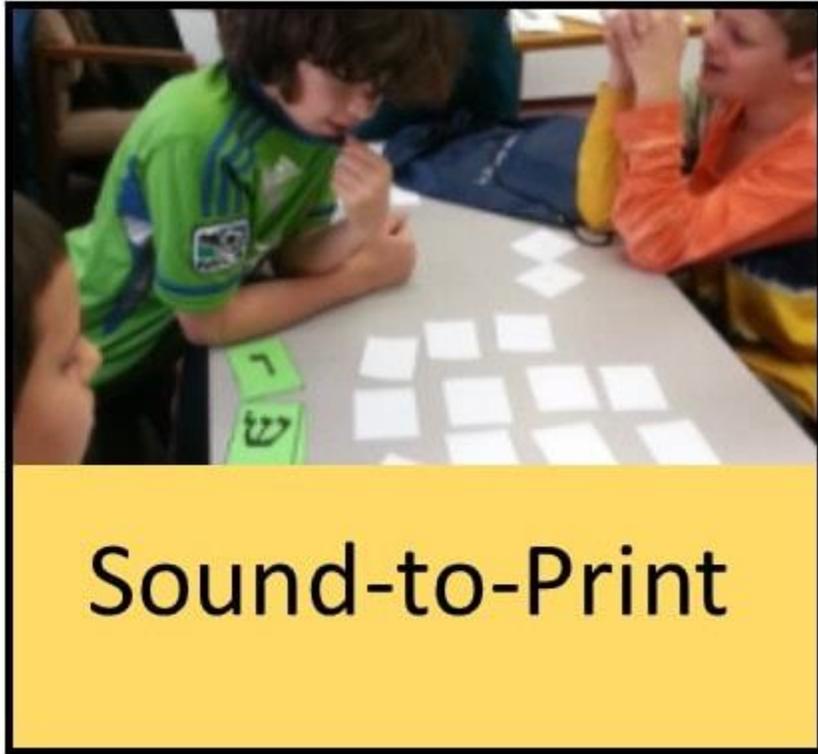


# #OnwardHebrew



Sound-to-Print

**A Guide for Teachers,  
developed by the Curriculum Department  
of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland**

August, 2018 / Elul 5778

## WHY THIS RESOURCE?

It is a familiar scene in a Hebrew class - a student has her finger on the page and letter-by-letter, vowel sign-by-vowel sign, is struggling to sound out a word. It is painful to watch and often referred to as "breaking one's teeth." But those behind the #OnwardHebrew initiative are working towards the day when these teaching practices become a thing of the past.

#OnwardHebrew is helping educators create better Hebrew learning



experiences for their students using a **sound-to-print (S2P) learning approach**. S2P Hebrew teachers do not ask their learners to "sound it out" or cajole "I know you can do it. Keep going." Instead, using S2P

learning strategies, teachers awaken previous learning in a variety of ways. They might say, "Let's first sing the prayer we are working on" or "Let me read that line for you and then you'll have a turn. Follow with your eyes" or "It is not cheating to sing the blessing in your head while you read the words on the page." These teachers help their students match the Hebrew in their ears with the print on the page, melding the two naturally.

**The teaching/learning ideas in this booklet assume that students have had multiple experiences building the sound of Hebrew** - in *t'fillah*, with Hebrew Through Movement, hearing Jewish Life Vocabulary and more. This booklet offers specific strategies to transform learning, S2P.

Try a few or many, then share your experiences and reflections in the #OnwardHebrew Facebook group – we would love to learn from you!

# S-2-P TEACHING STRATEGY:

## PREVIEWING WORDS

All the ideas offered, below, provide opportunities for students to hear the sound of Hebrew words and phrases before they are asked to tackle the printed page. Which will you try?

1. **Start every lesson by singing or reciting** the prayer/blessing segment you will be working on decoding/reading.
2. **Conclude every prayer lesson by singing/reciting** the segment you just worked on.

