

# OHR CHADASH RELIGIOUS SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK



Rabbi Dr. Boaz Tomsky  
Director of Education and Youth Engagement

Rabbi Manes Kogan  
Hillcrest Jewish Center

Rabbi David Wise  
Hollis Hills Bayside  
Jewish Center



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A new school year is beginning filled with dynamic and creative programs, engaging texts and creative learning. This school year Ohr Chadash promises to be an exciting time for all of us as we implement a new vision for the school.

Ohr Chadash is transforming itself! After many months of planning, we are launching a new Ohr Chadash for the school year 2019-2020. Under the leadership of our Director of Education and Youth Engagement, Rabbi Dr. Boaz Tomskey, we are starting an exciting new program to enrich the Jewish life and learning opportunities of all our students.

The school will now meet **on Sunday mornings from 9 AM to 12:30 PM for all ages**, from Pre-K to Teens. We will begin the day with a program for the entire school which will include Havdalah, songs, learning about the Torah portion of the week and much more. The rest of the day will be divided by subjects and each age group will rotate in four major subjects: Tanach (Bible), Jewish Holidays, Jewish History and Hebrew Language.

A second and important component of the “new” Ohr Chadash vision is **Independent Experiential Synagogue Programing**. One of the major changes being incorporated into the new model is that each one of the three partner synagogues will hold a number of events during the year for Ohr Chadash students and their families. Each synagogue has appointed a Mashpiah (leader) to engage with the Ohr Chadash families.

To succeed in our endeavor, we need your help. We would like to encourage you to be as active and supportive as possible in your children's Jewish education. The more involved you become both at home and by attending the individual synagogue programs, the more meaningful you and your children's experience can be. Here are just a few ways in which you can get more involved at the Religious School:

- Join and support our Parent's Association
- Participate in our Parent Group and join us for meetings throughout the school year
- Encourage your child to attend Youth Shabbat Services/Junior Congregation
- Attend the Family Experiential Programs at one of our partner synagogues

This handbook serves as a basic guide to our school. We hope you will read the handbook and learn about the new vision for Ohr Chadash. The information in this handbook should answer many of your questions about our philosophy, goals and academic program. Please keep it and use it as a reference throughout the year.

We look forward to working closely with you and your family. Please feel free to contact me throughout the school year with any thoughts, suggestions or concerns you may have. A successful year for everyone!

B'Shalom,  
Rabbi Dr. Boaz Tomskey, Director of Education and Youth Engagement

## EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES FOR STUDENTS

Ohr Chadash Religious School endeavors to nurture the child in the context of the family and the community. The goal of this new model is a religious school that your children will eagerly look forward to attending, not just this year, but in the years ahead as well. We will endeavor to inspire curiosity and love of learning in all our students.

### Educational Objectives:

- The ability to read Hebrew print.
- The ability to be comfortable using the Siddur (prayer book) on Shabbat and holidays. This includes vocabulary that reflects important concepts in prayer and holidays.
- A basic knowledge of the structure and meaning of the service.
- Knowledge of selected Shabbat and holiday prayers.
- An understanding of the observance of Shabbat and holidays and their meanings.
- An understanding of the observance of mitzvot and Jewish values.
- The development of positive ethnic and religious identification.
- A commitment to "Kol Yisrael Aravim Zeh La'zeh": all Jews are responsible for one another.
- An understanding of stories and key historical figures from the Tanach, the Torah, Neviim (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings).
- The ability to identify various laws with their correct moral behaviors.
- Knowledge of various time periods throughout Jewish history.

### Upon completion of Religious School, we desire that our students believe:

- In God, in some way that is constructive.
- In the Bible as a source of wisdom and guidance for living.
- In themselves as proud Jews.
- In Prayer as a source of personal comfort and community connection.
- In Mitzvot (commandments) as an ethical and rational way of life.
- In the centrality of the State of Israel.
- In Shabbat as a positive personal and family institution.
- In the value of Tzedakah (sacred giving).
- In the Holidays as a way to identify and connect to the past.
- In the Home and the Family as a primary focus of Jewish expression.
- In our tradition as an expression of Jewish identity.

