



RABBINERSEMINAR ZU BERLIN

בית מדרש לרבנים

## **Eshet Chayil Program**

### Activity Report for 2013/14 – Mid report – May 2014

Our Eshet Chayil Program, funded by Hulya A.s.b.l. Luxembourg, was launched in August 2013. It consists of three tracks of activities and additional services:

i) regular conferences; ii) Monthly webinars; iii) Mentoring Program; as well as  
iv) Building a networking system for Rebbetzins throughout Germany facilitated by an Online-Forum.

After a short preparation period of approximately 2 months the following activities have been realized up to now with an enormous success:

#### 1) First Conference, October 2013

The Eshet Chayil project was launched with our first bi-annual conference held in the Amano Conference Rooms in Berlin on 29-30th October. 18 Rebbetzins and Rebbetzins in-training came together for two action-packed, inspiring days. The theme was “Juggling the multi-faceted roles of the contemporary Rebbetzin”.

The first day was geared towards being inspired by top speakers such as Rabbi Josh Spinner with the theme of understanding Ahavat Yisroel, the importance of loving our fellow Jews, foremost in our communal roles. There was a dynamic debate and discussions in the afternoon sessions, as participants were divided into groups to present a list of the challenges they face in their field. The following session was dedicated to brainstorming and working together to formulate creative solution to the challenges, and importantly to provide insight to us the directors of the project, so we could customize future programs to maximum benefit.

The evening program and meal times, were crucial to bonding as a group, and laying the foundation of the peer-network of support.

Rebbetzin Rachel Binstock, flew in from London, the following day to inspire the women with a very warm, practical and positive approach. She brought with her over three decades of experience as Rebbetzin of a large, dynamic community in St Johns Wood London.

She was perfectly suited to give our women important insights, and practical application of juggling roles as wife, mother and Rebbetzin. She also gave a session outlining the many projects she had successfully initiated in her community over the years, which our participants could adapt to suit their congregations. She was the undisputed highlight of the conference. The women left feeling inspired and enthusiastic to return to their communities, brimming with new ideas and importantly a social network of peers.



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The next conference will be dealing with diverse backgrounds within the Jewish communities and how to communicate effectively. We are in the process of organizing this conference which will take place in Prague from the 29<sup>th</sup> of June to 1<sup>st</sup> of July. There will be two speakers at the conference. A psychologist as well as a Rebbetzin, dealing with both technical psychological issues as well as the Jewish perspective.

## 2) Monthly (Wednesday) Webinars

Our monthly webinars are usually held on a Wednesday, depending on the availability of the speaker sometimes more than once a month. We invite a renowned speaker, with rabbinic or outreach experience to address our participants via Webinar on important topics. This has proved to be a big success, as the ladies look forward to 'meeting' online, and interacting with the speaker.

Having conducted an evaluation of what is mostly needed by the participants, we have devised a curriculum addressing those needs, offering aspects of Halacha and general Jewish knowledge but also practical topics such as “Laws of Shabbat in the Kitchen”, Tefilla and Taharat Mishpacha. In addition, there are classes relating to the holidays as well as general issues that Rebbetzins face in their work within diverse communities.

The first Webinar in January, run by Rebbetzin Kalsmith, dealt with “Finding Hashem in the Darkness”, the second webinar was given by Rebbetzin Halpern on “Bringing Simcha into our homes”. Then we started a block session course in March on “Hilchot Shabbat in the Kitchen”, explaining in practical details the laws of Bishul, Borer and Toichen, given by Rebbetzin Rochel Stefansky of Manchester, England. This course is still ongoing and will be followed by courses in Tefilla and Taharat Hamishpacha and other topics relevant to the participants.

## 3) Mentoring

We have set up a mentoring program for which we seek out a pool of experienced 'Rebbetzins' from across Europe, who we match with participants from our program. They initially meet via skype, and follow up with the medium of their choice. The Mentor acts a listening ear, a supportive person to whom they can turn to for advice and guidance, and importantly to feel that they are not in this alone.



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#### 4) Networking system

We have started an online-forum in January providing the participants of the program with a social meeting place to share ideas, experiences and support.

This years' activities have inspired the women and created a sense of belonging for all participants. Whether they are alone with their husband in a far away community or live with other participants together in a vibrant community, they feel connected to one another and feel the support provided by this program. In addition, the networking system also includes bringing together experienced Rebbetzins, working in communities or other institutions, with the participants of the program. While the program moves on, some of the participants, who are already in the field, become more and more experienced and can contribute further to the group and the program.

The conference in Prague constitutes the highlight for this year with important topics that will be tackled in an amazing and historical surrounding. The group very much looks forward to this experience.

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