



Talmud Torah Derech Hashem Kindergarten Tekoa

Parents Handbook

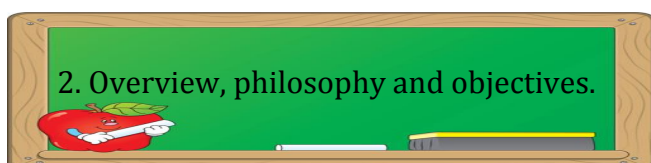
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1. About us.



The Israeli education ministry recognizes, Talmud Torah Derech Hashem Tekoa as a licensed kindergarten. We are inspected several times a year for safety, health and various other reasons. A representative from the education ministry visits our gan a couple of times a year to meet with our staff, students and to inspect the classrooms, supplies and toys. This representative is available to our staff throughout the year for guidance and counsel.

The kindergarten is privately managed by the non-profit organization, "Darashti Kirvatecha". Darashti Kirvatecha is dedicated to acts of kindness and strengthening Jewish identity through education, with emphasis on mutual understanding and love of ones fellow Jew.



We believe in our hearts that the future of the Jewish nation begins with quality education. Kindergarten is the most important time to start teaching about proper behavior and for the children to get a taste of the amazing blessing it is to be a Jew. For most children this is the first time that they leave the home, learn to interact with other kids and receive classroom instruction. We believe that these first tender years are most important in order to guide our children on the proper path and give them a head-start in life. By limiting the amount of children per class we allow for a close relationship between teacher and student. This close interaction allows our staff, gannet, assistant and melamed, the time and patience to be able to reach every child, to be there for them and to guide them hand in hand through those tender years. Our goal is to create a warm environment for our children to flourish, learn to respect one another and forever remember the joy and excitement from mitzvot, Shabbat and holidays. The beauty and purity in our children's eyes have affected many homes to experience learning and Judaism in a new light.

Our gan is like a big family where we welcome and encourage parent participation. The goal of our staff and management is to educate in the spirit of the Baal Shem Tov who as a melamed would treat every child as if they were his own, with burning love and endless compassion.

3. Registration and tuition.

Registration-



Upon being accepted to the gan, new children must be registered online at www.haavot.co.il. A copy of one of the parent's tudat zehut including sefach should be emailed to abetekoa@gmail.com. Registration fees are 400 nis per child. The fee covers the registration process through the Gush Etzion municipality, and the education ministry. The fee is non refundable.

Tuition-

Tuition is 650 nis per month for 11 months. 11 post-dated checks should be made out for the first of each month from September and including July. Although the gan is open for 10 months, it is the norm to pay the full time staff for at least one month of the summer vacation. There is no greater investment than that towards our own children's education. Families who are suffering from financial hardship can use maser money towards tuition. In situations of intense financial difficulty one can request a discount. Keep in mind that we have an obligation towards our staff and many expenses to run a gan with the high level of education that we provide. Requests for a discount should only be made when 100% needed. Any discounts given are on the condition to eventually be repaid once your financial situation improves or by volunteering your time in the gan. In the event that you move out of Tekoa, the tuition is 2/3 refundable. For example, if there are three months remaining until the end of the year, 2 months of the remaining tuition will be returned.

The non refundable registration fee is due upon registration. 11 checks for the year are due on July 1st.

4. Yearly schedule.

We follow the same yearly schedule as the Gush Etzion Municipality. The schedule is sent out at the beginning of the year and can also be found on the Gush Etzion website www.baitisraeli.co.il under education. The Gush Etzion Municipality also determines weather and snow days.



5. Mornings and preparation for gan.

Your child should come to gan with a full belly after eating breakfast. Send him/her with a lunch and fruit or vegetable. The fruit/vegetables are collected and prepared for a healthy snack later in the day. The gan's kitchen and tables are dairy so please do not send meat meals. Make sure your child is properly dressed with shoes (being this is Tekoa we need to actually say that) and (during the winter) a jacket. Sometimes the class likes to go for walks but if one child is without shoes or a jacket no one can go. A water bottle is not needed, as every child has their own cup with their name on it provided for them with tea or water readily available throughout the day.



Please do not send your child to gan with any toys. There are many toys in the gan and they are all shared. Having a personal toy could be unfair to other children. There is no formal dress code in the gan. It is advised that when needed, parents of younger children should bring a change of cloths to be left in their child's drawer. Children must be 100% toilet trained before coming to gan.

6. Illness.



Kindergarten kids who are used to playing closely with one another can easily catch an illness from another child. Please follow the illness guidelines carefully

for the sake of our children and staff's health. Children are not permitted to gan if they have had a fever, recurrent diarrhea, and vomiting or pink eye within the past 24 hours.

Use caution before sending a child to gan who appears as though they might be coming down with something.

In the event that a child is found to be sick during the day, the parents will be asked to come and pick him/her up. In the event that a parent is not immediately available to pick up their child, the staff can administer acamol or ibuprofen with written consent from a parent by sms.

Children should be checked for lice before the beginning of the year. Do not send a child with lice to gan before all lice has been properly removed.

