



Applied Research Institute Jerusalem ARIJ - 2015

The Settlement of Tekoa



~"Love your neighbor as yourself"
Leviticus 19:18

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Location and Physical Characteristics

Tekoa is an Israeli settlement in the Gush Etzion region within the Northern Judean Hills of the West Bank, situated on a mountainous ridge 675 meters above seal level, on the edge of the Judean desert.¹ Sitting adjacent to the historical monument of Herodion, one of the most sacred, Biblical, archeological sites, Tekoa is home to ancient ground.

Tekoa Settlement						
Population	Established	Settlement Type	Population Type	Side of Barrier	Area	Private Palestini an Land
1.596	1977	Ideological	Mixed (National. Religious. Secular)	East of Barrier	338 acres or 1070 dunum	36 acres

(Source: Americans for Peace Now. 2011)²

Established in 1975 as a Nahal Military Outpost and later appropriated for civilian inhabitation through the Labor Party under the leadership of Shimon Peres in 1977, Tekoa has since become a model for coexistence—a heterogeneous, healthy, mixed community of residents from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and social strata.³ The settlement was founded by a core group of secular, Russian immigrants from the former Soviet Union seeking to build a community of co-existence, and later expanded and has since successfully absorbed immigrants from all over the world.⁴ Numerous studies have been conducted documenting the success of the Tekoan social experiment that brings together religious and secular value systems, a rare emprise in comparison with neighboring Israeli settlements which conform to a more isolated, outlined set of a principles and accepted lifestyles and cater to a specific sect of people.⁵ From those who choose to experience full observance of Shabbat to those who do not, Tekoa prides itself on emanating qualities of ethnic and religious tolerance and harmony. According to One Land Fund, “the neighborhood reflects the diversity of the Jewish people - from fully-observant Orthodox to totally secular; new immigrants from the world over blending with Israelis; singles, young families, and grandparents; professionals from academics and high tech to organic farmers; a rich and beautiful Jewish tapestry in the heart of the Jewish homeland.”⁶ A tight knit society divided into six distinct neighborhoods, Tekoa hosts approximately 600 families and is expanding.⁷

Temperature and Climate

Tekoa Settlement					
No.	Locality	Temperature in C	Humidity in %	Rainfall in MM	Elevation in Meters
1	Tekoa	17.21	60.23	396.57	656

(Source: The Geographical Information Systems Unit (GIS) –ARIJ 2011)

¹ “Tekoah.” *Israel Real Estate Index-- InterNadlan Ltd.* 1997. <http://www.ravkooktorah.org/yesha/tekoa.htm>

² “Facts on the Ground.” *Americans for Peace Now.* 2011. <http://map.peacenow.org>

³ Eli Birnbaum. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011.

⁴ Eli Birnbaum. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. July 5th. 2011.

⁵ Simkovitz. Shani and Laura Ben David. “Tekoa.” *One Israel Fund.*

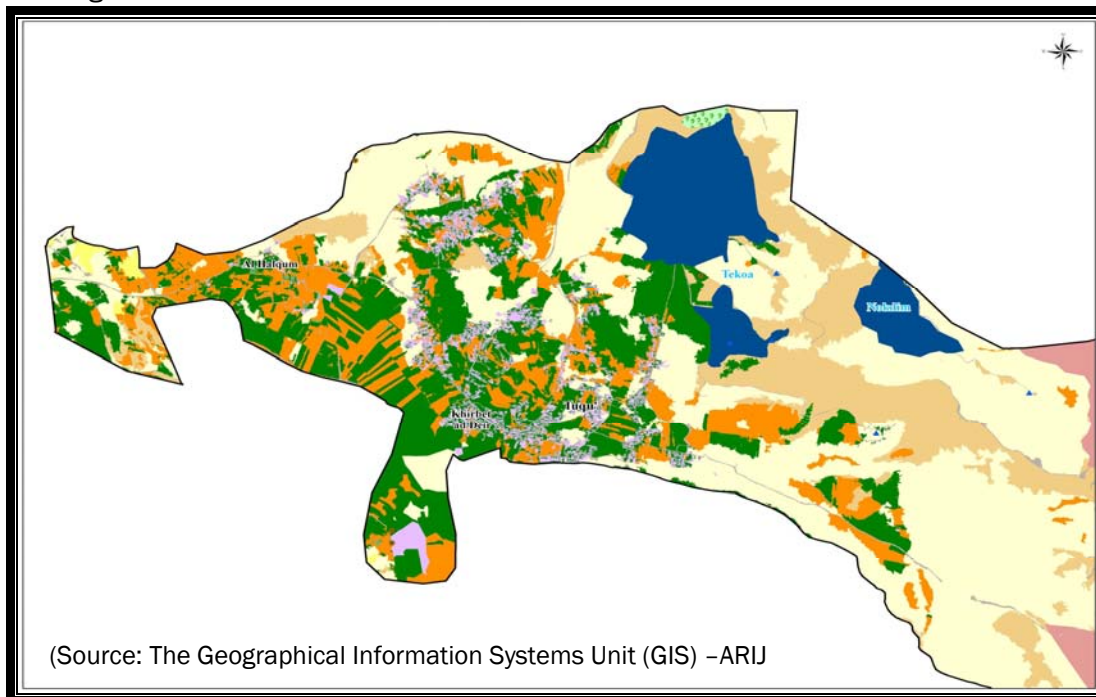
<http://www.oneisraelfund.org/articles.asp?cmd=viewarticle&id=21>

⁶ Simkovitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. “Welcome to Tekoa-Who Lives in Tekoa?” *Gush Etzion Regional Council.*

<http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

⁷ Ibid.

Tekoa enjoys a Mediterranean climate slightly warmer than Jerusalem.⁸ Typical Mediterranean winters range from sixty to forty degrees Fahrenheit during the day with blustery winds and rain in the evening, sometimes reaching below zero.⁹ The rare blanket of snow is an occasion. Summers days are hot, dry, and without humidity while residents enjoy cool mountain breezes during the evenings.¹⁰



(Source: Tekoa Photo Album)¹¹

Administration

Tekoa is within the municipal jurisdiction of the Gush Etzion Regional Council, which is located in Alon Shvut, approximately fifteen minutes away.¹² Since its inception, Tekoa has been locally administered through the community's governing board, the Vaad Menahel, by five volunteers and the town manager in charge of overall management and policy.¹³ The Town manager, appointed by the Vaad Menahel, is in charge of maintenance and administering staff; this is a paid position.¹⁴

⁸ Ibid. "Location and Climate." p. 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Tekoa Photo Album." Tekoa. <http://tekoa.org.il/index-old1.htm>

¹² S. Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Regional Municipality" *The Gush Etzion Regional Council*. p. 8. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

¹³ Eli Birnbuam. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. July 5th. 2011.

¹⁴ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

The volunteers who sit on the town council are not involved in running the town but help give voice to the desires of the local population in regards to future internal decisions, discussing problems that arise.¹⁵ Each volunteer sits on the town council for two-three years and meet once a week, excepting the summer where they meet once every two weeks.¹⁶

The community infrastructure is jointly owned and managed through regular town meetings, conducted periodically to decide on issues brought up by community members.¹⁷ Accepted Tekoa members are entitled to vote. Multiple committees exist within the community to address education, culture, security, environment, tzdakah, synagogues, and building; there is even a street name committee dedicated to creating innovative, meaningful street names with religious or symbolic significance to the community.¹⁸ The cultural committee, for example, puts on concerts, plays, and summer programs for both religious and secular sects of the community. Each committee is elected annually, with some overlap.¹⁹ Moreover, the following are official committees which are under the legal authorization of the Ministry of Interior and Treasury Affairs which, by law, the town council is obligated to oversee:²⁰

The Administrative Committee: comprised of five volunteers who are elected by members of the Tekoa community.²¹ This committee addresses the various issues brought up by town members, also known as the “auditing committee.”²²

The Absorption Committee: comprised of three to four volunteers whose duties consist of interviewing, accepting, and processing new candidates to live in Tekoa.²³ The absorption committee process is the following: if approved, candidates are initially accepted as a temporary member for one to two years; then, the candidates are voted on as full members, entitling them to full fiscal responsibilities as new residents.²⁴ There is a contract which is signed, stating the official legal laws of the community that new members must abide by. Even future spouses from outside of the community must undergo approval by the committee. Thereafter, the “welcome wagon committee” takes over, and is in charge of assisting families and helping them acclimate to life within the community, staging events to introduce newcomers to veteran families.²⁵ One resident expresses the fact that there is “no kind of mayflower complex;” newcomers are readily embraced, welcomed, and integrated into the community.²⁶

The Supervision Committee: supervises the budget, laws, and management of the community.²⁷ This committee has the authority to suggest and propose changes which are presented to the community at large; a meeting thereafter goes into effect and an election and vote would then take place to make the necessary changes. In order to best determine the needs, local capacity, and practices of the community, a meeting by the administration committee or a public meeting is usually undertaken.²⁸ The official, legal laws of the community of Tekoa are monitored, administered, and implemented by the supervising committee and the other official governing bodies of the community together with a legal advisor.²⁹

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ S. Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. “Regional Municipality” *The Gush Etzion Regional Council*. p. 8. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Shani Simkowitz. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. July 15. 2011.

