



Garin Torani Ohr Yehudah



Background Information

The GT of Ohr Yehuda was established in 2009 by 6 young and idealistic families. These families set as their goal residing in Ohr Yehuda and becoming an intrinsic part of the local population. By participating in the building of active and multi-faceted community life, the aim was to bring into fruition community projects involving Torah, education, social services, and Jewish identity.

Members of the GT work in a variety of professions. There are those involved in education and in therapeutic areas, such as social workers and psychologists. There are those who function as coordinators of the girls doing National Service. There are those who are students and those who work in other fields. The common denominator, however, is the desire to connect and reach out to the Jewish People, and to give of themselves to their fellow human beings.

Through the course of the last years, the community in Ohr Yehuda has grown, and so too the activities and projects around it. Today, after 6 years, the community, which revolves around the educational institutions of GT, numbers over 150 families. Likewise, the various activities conducted by this non-profit organization, reach thousands of people throughout Ohr Yehuda. The work is done in full cooperation with the local authorities, including the Department of Culture and Education, Social Services and other government offices.

our warmest regards...

David Cohen

Association manager

Education

Most of the population of Ohr Yehuda is a traditional one. The love and admiration for traditional values are completely natural to it, as is the connection to the Jewish nation, the State of Israel, and Israeli society. Despite all this, the educational system of the National Religious schools which combine all these values had begun to steadily decline over the years. For example, each year, an additional National Religious pre-school program was being closed. This was also evident on the elementary school level. So together with the local government and the board of education, we embarked on a process of revitalization of these institutions, making the National Religious system into the flagship of religious education in Ohr Yehuda.

Education



Emunah Day Care

The Emunah day care program of Ohr Yehuda was designed through full cooperation between the GT and the national Emunah organization. In 2013, as a result of these joint efforts, a member of the GT became supervisor of the program. With this change, came many other welcome changes in the day-care program activities. These changes proved to be successful, and today the day-care program is filled to capacity, with approximately 70 children—a rise of 130% over the previous year! The program enjoys the benefits of the professional supervision of representatives from government offices, and from the pedagogic supervisors of Emunah. This supervision is combined with community activity, which simultaneously reinforces Torah values, as it is offered by the staff members of the GT.



Education



Nursery and kindergarten

In 2010, we opened the first National Religious pre-school program of the organization. In this program and in others which followed, we insisted on hiring a highly professional staff, who brought with them a high standard of education. We were privileged to experience the great demand for our programs. And this year (2014), a 4th program was opened. In our kindergartens, we emphasize Jewish education, Zionist values, the love of mankind, the love of the Land of Israel, and the strong connection to our tradition. There is a high level of professionalism invested in attaining excellence in all areas, meeting the requirements of the Board of Education. In these pre-school programs, dedicated and loving staff members place special emphasis on the personal relationship with and the development of each and every child. Alongside the pre-school activities, there are also many communal activities with parents and siblings of the children. Throughout the year, there are various events such as “Slichot”, a joint “Tu Bishvat seder”, “Melave Malke” and more. These National Religious kindergartens are fully supervised by local government and Board of Education authorities. They are open to the general public, so that whoever is interested in registering, is happily accepted.

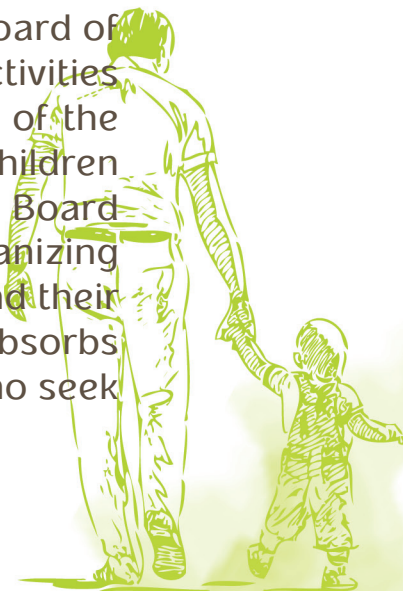


Education



The National Religious elementary school–“Saadyah Gaon”