# Academic Program

Our new curriculum for ALL grades is outlined below and will include four subject components for each grade using age appropriate materials. The main subjects are Tanach (Bible), History, Holidays and Hebrew Language. All classes will meet on Sunday mornings from 9 AM-12:30 PM. The curriculum for each class is outlined below.

There will also be a **Weekly Opening Session** for all ages during the first half hour of every Sunday Classroom Session. In addition to our Director Rabbi Tomsy, we will be privileged to have Rabbis Kogan and Rabbi Wise on a rotating basis participate in the opening session.

Activities will include Shabbat and Holiday songs, learning Tefilah (Prayers), reviewing the weekly Torah portion, introducing upcoming holidays and discussing meaningful Jewish current events. There will be many golden opportunities for our students to earn points in our soon to be famous "613 Mitzvah Club".

The specific curriculum in each class grade level will be different for each subject insuring that every year our students can look forward to learning new material the following year while building on past learning.

## Garinim (Seeds) Pre K and K

The Pre K and K students will be combined and led by a warm, loving, caring and enthusiastic teacher. Torah stories, Shabbat and Holiday learning, Blessings, songs and arts and crafts will all be a focus of this class.

- **Mitzvah Program – Kivud Zkenim and Kivud Horim – Honoring the Elders and Parents**

## Kochavim (Stars) Grades 1 and 2

- **Tanach (Bible)** The first and second graders will study **Genesis Tales (The beginning of the world and the beginning of our people)**. Using age appropriate materials the children will explore creation, the flood, the journey of Abraham through the story of Jacob.
- **History (From King David to the Romans)**  
The students will study the Kingdom of the unified Israel, the stories of King David and King Solomon through the destruction and reconstruction of the Temple to the destruction of Jerusalem.
- **Holidays**  
The class will learn songs and the meaning behind symbols, the different name of each holiday in the Jewish tradition, as well as stories.
- **Hebrew**
- **Mitzvah Program – Tzedakah – Charity**

## Chalutzim (Pioneers) Grades 3 and 4

- **Tanach (Bible)** The end of Genesis and the Book of Exodus (from slaves to a free nation)  
The children will study the Joseph story, the birth and journey of Moses in Egypt, the Passover story, the Ten Commandments, through the story of the Golden Calf.
- **History (From the Romans to the Talmud)**

The class will learn about the Sanhedrin, stories of the first rabbis, stories of Hillel and Shammai, Rabbi Akiva, the redaction of the Mishnah, and the stories of the rabbis of the Talmud.

➤ **Holidays**

The students will learn songs from the liturgy, stories from the Bible, and the main characters of each holiday when possible.

➤ **Hebrew**

➤ **Mitzvah Program – Achnasat Orchim – Hospitality**

## **Giborim (Heroes) Grades 5 and 6**

➤ **Tanach (Bible) The Book of Numbers (the journeys and stories of the forty years in the desert)**

This class will cover the census of the people of Israel in the wilderness, the concept of the priesthood, the rebellion of Korach, the story of the twelve spies, and the journeys and stops in the desert.

➤ **History – From the Expulsions to the State of Israel**

This class will study the expulsion from Spain, the first Jews in North America, the pogroms in eastern Europe through the Enlightenment, the first aliyot, early Zionism to the main wars of the State of Israel and through to its artistic and social development.

➤ **Holidays**

The students will engage in text based study from the original sources (Biblical and Rabbinic) and learn about the main characters of each holiday when possible.

