

# *MATANEL FOUNDATION*

## *ACTIVITY REPORT*

**Program:** Midreshet Roni

**Year:** 2020-21 (5781)

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:** 2020-21 (5781)

**Name of the report's writer:** Dr. Gary Coleman

**Function of the report's writer:** Director of Resource Development

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**Number of active participants in the program:** 26

### **Estimated number of impacted participants**

About 525 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 fourth year ended at the end of June and year five will begin on August 22. The 26 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 and the Guardians of the Wall operation as mentioned later, added to both the intensity and the success. There will be 31 young women starting the 5<sup>h</sup> year of Midreshet Roni on August 22.

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

Twenty-six young women participated in Midreshet Roni on Masu'ot Yitzchak during 5781. They learned 45 hours a week that was divided between classes and independent learning in the Beit Midrash. During this process, the learning at Midreshet Roni became much more meaningful and impactful as the young women

now are able to look at themselves as “Bnot Torah”. They completed a tractate of Talmud and produced a pamphlet with their original Torah thoughts.

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 when they finish the year at the Midrasha. The participants are responsible for their daily schedule and prepare special programming including the "excursion/trips."

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.

Because of COVID-19 that was with us for the entire year and the Guardians of the Wall operation towards the end of the year (Masuot is about 20 kilometers from Gaza), we needed to make certain changes to the program. The learning for much of the year was in “capsulot” (small groups) and volunteering opportunities were more limited. Trips to learn about the various groups who make up Israeli society and their challenges were one day excursions, until after Pesach, instead of multiple days with sleeping off campus. The participants stayed on campus for longer periods including more Shabbatot.

The year was emotionally very difficult for the participants, but through the work of our excellent staff, the challenge of this unique year brought the young women closer together and made the experience a growing one and unforgettable.

Also, the Guardians of the Wall operation was complicated because our campus on Masu'ot consists of many temporary buildings and the young women sleep in caravans. We need to find a solution to this security problem.

**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 31 young women starting the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the Midrasha August 22. We are also in continual contact with the alumni serving in the Israeli army and those who have finished their army service.

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