7. Gan hours.

The gan starts at 7:30 and ends at 1:50 sharp. Please be on time when picking up your child. If every parent is late only once a month, that means that the gannenet needs to stay late nearly every day. 1:50 means that this is the latest time to come and pick up your child. On Fridays the gan ends at 12:00.

8. Arrival to gan.

For new students as well as older kids returning from vacations and extended periods at home, coming to gan in the morning can sometimes be a challenge. There is something that you can do to help. Show confidence and assure your child that they are in a good place with a day of fun ahead of them. The general rule is that the longer you stay during the morning arrival period, the harder it is for your child to let you go. Children quickly pick up on a parent who is feeling unsure and uneasy leaving their child. 90% of children who cry on arrival are usually smiling and laughing with the other kids within just a few minutes of their parent's departure. The ganenot will work closely with parents to make the transition as smooth and stress free as possible for both parent and child.



9. The first two days of the year.

In order to gradually acclimate our children to gan, we have a "start smart" beginning. The first day of gan goes until 10 am. The second day is until 12 pm. After that the schedule is regular.

10. Safety and security.



Given our location in Tekoa and our close proximity to arab towns and workers, great importance is placed on safety and security. In each gan there is a "panic button" that sets off a loud alarm and automatically calls the head of security in Tekoa as well as the fire department and school principal. After consulting with the local head of security and the gan's parents committee it was decided to

place a small canister of pepper spray in each kindergarten in a safe place, each canister with a safety feature and out of the reach of the children. The gannenet should never be defenseless if ever faced with a security situation, God forbid. The storage room located under the younger children's kindergarten is an emergency bomb shelter. It was used a few years ago when two missiles were shot at our direction from Gaza.

Both gannanot as well as the principal have completed first aid certification. This is renewed every couple of years.

Both ganim are equipped with modern first aid kits.

Both gamin are carefully inspected twice yearly by a private security inspector and must also be approved by the education ministry. Every child is insured from personal injuries.

11. Medication and allergies.

Parents with children who require medication or who have allergies should be careful to fill out the details on the application form online. In addition please provide the gannanet with a written letter on the first day of gan.

12. Parent participation.



One of the things that make our gan so unique is the family atmosphere and desire to join together and contribute for the sake of our children. The children benefit so much when parents come to gan to share their talents and skills. Even if you would just like to volunteer some time to read a story, please contact the gannenet to arrange a time that is convenient to come. Your child will beam with pride to see mommy/daddy as the center of attention with all the other kids learning and enjoying what you have to share. This is also a good way to show your child how important gan is to you and how you are also a part of the staff.

13. Parent and staff interaction.

Raising children is a challenge for even the best of parents. Our goal is to work together with you on this path. It is important for there to be regular communication of what is going on at home as well as in the gan. Children have ups and downs like adult. Sometimes it takes both the gannenet and parents to work together to come up with a plan of action to overcome a difficulty and to decide how the child should be properly rewarded when successfully overcoming these challenges.

Issues relating to your child or their gannenet should be discussed first directly with the gannenet. The principal is also available when needed.

The end of the school day is not the best time to have an extended conversation with the gannenet. She is busy seeing everyone off and starting to prepare for the next day. Our whole staff is available for you in the evenings by phone.

14. Ha'melamed

The emphasis of learning at this age is to inspire the students to thirst for learning in general and yidishkeit in particular.

Our facilities include a cheder melamed where small groups of up to five students can progress in their love for Torah and basic foundations of recognizing letters and eventually reading.

Our melamed strives to facilitate an environment of openness, acceptance and an underlying “sweetness” which aims to provide a nurturing atmosphere where the children’s soul can flourish in the spirit of the “Baal Shem Tov.”

15. Red line.

Our red line policy at the gan is hitting. There is nothing that can ruin a child’s day like being on the receiving end of physical abuse from another child. We have a no hitting policy at gan. This is a tremendous challenge being as how children at this age are quite used to hitting. Keeping our red line requires the help of our parents to enforce this rule also at home with other siblings and friends. Children must learn that there is never a justified reason to hit, even if someone else hit first. This is the time to learn to express one self and ones feeling with words rather than fists.

When required, parents may be asked to meet with the gannenet to to discuss how to best educate their child in this area.

16. Nutrition.



We strongly encourage a healthy diet. The effect junk food has on children’s behavior is clear to see. Excess sugar gives children a “rush” for about 20 minutes and then a “crash”. It is important to have a balanced diet that includes healthy bread, fruits and vegetables. Whenever bringing food to be shared with other children, please be mindful of other families who adhere to a healthy diet. Likewise all food brought into the gan must be kosher. Try not to send your children with candies that may be too much of a temptation for other children.

17. Abba and Ima Shabbat

Every week two children are honored with the title of Ima or Abba of Shabbat. During the Friday’s Kabbalat Shabbat ceremony at approximately 11:30, they are given the place of honor at a special table and allowed to “make Kiddush” or light the Shabbat candles. The gannenet will ask you to bring either a bottle of grape juice or a small healthy snack that your child will give out to the other children. All parents are invited to the kabalat Shabbat and to join with us in song and instruments. The parents of ima or abba Shabbat are welcome to bring a camera to capture these precious moments.

