

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: Midreshet Roni

Year: 2019-20 (5780)

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole report will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program: Midreshet Roni

Year of activity: 2019-20 (5780)

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Number of active participants in the program: 22

Estimated number of impacted participants

About 500 people when include the families of the participants, the residents of Masu'ot Yitzchak, the families whom they volunteered with during the year, participants of other Midrashot that they met with, Roni alumni and potential participants, and their peers at Mechinat Tzahali, in the army, sherut leumi, and other walks of life..

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

Roni as a program is now on break. The third year ended at the beginning of July (slightly extended because of the corona pandemic) and year four will begin at the beginning of September. The 22 participants are getting ready to join the Israeli army, better prepared, with greater motivation, and a better understanding of whom they are and their mission. The staff is spending the "break" reviewing and evaluating the year, planning for the upcoming year based on what they learned from the review and evaluation, and training new staff. They are also taking some vacation time after finishing an intense and successful year. Dealing with the coronavirus, as mentioned later, added to both the intensity and the success. There will be 28 young women starting the 4th year of the Midreshet Roni on September 1.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

Twenty-two young women participated in Midreshet Roni on Masu'ot Yitzchak during 5780. They learned 45 hours a week that was divided between classes and independent learning in the Beit Midrash.

Beyond the text learning, the educational process included experiencing group living on a daily basis and special programming throughout the year focused on learning more about Israeli society. They also volunteered on Masu'ot with senior citizens and women with special needs.

The regular learning schedule included Tanach, Talmud, Jewish law and Jewish philosophy with a focus on wrestling with the dilemmas that accompany these women on a daily basis in our postmodern world.

Special emphasis was placed on preparing the participants for meaningful army service at the end of the year at the Midrasha.

Learning at Roni also occurs beyond the walls of the Beit Midrash and what is written in books. Throughout the year, the participants learn to live as a group as they acquire skills needed to live in an inclusive environment; discussing issues that are on the group's agenda and identifying with the perspective of others that lead to compromising. A lot of time is dedicated to this as each person reflects on her own values leading to both personal and group growth.

The participants individually and in small groups are also involved in all aspects of the operation of the Midrasha; shifts in the kitchen and the cleaning, responsibility for the campus, and preparing special events as well as Chagim and Shabbatot.

The multiple day trips to learn about the various groups who make up Israeli society and their challenges, are also planned by the participants with the oversight of the educational staff.

We wanted to strengthen the skill set of the participants for self-learning. In order to do this we increased the number of hours for self-learning and had the staff focus more on closely guiding the students during this time in order to answer their questions and to help build an environment that led to success.

Just like everyone else, we were surprised by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. We had just completed a powerful experience on Purim night (March 9) and the students went home the following day to celebrate part of the Holiday and a long weekend with their parents. Instead of returning to the Midrasha the following Sunday, they returned in mid-May. We were able to start teaching through Zoom so remote learning started almost immediately. Because the students technically join the army during their year at the Midrasha, the army recruited about half of the students after Pesach for three weeks to help the Home Front Command at one of their call centers answering calls from people in need due to the pandemic and advising them. The rest of the group continued learning remotely.

The participants returned to the Midrasha in mid-May. Even though we were following the instructions of the Ministry of Health, all of us had concerns. We were overjoyed that all the students returned with a tremendous amount of motivation. This led to an incredible experience during the last two months of the program. This period brought greater group cohesion and the time was used effectively for continued growth and preparation for their drafting into the Israel Defense Forces.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

Please refer to the separate Evaluation Report

Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

There will be about 28 young women starting the 4th year of the Midrasha on September 1.

Midreshet Roni is a 10-month intensive experience, and the participants are involved in multiple areas of study and immersion. Goals and activities include:

Goals

- Strengthening the participants' religious and feminist identities through in depth study of a diverse and open Judaism as they are prepared for army service
- Leadership development, learning responsibility, group living skills, and empowering each individual
- Strengthening the skill set of the participants for self-learning

Types of Activities

- In-depth, existential and relevant Jewish Studies
- Emotional, mental, and physical preparation for meaningful army service
- Responsibility for their daily schedule and preparing special programming
- Learning and taking upon themselves tasks that focus on connecting with Israel through meeting diverse groups living here, weekly volunteering, and taking upon themselves a variety of missions within the wider community
- Group living that includes task groups, projects, a communal kitchen, learning time management skills, and how to stay within a budget