

Matnael Foundation
Activity Report
Mechinat Meitarim Lachish
2013-2014



Name of Program: Mechinat Meitarim Lachish

Programmatic Year- 2013-2014 תשע"ד

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Program Status:

In September the Mechina in Beit Guvrin began its eighth year, currently there is only one active program; Shanah Aleph which is made up of 40 participants – female and male. The Shanah Bet program which is made up of 17 participants ended in February and the participants recruited to the military. In the new program in the yeshuv of Eliav there are 22 participants in Shanah Alef. Each year is comprised of a diverse group of participants, coming from all different kinds of households and lifestyles, ranging from urban to kibbutznik, various religious and traditional backgrounds as well as olim from all over the world, some who have lived in Israel most of their life and others who have made aliyah before or during the Mechina.

Presently, the educational programming has been fully realized by the participants. They have been assigned to their work committees, each participant is already well into his or her own weekly volunteer project, and we are working hard to intensify and further develop and deepen the experiences in Mechina – the impact of the participants studies, the execution of large community projects, and most importantly the empowerment of each and every participant as they go through meaningful personal development.

Primary Achievements of the Past Year:

We completed Mechina this past year with forty- seven participants of which twenty-four girls and twenty-three boys in Shanah Aleph, and an additional group of 17 in Shana Bet earlier in march.

We feel that we have achieved our objective in establishing a group dedicated to learning, understanding our country, volunteering and preparing for meaningful service in the I.D.F. We have seen throughout the year an impressive strengthening of group harmony and inclusion that does not engulf the individual, but rather enables him to reveal his true character and personality. The unique nature of this group and

the phenomenal support each individual receives from the other members has resulted in an astoundingly united and cohesive group this year.

We felt that this year's studies were at such a high level that it was appropriate for the continuation of this learning to occur, and therefore we allowed the most serious and dedicated group of this year to continue on for Shanah Bet – the second year program, focused on intense study and devotion to values

We of course did not neglect recruitment of participants for the upcoming year, and thus we arrived at dozens of schools across the country; schools from which this year's participants came from.

As for the area the mechina resides in – the Lachish strip, the mechina is a focal for cultural events and contributions to the community. The participants volunteer regularly in the community and reach hundreds of teens, children and elderly in a verity of activities and channels.

Despite these considerable achievements, there is no doubt that the greatest among them is the empowerment of the participants in our Mechina due to the effectiveness of our educational program. Participants graduate each year charged with greater knowledge, a founded set of values on top of a clearer, richer sense of identity as well as a burning desire to contribute to and strengthen Israeli society. Each year they leave more prepared for meaningful service in the military, not only as soldiers but also as instructors and commanders – the next generation of Israeli military and social leadership.

We see that Graduates of Mechina maintain regular contact with the mechina and see in it a palace they can come back to "charge their batteries" spiritually, to share their experiences and consult. They visit the mechina when they leave for vacation and keep in contact for years.

Program Evaluation

Throughout the year, we functioned by using several different methods of both internal as well as external supervision and examination. The Mechina is examined regularly by an experienced accountant and a two-person Audit Committee. The Committee checks the Mechina in regards to its budget, organization and management. The Audit Committee noted that the fiscal behavior of the Mechina is superbly organized and under control, and supports the approval of the annual report.

The staff held three meetings throughout the year dedicated to internal feedback, checking the quality of each course, satisfaction of each student and to which extent each one is participating in each aspect of Mechina. Upon receiving this feedback, we conducted a number of internal changes as we saw fit, most notably in our curriculum.

This year, we monitored our staff very thoroughly since the beginning of the year, including our secretary, counselors and senior staff members. We had our students complete feedback forms on each staff member and lecturer, in which the students provided invaluable advice. This feedback from the students served as one of the most significant landmarks in the development of their counselors, and resulted in each and every counselor, lecturer and staff member to engage in constructive dialogue and meaningful improvement.

We also progressed meaningfully this year in regards to our guiding and teaching abilities as staff members. We employed an outside source, Abigail Ben-Moshe, who trains counselors and staff at several Mechinot other than our own. We truly feel that this year's counselors were better prepared to address with their challenges as authority figures, educators and individuals in a challenging position. By bringing in a professional resource, these counselors were given many important tools to help bring about this year's success in Mechina. Additionally, the counselors of every Mechina were brought to Beit Avi Chai for several educational seminars that took place throughout the year.

The biggest challenges are always the material and technical ones for us. We as a management run very smoothly are meticulously organized and never run into deficit or any other stumbling blocks that exist in other organizations and programs. However, we are not without our challenges. Students who are new immigrants to the country, who have health problems that result in military exemption, or who have other complicated stories often do not receive the necessary assistance they require from the government during their drafting process. Our desire to support these students and integrate them into the mainstream of Mechina graduates is great, yet increases our expenditures and often loses out to budget.

Our general understanding and conclusions insofar are that the Mechina has been extremely successful in achieving its objectives and fulfilling its vision, while we continue to improve by making changes based on the previous year.

Guidelines for Next Year:

The central project that we are engaging in now is the construction of a permanent site in Eliav, the new combined religious and secular community in Eastern Lachish, as of this year a new program of the mechina has opened its doors , in temporary buildings, and in the meantime we are working on building the permanent campus.

Next year we plan on thickening the three programs of the mechina, to add participants, to increase in teachers and to develop the learning programs. We are working on developing learning content and publishing of referential materiel that will reflect both the spiritual and cultural work of the mechina, and the vast education experience that has been gained during the years.