18. Birthdays parties and Upshirin.



Birthdays are an exciting time for children and when celebrated correctly the happy memories can last a lifetime. Please be in contact with the gannenet in order to arrange a date and time when you would like to celebrate your child's birthday. The gannenet will be happy to discuss with you how to best celebrate your child's special day. Remember the nutritional and kosher guidelines pointed out earlier when bringing food to the gan for other children. As a general rule, children will eat what they have in front of them. Some parents prefer to donate a book or quality toy to the gan as opposed to giving out individual toys that often break easily. The melamed will be happy to discuss the details and arrange a time to celebrate your son's upshirin in the gan.

19. Parent teacher conferences.

Twice a year every parent has the opportunity to meet with the gannenet privately to discuss the development of his or her child. The first meeting is within the first couple of months of the year. This meeting is to evaluate how the child is adjusting to gan, including strengths and possible challenges. The second meeting is towards the end of the year. This meeting is to sum up the progress made over the year and to plan ahead for the next year. Private individual appointments can be made throughout the year upon request. The staff is also readily available by phone or email.

20. Weekly letter



Most weeks your child will come home with a letter from the gannenet summing up the previous weeks activities in gan. It is particularly important to read these letters in order to be aware of all that your child is learning in gan. This is a great opportunity to sit down with your child and review the letter with them in order to remind them of what they learned and to help insure that it won't be forgotten. I can't express enough how important it is for parent teacher cooperation.

21. Pictures

From time to time pictures or video are taken throughout the day and at special events. The pictures are sent out to the parents, as are short movies. The media may also be used to put a smile on the face of our donors who have made the building and continuation of the gan possible.



22. Evaluations, extra assistance, special education.

Within the first couple of months the staff members meet together with the melamed and principal. At this meeting every child is evaluated and generally placed in one of three categories. The first category is for children who are progressing fine and require no extra assistance. The second is for children who are experiencing some slight difficulties in certain areas.

In this case the gannenet will speak to the parents to make them aware of these issues and discuss how to best work together for the sake of the child. The third category is for children that the staff suspects might have certain learning challenges that require an evaluation. The parents can then decide if they want their child evaluated. The evaluation process starts with a trip to your local kupa cholim and a letter from the gannenet. The process is free. If the evaluation determines that the child has a learning disability, then he or she will be entitled to extra assistance from the education ministry. The assistance ranges from a weekly visit from an educational expert, to entitlement for special education for the upcoming year.

Every child develops at a different pace. Even if a child is slow to develop in certain areas we are in no rush to recommend an evaluation. If your child is happy with himself and generally progressing well, there is no need for concern. The world is full of successful late bloomers.

23. Chanukah party.

One of the most exciting moments of the year is our Chanukah party. A few days before the Chanukah vacation we gather at the gan as the sun starts to set. The children are excited to share with you the songs and dances they have learned in their gan, which is fittingly decorated for the festival of lights.



24. Yearly trip.



Every year we take at least one trip out of Tekoa. Previous trips were to the Kotel, Jerusalem zoo and gan soccer. There is always room for parent chaperones, but reserve your spot quickly because they fill up fast. Parent chaperones are there to help, so we ask that you do not bring babies along. At the end of the trip we send out pictures so all parents can

feel as though they were with us also.

25. Petting zoo.

The petting zoo is currently home to goats, ducks and chickens. Each gan also has a fish tank. The children save their left over bread, fruit and vegetables and feed them to the animals. Every day another child is responsible for feeding the fish. Interacting with animals is a great way for children to learn about responsibility, having to care for others and to be able to bond with them. The fish tank is soothing and the goats and birds are always fun to visit and feed. We welcome your left over bread, vegetables and fruit (not citrus). Please make sure the food is in good condition without any mold.



26. Parents committee.

The parents committee is a big part of the gan. In the beginning of the year a committee head is chosen by all the parents. The chosen head forms a committee with parents who are willing to volunteer their time. The committee serves to discuss further ways to assist the staff and improve the gan. This is an opportunity for us to thank all the parents for their time and efforts on behalf of our children.

27. Conclusion.

Rabbe Yehuda Hannsai said, “One should not interrupt the studies of young children, even for the sake of building the Beit Hamikdash”. These first impressionable years are of paramount importance in shaping the future of our children. The Lubavitcher Rebbe compared young children to new saplings. Even the smallest change will greatly effect how the tree will eventually grow. Most of us can hardly remember our first years in kindergarten. Our lack of memory does not mean that these years are not important, but quite the opposite. The memory of these years is stored on a much deeper, subconscious level that greatly effects the very essence of who we will eventually become.

The management and staff are dedicated to working with you to give your children the brightest start we possibly can. May Hashem grant us success and bless us with that awesome blessing Jews have always sought after in every generation, good Jewish nachat from our children.

With you every step of the way,

Rabbi Avraham and Dalia Fried