➤ **Hebrew**

➤ **Mitzvah Program – Bikur Cholim – Visiting the Sick**

## **Chaverim (Friends) 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up**

The new **Chaverim** Program (formerly Geshet) is specifically designed for the oldest students in our religious school and will be under the direction of Rabbi Uriel Romano. The group will spend Sunday mornings studying, discussing and experiencing different Jewish values and practices together with Rabbi Uri. They will also have a special opportunity to meet each week with the Director of Ohr Chadash, Jeff Kelman, to engage in relevant, current discussion topics. Some of the areas this group will examine on Sunday mornings with Rabbi Uri are:

- Davening (Prayer): Developing skills to be able to lead the Morning Service. We will start every morning praying together and exploring the Torah portion of the week.
  - Tanach (Bible): Learning about the stories of the Bible that are usually forgotten. This year we will focus on the teachings and drama from the Books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel.
  - Chagim (Holidays): Learning about the Holidays of the Jewish Calendar from the original Rabbinical and Biblical sources and modern debates about the holiday and their meaning.
  - Machloket (Jewish Debate): Discussing modern and actual dilemmas from the Jewish sources.
  - 613 Mitzvot: Studying “all the Mitzvot” from the first one to the last one, one by one.
  - News Cycle: Reviewing the latest news in the Jewish world, antisemitism and the State of Israel.
- **Mitzvah Program – Kivud HaMet – Honoring the Deceased**

## Independent Experiential Synagogue Programing



The second component of the “new” Ohr Chadash is the "experiential" part of this new model. Each of our three Synagogues has hired a "Mashpiah" (Leader), who will create and develop approximately fifteen different exciting, meaningful and fun programs, in each synagogue, related to Shabbat and holidays, customs and traditions and other forms of enrichment. All students and families will be welcome to attend any/all programs in every synagogue. Children will be encouraged to attend youth services/junior congregation as often as possible. In this way, we will be providing an excellent framework for both students and families to "experience" what is being learned in the classroom. Families may attend events at all three synagogues if they wish.

Details about these programs will be announced throughout the year.

## PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Parents are encouraged to become acquainted with the school curriculum, your child's teachers and the many programs offered by Ohr Chadash Religious School through both formal and informal means of communication. Please do not hesitate to contact the Director should you have any questions or concerns.

To facilitate open lines of communication, check your email, the Ohr Chadash website ([Ohrchadashqueens.org](http://Ohrchadashqueens.org)) and the Ohr Chadash Facebook page.

We strongly encourage parents and children to share at home the Jewish traditions that we teach in school and to share with us your special customs and skills. Please feel free to ask the staff for help with any aspect of Jewish life, and please let us know if you would like to contribute to the school program.

Please check your child's book bag or folder after each session. There may be an important notice in it for you to read. Encourage your child to talk about what he/she has learned in school that day. When a child senses that his/her work is important and that a parent is interested, he/she will take it more seriously and be more enthusiastic about religious school.

Although children are permitted to have cell phones, they must be kept on vibrate and are not to be used for texting or calling during school hours. Phones will be confiscated until the end of the class and returned to a parent or an adult.

To keep parents informed of the progress of their children, our school employs a multifaceted approach. Twice a year (approximately the last week in January and at the end of the school year) formal reports of the student's progress are sent home. In addition, parents are encouraged to meet with their child's teacher mid-year for parent-teacher conferences.

## EMAIL

**Each week** our families will receive a weekly e-mail from our religious school with reminders of our upcoming programs. In addition, we will send program notifications and various classroom communications from the teachers via e-mail. **Each month** families will receive a summary of what students are learning in the classroom. If a parent would like to meet with their child's teacher any time during the school year, please contact the Director to schedule a meeting.

# SCHOOL POLICIES

## Arrival and Dismissal

Classes take place on Sunday morning from 9 AM -12:30 PM. Please have your child in school five (5) minutes prior to the beginning of each class so that classes can begin in a timely manner and disruptions in learning can be minimized. Similarly, please return to pick up your child five (5) minutes before the conclusion of classes to assure that all children can be dismissed on time and in a safe manner. All dismissals are to take place from the lobby of the school building so that we can be sure that all children are picked up by the appropriate parent or carpool.

Parents are not to wait outside the classrooms or in the hallway, as it may disrupt the class. A staff member will be waiting with the students in the lobby until everyone in the class is picked up.