“Saadyah Gaon” is amongst the oldest elementary schools in Ohr Yehuda. Over the years, it had become a central and major institution thanks to the religious education it offered. It provided a suitable and viable response to the varied needs of the local population. Graduates of “Saadyah Gaon” became integrated in all areas, and reached admirable achievements both in Torah and general academics. Unfortunately, over the last years, the school’s reputation declined, and became labeled as the school for the Ethiopian immigrant population and for other welfare children. Approximately 4 years ago (2010), the children of the GT began studying in the school. Along with them, came a new student body, whose parents had previously abstained from enrolling their children in the school. GT members are active together with school staff, the Board of Education, and the local municipality, to create a community whose activities revolve around the school. In so doing, they have regained the trust of the general public. In this last year, for the first time in many years, over 45 children were registered for the first grade. Two first grade classes that fit Board of Education specifications were opened. GT is responsible for organizing many after-school community and Torah programs for the children and their families. It is noteworthy that “Saadyah Gaon” elementary school now absorbs the children of families of the GT, as well as the children of families who seek traditional religious education from all over Ohr Yehuda.





Education

Social Services

In Ohr Yehuda, there are many poor families who live in dire straits because of extremely limited economic means. This affects these families both spiritually and emotionally. The families are welfare cases and receive great support from the municipal social services. These services are inadequate, however, as they are unable to encompass all the needs of this segment of Ohr Yehuda's population. Members of the GT chose to specifically live within the older and more difficult neighborhoods in order to achieve close relationships with these people. In this way they hope to be available to provide answers and solutions to the many difficulties as they arise.

Social Services



“Warm Home” for children at risk

15 children from grades 2–5 were referred to us by the Department of Social Services of Ohr Yehuda, because their own homes could not provide for their basic needs, including meals, clothing, help with homework and more. In this “Warm Home” program we strive to meet the special needs of these children, with the hope of encouraging their growth and development. Their school day is extended until 6:30 PM and so their time at home is reduced. The children receive lunch and supper meals, help with homework, along with social and therapeutic intervention. Social skills are taught; and the children are introduced to people who portray personal living examples. In addition to the care, attention, and encouragement, an emphasis is equally placed on maintaining close contact with parents. The goal is that the responsibility for raising and educating these children be returned to their parents. The staff at this “Warm Home” includes a social worker, counselor, house mother, National Service girl, various therapists and volunteers.





**Social
Services**

The New Page/Fresh Start

The program, which has been coined “New Page”, was set up for 30 pupils—Ethiopian and native Israeli alike. These are children who have not adequately mastered basic learning skills on the elementary school level. The program aims to open a “new page”/“fresh start” for these pupils as they approach their next stage of study. The goal is to enable them to set out on their new path, without residual frustration, lack of self-confidence, and primarily lack of basic knowledge. The children receive added study hours in the 3Rs, until the gap is closed and they are able to hold their own for the upcoming stage. This is done to ensure their chances of standing proudly for the acceptance exams they must pass to qualify for good schools. The devoted staff of this program includes a clinical psychologist, English and math teachers and 2 National Service girls.



Social Services



Distribution of Food to Needy Families

The cost of living in Israel exceeds that of any European country. This becomes especially apparent within the welfare population, who have difficulty providing basic need for their families. And so, in 2014, the State of Israel has many hungry families. Members of the GT are partners in carrying out this charity work, which involves distribution of food to the needy. Each Wednesday on a regular basis, food packages are prepared for the poor of Ohr Yehuda, as well as for those outside the town. There are also major distributions which occur biannually, before the New Year and Passover holidays.



**Social
Services**



02/09/2010

The Institute for Family Living (IFL)

The decision of the GT members to settle on specific neighborhoods of Ohr Yehuda came as a result of the desire to identify and associate with needs of these populations. As relationships with the residents were developed, mostly through the joint educational system, the great difficulties that parents have within the families became apparent. Counseling, advice, and reinforcement is offered in terms of management and budgeting, as there is a great need to learn about these matters. The IFL was established as an outcome of the wish to provide assistance to the nuclear families, by guiding them how to appropriately deal with matters. This is accomplished thru workshops, study days and support groups.