²¹ Eli Birnbaum. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. June 28. 2011

²² Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Shani Simkowitz “Questionnaire.” July 15. 2011

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

The town council encourages new members to become active members, and participate in community decision making and committee responsibilities.³⁰

One challenge for the Absorption Committee has been finding families who are financially stable, and who can pay for their mortgage. There have been many instances where the community as a whole has had to help struggling families pay off loans or taxes which creates a financial burden. For example, 10% of the community residents do not pay taxes; therefore, the budget of the community is subsequently altered to adjust to these challenges. Every year, families go in front of the committee to ask to be relieved of obligation to pay taxes. Sometimes families are exempt; other times, there are tax reductions which take place. There were four cases recently where individuals applied to reduce taxes—the committee must decide how much percentage should be allocated from the budget. The question then arises by the town council: to what extent should the community allow itself to be generous to families with financial problems?³¹

Taxation

Within the settlement of Tekoa, national, regional, and local taxes are paid. Examples of national taxes are income tax or national health insurance taxation. Local tax covers areas such as upkeep of parks, investment in local mushroom farm or industrial areas, building investments, swimming pool, guard duty, (jeeps. cars. maintenance of fences) and water for gardeners such as watering grass in parks.³² Regional Taxes include taxes such as collection of garbage and upkeep of lights.³³ There is also an additional tax paid for the settlement movement to help pay for media and propaganda related material to encourage migration to the West Bank.³⁴

Electricity: The locality is supplied with electricity by the Israel Electric Company; in the early years of development, electricity was supplied by the East Jerusalem Electric Company.³⁵

Water: Water is supplied by the Israel National Water Carrier; originally, the main source of water was drilled from the Herodion area. The Gush Etzion Regional Council collects the water bill of the community as a whole; however, each family is dictated a consumption rate dependent upon the number of people within the household. If this rate is exceeded, then the rate progressively becomes more expensive, and the overall bill of the community is then increased because of excessive use. ³⁶

Housing: During the early years of establishment, there were many debates regarding administration of building within the community. Originally, each family lived in small prefab houses of approximately 40 sq. meters.³⁷ In the early stages of development, Tekoa was not allowed to build for the first few years until it was determined that the land was indeed governmentally owned land. This was a long and complicated legal process; thereafter, Tekoa's lands were vetted by the late Pliah Albeck, deputy solicitor general to the Justice Department.³⁸ Thus far, the residents of Tekoa have not faced any legal challenges from the state of Israel or in the form of court petitions from Arabs, excepting the establishment of outposts.

Prior to expansion, each house was standardized; there was much debate about whether or not families should independently build or be restricted to standard housing designs. The photographs below depict settlement expansion in a distinct area of Tekoa between 1980 and 2010.

³⁰ S. Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Community Governance and Infrastructure" *Gush Etzion Regional Council*. p. 4. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

³¹ Eli Birnbuam. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. July 5th. 2011..

³² Eli Birnbuam. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. July 5th. 2011..

³³ Ibid.

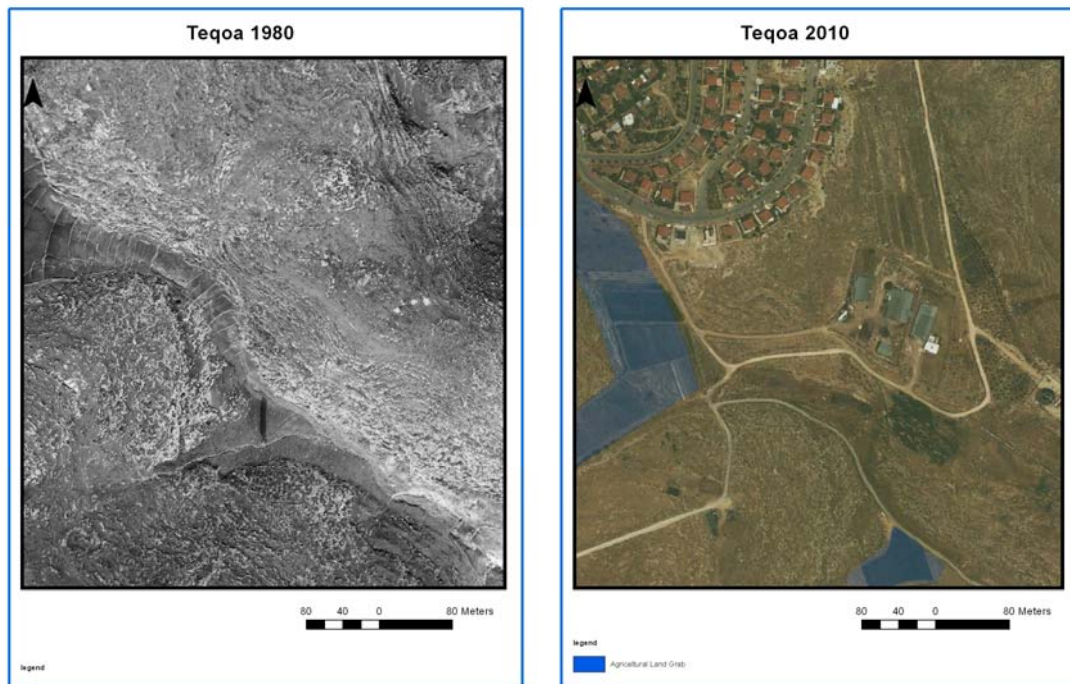
³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Eli Birnbuam. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tue. Jul 5. 2011

³⁸ Amiel Ungar. Email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Wed. Jun 29. 2011



(Source: Photographs by Dror Etkes. provided on July 19th 2011-ARIJ database)

According to Gush Etzion Regional Council, no family technically owns land in Judea and Samaria—the land is owned by the state of Israel. Residents of Tekoa must sign a document stating this fact before the building process begins. There is, therefore, no legal way to buy and register the land. A resident of Tekoa explained that an Israeli can buy land from a Palestinian but there is no way to register it legally.³⁹

Purchasing a plot of land entails a step-by-step process that includes working with an engineer and architect to submit a plan for approval.⁴⁰ The plan is submitted for review and permitting to the Regional Council of the Gush Etzion Engineering Department to approve various facets of construction such as through sewage and electricity assessments. The Civil Defense instigated a new requirement, for example, to mandate that all houses and even apartments have shelter provisions. Upon completion of the process, residents may build.⁴¹ According to Gush Etzion, the process is straightforward to ensure basic building standards.

The average cost for ½ dunum plot of land is approximately 300.000 shekels, minus the actual building costs which correlates directly with house dimensions and features.⁴² The majority of houses are single dwelling houses; in order to build apartments, companies must first go to the regional council for approval to change zoning laws.⁴³

Tekoa is not cheaper at present in terms of land development costs and building; there are places in pre-196 northern and southern Israel that are cheaper. Mortgage rates are only determined by banks and have nothing to do with location. Tekoa originally benefitted from a system that was applied to all parts of Israel; for example, when the community first got started, it received more extensive help and subsidies from the government because it lacked many amenities and services. However, as the community expanded and became more mature, the incentives were reduced and other communities were thereafter given priority status.⁴⁴

³⁹ Eli Birnbaum. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. June 28. 2011

⁴⁰ S. Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Housing" *The Gush Etzion Regional Council*. p. 8. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

⁴¹ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Amiel Ungar. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Wed. Jun 29. 2011.