**Please be courteous and be on time for drop-offs and pick-ups.**

**At Hillcrest Jewish Center**, all drop-offs and pick-ups are at the Union Turnpike entrance by the bench.

**At Hollis Hills Bayside Jewish Center**, all drop-offs and pick-ups will be at the 211 Street doors.

**At Israel Center of Conservative Judaism**, all drop-offs and pick-ups are at the 168 Street entrance.

Classes meet on a rotational basis for each half of the school year in the three participating synagogues.

## Code of Conduct

The Ohr Chadash Religious School is a place that promotes respect and responsibility in a safe learning and teaching environment. It is the expectation of the School that all students will strive to maintain a high level of respect for their peers, teachers and for each synagogue.

### **Guiding Principles**

- All participants including teachers, parents and students are included in this Code of Conduct.
- All members of the community are to be treated with respect, especially persons in roles of authority (i.e. Rabbi, Cantor, Director of Education and Engagement, and Teacher).
- All students in the School are to follow the policies set forth by the Ohr Chadash joint Board of Education.
- All school parents shall review these policies found in the Parent Handbook with their children.
- If students do not adhere to this Code of Conduct, appropriate disciplinary measures will follow.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Director of Engagement and Education, under the direction of the joint Board of Education, shall take a leadership role in the daily operations of the school.
- Religious school faculty members under the supervision of the Director of Engagement and Education shall maintain order in the classroom. They are expected to follow the standards of the school. Teachers shall help all students work to their full potential.
- Students are to be treated with respect by the members of the faculty. In return, they are to demonstrate appropriate behavior at all times and follow the standards set by the joint Board of Education, the Director of Engagement and Education and teacher.
- Parents play an important role in the education of their children. They have the responsibility to support the efforts of the school staff. It is also the hope of the school that parents will join in the Jewish education of their children and support their learning. They are also responsible for reviewing the standards of the school with their children.

## **Religious School Discipline Policy**

The Board of Education and staff at the Ohr Chadash Religious School work with parents and education professionals to provide a productive and safe learning environment for all of our students. Students and teachers are expected to behave in a way that exemplifies the concept of “Derech Eretz,” proper respect. On rare occasions, however, a student makes it difficult or impossible for the teacher to lead the class and for the other children to learn, or otherwise behaves in a manner that is not consistent with the exemplification of “Derech Eretz” towards our teachers, administrators, school, institution, building or facilities. Our discipline policy is intended to be implemented only in those unusual circumstances where a child will not adjust his or her behavior to the requirements and safety standards of the Religious School.

1. In the event a student is disruptive in class, which shall constitute behavior which, in the opinion of the teacher, is detrimental to the respectful work environment in the classroom, the teacher will speak directly to the student. In the event that the student continues to act in an inappropriate or disruptive manner after having been spoken to previously, the teacher shall alert the Education Director. The Education Director shall immediately notify the student’s parent or guardian to discuss the behavior. The parent is strongly encouraged to speak with his or her child regarding this incident.

Upon notification that a student’s behavior has been disruptive for the third time, the Education Director will require a meeting among the parent, student, teacher and Education Director and, if the parent so requests, with a Rabbi. The purpose of the meeting will be to determine appropriate measures to correct the disruptive behavior. The student shall not be allowed to return to school until the meeting has taken place and a solution acceptable to the Education Director is determined.

If the student is allowed to return to school and exhibits disruptive behavior for a fourth time, the student shall be suspended.

While suspended, and reflecting on the overall school experience, the student may choose to work with the Education Director on a specific project that would enrich his/her Jewish education. The length of suspension shall be no fewer than two weeks from the date of suspension. If/when the student returns, it is anticipated that he/she will make every effort to learn the material covered during the suspension.

Upon return from suspension, if a student exhibits disruptive behavior for a fifth time, the student shall be suspended for the remainder of the school year. The student may return the following year. Tuition will NOT be refunded for any portion of the school year for which a student was suspended.

2. If a student exhibits any other form of behavior deemed disruptive in the sole discretion of the Education Director while attending Religious School, including (without limitation) defacing school property, acting disrespectfully to teachers, administrators or any staff member, etc., such student shall be subject to such disciplinary action as the Education Director shall deem appropriate.
3. If a child has acted in any way that the Educational Director or Rabbi feels is dangerous or poses a safety risk to the children in the school, his or herself, the school staff, the staff or any aspect of the school environment, immediate suspension will be imposed. The length of suspension and whether the student shall be allowed to return to school will be at the sole discretion of the Education Director.