Social Services



Torah

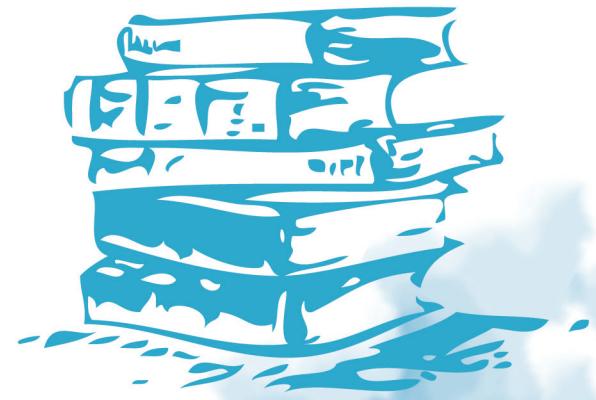
Admiration for traditional values is part and parcel of the population of Ohr Yehuda, as is their connection to the people, the state and Israeli society. Despite all this, Torah study combined with these values is not prevalent in Ohr Yehuda. Most synagogue Rabbis and others who teach Torah preach a concept wherein Torah study is disconnected and irrelevant to the experience of modern Israeli life. At the same time, the general public is moving closer to a world foreign to its natural values. The Torah classes in our study hall, which we provide to both young and old, aim to have these people to experience as relevant and meaningful to their lives. We work to fuse Torah study with the values which connect, accept, and respect all people as they are.