Current housing prices approximate Jerusalem prices with the exception that it is almost impossible to acquire a vacant plot of land in Jerusalem. The housing crisis in Jerusalem has spurred the growth of satellite communities and Tekoa benefits from this phenomenon; additionally, the new bypass road to Jerusalem has opened many more flexible avenues for expansion.⁴⁵ Before the development of the road, Tekoa was in jeopardy; now, with the new bypass road, individuals have more incentive to move and reside within the settlement which is no longer seen as particularly rural but now a strategic location with many amenities. The reduction of travel time to Jerusalem has boosted the demand for housing in Tekoa.

The homes of Tekoa are marketed by Amana Settlement Movement and the Yakir settlement. Amana is the settlement arm of Gush Emunim and is responsible for developing and expanding over one hundred settlements in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza region.⁴⁶ Families purchasing homes in Tekoa are entitled to special mortgages and loans totally up to \$49,000 dollars.⁴⁷ Of these mortgages and loans, approximately \$14,000 are automatically converted to a grant (forgiven) if the family continues to reside in Tekoa for fifteen years.⁴⁸



(Source: Amana Settlement Movement Website)

Amana Settlement Movement

Amana, the settlement movement of Gush Emunim was established in 1978 with the primary goal of developing communities in Judea, Samaria, The Golan Heights, The Galilee, The Negev, and Gush Katif.⁴⁹ This goal includes not only the establishment of communities and their supportive industries and social services but their continued maintenance and development.⁵⁰

The critical nature of Amana's work lies in insuring a strong, vibrant presence in the only areas which can provide quality living for the inevitable overflow from the crowded Tel Aviv coastal region.⁵¹ This presence is a guiding force in protecting the conditions necessary for a Jewish State.⁵²

Targeted Population

Amana seeks out all those interested in building their lives in one of its communities, regardless of age, country of origin, religious observance or profession.⁵³ Among these residents which can be found native-born Israelis, new and more established immigrants from all over the world, young couples, singles, families, seniors, religious, secular, and haredi.⁵⁴ In fact, Amana has established the forerunner integrated communities of religious and secular families where innovative schools have become models for other educational institutions around the country.⁵⁵

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Tekoah." *Israel Real Estate Index-- InterNadlan Ltd.* 1997. <http://www.ravkooktorah.org/yesha/tekoa.htm>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Tekoah." *Israel Real Estate Index-- InterNadlan Ltd.* 1997. <http://www.ravkooktorah.org/yesha/tekoa.htm>

⁴⁹ "About Us." Amana Settlement Movement. 2011.

<http://www.amana.co.il/Index.asp?CategoryID=101&ArticleID=166>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Most of Amana's communities retain a pastoral nature, limiting the number of families to 200 families to insure their warm family nature.⁵⁶ There are, however, communities ranging in size from 200-1000 families for those seeking such options.⁵⁷



(Source: Amana Settlement Movement Website)

Goals:

Establishing communities –

Drawing up the plans for building communities and securing the necessary political and bureaucratic approval⁵⁸

Organizing groups to found communities –

Matching families with similar geographic and social characteristics to form a founding group of residents⁵⁹

Guiding the founding group toward understanding the financial, social, and organizational frameworks necessary for a healthy community⁶⁰

Overseeing the initial move to the new community and the beginning stages of development⁶¹

Supervising communities –

Supervising all aspects of community life until independent capabilities have been firmly established⁶²

Utilizing decades of experience with governmental bodies and other professionals to form a strong social, organizational and financial foundation in the community⁶³

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "About Us." Amana Settlement Movement.2011.

<http://www.amana.co.il/Index.asp?CategoryID=101&ArticleID=166>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

Absorption of new immigrants –

Encouraging Amana communities to take an active role in the successful integration of immigrants by providing help in developing appropriate facilities, affordable housing, sources of funding, social services specific to absorption needs, and more.⁶⁴

Recruiting new families –

Increasing public awareness regarding the importance and availability of quality living in Amana's communities through advertising, marketing, and disseminating public information⁶⁵

Building homes –

Undertaking building projects in Amana communities with its associate company, "Binyanei Bar Amana," in which modest quality homes are built quickly at reasonable prices⁶⁶

Binyanei Bar Amana

Amana, through its associate company, Binyanei Bar Amana, initiates and carries out quality building projects in Amana communities throughout Israel.⁶⁷

Binyanei Bar Amana has completed over 50 building projects and more than 2000 housing units establishing a reputation for the building of fine homes at reasonable prices and in a timely manner.⁶⁸

Binyanei Bar Amana's typical home is a single-family dwelling built using the most efficient, effective methods and creating the basis for expansion as the family grows and financial resources become available. ⁶⁹

Being an associate company of Amana, the staff at Binyanei Bar Amana has the experience with and knowledge of community villages enabling them to understand the importance of a community and its residents being able to influence the choice of homes being built. ⁷⁰They employ the most reliable construction companies and supervise the entire project from beginning to end.⁷¹

Binyanei Bar Amana's goal is to continue to build homes in Amana's communities and become one of Israel's leading builders, while retaining its impeccable reputation, in order to provide an answer to the demand for available housing.⁷²

[See Section#11 for building development plans]

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "About Us." Amana Settlement Movement.2011. <http://www.amana.co.il/Index.asp?CategoryID=101&ArticleID=166>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

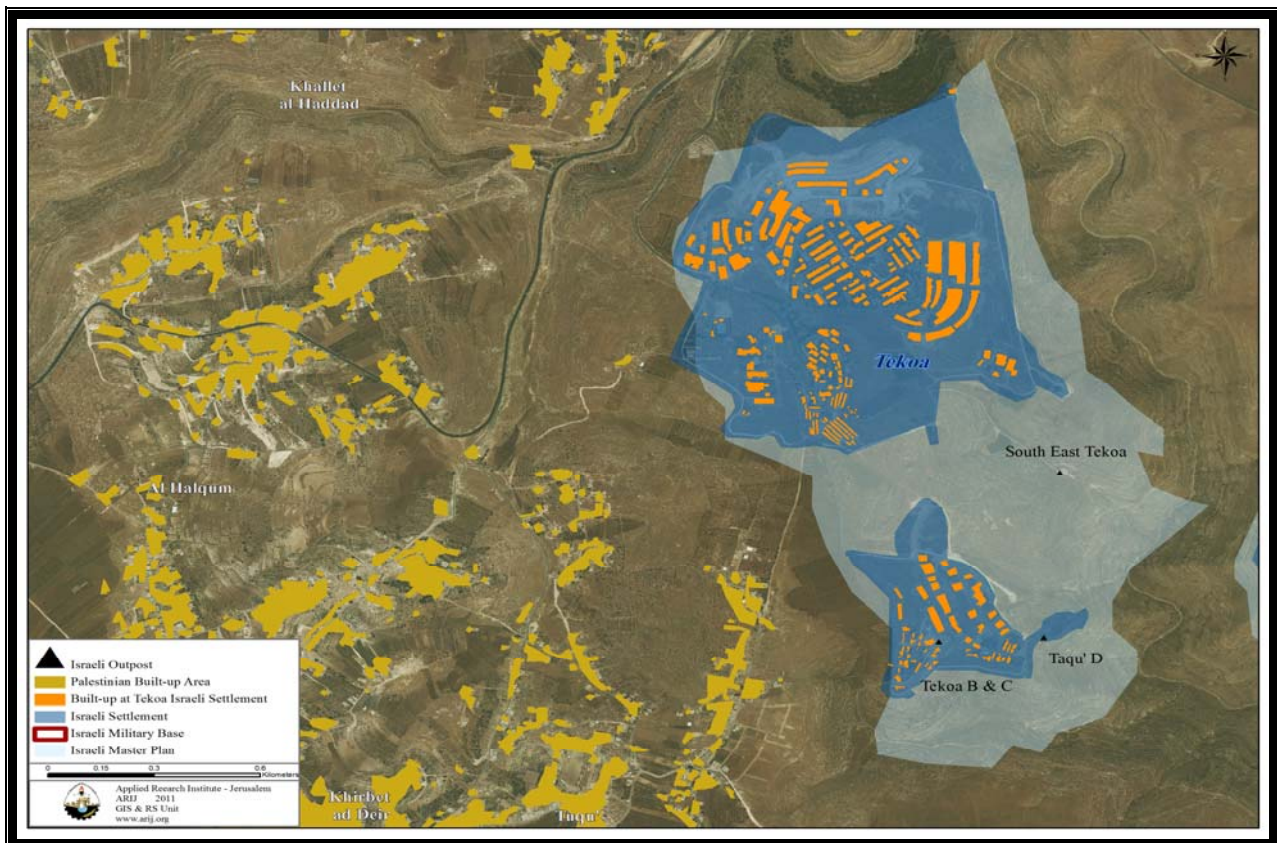
⁷² Ibid.

