



End of Year Report to the Matanel Foundation From the Hannaton Educational Center 2018 - 2019

The Hannaton Mechina

In 2018 - 2019, the Hannaton Mechina engaged young adults from throughout Israel in programming that promotes pluralistic approaches to Jewish study and Jewish life; learning and leadership development through direct engagement with groups and individuals representing a spectrum of backgrounds and views on Israeli society through facilitated, diverse learning opportunities, or “mifgashim”; and volunteerism among at-risk populations as well as in neighboring Arab communities.

During 2018 - 2019, the Hannaton Mechina included the following:

- 1. The Hannaton Pre-Army Mechina**, 43 participants in the 2018-19 class, for a 10-month program beginning at the end of August and continuing through the end of June.
- 2. Shana Bet Second Year Mechina Program**, seven participants in the first class, which ran from August 2018 – February 2019.
- 3. Alumni Network**, more than 200 graduates of the Hannaton Mechina participated in educational and information activities around Israel and at Hannaton and received support and a networking system throughout the year.

Objectives of the Hannaton Mechina:

- **Objective 1:** To provide mechina participants each year with Jewish knowledge, including texts, rituals, holidays and prayer through daily learning, Shabbat and holiday experiences and community participation.
- **Objective 2:** To provide mechina participants with the leadership skills required and the passion and desire demanded to make positive change in Israel by offering twice-weekly volunteer experiences (in 14 places throughout the Jezreel Valley) and social change projects and enabling self-governance throughout the year.
- **Objective 3:** To offer ongoing guidance, support and learning to our 200+ alumni (with the numbers growing each year) to help them become engaged, learned and affective leaders in the army and in their communities.

Mechina Shana Aleph

Learning

- **Providing both traditional and experiential learning to help broaden students' Jewish worldview.** Mechina students spent several days a week learning courses that included History of the Land of Israel,

Islam and Arab Culture, Revolutions and Revolutionaries, Jewish Law and Social Justice, as well as informal learning through trips and seminars throughout the country.

The mechina students spent more than half of their week immersed in learning. Throughout the week they studied a range of topics from Mishna to the psychology of the rabbinic sages to Zionism to Ethics to Gender Issues. This immersion in text learning – from a variety of perspectives and from different academic fields – helps broaden their understanding of Judaism and Zionism and helps formulate and strengthen their own personal Jewish identity. Courses this year included the following:

Important Jewish Texts, Rabbi Yoav Ende; *Pioneering Zionism*, Mechina Staff; *The Development of the Streams of Judaism*, Gabriel Ende; *Stories and Ethics from the Talmud and Mishna*, Ayal Beer; *History of the Land of Israel*, Itai Capsouto; *Islam, Arab Culture and Bedouin Society in Israel*, Maazan Ayoub; *Revolutions and Revolutionaries in History*, Zohar Caplan; *Halacha, Midrash and Practice*, Rabbi Oded Mazor; *Preparation for Army Service*, Yedidya Hazani and Shai Ben Yishai; *Group Dynamics*, Orly Ofer; *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Itai Capsouto; *The Matanel Tikkun Olam Course: Social Justice in the Jewish Sources and in Actuality*, Dr. Dror Greenblum; *Musar*, Rabbi Menachem Succot; *The Sages of the Talmud on the Psychologists Couch*, Dr. Nurit Novis-Deutsch; *Zionism and the Wars of Israel*, Asaf Ezer; *Political Philosophy*, Udi Bernstein; *Humanism*, Yaron Tzur; *Gender Studies*, Dotan Arieli; *Independent Beit Midrash Study*.

- **Helping participants to develop a Jewish worldview that supports individual choice and citizenship in the broader society.** “Conflict” is central to the process, asking students to step out of their comfort zones and come to understand other viewpoints, and this in turn, helps them better formulate their own opinions and perspectives.
- **Offering opportunities that expose students to diversity in Israel.** Students lived as a diverse Jewish community amongst themselves and within the larger Kibbutz Hannaton framework. During seminars on religion and state, Judea and Samaria/the West Bank, Social Justice, they are challenged to think differently; a one week social change project; hikes throughout the country; special guest lecturers; cultural evenings and more.
- **Providing models and mentors.** Teachers include men and women, Arabs and Jews, secular, observant, and even ultra-orthodox Jews, many of whom develop close connections with the students. Members of the Hannaton community also served as role models. Teachers and residents continue to play a role in the lives of our graduates, in Shana Bet and when they return on visits to Hannaton.
- **Ethical, mental and physical preparation for military service, particularly in command roles, and in society.** Twice a week Mechina students had physical preparation courses and throughout the year had a course on mental and emotional preparation for the army.
- **Providing opportunities for community building.** Students in the Mechina lived together as a group and were an active part of the larger community of Hannaton, and in this way learned from a living diverse community while building their own small community through work in committees, making group decisions and learning to live with their own diversity.
- **Providing frameworks to enable participants to do Jewish leadership in practice through self-governance, volunteer work and social change work.** This included: the volunteer work they did twice a week, the one week social change project, “TakeASec”, inviting people to talk to one another

and open themselves up to new ideas; the many different MKs they invited over the year to educate themselves better for the elections; and the ongoing committees they worked on together to ensure that all of their programming took place.