Generally, the Board of Education discipline policy shall not affect any student's ability to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at one of the partner synagogues; however, all Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates are always subject to the discretion of the Rabbi.

Parents/guardians of any student who is suspended may meet with the appropriate Rabbi to discuss alternatives in their child's Jewish education.

### **Dress Code**

Parents should keep in mind that classes meet in a religious institution and students should be dressed appropriately. An important consideration is that students wear clean, comfortable clothes. Boys are required to wear a **kippah** in the synagogue building and girls are encouraged to do so.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

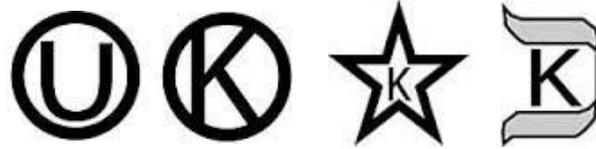
Should it become necessary to cancel Religious School classes due to inclement weather the procedures below will be followed:

An email will also be sent to each family and it will be posted on our Facebook page [Ohr Chadash Religious School Queens](#)

If you are unsure whether classes are canceled please call the director: **Rabbi Tomsky at 347-628-7494** before you send your child to school.

### **Snacks**

All students may bring their own snacks (fresh fruit, fresh vegetables or a packaged snack with a **proper Kosher Certification**) from home to eat during break time. We will also have kosher snacks available for sale. Appropriate certification on the labels to indicate Kashrut may be:



All food brought into school must be either dairy or pareve. If you are uncertain about the kashrut of a particular food item, please contact one of our three rabbis.

No glass bottles are permitted. **At no time may students chew gum during classes.** If your child has food allergies, please alert either the Director or your child's teacher.

### **Tzedakah**

Each session students are encouraged to bring money for tzedakah. While the amount collected is not important, learning the habit of regular giving is crucial. Tzedakah is collected on each day school is in session. A relevant organization will be chosen for the upcoming year and announced to the students in September.

### **Safety**

Fire and lockdown drills may be performed periodically throughout the school year for the safety of the children. Parents will be notified in advance of any drills and notified upon completion. Each synagogue has an emergency procedure in place.

### **Visitors**

If any person would like to visit our school, please schedule a visit with our Educational Director.

### **Homework**

We recognize the existence of public school work and outside activities that take up much of your child's free time. The purpose of homework is to challenge our students as well as to keep concepts fresh in their minds. It is necessary to assign a limited amount of homework. We also would like to ask you to encourage students in 2nd grade through 6th grade to practice their reading, as practice strengthens their reading skill. We would be happy to provide you with material so that your child could also practice at home. This material would not involve a parent to know Hebrew. It would just involve time and focus for your child.

### **Books and Supplies**

Students are always required to bring pens, pencils, and notebooks as required by the teacher. Children are encouraged to bring their own personal kippot to religious school. Please double check that your child is equipped with these materials before leaving the house.

## **Parents' Association**

The PA is an exciting and crucial asset of Ohr Chadash. Not only does the PA provide important services for our students and faculty, it also provides a vehicle for parent involvement in the school and synagogue. Our PA seeks to build a sense of community and helps to enrich and strengthen family life. The Parents Association of Ohr Chadash is really a family membership of parents, grandparents and guardians, whose focus is to support the school with the primary goal of further enriching the student's total Jewish experience. Activities will include various holiday promotions and gift packages, snacks, and more. They contribute to bi-annual teacher recognition, special programs and other needs in coordination with our Director. Additionally, the PA supports Mitzvah projects such as putting together Shabbat bags, letter writing, donating toys, emergency relief projects, coats, costumes and food collection drives and more. Volunteers from our group also help with school activities as directed by the director and staff. We encourage all parents and guardians to participate in our periodic meetings, bring new ideas, and offer any level of help you can.