Outposts

Tekoa					
Mother outpost	No. of Structures	Name outpost	District	Period	State
Tekoa	1	South East Tekoa	Bethlehem	1996 - Feb. 2001	Outpost
Tekoa	26	Taqu' D	Bethlehem	Feb. 2001 - Nov. 2002	Outpost
Tekoa	26	Takoa B & C	Bethlehem	Jan. 2001	Outpost

(Source: Geographical Information Systems Unit (GIS) –ARIJ 2007)

South East Tekoa, Tekoa D, and Tekoa B & C, are three outposts which reside underneath the jurisdiction of the settlement of Tekoa. Israeli outposts, according to the Israeli government and international law, are illegal entities.⁷³ According to the map below, the outposts reside underneath the master plan of the settlement; however, for the residents of Tekoa, the issue lies more so within the establishment of Tekoa D. According to the town council, the dwellings within Tekoa D jurisdiction have not been officially approved by the Israeli political echelon for building and establishment whereas South East Tekoa and Tekoa B & C have been zoned and approved.⁷⁴



(Source: The Geographical Information Systems Unit (GIS) –ARIJ 2011)

⁷³ “Summary of Opinion Concerning Unauthorized Outposts-Tayla Sason. Adv.” 10 March 2005. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Law/Legal+Issues+and+Rulings/Summary+of+Opinion+Concerning+Unauthorized+Outposts+-+Talya+Sason+Adv.htm>

⁷⁴ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011

Built-up Area**133 Dunum**

(Source: The Geographical Information Systems Unit (GIS) –ARIJ 2011)

Area**1070 Dunum****Master Plan Area****1970 Dunum**

Tekoa D outpost is an independent entity, abiding by its own local council and decision making bodies.⁷⁵ Tekoa D has been given some degree of autonomy because it is comprised of the bereaved families from Tekoa following the brutal murders of two teenagers in the area.⁷⁶ The bodies of Ya'acov (Kobi) Mandell and Yosef (Yossi) Ish-Ran, both 14, were discovered inside the Haritun Cave in Nahal Tekoa, a few hundred meters from the community.⁷⁷ Instead of retaliation, these families decided to separate themselves from the community and build in the exact place which overlooks both a popular hiking place as well as the place where the boys died.⁷⁸

When it comes to legal and governmental representation, the settlement of Tekoa is forced to take these outposts under its wing; the actions of these outposts impacts the neighboring settlement's image and draws unnecessary attention to the legality of the settlement from a Tekoan settler perspective. Additionally, there is a representative from Tekoa D which sits on the Absorption Committee to help process any families interested in living in that segment of the community. The construction of these outposts were not sanctioned by the settlement itself to expand the existing settlement infrastructure; rather, those who chose to inhabit the land and build chose to on their own individual claims to the land and with no governmental authority.

If the settlement disagrees with any practices, "push will come to shove." The members of the outposts are entitled to the same rights as those within the community and are represented. For example, a good part of the Tekoa annual budget went to the construction of a paved road to link the outposts to the settlement. The residents of the outposts are hooked up to the same water and electricity. and the settlement contributes resources according to priority need.⁷⁹ The residents of Tekoa support their right to the land; however, there are issues of legality and authorization which must be addressed which has created problems and reflects badly on the settlement as a whole.

To get a feel for the structure of an outpost, PeaceNow has provided information regarding Tekoa B&C and D.⁸⁰ According to PeaceNow, 44 caravans and 15 permanent structures sit in Tekoa B&C. Within the Sasson Report, commissioned by then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2005, there were 12 families and a total of 41 people living in this outpost.⁸¹ The following are a list of types of constructions built in Tekoa D in 2005: 20 caravans (five of which are faced with stone and five of which are in the process of being faced); electricity posts; a generator; a water tower; two hothouses; two containers; a mikve; a cesspool; a garbage bin; wooden light poles; two fuel tanks; two stables; a guard post; two concrete structures under construction. a two-storied wooden shed; a sheep pen. The body which financed the establishment of this settlement was the Ministry of Housing and Construction in the amount of 150.000 NIS.⁸²

⁷⁵ Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

⁷⁶ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

⁷⁷ Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

⁷⁸ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Tekoa B&C" PeaceNow. <http://www.peacenow.org.il/eng/content/tkoa-b-and-c>

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Security

The army is the judicial organ which provides the main sources of security within the region. During the early stages of settlement establishment, Tekoa residents were forced to provide their own security. Each resident would volunteer to sit 1-4 a.m. shifts or 10 to 2 p.m. shifts.⁸³ Later on, through a democratic vote, the community agreed to hire a professional security service in which internal taxes are paid by the community residents. Tekoa has twenty-four hours a day patrol system, ambulance, and a trained rapid response team for any emergency.⁸⁴ There is a guard at the locked gate. In addition, the following security services are provided by the regional defense forces and security department under Gush Etzion:

With the enormous responsibility of safeguarding Gush Etzion's over 55,000 residents, the Security Department works in constant cooperation with the army and the police force to expand and maintain the region's security infrastructure and oversee ongoing security activities and provide comprehensive emergency services.⁸⁵

Despite the uprising that severely augmented our security needs, the government has not been able to make substantial contributions for the numerous emergency requirements that have been thrust upon Gush Etzion. Notwithstanding the difficult economic situation, the increased cost for the stringent security requirements has fallen upon Gush Etzion.

Security Department responsibilities, among them:

- Guarding and providing security systems for schools and public institutions
- Arranging permits and army accompaniment for school trips, visiting groups and other outings
- Overseeing civil guard activities in each community
- Organizing drills of emergency procedures
- Maintaining security communications systems

Building and maintaining a secure environment: In recent years, the Security Department has built and paved 60 km. of security roads, erected more than 76 km. of security fencing, added and renovated bright lighting around communities, and installed electric gates at the entrance to each community.⁸⁶ The Department provides each community with a security jeep, furnished with essential lighting communications and first-aid systems.⁸⁷



(Source: Gush Etzion Regional Council. Regional Rescue. Fire and Trauma Station (La Mizrak))

⁸³Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

⁸⁴S. Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Security" *The Gush Etzion Regional Council*. p. 8. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

⁸⁵"Gush Etzion Security" Gush Etzion Regional Council. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/security.asp>

⁸⁶Ibid

⁸⁷Ibid

Coordinating all emergency services: Gush Etzion`s new Regional Emergency Station, the first of its kind in Israel, brings all emergency services together under one roof. Currently housing a professionally-staffed fire station and two rescue units - one for rescue from automobile accidents or security-related incidents and the other for locating and rescuing hikers in distress in the Judean Desert - the Station will soon become the central dispatcher for the region`s 11 ambulances and mobile intensive care unit. A trauma treatment center will provide the highest quality care in times of emergency, ensuring the fastest, most effective reaction to any crisis. There will also be a central police station for the residents.⁸⁸