### 3. **Sing the usual musical version of any prayer as a group, then:**



**Vary the singing** by doing it loud, soft, in a mouse voice, very very slowly, etc. OR by standing tall, standing on a chair, sitting on a chair, sitting on the floor, while walking fast, etc.

**These variations may be changed** at different lines or verses, or when a set timer goes off. The variations may be decided by the teacher or *madrich*, randomly chosen in the moment, or by using “variation cards” drawn from a pile. No matter how this is done, conclude the oral signing or reciting by following along with the printed page.

4. **Play a music video or audio version of prayers or songs to introduce alternative versions.** Consider setting up a listening station in the room for use when students rotate between learning centers; ask students to go to this station to listen to the prayers/blessings at least twice during the period. For a list of “sound sources” check page 15 of this booklet or search YouTube for videos.

5. **Integrate Jewish Life Vocabulary** in your speech and **adopt Hebrew Through Movement** from early childhood through Grade Six.
6. **Introduce the print version of specific words after students have mastered a Hebrew Through Movement or Jewish Life Vocabulary lesson.** If not doing either HTM or JLV in your program, act out a situation that integrates 3 Hebrew words into an English dialog before introducing them in your Hebrew lesson. For example: introduce vocabulary by offering a skit of people sitting at a Shabbat or holiday dinner table where they ask for certain ritual objects (e.g., “I want to do that blessing that ends *borei p’ri hagafen* – can you pass me the grape juice?”). Such a skit will be more memorable if there is a bit of humor involved.



7. **Before working on the decoding/reading of food blessings, bring in sample snacks** from various blessing categories (bread, veggies, fruit, etc.). Recite/sing the blessings a few times (eat, too) and then work with the print.

8. **Hold regular t’fillah experiences** during the educational program, including prayers/blessings that the students have not yet been “taught.”

9. **If teaching Hebrew Through Movement, use the model to introduce select words** you want to have students decode. **Follow-up with the print versions of the words.** Check the Print

Literacy section of the HTM curriculum guide for ideas. As a lesson example, check the



HTM video that shows an introduction of words in the *Sh’ma* (posted here: <https://www.hebrewthroughmovement.org/shma-and-its-blessings.html>).

10. **Check out the website, "I'm Gonna Stand Up"**

(<http://imgonnastandup.weebly.org>) which offers gold and silver challenges to reinforce blessings in the *Amidah*. Many of these were developed with sound-to-print learning.

11. **Integrate in your lessons and home-experiences the JECC's holiday websites** that are sound-to-print based. These websites cover holiday concepts and offer prayer/blessing practice:

I'm Coming Clean (<http://imcomingclean.weebly.com>) – for the High Holidays

I Left with Moses (<http://iLeftWithMoses.weebly.com>) – for *Pesah*

12. **Play, "I'm thinking of a line"** – This is a rather silly game (*don't tell the students that – they love it!*). Number the lines on a photocopy of

whatever prayer or blessing you are working with.

Tell your student(s) that you are thinking of a line and ask them to guess which one it is. When they pick a line, YOU read it aloud first while they follow with their eyes (remember the principle of



“sound-to-print”). Ask the student to read it back to you. Then, tell the student if it is the correct line or not. Keep playing until someone guesses your line. Role reversal is fine, too! A student can pick a line, but YOU should be the one to read it aloud first.

# S-2-P TEACHING STRATEGY: HEARING THEN FINDING

All the ideas offered below provide opportunities for students to hear Hebrew and immediately search for the matching words or phrases on the printed page. These activities are for students who already know how to decode Hebrew.

1. **Sing or play the audio** of only one line of a prayer and ask students to point to, or otherwise identify, the printed line on a prayer sheet or in the *siddur*. Some “sound sources” are on page 15 of this booklet.

2. **Do a “get-in-order” activity.**

- a. Variation #1 (all group) - Give every student a different word or phrase card from a prayer or blessing being learned. Read each card aloud at least two times when giving it to a student (i.e., build the sound). After everyone has a card, read the words/phrases one-at-a-time in order. Ask each student with the matching card to self-identify and then line up according to the correct sequence of the prayer.



