



**Anshei Chayil: English and Social Media Lessons for Fellows
Activity Report, October 2023**

Name of Program

English and Social Media Lessons for Anshei Chayil Fellows

Year of Activity

2023

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

The Matanel Foundation's generous donation enabled Anshei Chayil fellows to receive a series of private English lessons (the number of lessons varied for each fellow), and to attend three two-and-a-half-hour workshops to increase their social media and digital skills.

Operation and achievements of the program:

English lessons: Anshei Chayil fellows benefited from private English lessons with Mimi Kahn, a professional ESL teacher, once or twice a week. Some of the lessons took place in person, while others were on Zoom. Each concentrated on the aspect of English that was important to him – one had an upcoming exam for entrance to graduate school and wanted to focus on reading comprehension, while the others preferred to learn conversational English (although some grammar and reading was also included). Each one began at a different level of language comprehension and of confidence in speaking the language. Each worked hard and improved over the course of the lessons. Those that began at a lower level can now carry out basic conversations in English, and can write with guidance, using the grammar that they've learned. Others can speak more fluently in both present and past tenses, and can express themselves successfully about a variety of subjects. The fellow with the upcoming exam received very important tools for understanding English and for writing exams (they also discussed types of questions that can be

problematic if you don't understand them properly, etc.). One of the fellows would like to continue on his own once the series of lessons within the framework of Anshei Chayil is finished.

Social media workshops: Anshei Chayil fellows participated in three social media workshops during July and August, facilitated by Yiscah Oppenheim, an expert in branding and community communication networks. Each workshop was two-and-a-half hours long. The purpose of the workshops was to increase the impact of the fellows' work through digital means.

During the first workshop, participants underwent an in-depth process, each stated what he wanted to transmit and to whom, and then they began investigating which digital platforms would be most suitable for that purpose. As each participant had something different to say and different audiences to address, each left the workshop with an individual marketing plan, including which platforms they'd like to use (among the possibilities were Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, podcasts, a blog, Haredi forums, professional articles, op-eds in Haaretz, and more).

During the second workshop, participants provided feedback to one another, examined the difference between what they'd wanted to transmit and what they'd actually transmitted, and closed the gaps.

During the final meeting, they looked at additional platforms and how to use them for their purposes. In fact, during each meeting, fellows brought examples of the various platforms they'd used, what had and hadn't been successful, and how to improve. They also learned to take photos on a variety of platforms, which is significant because Haredim generally don't take pictures. However, understanding that a photograph significantly increases engagement with a post, they learned this skill as well.

Following the workshops, some of the participants maintained contact with the facilitator, consulted with her by phone, and sent her their posts, asking for feedback.

Evaluation and Challenges:

Evaluation:

English lessons: Mimi, the teacher feels that, in the limited number of lessons that took place, participants made great progress. She feels that the fact that lessons were private was the key to their success. There are two reasons for this: 1) Fellows didn't feel intimidated by others seeing what they felt might be their low level of English, and 2) they were "forced" to do their homework, as they couldn't hide within a group.

Social media workshops: At the final meeting, participants expressed their complete satisfaction with the process in which they'd participated, and the tools they'd acquired to better express and disseminate their viewpoint. Yiscah finished the workshops with a feeling of hope, as she experienced the variety in Haredi society and the voices within it that are making change, and was thrilled to have helped them acquire the tools to increase their impact.

Challenges:

English lessons: The teacher reports that the primary challenge was the difficulty of learning a new language at the fellows' stage of life, when starting at a low level. She also witnessed a marked lack of confidence in some of the students.

Social media workshops: The facilitator reports that the primary challenge was participants' difficulty in speaking openly with one another regarding personal issues and exposing their authentic selves. Several of them wanted to speak privately with Yiscah, but she encouraged them

to speak honestly with one another, explaining that digital algorithms can identify authenticity and inauthenticity, and that it was important to have their personal voice expressed. She felt that, through the process of the workshops, they gradually opened up significantly and, by the end, were able to communicate well with one another.

Another issue was the fear of criticizing phenomena within the Haredi community. Thus, they learned how to write about their own personal experience, issues they encountered, without generalizing to the entire community or being critical.

Feedback:

English Lessons: All participants expressed how important they felt it is to learn English, and were extremely grateful for this opportunity. One student had a particularly difficult time, and, after five lessons, felt totally lost and wanted to quit. The teacher encouraged him to remain, and now he wants to continue lessons privately after the session ends.

Participants' feedback includes (in translation):

"I was very fortunate to be offered the opportunity to study English with Mimi. I began at a very low level of English. Mimi knew exactly how to work with me and develop my confidence, enabling me to converse in English and to read and understand texts, including basic tools for constructing sentences. I believe my English improved significantly, and the lessons were experiential and fun. I know that the tools I acquired in these lessons will enable me to continue to move forward in English language acquisition."

"I feel that the opportunity to study English with Mimi was a great gift. The lessons improved my English speaking, reading, and writing, and enabled me to advance very significantly. Mimi knew very well how to relate to each person's needs. I think these lessons were one of the most important factors in general progress in my life. I am most grateful to Mimi and the funders for this opportunity."

"I have studied with other English teachers in the past, and can say that Mimi's lessons are clear and well taught, and that she has a great amount of patience and desire for me to progress, with the tools to do so. I believe I advanced a great deal in English speech, reading, and writing. I would love to be able to continue if possible, and am very grateful for this course, which was a huge success for me."

Social media workshops: During the final meeting, participants expressed their complete satisfaction with the process they'd undergone and with the tools they'd acquired, enabling them to better express and publicize their viewpoints.

Rabbi Bezalel Cohen, Anshei Chayil's founder, participated in the workshops, and expressed how excellent they were. "Yiscah, the facilitator, was excellent and professional. She worked hard on defining each person's voice and what they wanted to say – what hurts them, what their focus is, what they want to do in the world, and which platforms are best for each of them. She used very good exercises and did great work, and participants were extremely satisfied."

Yiscah, the facilitator, left with a lot of hope, saying that she's witnessed the variety within Haredi society, and the voices that are affecting change, and that they'd acquired tools to increase their impact. She says, "On Rosh Hashana I was thinking about the many things I'd done during the past year, and Anshei Chayil was the most meaningful. I truly felt their development and opening over the course of the sessions. They understood the problems of their community and were able to look at it critically, wanting to understand how they can open others' eyes."

Our thanks:

We'd like to express our sincere gratitude, on behalf of the Society for Advancement of Education, Jerusalem, and all the Anshei Chayil fellows who participated in the English lessons and/or the social media workshops. These were wonderful opportunities for the fellows to acquire language facility and digital skills that will enable them to disseminate their views and their important messages, which are essential in opening minds and providing options to forward-thinking individuals within Haredi society.