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a completely volunteer operation that assists in responding to medical emergencies throughout Gush Etzion. The primary role of the volunteers - trained and certified as EMTs, Paramedics, and MDs - is to provide an immediate response within 2-4 minutes from the onset of an incident: establishing a life-saving bridge of medical care; transmitting vital information to control centers and once the local ambulance service arrives, working alongside its crew to enable a swift transfer to hospital.⁸⁹

Arms control is a very stringent process; the gun is a necessary evil for defense and not something the community of Tekoa uses to flaunt or use for the purposes of intimidation. People who have used firearms in self-defense have to justify their actions in a police investigation. The incidence of such use is low precisely in comparison with the amount of people bearing arms.⁹⁰ In order to obtain a weapon, one must pass test with Ministry of Interior, and undergo a psychological test and full security clearance. ⁹¹Every three years, one must undergo a renewing process; if the gun is stolen or even left visibly in the car one could face charges and inevitably find themselves in jail.⁹²

Medical Services

In Israel, every family is entitled to health insurance; approximately five percent of an individual`s salary goes towards the type of health fund wanted, and health insurance is provided until eighteen years of age.⁹³ After eighteen years of age, the IDF takes care of medical treatment and insurance during time of enlistment, three years of mandatory service for men and two years for women. The national health funds provided to Tekoa residents forbid access to Jerusalem for health services.⁹⁴ Therefore, primary health care is provided by the Gush Etzion Regional Council. Every family has medical coverage through one of the three major insurers which provide basic services such as Meuchedet, Clalit, and Maccabi, the last being the most prevalent within the community.⁹⁵

Tekoa used to have its own clinic; however, residents must now go to Gush Etzion to a regional clinic for medical services.⁹⁶ If the clinics within Gush Etzion do not provide the medical services needed, residents must pay out of their own pocket money to receive specific services or special medical attention.⁹⁷ Ambulance services are provided by the town council, driven by volunteers from the community.⁹⁸

⁸⁸ "Gush Etzion Security" Gush Etzion Regional Council" <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/security.asp>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Amiel Ungar. email message to Ashley C. Overholser. Wed. Jun 29. 2011.

⁹¹ Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ S. Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Medical Services" *The Gush Etzion Regional Council. p. 8.* <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

⁹⁶ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

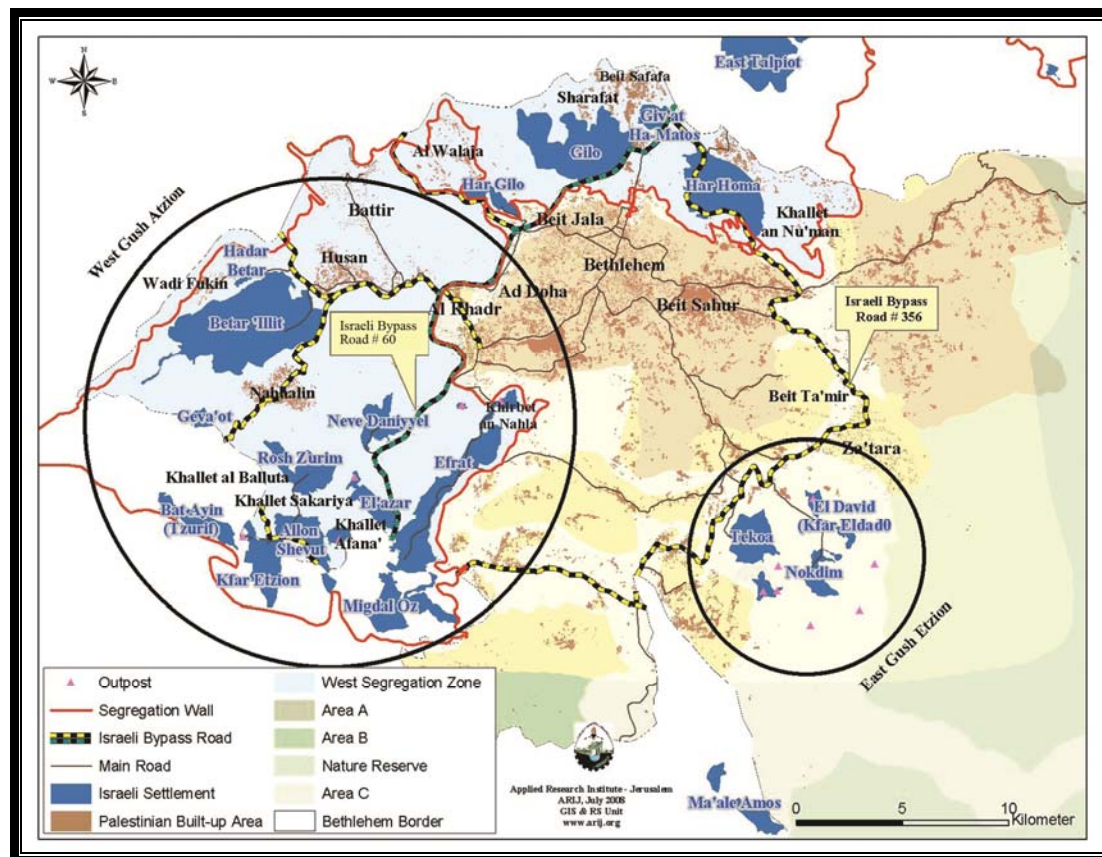
⁹⁷ Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

⁹⁸ Ibid.

There is a pharmacy in Efrat open for the day and evening hours. Within Tekoa, there is a private dental clinic. Alternative therapies for nutrition and whole system health treatments such as massage therapy, shiatsu, reflexology, and acupuncture are provided by Tekoa-based practitioners.⁹⁹

Veterinary services are available in the Regional Council, with regular visits in Tekoa for vaccination, licensing, and registration of pets.¹⁰⁰

Transportation



(Source: The Geographical Information Systems Unit (GIS) –ARIJ 2011)

Tekoa is fifteen kilometers south of Jerusalem, eight kilometers west of Efrat, within an hour drive from Beersheva, and an hour and a half from Tel Aviv.¹⁰¹ The town of Efrat and Jerusalem are just a ten minute drive away.¹⁰² Frequent public bus transportation is available to and from Jerusalem, leaving once every two hours.¹⁰³ Many people drive in private cars and offer rides to those waiting at the central Tekoa bus stop. Residents are subject to two toll roads in the area; one is toll road #6 N/S Road Israel.

⁹⁹ S. Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Medical Services" *The Gush Etzion Regional Council*. p. 8. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

¹⁰⁰ . Shani Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Pets" *The Gush Etzion Regional Council*. p. 8. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

¹⁰¹ Shani Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Location and Climate" *The Gush Etzion Regional Council*. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Eli Birbaum. interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. June 28th 2011.

The other toll is through the German company dug tunnel under Haifa. Before 2000, in order to drive to Jerusalem, residents of Tekoa had to drive through Beit Sahour, pass what they deemed “the garbage road,” pass an army base, and the shepherd’s field.¹⁰⁴ Now, with the new bypass road 356 (shown on the map above) to Jerusalem, residents can be in Jerusalem in ten minutes.

Education

The state of Israel provides and guarantees free public education for children from elementary to high schools, which are immediate rights applicable to the Israeli inhabitants of the West Bank.¹⁰⁵ Within the public school system, there is one service fee that must be paid which is used towards purchases of text books and compensation towards field trips conducted throughout the year.¹⁰⁶ Every public school dictates the service fee amount. Up until high school, free transportation is provided by the Gush Etzion Regional Council through the Israeli Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁷ By the order of the IDF, Gush Etzion must provide security guards at every school building and for every class trip.¹⁰⁸ If there is a desire to send a child to a special, more focused school, the Regional Council takes care of transportation initiatives regardless of school locality, whether the school be situated within Gush Etzion, Jerusalem, or the state of Israel.¹⁰⁹

In order to make quality education available to all of its children, the Gush Etzion Regional Council allocates a large portion of its annual budget for education.