- b. Variation #2 (individually) – Give each student a mixed up set of slips that each have one word or phrase from a prayer or blessing being studied. Using a “sound source” of your preference (see page 15 of this booklet), have a madrich click on words in order so students hear them aloud. Ask students to find each word or phrase in their pile and put the prayer in the correct order.

3. **Find the word** - Read a word on a reading page and ask students to find it and then read it back. You can also ask them to read the entire line back to you if they have been working with this prayer or blessing for a while. Remember that at the first sign of struggle, YOU should read the line first and ask the student to read it back. If your student continues to struggle, ask him/her what might be confusing OR if there are letters or vowel signs s/he doesn't remember, then reteach on the spot.



4. **Tap into the power of the app JI Tap or Tiny Tap** (they are related). There are Jewish prayer programs/games already made, or you can

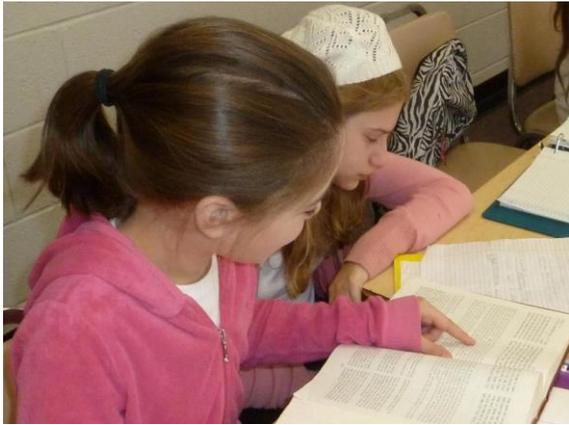


create others. Check out the ones attached to: <http://jitap.net/activities/g12r/play/> (you may need to do a prayer-name-search on the site). The JECC created ones for:

- Avot V'imahot
- K'dushah

## S-2-P TEACHING STRATEGY: AWAKENING LEARNED WORDS

New English readers come to the printed page with years of exposure to oral language. They use what they know about English to double-check pronunciation and gain meaning.



In S2P learning, children gain the confidence to tap into previously learned aural/oral Hebrew to tackle the print on the page. For example, if they've learned the prayer/song *Oseh Shalom*, they need to be told that it is okay to sing the song in their head when

reading the words on the page; this is not cheating but rather “using available resources.” Tapping into previous Hebrew knowledge is what it means to “awaken learned words.”

1. **Reenact ritual actions in classroom** (i.e. lighting *Shabbat* or *Hanukkah* candles), recite the matching blessings as a group, and then work with Hebrew print.
2. **Teach the principle of “using what you know”** – meaning that if the student has the background, it is fair game to tap into it. Show a potentially difficult word in the context of a prayer, and demonstrate that the students can figure out how to pronounce it based on their knowledge of the prayer. (i.e., the confusing word >> בְּמִרוֹמָיו >> that comes after the two words >> עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם)

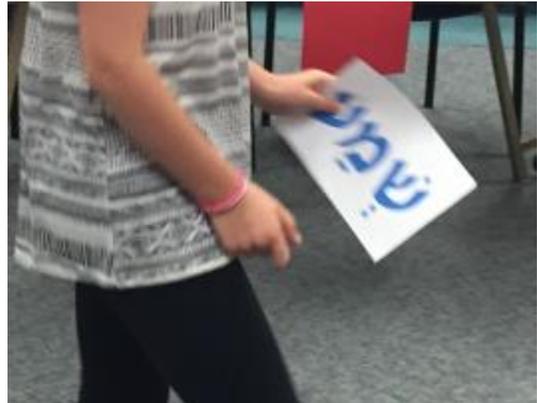
3. **Play the Memory game** with picture cards of objects the students know how to identify in Hebrew but do not yet know how to decode/read. The JECC has a card set specifically developed for this purpose (search in [JECCMarketplace.com](http://JECCMarketplace.com) for >> Memory Game – Awakening S2P). Your students may play a ritual version, a Hebrew Through Movement version, or both together. For each game, choose 8-10 photo cards that students know (e.g., if you are a female teacher, use only the female teacher photo and word card). Using two each of the picture cards, set up the game.