Practicing

Mechina students at Hannaton invested two days a week in volunteer activities around the Jezreel Valley. These included:

- [Dor L'Dor](#) (Generation to Generation), visiting the elderly in Upper Nazareth.
- Tav Hevrati, which raises awareness about accessibility for those with disabilities as well as workers' rights in local businesses;
- Ahava Boarding School where Mechina volunteers helped students with homework and offered emotional support;
- [Etgaram](#) at Moshav Nahalal, a bike-riding group for people with disabilities;
- Achva school for children with special needs in Kfar Manda, where volunteers coordinated art and Hebrew classes and socialized with the children;
- [Kfar Tikva](#), a village for adults with special needs, where Hannaton volunteers led discussions on current events and social issues, and helped with special projects;
- Big Brother/Sister, working one-on-one with children in Hannaton with special needs;
- Hannaton *limudia* or after-school program, providing informal activities and homework help for 35 children in Hannaton in 1st through 4th grade;
- Counselors in the NOAM and Bnei Moshavim youth movements in Hannaton for 3rd through 9th grades;
- Kfar Manda, teaching Hebrew to Moslem women at the local community center;
- The Equalizer program offers at-risk youth an after-school program of soccer, with a parallel obligation to attend a learning program. Mechina students are now helping run this program in the nearby Bedouin town of Shefaram.
- Two Mechina offered additional support to the therapeutic horse farm at Hannaton (Horses in the Woods).
- The Nazareth firefighters' brigade, offering additional volunteer help.

Each year, Mechina students choose a social change project. This year the Mechina class of 2019 developed a project called "Take a Sec", aimed at engaging people on the street in thoughtful and respectful conversation on a variety of topics. Over the course of five days, the students engaged hundreds of individuals in conversation in public spaces throughout the north of Israel.

From our mechina students:

Natan: I volunteered at the Ahava boarding school for at-risk youth. My role was to listen to the kids, advise them and for five hours each week, to simply be there just for them. In the beginning, I didn't know how important I would be for them, but they slowly opened up to me and told me their stories, some of them very difficult. One of the children came up to me at the end of the year and thanked me for what I had had been for him – a listening ear and a place where he could spill out all the difficulties he was having at the boarding school. This was so meaningful for me, because it helped me understand how important my time with them is and how much it gives them.

Rotem: At the mechina, I opened my mind to opinions I had never heard before. I met people from different backgrounds professionally, in terms of their learning, their politics and more. And I also had a place to open up and to improve my own abilities.

Gil: The mechina influenced me in so many areas, in every subject we dealt with. The lessons and the seminars, the examples set for me by the mechina staff all helped to shape my worldview, my different opinions and the path that I am choosing. The mechina taught me how to live with other people as a group, to accept others and other opinions that may contradict my own, to be considerate and to find a way to live together.

Halleli: I learned a lot about myself in so many ways that I had not known previously. I expanded my knowledge in many areas. And I made many new friends.

Hadar: An amazing and positive experience. I came to understand Israeli society much better. I opened myself up to opinions that in the past I couldn't even listen to. I became more motivated to serve in the army. And there were so many internal, personal changes that I don't think could have happened anywhere else.

Shana Bet Mechina Program

The Shana Bet or second year program for the Mechina opened in September 2018, following many requests by Hannaton Mechina graduates to spend additional time focused on Jewish learning and social activism. The major components of the program, which runs for six months, included social activism, beit midrash learning and independent research projects.

This year the students worked with [Jewish Pluralism Watch](#), a project of the Masorti (Conservative) Movement in Israel whose mission is to monitor Israeli elected officials' positions, statements and legislative initiatives and voting on state and religion in Israel and [Todaa](#), a nonprofit organization fighting prostitution in Israel. The work with these organizations helped them gain skills and knowledge in social change work. Beit midrash learning included traditional topics like Talmud and Jewish Thought but also Zionism, Philosophy and Psychology with a combination of frontal learning and hevruta learning in pairs.

Beit midrash learning included courses in Talmud, Zionism, Philosophy, Jewish Thought and Psychology together with one-on-one learning in *hevrutot*.

Shana bet students worked on independent research projects which they chose. This year projects included developing a program for high school students to be paired with an elderly individual and to visit them over the course of three years; advocating for a system for proper cleanup in the forest next to Hannaton; creation of a special card for individuals with Crohn's disease and colitis to provide them with immediate access to public restrooms; establishment of a pub at Hannaton; development of a curriculum for schools on the subject of free choice and sexual consent; and a program at Hannaton for 8th -9th grade students to work with younger children. These projects were an educational process and helped students learn how to develop their ideas, create strategies for making content accessible to others, how to disseminate an idea, and how to recruit others to join a cause.