With this funding, the Education Department

- Provides classes and subjects that are not covered by the Ministry of Education budget, including extra hours of learning, advanced Torah studies, special math groups, art, music ,and remedial services.
- Makes activities in art, science, and communications available to kindergartens throughout the region and maintains a Pedagogical Resource Center for teachers of young children.
- Oversees all psychological services for children in the region and is a partner in the Gush Etzion Child Development Center, which provides diagnostic evaluations, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and related services.
- Maintains and improves the region`s educational facilities, overseeing the construction and renovation of school buildings and furnishing them with computers, video equipment, laboratory requirements, and other essentials.
- Organizes daily school bus service for 1500 children, arranges free public transportation for other children and provides transportation for children with special needs and education workers across the region.

Within Tekoa, there is a community daycare and nursery program till four PM with a hot meal, with longer hours available for working mother. There are also several home-based daycare programs run by mothers, a yishuv, and a Chabad kindergarten.

¹⁰⁴ Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

¹⁰⁵ Eli Birnbaum. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. June 28th 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Eli Birnbaum. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. June 28th 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Tekoa Elementary School

Tekoa is host to one elementary school, unique in its pioneering of 'Achdut Israel,' a program which was awarded high honors for innovation in integrating religious and secular students in the classroom.¹¹⁰ The Achi School was founded in 1988 to meet the needs of the communities of Tekoa and Nokdim, both located on the eastern side of Gush Etzion.¹¹¹ The school was created to extend the ideology of the communities of not only living together but having their children study together. The philosophy of successful coexistence was put into practice.¹¹² The school has approximately 150 students. 65% of whom come from torah-observant homes and 35% from secular homes.¹¹³ The school population is increasing annually similar to the growing populations of Tekoa and Nokdim.

The school is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education's Religious Sector, which sets the curriculum guidelines.¹¹⁴ However, there is creativity and flexibility in building the curriculum in order to adapt it to the school's ideology.¹¹⁵



In Tanach and Halacha classes the stress is on a wide range of various resource materials so that those students identified as secular may identify and commit themselves to their Jewish roots.¹¹⁶ Therefore the school has expanded its religious study classes to be integrated with other subjects such as Jewish history, geography, nature, agriculture, computers, art, sports, music, science, and literature and community involvement. All the students regardless of their religious affiliation study the same curriculum.¹¹⁷

An open learning atmosphere where each and every pupil learns at his own pace and fulfills his potential is a basic tenet of the school's philosophy. Educating Jewish Israeli children to have a deep commitment to their Jewish tradition, heritage, history, and people is carried out by exposing and connecting them simultaneously to Jewish and secular resources. A detailed document about the school's ideology including the complete curriculum is available in Hebrew.

The Ministry of Education through the Regional Council of Gush Etzion funds the annual budget and pays for the salaries of most of the teachers.¹¹⁸ The parents pay an annual education fee that is divided into 10 monthly payments which cover items such as equipment, salaries for extra hours, and outings. In order to develop additional programs the school is in need of extra funding.¹¹⁹

Source: "Tekoa Achi School" Gush Etzion

¹¹⁰ "Tekoa 'Achi' School." *Gush Etzion Regional Council*. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/projects/tekoa.htm>

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ "Tekoa 'Achi' School." *Gush Etzion Regional Council*. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/projects/tekoa.htm>

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Due to the recent increase in families joining the community the Ministry of Education is now in the process of adding two classrooms for every grade and an additional two kindergartens to the already existing three.¹²⁰

One challenge within the education sector is the difficulties that arise for children with learning disabilities and special needs in the public school system. It is difficult to find a public school which is compatible to the child's special needs. Private schools, such as the Reishit School, have incorporated programs known as "mainstreaming" which is ideologically based on the principle that these children should have access to the same services as any other child in the system.¹²¹ However, there are two schools within the Gush Etzion region which are specifically geared towards special needs children: The Reishit School and Sadna School.

The ratio of special needs children is 1 out of 8 and it is one of the most successful special needs programs in Israel, drawing families to Gush Etzion from all over the country.¹²² The regional council is proud to have a satellite branch of the wonderful Shalva program in Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion, to provide afternoon programs for our mentally and physically challenged children.¹²³ Before the Arab uprising in 2000, these special needs children from Gush Etzion would travel to Jerusalem daily for afternoon activities.¹²⁴ Once the traveling became a problem, a local solution had to be found for the families whose stresses of dealing with a special needs child are high enough without the added burden of traveling on dangerous roads.¹²⁵ These special needs children now benefit from a daily after school program from 2-6 pm at which time they are transported to their homes after a nutritious supper.¹²⁶ There are also 4 special needs kindergartens where young challenged and special children receive therapy with professionals.¹²⁷

The Reshit School

The Reishit School was founded in 2000 in Kibbutz Rosh Tzurim, Gush Etzion. The cornerstone of the school is its commitment to co-educate children with special needs alongside their mainstream peers. Reishit is a private school which covers the full curriculum up to seventh grade and has 320 children in 14 classes.¹²⁸

60 of its children have special educational needs, including Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, and autism. Each classroom is staffed by a general classroom teacher, a special education teacher and a volunteer from Sherut Leumi (National Service). All pupils with special needs are part of the regular class and are supported with their own individual education program covering the same subjects as their friends with additional input where needed. They also receive occupational therapy, speech therapy, and animal therapy, according to their needs.¹²⁹

The School's 'raison d'être' is based on three principles: The love of Torah; Love of the land of Israel and love of one's fellow man.¹³⁰

Reishit is located in a rural setting approximately 20 km South West of Jerusalem. The tranquility and space that the kibbutz provides allows for a number of therapeutic activities which benefit all the children.

¹²⁰ Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

¹²¹ Eli Birnbaum. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Tuesday. June 28th 2011

¹²² "Special Education" Gush Etzion Regional Council. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/projects/sed.htm>

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ "Special Education" Gush Etzion Regional Council. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/projects/sed.htm>

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ "The Reshit School." *Gush Etzion Regional Council*. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/projects/resh.htm>

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Ibid

These include a petting corner where the children are responsible for the care of the animals, a garden where the children grow vegetables and plants and horse-riding.¹³¹

The theory of integrating children with special needs into a regular framework is not new, but is seldom put into practice to the extent seen in Reishit which has proven to be one of the greatest successes in Israeli special needs education.¹³² The key to the school's success is that rather than providing an institutional environment meeting the physical and/or psychological needs of such children.

Reishit provides a tailor made program to meet the needs of each child within a regular educational environment.¹³³

Apart from fostering understanding and tolerance in all children at the school, it also focuses on bringing the child with special needs closer to the mainstream and allows them to build the skills they need to achieve a high level of independence or even to return them to mainstream education.¹³⁴

The regular education is similarly innovative in that it focuses on the enjoyment of creativity and the abilities of each child to both learn and contribute within a framework based on Judaism, its values, and texts. This combination of integrated special and regular education, with an original approach to the syllabus and teaching methods, is unique in Israel.¹³⁵

Religious Life



(Source: "Tekoa Hesder Yeshiva" Aleph Society Inc)

There are six active synagogues in Tekoa. The largest synagogue in our yishuv is the Ashkenazi Young Israel, other synagogues include Sephardic, Chabad, the Steinsalz, Yeshiva Minyan, and the Carlebach-style minyan. There are at least two early minyanim for morning services. The Rabbis and learned women are as diverse as our community, and are affiliated with Torah institutions throughout Israel such as the Matan Torah Institute for Women, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz Hesder and Yeshiva High school. Weekly shiurim are conducted in English, French, Russian, and Hebrew. Our modern mikvah is open at time convenient for busy schedules or men and women.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Simkowitz, V. Brill, and E. Rogosa. "Welcome to Tekoa-Who Lives in Tekoa?" *Gush Etzion Regional Council*. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.