- i. First time through, ask students to identify the picture and look at the Hebrew word from right to left as they say it.
  - ii. Second time playing, have the students identify the item and identify the sound of the first letter/vowel sign combination.
  - iii. Third time playing, see if they can identify the sounds of any other letters in the Hebrew word when they pronounce it.
- b. Using one set of picture cards and one set of word cards, set up the game.
- i. First time through, ask students to see if the shape of the words on each card match (do not ask them to decode the Hebrew card when they turn it over; rather, you pronounce it for them). If a match is made, ask the student to use their knowledge of the word's pronunciation and then look at the print as s/he says the word aloud.
  - ii. Second time through, if the student can read the Hebrew print card, allow him/her to do so.
- c. At some point during a game, ask students to reflect on how knowing the word helps them figure out letters/vowel signs, especially ones they may have forgotten.

4. **In advance, enlarge and print a prayer or blessing and then cut it up into individual words or phrases.** Divide the word/phrase cards among students. Slowly sing the prayer/blessing as a group, asking the students to hold up their card when that section is sung.

5. **Play** **נחמני**: Print enough word cards for all the students in the class to have one - this game works well whether you play with one card per word or 2-3 cards of the same word. You (the teacher) stand in the center of a circle of all the students. They have a word card that they read (asking for help is okay) and then put on the floor behind them. Explain the game and model it together in slow motion at least once. As a key safety rule, be clear that if anyone “slides” into a spot (a la baseball sliding), the game will automatically stop.



- a. Call out 2-3 words. Those who have the matching word card have to find another spot to stand on while you try and claim a spot in the circle.
  - i. Whoever cannot find an open spot becomes the person in the middle.
  - ii. Players may not move to the spot on their immediate left or right, but have to find an open space at least two people over.

The first few times this is played, YOU call out the words, but the task may be transferred to whomever is in the middle of the circle, eventually. As the play continues, trade out current cards for new words.

- b. At some point call **נחמני** which means “move!” This signals everyone to move at least 2 spaces over (or cut across the circle) to find a new spot; the person in the center also looks for a place in the circle. Whoever does not have a place becomes the next person in the middle.

# S-2-P TEACHING STRATEGIES: CUEING UP VISUAL CLUES



Students who learn to pay attention to visual cues have an easier time with Hebrew decoding because they learn to better discriminate what is on the page. The strategies here all assist with this goal.

1. **Ask students to point** to “the letter and vowel sign combination that makes a \_\_\_ sound” on a given worksheet/on a prayerbook page.
2. **Teach students how to divide words into syllables according to the Hebrew system.** While different from English and thus a bit confusing at the beginning, it will help students visually focus on a word in more detail than they might. In addition, pronouncing words via this system actually creates better attention to a word’s correct accent.

a. **The three key rules for Hebrew syllables:**

i. **A vowel-sign indicates a syllable.**



The word **לְקוּם** has two vowel signs and two syllables.

ii. **BUT, a sh’va is not considered a vowel sign – it doesn’t denote a syllable.**



Thus, the word שְׂמַע has one vowel sign and one syllable (consider how we pronounce it – not *sheh-ma*, but *sh'ma*; it flows).

**iii. AND, a hataf is related to the *sh'va* – it also doesn't denote a syllable.**



Thus, the word אָבוֹתֵינוּ has three vowel signs and three syllables

אָבוֹתֵנוּ

A native Hebrew speaker would not say *ah-vo-tey-nu* (which has equal accents) but rather *avo-tey-nu*.