Seven graduates of the Hannaton Mechina participated in the Shana Bet program in 2018-2019 and 13 students will attend the program in 2019-2020.

Alumni Network

Activities at Hannaton in 2018-19 included: Two alumni holidays, one on Simchat Torah and one in May 2019, for all classes of the Mechina, which included study sessions with the heads of the mechina and the Alumni Coordinator, at least one hike and time with host families; two seminars on "life management" for recent graduates of the army, to help them make the big decisions in their lives about where to live, what to

study, defining their goals; a late-night study session for the current mechina class on the army and their own personal experiences; and annual reunions for each class, at Hannaton.

Activities Around Israel included: a meeting with activists in the organization “It Can’t Continue this Way – Changing Education in Israel” (ככה זה לא יכול להימשך – משנים את ההינוך בישראל), who discussed ways in which they are trying to improve the educational system in Israel and how others can become involved; get-togethers for each class, approximately once every two months, which included a learning session by one of the staff members and time for socializing; participation in a special service held at the Kotel in memory of the young people who died in Nahal Tzafit; and during Chanukah, a gathering of 22 graduates in Tel Aviv for candle lighting and pizza.

“Hannaton at the Bar” is a project that came in response to graduates’ desire to remain socially and politically aware. The graduates meet at a pub or bar in the Tel Aviv area for a lecture on an issue of current events with time for discussion and socializing afterwards. In 2018, there were four meetings of “Hannaton at the Bar”: [Be Free Israel](#), a grassroots movement working for religious pluralism and civil rights; Asaf Nativ, one of the founders of [100 Days of Transparency](#), a nonprofit demanding greater accountability and transparency from Israeli lawmaker, who discussed how the media and politics work together and how citizens can change the situation; A talk with an Israeli artist named Matan Pinkus who spoke about activism through art; graduates met with Chagi Elkayam to discuss political philosophy and how to encourage people to go out and vote and how mechina graduates can become involved.

Graduates also initiated an Instagram project entitled “Inspiration, Influence, and Familiarity”, intended to help graduates share information about artists of all kinds who have influenced them in some way. Posts have included information about graffiti artists, musicians, artists involved in social change, podcasts and more.

[Graduates took to the streets](#) in February this year to campaign against racism and Kahanism in the Knesset.

Regular contact with individual graduates continued, including attending special events (completion of courses in the army, graduations, weddings), in times of crisis. The class coordinator has the primary contact with each graduate in his or her group.

A bit about some of our graduates: **Nir** worked in a special aviation unit of the IDF and today volunteers with SpaceIL and reflected [on his time at Hannaton](#); **Jean** served as Deputy Director of “Awakening in Jerusalem”, a social and political movement whose aim is to work for the good of the city; **Binyamin** completed a year as a counselor in the Meitzar Mechina in the Golan and shared his thoughts on this experience and Hannaton’s role in his life [in a recent post](#); **Ayala** works with the NOAM youth movement and volunteers with African refugees; **Maor** and **C’** were promoted this year to the rank of Company Commander, the highest rank yet that any of our graduates have reached in the army; **Kayla** is studying at the Shalem Institute and living in a communal home for graduates of mechinot who do volunteer work in the community; **Noam** is a pilot in the Air Force; **Alon** campaigned for Rachel Azaria in the municipal elections in Jerusalem; **Mati** runs the NOAM youth movement branch in the city of Modiin; **Daniel** completed his military service as a medic and is actively involved fighting for the rights of the LGBTQ community in Israel and abroad; **Zohar** completed over four years in the army where she served in the Lions of Jordan brigade and as an officer and helped Syrian refugees receive medical help in Israel; **Omer** is an officer in the Bardalas unit and was one of 120 soldiers who received the President’s Award for Excellence in 2019.

More about the Mechina

Below are links to short films and articles that highlight the work of the Mechina:

[My Decision to Work as a Mechina Group Leader](#)

[On Becoming a Social Activist](#)

[Hannaton Mechina Graduates: No to Kahanism in the Knesset](#)

[About the Seminar in Judea and Samaria](#)

And in Hebrew:

[חניכי מכינה סחבו את חברם הנכה בטיול: "מסע ערכי ומשמעותי"](#)

[קחו שנייה, והפיצו בה טוב](#)

[שיפוץ בית ספר](#)

We also developed a series of short videos on the weekly Torah portion or the holiday, taught by the variety of educators teaching at the Hannaton Mechina that were shared each week with our alumni and with a wider public through Facebook and our enewsletters. These videos can be viewed on our website by clicking on this link: "[Witness the Thunder](#)".

A Final Thanks

We would like to thank the Matanel Foundation for supporting the work of the Hannaton Mechina this year. We are proud to be partnering with the foundation and to be working together for the next generation of Israelis and for the betterment of Israel.