(Source: "Welcome to Tekoa." Gush Etzion Regional Council)¹³⁷

The Hesder Yeshiva in Tekoa is a five-year program that combines service in the Israeli army with advanced Jewish study. The Yeshiva's location in Tekoa, a small town in the Judean Hills, established as a model of diversity and co-existence is no accident. Its population is a rich mix of religious and secular Israelis as well as immigrants from all over the world, and prides itself on being tangible proof that Jews from all walks of life can live together in mutual respect. When the community decided to invite a yeshiva to make its home in Tekoa, it was only natural that they approached Rabbi Steinsaltz, an educator renowned for a lifetime of reaching out to Jews of all affiliations and backgrounds.¹³⁸

There are currently 140 students studying at the Yeshiva: 40 in the army and 100 who are there full-time.¹³⁹

The Hesder Yeshiva's mission is to create a cadre of rabbis. Teachers, spiritual, and communal activists who embrace Rabbi Steinsaltz's philosophy that learning belongs to every Jew; that all Jews merit the respect and love of their fellow Jews, regardless of level of observance and belief.¹⁴⁰

Community Life and Recreation

Tekoa has a number of local institutions and associations that provide services to various segments of society. Nevertheless, the residents of Tekoa do not necessarily feel obligated to supply every service within the community, particularly for youth because the Gush Etzion Regional Council area or nearby Jerusalem can provide these amenities. Below are a list of amenities provided by Tekoa as expressed through Gush Etzion and the community as a whole:

Tekoa offers a broad variety of extra-curricular activities for young and old. The Tekoa Community Center offers basketball, local soccer league, arts and crafts, yoga, karate, chess, music lessons, choir, ballet, a mikvah (ritual bath), hiking, fencing team, and sewing taught by professionals from Tekoa and the region. The Center also has two basketball courts, a tennis court, and a well-equipped exercise room with a professional trainer. The library has both English and Hebrew books and offers after-school homework tutoring. There is a Horse Ranch which offers group and individual riding lessons. Tekoa has six playgrounds with equipment for active play. A youth counselor is paid by the community for youth activities conducted on Saturdays.¹⁴¹

There is also an active Bnei Akiva chapter that begins in the fourth grade under the leadership of community counselors with Shabbat afternoon activities in addition to various weekday programs that involve both religious and secular young people.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "Tekoa Hesder Yeshiva" *Aleph Society INC*. http://www.steinsaltz.org/Hesder_Yeshiva.php

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Simkowitz, V. Brill, and E. Rogosa. "Recreation." *Gush Etzion Regional Council*. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

In addition, there is a youth leader for the upper grades that works with an elected youth committee who together organize their own supervised activities. During vacations there are day camps for young children and exciting activities for the older children, such as hikes, movies, and outings.¹⁴²

The Tekoa Country Club boasts two outdoor swimming pools, for adults and little ones, with separate men, women, and family hours. It offers swimming lessons, lockers showers, and a canteen selling refreshments. The pool is open on Shabbat but no business is conducted.¹⁴³



(Source: "Welcome to Tekoa" Gush Etzion Regional Council Webpage.)

The pool in Tekoa is host to people from all over Gush Etzion. Another short drive outside Jerusalem this time via Har Homa will take you to the Tekoa Pool or take bus route 166 from Jerusalem Central Bus Station.¹⁴⁴ It is a 1/2 Olympic pool with a covered kiddie pool.¹⁴⁵

There are grassy areas to sit and relax in and a miznon for snacks. This pool has family hrs. mixed hrs., and separate swimming hrs.¹⁴⁶ According to the Fun in Jerusalem Services Directory, the following amenities are provided by the pool:¹⁴⁷

- ❖ Parking: large parking lot at the entrance to Tekoa.
- ❖ Hours: May 12:00-6:00 p.m. and July&August 7:00 am-9 p.m.
- ❖ Pool Size and Temp. 1/2 Olympic. 26 degrees.
- ❖ Locker rooms: available.
- ❖ Prices: 40 NIS Adult; 30 NIS Child (3-18)

Gush Etzion Regional Services

The Gush Etzion Regional Council is the main judicial organ, providing many regional services. The services provided by the Regional Council are garbage disposal, security, social services, school transportation according to the Ministry of Education guidelines, veterinary services, cultural activities and the Aliyah Department which assists new Olim.¹⁴⁸ The Regional Council of Gush Etzion gives service to its over 15 communities, such as Tekoa, in the fields of education, culture, security, health, religion, welfare, community development and building, environmental development, agriculture and technological research, and the development of various spheres of employment.¹⁴⁹ The following are a specific list of amenities provided by Gush Etzion Regional Council:

¹⁴² Ibid. "Youth Movements and Activities"

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "Tekoa Pool." *Fun in Jerusalem Services Directory*.2010. <http://www.funinjerusalem.com/en/directory/jerusalem-swimming-pools.html?sobi2Task=sobi2Details&catid=50&sobi2Id=63>

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Simkowitz. V. Brill. and E. Rogosa. "Welcome to Tekoa-Who Lives in Tekoa?" *Gush Etzion Regional Council*. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/tekoa.asp>.

¹⁴⁹"Gush Etzion Regional Council." Gush Etzion Regional Council. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/council.asp>

Gush Etzion Development Company

The Gush Etzion Development Company with over 120 employees was established in 1983 and is one of the most successful development companies in Israel.¹⁵⁰

The purpose of the company is to establish a business division of the Regional Council of Gush Etzion, as an independent unit. to help with the development and rapid expansion of Gush Etzion. The company is involved in all aspects of planning and building in the area and provides various services to the entire region. ¹⁵¹

The company is forever growing and seeking new ways to draw more investment and business to Gush Etzion. Currently, the Development Company includes the following:

Tourism

The tourism division of Gush Etzion is responsible for the development and maintenance of the ancient and historical tourist sites in Gush Etzion, advancement of entrepreneurial sites, as well as the promotion and organization of tourism in the region.¹⁵²

Rental Cars

The tourism department has partnered with Hertz Rental Cars to provide rental cars all over the world- delivered to your doorstep, with better pricing than Hertz will provide.¹⁵³

Cellular Phones

Gush Etzion have a department for cellular phones with special plans and economy packages which can be suited to all needs.¹⁵⁴

Gas station

In addition to our centrally located gas station, we also have a car wash and a state of the art garage to maintain our fleet of busses as well as service the residents.¹⁵⁵

Printing company

Our printing company offers a full range of printing services with graphic designers and modern equipment.

Industrial Park

For the first time in 60 years since the establishment of Gush Etzion, a modern industrial Park has been built in order to make our region economically viable. The park is meant to supply 1.000 jobs to our residents.¹⁵⁶

In addition to lots for building, there is a building for offices as well as factories. Low rents, easy access to the Gush Etzion shopping centers and close proximity to the major cities make the Industrial Park an attractive option. In addition, the diverse population of Gush Etzion offers a quality solution of human resource needs for any endeavor.¹⁵⁷

Building Department

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Gush Etzion Regional Council." Gush Etzion Regional Council. <http://www.gush-etzion.org.il/council.asp>

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The building department is responsible for all public buildings, infrastructure, and roads. New building methods are constantly being adapted in order to provide state of the art quality and turnaround times, as well as affordable housing.¹⁵⁸

Shooting Range

A state of the art shooting range has been established in the center of Gush Etzion to answer the need to train, coach and keep in practice thousands of gun owners from different segments of the population. Included are citizens who hold personal guns and rifles distributed by the army for the security and defense of the communities.¹⁵⁹

Bus drivers, teachers, citizen volunteers for rapid response teams, security guards and policemen make use of the range. It is possible to practice with all types of weapons, from hand pistols to rifles of any caliber. Shooting while moving, as well as shooting from a vehicle are also options.¹⁶⁰

Employment Sector

There are some employment opportunities in the Gush Etzion region, but most residents work in nearby Jerusalem.¹⁶¹ Work options range from small businesses to organic agriculture, light industry to teaching in the school system.¹⁶² Business initiatives include: a carpentry shop, building company, a grocery store, graphic art studio, a real estate, and an educational software company, a mushroom farm a winery, and a gourmet dairy restaurant.¹⁶³ Entrepreneurs are encouraged to establish new initiatives in the community and in the nearby industrial park near Efrat, ten minutes from Tekoa.¹⁶⁴ The Gush Etzion Development Company provides business initiative development, guidance and assistance.¹⁶⁵

List of Businesses in Tekoa

- Landscape architect Firm
- Winery
- Internet consultants
- Mushroom Farm
- Volvo Repair Shop
- Hydroponics and Organic Farm
- Post Office
- Grocery Store/ Mini Market
- Office of the County Supervisor (Rosh Ha-Moatza)
- Goat Farm and Dairy
- Meat Grill Restaurant
- Family-run pizza parlor
- The Beit Bad is both an industrial olive press and cafe. The olive press is renewing the ancient tradition of olive oil production in this region. The cafe often features live music in the evenings.¹⁶⁶

At least ten families make their livelihood from cultivating an array of organic products, from organic grapes for wine, juice and raisins, organic mushrooms, fruits and vegetables such as

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ "Tekoa" Nefesh B'Nefesh. 2009. <http://www.nbn.org.il/component/content/article/1816-tekoea.html>

¹⁶² Simkovitz. Shani and Laura Ben David. "Tekoa." *One Israel Fund*.