**3. After teaching the three rules and demonstrating how they work, divide students into groups of 2-3.**

a. **Step One: Give each group the same multi-syllable word and ask them to decide how many syllables it has.** When the team members agree, have one person come up and write their conclusion on the board (e.g., a 3 or a 4 or whatever). If every group has the same answer then move to the next step. If not, ask some groups to explain their answer, whether right or wrong. Take the entire group through the three rules again, with everyone coming to agreement on the correct answer.

b. **Step Two: Give one more all-group word and repeat Step One.**

c. **Step Three: Give each group an identical set of 10-15 individually cut-apart words.**

- i. Ask each team to decide how many syllables there are for each word and put the slips into separate piles grouped by syllables: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
- ii. Create a chart like this on the board and ask each group to record the number of words they determine for each of these number of syllables (e.g., 2 words with 2 syllables)

	1	2	3	4	5
Group 1					
Group 2					
Group 3					

# of syllables per word

# of words in each group's pile with number of syllables

- iii. If the chart numbers do not match, ask the groups to count again. [You may need to give a clue if they need to try a third or fourth time.]

d. **After doing this exercise, stop every now and then in future classes to ask students to divide some troublesome words into syllables.**

4. **Make student-sets-of-cards with words/phrases that students know, perhaps from Hebrew Through Movement or Jewish Life Vocabulary.** These may be distributed to individuals or pairs of students (the latter encourages collaboration). Give students 6 cards the first time doing this, though once they are experienced, the numbers of cards may increase. The first time, ask students to sort the cards by an instruction you give (for instance, “by similar beginning letter, if there is one”). The other

times, ask students to sort the cards any way they wish. Each time after a sorting sequence, stop and ask each group to share what sorting “rule” they chose with the entire group. Encourage creative ways to view and categorize cards. Repeat a number of times.

5. **If students are working on the *alefbet*, give individuals letter cards and have them divide them into piles of “I know these” and “I don’t know these.”** The “I know” piles can be quickly reviewed at times. Students should work with the “I don’t” pile two-to-three cards at a time until they can also go into the “I know” pile.
  
6. **When students know how to decode/read Hebrew, use Hebrew Through Movement commands (or English ones if the students do not work with HTM) to give instructions** that have them hear the Hebrew and then find the matching print:
  - a. קָרַיִם “בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה”  
(lift up “בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה”)
  
  - b. לְשִׁים “הַמוֹצֵיא לְחֵם” תַּחַת הַשׁוּלְחָן  
(put “הַמוֹצֵיא לְחֵם” under the table)

# S-2-P TEACHING STRATEGIES:

## SOURCES OF SOUND

Looking for “sound sources” for Hebrew prayers and blessings?  
Check the list, below:

1. Rae Antonoff’s Prayer Karaoke (click on a prayer/blessing then scroll down)  
<http://raeandesigns.wixsite.com/hebrewresources/videos>
2. Behrman House “Click and Read”  
<http://www.behrmanhouse.com/kol-yisrael-main-menu-0>
3. Behrman House “Hebrew in Harmony” – *Sh’ma* and *Mi Chamocha* are available without purchasing access: <https://hih.behrmanhouse.com/>
4. SiddurAudio.com (based on *Siddur Sim Shalom*) <https://sidduraudio.com/>
5. Temple Beth Tikvah’s (Columbus, OH) Hebrew prayer recordings  
<http://www.bethtikvahcolumbus.org/hebrew-prayers-with-recordings/>
6. Reform Judaism – Shabbat Blessings  
<https://reformjudaism.org/shabbat-blessings>
7. YouTube videos of any Hebrew song you may wish to teach!

If you experiment with Sound-to-Print learning, your colleagues would enjoy hearing what you tried and how it worked out.

Your questions and comments are also welcome.



Please feel free to start a Sound-to-Print thread on any topic you wish in the #OnwardHebrew Facebook group.

Search for "Onward Hebrew!" or go to this URL <https://www.facebook.com/groups/144174356227118/>