

Report on Matanel Chair for Kabbalah Studies at Zefat Academic College 2016-2017

September 2017

Headed by Professor Moshe Idel,

Zefat Academic College would like to thank you for your ongoing support of Professor Moshe Idel's significant research and the operation of the Matanel Chair for Kabbalah Studies, headed by Professor Moshe Idel.

The activities supported by The Matanel Foundation in 2016/2017, included:

- A senior teaching position for Professor Moshe Idel. Professor Idel is the leading senior lecturer at the Mysticism and Spiritualities department that was established and is operating with his assistance.
- Professor Idel taught three academic courses: Rituals and Mystic Techniques in Judaism/Hasidut and its sources/'Son of God' in Jewish mysticism
- The editing of the book "Dual Ontology" (the book is in its final processing stages and will be printed by the end of the year).
- "Keter Malchut", 260 pages book completed in summer of 2017 on The privileged Status of the Divine Feminine in Theosophical-Theurgical Kabbala , based mostly on the city of Zefat as a Kaballah renaissance center.
- The "Dimitri Cantemir" price recipient presented in Romania on behalf of the Romanian Monarch in an international scientific conference on "Evolution and Revolution"
- Opening lecture in Warsaw in a conference dedicated to Rabbi Kolonimus
- Key note lecture in ZAC "New revelations on Zefat Research" in participation with the National Antiques Authority
- Published an Article in "Peamim" on Rabbi Moshe Cordoveiro.
- Employment of two research assistants (to be implemented later in 2017)
- The Matanel Chair for Kabbalah web site Employment of two research assistants (to be implemented later in 2017)
- A template for the website has been established within the new ZAC website. The process of updating the website will be completed during 2017-2018.

The Matanel Foundation granted \$70,000 to be at ZAC's disposal. The Matanel Foundation and ZAC agreed on the ways to advance the Kaballah and Spiritualities studies in the city of Zefat, which took its place as the Kaballah center in the Jewish world and in general. For the advancement of the subject, an agreement for three years of collaboration was signed early on 2016.

Principles and Proposed Activities:

The following activities now take place within the Institute for Zefat Kabbalah Research:

- Professor Idel heads the institute and will continue to teach at ZAC, parallel to conducting researches.
- A new internet website will gather academic information and research in the field and will be accessible to the public with comprehensible and clear language. In this website not only the research of Kaballah will be made prominent but also other topics; the examination and research of old cemeteries and synagogues, and publishing houses, in Zefat and the area.
- The institute will participate in public lectures to the general public including city tours in the fields of its expertise.

- The institute will publish the book *“Male and Female”: Equality, Female's Theurgy, and Eros - R. Moshe Cordovero's Dual Ontology* (Funds were received for this publication in the 2014-2015 Matanel Foundation grant)

Organization:

A steering committee was established and will be comprised of academics and people recommended by The Matanel Foundation.

Professor Idel will be aided by two research assistants who will receive a scholarship, preferably third year students at ZAC, who among other things will aid the researchers and the content manager of the website.

Budget for 2017:

See App.

About Zefat Academic College (ZAC)

Zefat Academic College was opened in the 1980's as a small branch of Bar-Ilan University. During this period of time, urban Israeli universities were encouraged to open up branches in the rural Galilee and Negev where no public institutions of higher education existed. The goal of these branches was to offer affordable quality education to these rural Israeli populations. In the 1990's a decision was made by the Israeli Council of Higher Education to encourage these small university branches to grow into substantial independent public colleges. Zefat Academic College was approved as an independent college in 2007 and is accredited to award baccalaureate degrees in the areas of law, health, and the social sciences and humanities. There are currently 2,500 students studying for their baccalaureate degrees, and an additional 250 students in their pre-academic studies. ZAC is a major anchor to the local Zefat community, and leads in the urban development of Zefat and the Galilee. 90% of our students are from the Galilee and prefer to live in the Galilee upon graduation, students who remain here, add to the quality of the workforce.

About The Mysticism and Spiritualities Department

Zefat Academic College's B.A. program in Mysticism and Spiritualities is at the heart of the College's broader mission to revitalize the study of the humanities. This program builds on the burgeoning academic interest in mysticism gaining ground in institutions of higher education in Israel and throughout the world. The curriculum includes a natural focus on the creative Jewish spiritual expression which has thrived in Zefat for centuries, and the city provides a natural venue for students and scholars to examine and observe contemporary Kabbalistic thought and practice. At the same time, the program explores spiritual phenomena in a range of cultures and religions, including mystical traditions in Christianity, Islam and Asian religions. The curriculum also has a strong multi-disciplinary component, linking the study of mysticism and spiritualities to the social and behavioral sciences. Historical, sociological, psychological and gender perspectives are among the tools utilized to achieve critical insight into this multi-faceted field of scholarly inquiry.

About Professor Moshe Idel

Currently Professor Emeritus, Max Cooper Professor of Jewish Thought, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute.

For his transformative research into Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism, for development of methodology which introduces phenomenological modes of investigation and the

development of theoretical tools that have facilitated interchanges between his field and other domains of Religious Studies.

Professor Moshe Idel is widely considered to be the greatest living scholar of Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism in the world today. He has transformed the study of Kabbalah, critically expanding the historical-philological groundwork first laid by Professor Gershom Scholem. Professor Idel's innovative approach combines phenomenological methodology emphasizes the experiential and per formative aspects of Kabbalistic practice and profound reflection on Kabbalistic hermeneutics and theories of languages. He has identified, dated, analyzed and translated thousands of unknown or little-known texts, exhibiting from the outset, an unparalleled understanding that has enabled him to give fresh interpretations of ideas, attitudes and patterns of behavior evinced in them. His contribution has transcended the academic study of Kabbalah, touching the broadest possible spectrum of issues of Judaism, history and phenomenology of religion. He has dealt with relations between mystical and other trends, Halakha, renewal and change in Judaism; he has delved into hermeneutics, placed religious practice in new light; and examined the place of 'myth', 'ritual' and mystical techniques at various stages of Jewish religious development. His work has evoked the interest of the greatest interpreters of intellectual and religious heritage of the West, including Umberto Eco, Harold Bloom and Jacques Derrida.

He has authored over 20 books and edited eight volumes, and his books were translated in many languages. He has been instrumental in the development of Jewish Studies as an international academic field and in the revival of Jewish Studies in Eastern and Central Europe.

Professor Moshe Idel was born in Târgu Neamț, Romania in 1947. He holds the Max Cooper Chair in Jewish Thought at The Hebrew University. He is Professor Emeritus since 2008. He chaired the Department of Jewish Thought in 1992-1994. Professor Idel received his PhD in Kabbalah, *summa cum laude* from The Hebrew University in 1976. He has been a Visiting Professor at Yale, Harvard, and Princeton Universities, the University of Pennsylvania, at the College de France and at Ecole de Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociale in Paris, at Dartmouth College, and UCLA, and taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. He has been a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies at The Hebrew University, and The Tikvah and Straus Institutes at NYU, and served as Head of the Academic Committee of Makhon Ben-Zvi and of the Centre of Jewish Music at the National Library of Israel. He is a member of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Among his numerous awards and honours, he received the Koret Prize, the EMET Prize, the Jewish National Book Award and the Gershom Scholem Prize for Research in Kabbalah at the Israeli Academy, and the Israel Prize for Jewish Thought in 1999, the "Dimitri Cantemir" price recipient presented in 2017 on behalf of the Romanian Monarch.