<http://www.oneisraelfund.org/articles.asp?cmd=viewarticle&id=21>

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ "About Tekoa." Gush Herodion Building Development Company. Website by :www.CyberProgramsInc.com. 2011. <http://gushherodion.com/tekoea.html>

asparagus, broccoli, fresh organic eggs, organic goat milk and cheese, olive oil, and organic breads.¹⁶⁷ Tekoa has two country stores; one carries tasty Russian delicacies and the other a good selection of local shopping needs.¹⁶⁸ For a larger selection, all the major food chains and the colorful Machane Yehuda open air market in Jerusalem offer a tapestry of ethnic flavors.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, Tekoa is known in Israel for their local mushroom farm. Below is a snapshot into the farm and its establishment.



For the past 25 years, Tekoa Farms has specialized in the cultivation, marketing, and import of unique, high quality fruits and vegetables. The farm, founded by Mira Weigensberg and Oren Kessler in 1986, began by cultivating oyster mushrooms.

Tekoa Farms has become a leading producer, importer, and distributor in Israel offering the market an all-year supply of unique products. Together with the growing health trend and demand for high quality fresh foods, Tekoa Farms is constantly enlarging the variety of top quality, fresh, healthy, and tasty products. Within the range, a variety of exotic mushrooms—fresh and dehydrated, ginger root, endive, turmeric root, shallots, lime and more.

Tekoa Farms is highly regarded by both cultivators and chefs for its sophisticated methods and is today, the leading professional entity for specialty mushrooms in Israel. More new and unique vegetable products have been added to the Israeli food basket, courtesy of Tekoa Farms, resulting in heightened interest and demand for an expanding variety of food innovations

Since its founding, Tekoa Farms has endeavored to broaden its range of unique products for the Israeli table, to achieve the highest standards and respond to growing demand from our customers for natural and healthy food. Our foodstuffs—a variety of fresh and dried mushrooms types, fresh ginger, endive, fresh turmeric root, 2 types of dried tomatoes, genuine lime, shallots and more—some locally produced and others imported from distant and exotic lands, are “our treasures,” each carefully chosen and examined to meet a peak level of quality, health, and of course – taste. Today, thanks to a wide variety and low prices “our treasures” can be found in almost every kitchen in the country.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ “The Farm.” Tekoa Mushroom Farm. 2011. <http://www.tekoafarms.co.il/%D7%AA%D7%94%D7%99%D7%95-%D7%91%D7%A7%D7%A9%D7%A8.aspx>



(Source: Tekoa Mushroom Farm Website)

Locality Development and Priority Needs

One of the main, inhibiting factors which the residents of Tekoa face is the fact that there are no formal interactions, no institutional ties between the settlement of Tekoa and neighboring Israeli communities.¹⁷¹ Formerly, the Yesha Council for Settlements in Judea and Samaria used to meet regularly with representatives from differing settlement communities to discuss common challenges. There is a lack of communication between neighboring settlements, and the idea of learning from common lessons and dealing with common problems is practically nonexistent between local settlement bodies.

Because of recent expansionist endeavors by building development companies within the settlement, The Tekoa Elementary School is bursting to the seams because of new waves of families coming in.¹⁷² The present Minister of Education is in favor of integrating philosophies of religious tolerance within schools across the state of Israel; therefore, the ministry of education is planning on expanding the school to provide more classroom space given the steady population growth in the region.

There are also transportation impediments; although the new bypass road has created easy access to Jerusalem, residents still complain that it is difficult to visit a few neighboring settlements such as Nok Dim. Nok Dim can be seen from residents' windows. However, it is very difficult to travel by car because of the state, condition, and geography of the roads.¹⁷³

Building Development Plans



(Source: Gush Herodion Building and Development LTD. Website)

Company Structure

Incorporated in Israel in 2008, Gush Herodion Building and Development Ltd has been given the exclusive contract by the Tekoa municipality to develop six multi-storied terraced apartments in Tekoa.¹⁷⁴ The Gush Herodion team is comprised of building and real estate professionals with an intimate understanding of the residential environment in Gush Etzion area.¹⁷⁵ Tekoa is also the home to three of its founders.¹⁷⁶ Gush Herodion is committed to building quality residences and is focused on providing quality of life for a reasonable price.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

¹⁷² Amiel Ungar. interview by Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Thursday. July 21. 2011.

¹⁷³ Eli Birnbaum and Amiel Ungar. Interview with Ashley C. Overholser. Tekoa. West Bank. Sunday. June 26th 2011

¹⁷⁴ "About Gush Herodion." *Gush Herodion Building and Development Company*. Website by :www.CyberProgramsInc.com. 2010. <http://gushherodion.com/company-detail.html>

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Future Building Development Projects

The project consists of 6 brand new buildings with 8 spacious apartments in each building. Each apartment will be between 109 - 129 square meters. in addition to terraces and additional space. Residents of the Meduragei Tekoa project will be able to reach Jerusalem in under 15 minutes using the new road. The Meduragei Tekoa project overlooks the Tekoa forest with beautiful views of Mount Herodion.

Garden Apartment Floor 0, A



Mid-Level Apartment Floor 1, A



*For Informational purposes only and subject to change.

*For Informational purposes only and subject to change.

Street Level Apartment Floor 2, A



Penthouse Apartment Floor 3, A



*For Informational purposes only and subject to change.

*For Informational purposes only and subject to change.

(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)

3-D Building Views



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)

Construction in Tekoa

Gush Herodion Building Company Advertisement



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



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(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



(Source: Gush Herodion Building Company Website)



Project Descriptions and Objectives

Proposed Strategy Initiative:

--To compare and contrast living conditions, socio-economic structure, infrastructure, and geo-politics in the West Bank inhabited Palestinian town of Tuqu and the nearby Israeli settlement of Tekoa, taking pains to review existing trends and changes in geo-politics and monitor the present situation and impact of military occupation of both communities.

--To identify the needs and particular vulnerability of these populations, and propose solutions to mitigate ensuing impacts which are inhibiting their sustainable development with the end goal of forging awareness of struggles between these two communities based on mutual respect and understanding while highlighting the distinct vulnerability of the Palestinian plight.

This project fulfills the following objectives of the Urban Monitoring Department of the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem in the following respect:

to harvest related information, document it, and then disburse it to the public at large; locally and internationally, and to the officials at the national government and official representatives of other countries of the world; all of which aiming to raise general public awareness, in addition to supporting peace negotiators and civil society initiatives.¹⁷⁸

Data Collection

ARIJ obtained valuable, statistical information regarding the Palestinian town of Tuqu through assistance and cooperation from ministries. Municipalities, joint service councils, village committees and councils, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, and local civil society organizations; a case study and information fact sheet had been completed and was supposed to be used within this analysis. However, this is the first time that ARIJ has attempted to conduct an in-depth, comprehensive analysis and study of an Israeli settlement. This research is the first of its kind at ARIJ. There were many research impediments which inhibited research at an analysis stage; therefore, the result became a case study which attempts to mirror the case study of the Palestinian town of Tuqu.

A questionnaire was designed and given to the Tekoa town council; however, the council did not have access to statistical information within their community. The researcher was referred to the Gush Etzion Regional Council which did not have the time to fill it out and there was an additional language barrier which inhibited the completion of the survey.

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