Torah

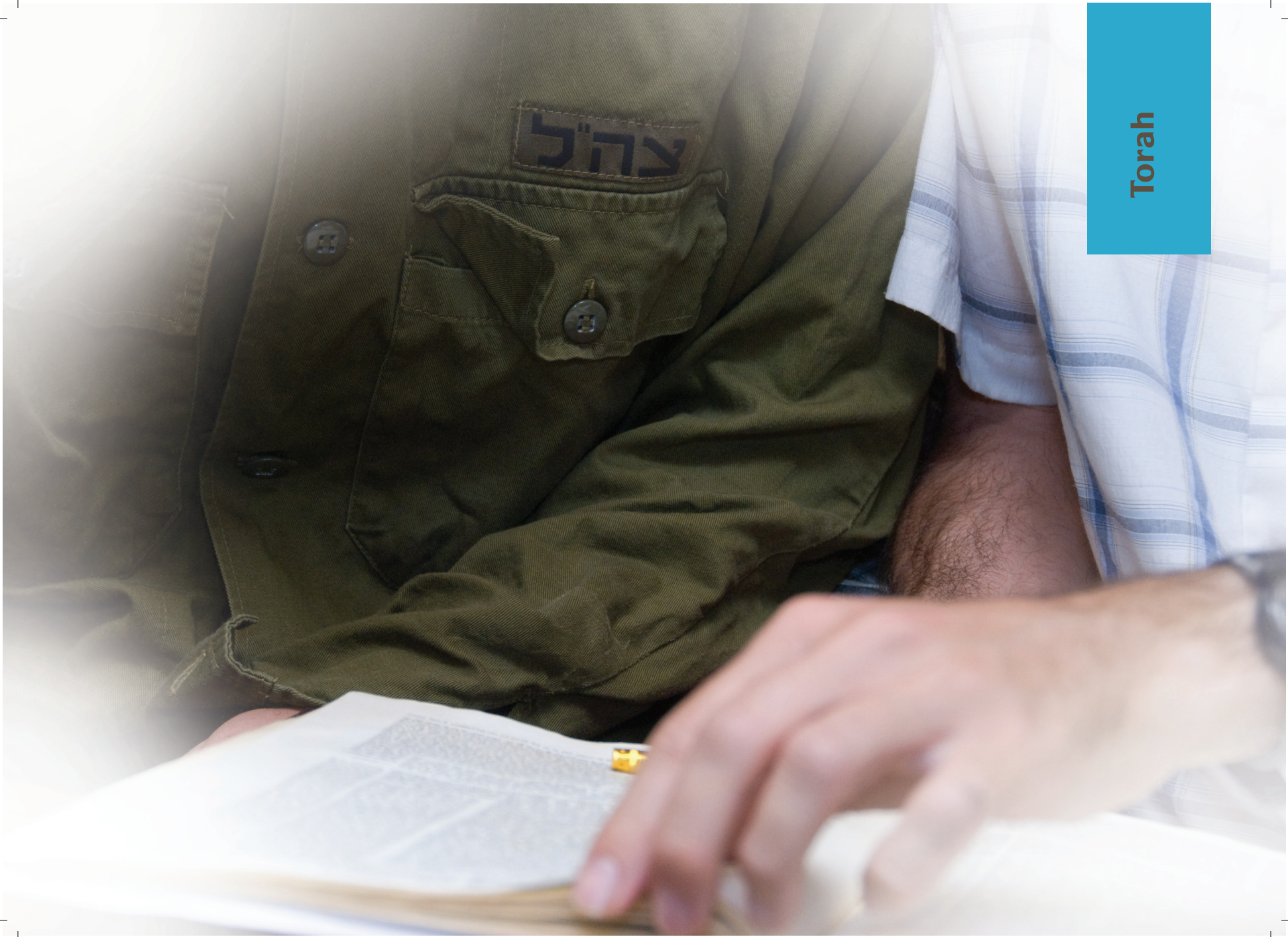


Adult Beit Midrash

In this community program, people convene for intense Torah study 3 evenings weekly. The learning includes both Torah lessons and group study. Once a month, there is a special event in which respected Rabbinical figures participate. The staff of the Beit Midrash include the head, Rabbi Ofir Shwartzbaum, and 5 young Torah scholars. These men both teach as well as provide the basic foundation of the Beit Midrash.

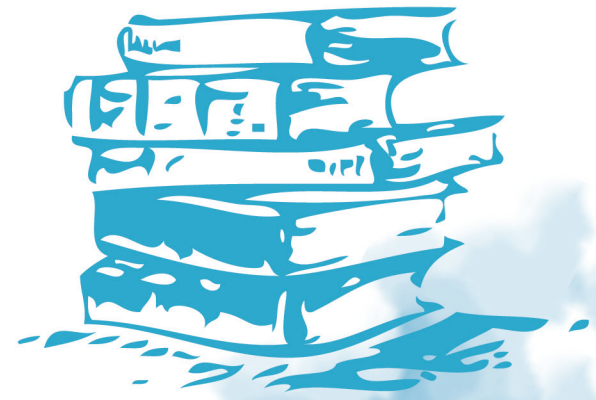


Torah



Beit Midrash/study hall for women

The Beit Midrash for women functions one morning a week for 4 hours, and one evening each week for 2 hours. The target group for this program are married and single women of Ohr Yehuda who are interested in deepening their Torah knowledge, which enhances and enlivens the reality of their daily lives. The study for women includes workshops, lessons, and time for individual learning with partners. There are also special community events which include “Rosh Chodesh” gatherings, the separation of Challah, etc...The staff of the Beit Midrash include Rabbaniyot, lecturers and volunteers.

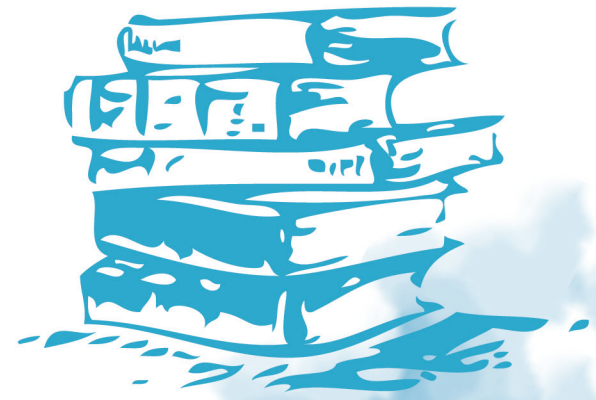


Torah



Talmud Torah for children

This program runs 3 afternoons weekly for an hour and a half each time. The Talmud Torah serves children from grades 1-4, who are divided into 2 study groups. Staff members include an educational director and 2 experienced Talmud Torah teachers. There is also a Saturday night program for mutual study between parents and their children.



