

Havurah Shalom Youth Hebrew Classes

Because the nature of these classes is unlike many language acquisition programs, it is important that you and your child understand both the modest goals of the classes as well as the commitment that you are making to home practice. The 16 classes (1:30-2:40 pm, on Saturdays before Shabbat School) are meant to help give structure to ongoing family participation and are dependent on adequate home practice.

Please:

- 1) read the Goals and Terms of Participation on the following pages with your child*
- 2) sign the participation agreement (below) together*
- 3) return this form on the first day of classes*

Participation Agreement

We, _____ (parent name) and
_____ (student name) have read and accepted the Terms of Participation for the Havurah Shalom Youth Hebrew Classes. We agree to fully participate in the Hebrew classes, as outlined in the sections **Introduction, Home Reinforcement and Parent Responsibility, Curriculum and Student Progress.**

Parent signature

Date

Student signature

Date

Havurah Shalom Youth Hebrew Classes

Goals and Terms of Participation

INTRODUCTION

In the past Shabbat School students learned Hebrew with individual tutors, arranged by their parents, or in the context of their family if parents were able to teach. Both options are still available. However, another structure has emerged. It is different from a conventional Hebrew School in two primary ways. First, families may elect to participate; Hebrew classes are not a requirement for participation in Shabbat School or for eligibility to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the Havurah community. More importantly, considering the time needed for language acquisition, the current timeframe for student-teacher contact (15-16 sessions, 80 minutes each) is very limited. Therefore, program goals and parent involvement are necessarily affected.

Unlike Shabbat School, which endeavors to create community within a group of children of the same age, the Hebrew classes are focused upon skill acquisition. Children advance through three levels of learning, based on the skills that they acquire. Both the student's teacher and the Education Director periodically assess progress.

There are various factors which affect student progress:

- Individual language acquisition skills (Hebrew uses a different alphabet, and is totally phonetic. Some children find it easier to learn to read Hebrew than to learn to read English; some children find it harder)
- Quality and amount of home reinforcement Regular attendance
- Confidence / student comfort level / investment and enjoyment level

PROGRAM GOALS

Given our limited timeframe, we can only offer the most basic introduction to the Hebrew language. These classes are for learning Hebrew reading and prayer vocabulary and concepts for their own sake. Focusing on the language of Tefillah (prayer) and Torah, which is an integral part of our community, is beneficial. While the curriculum does include some vocabulary and skills that will aid students who want to learn Modern spoken Hebrew at a later time, the focus of these classes is not Modern Hebrew.

The Hebrew classes are good preparation for those who later undertake learning how to help lead a Shabbat morning service and read from the Torah. However, the classes are not a substitute for specific preparation for becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Parents will need to set up B'nai Mitzvah tutoring, beginning in Grade 6 or 7. The Bnai Mitzvah preparation process is separate, and supported by the Bnai Mitzvah Committee and rabbi.

The goals for the Hebrew classes are:

- Provide a basic introduction to Hebrew literacy (reading accuracy, decoding words, some vocabulary)
- Complement the Shabbat School model to enhance our children's education through Hebrew learning
- Enable and encourage youth/family participation in Shabbat services by introducing concepts of prayer and prayer vocabulary to the students

HOME REINFORCEMENT AND PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

Parents need to recognize that Hebrew classes that are scheduled only in conjunction with the Shabbat School schedule (15-16 sessions) are not optimal for language acquisition, and afford much less time than conventional language classes. In order for this process to be worthwhile, parent involvement and home reinforcement are essential. Students will only be successful if parents take an active role in their child's learning.

Homework: Parents are expected to monitor homework and provide guidance for reading practice. The teacher sends out an e-mail after each class with instructions. Web sites and other tools are provided to help parents who aren't fluent Hebrew readers. Progress can only be made with regular review and reinforcement between class sessions. **Families will be expected to check off their practice on a Kriah Chart (Reading Chart), 15 minutes a day, 3-4 times a week.**

Participation in Family Shabbat services or other Shabbat services is also highly encouraged so that students have the chance to practice what they are learning and see their skills being applied within the context of Jewish living.

Attendance: Given the limited number of sessions, families need to commit to regular attendance. Parents ensure that their child arrives on time, prepared, and ready to participate. **If you think that your child might miss more than 3 sessions, please consider waiting until the next year or finding an alternative. It is incumbent upon the family to take responsibility for missed sessions by contacting the teacher to find out how to catch up. Also, parents need to notify the teacher ahead of time if their child will miss a session.**

CURRICULUM AND STUDENT PROGRESS

Classes will be organized around three levels of the curriculum: Aleph, Bet, Gimel.

Students will be assessed at the beginning of each year, and again half way through the year. They will be placed in the level most appropriate to their skills; families should not expect that their child will be with a Shabbat School grade cohort. After the half-year assessment, some students may move to another class if it is more appropriate to their level. The general recommendation is that students begin the classes when they are in third grade.