Torah



Jewish Identity

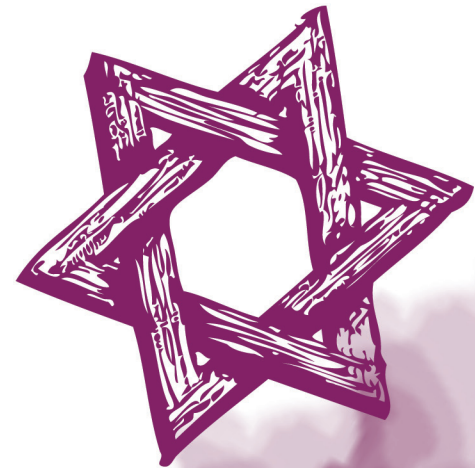
There are junctures in the life of every Jew in which he/she encounters the religious world. This may be in honor of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a bride and groom in preparation for their wedding, or during times of holiday celebration. At these junctures, they and their families, possibly for the first time, encounter the synagogue, Rabbinical institutions, and people who observe Torah and Mitzvot. We attach great importance that these meetings be positive and inviting experiences. The encounter should leave a “sweet taste”, associating these people with the Tradition, as something alive and relevant to their lives.

Jewish Identity



Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Members of the GT prepare children for their Bar Mitzvot. The preparation consists of teaching the boys what to do when they are called up to the Torah, including reading from the Torah. Putting on Tefilin and basic Jewish concepts, which revolve around the maturation of the child are also addressed. In the near future, we plan to run 8 workshop sessions for mothers and daughters around the topic of Bat Mitzvah. These meetings will include creative study pertaining to the feminine figures throughout Jewish History. At the conclusion, a moving synagogue ceremony, together with the girls and their families is planned.

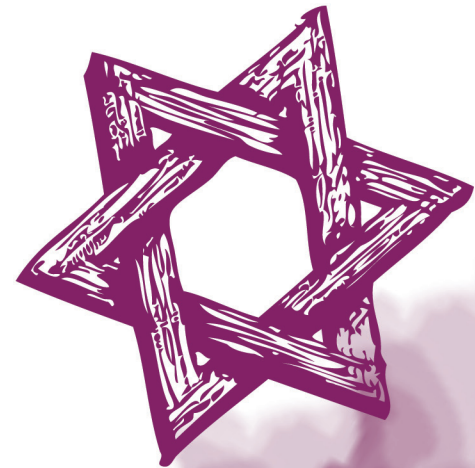


Jewish Identity



Jewish Identity Center/"Or Yehudi"-Jewish Light

The center includes a coordinator and 4 National Service girls who prepare experiential and special lessons dealing with the Jewish calendar. These activities are held in the schools and after-school programs, wherein the children are taught about the holidays and special national Jewish events. Hundreds of children participate in each lesson as they learn about the Jewish Holidays in an enjoyable and lively manner.





Jewish Identity

Cultural Activities around the Jewish Calendar

Ohr Yehuda is comprised of a very varied population with different lifestyles. But that which unites us is our connection to the Jewish People and to the values that are unique to us as a nation. Through the communal cultural activities, we strive to create a bridge between the different segments of the population. Jewish History and Tradition is that which unites all. Via events for the children and youth, and discussions and studies for the adults, we strive to form a bond between the different streams of the local population. Prior to the Holidays and special days which come up on the Jewish calendar, a festive event is planned and opened up to the general public. The content of the events fit the topics of the Holidays and the current issues at hand. There are activities for the children, such as a “Happening”, crafts fair, playground activities, and more. There are also activities for adults in the form of joint study and discussion. The GT, community, and National Service girls work together planning and carrying out the activities. Hundreds of thousands of Ohr Yehuda residents participate in these annual events.

Jewish Calendar







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