

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: Kabbalah in Context: Portraits of Localized Knowledge (as part of The Matanel Chair of Kabbalah Studies at the Ben-Zvi Institute)

Year: 2025

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

Name of the Program: Kabbalah in Context: Portraits of Localized Knowledge

Year of activity: 2025

Name of the report's writer: Dr. Assaf Tamari and Eugene Matanky

Function of the report's writer: Head of The Matanel Chair of Kabbalah Studies at the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, and coordinator of the workshop.

Mail: assaf@ybz.org.il

Phones: 972-523-656139

Website / Facebook address of the organization: <https://ybz.org.il/> / <https://www.facebook.com/ybz.org>

Number of active participants in the program: 37

Estimated number of impacted participants: 37

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

The research workshop **Kabbalah in Context: Portraits of Localized Knowledge** successfully took place on January 28–29, 2025, at Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem. The event was held as a two-day closed workshop in which there were 36 participants (27 speakers and 9 session chairs), including international scholars. All presentations were limited to 15 minutes to allow for extended, in-depth discussion. The event fostered focused dialogue among a committed group of scholars and students and met its methodological goal of rethinking the localization of kabbalistic knowledge.

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

The primary achievement was the successful organization and completion of a focused, two-day international research workshop. Participants included senior academics, early career researchers, and doctoral students. The format—short presentations and long discussions—encouraged meaningful engagement and methodological exchange. The workshop format also fostered greater commitment

and a more intimate environment. The high-quality discussions indicated that the event served as an important milestone in this burgeoning academic conversation and participants, especially early career researchers and doctoral students, related that they found the workshop extremely relevant to their research projects and methodologies. Furthermore, as many participants noted, in recent years conferences and workshops devoted entirely to the scholarship of the Kabbalah have become scarce, and this workshop served to revitalize the scholarly conversation in the discipline. On the academic level, the workshop presented various new approaches to the methodological challenges associated with portraying local intellectual knowledge, by foregrounding both local and global dynamics in the production, transmission, and reception of kabbalistic knowledge. Sessions were built along methodological lines, allowing to bring to the discussion table various considerations in the delicate work of contextualization, localization and the ability to draw wider conclusions regarding Kabbalah's roles in Jewish societies more widely. Accordingly, the sessions ranged from philological issues to epistemological and historical ones, from an emphasis on the local, to a discussion of mobility, from the communal to the global, and from the social to the ideational, to create a plethora of considerations.

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

Feedback was collected informally through post-event correspondence and direct communication. Participants expressed high satisfaction, particularly with the workshop's structure that prioritized discussion over lengthy lectures. Many found the event professionally rewarding and intellectually stimulating. As this was the first workshop held, there is no previous year to which we can compare.

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

A future workshop event would retain the format of brief presentations, supplemented with pre-circulated drafts, to allow more time for discussion. We have likewise discussed including in the Call for Participants a planned publication based on the presentations delivered during the workshop to share the proceedings with the public. A key difficulty, to be considered in future activities, is the ability to ensure all participants provide materials in full and in time. This is of course not a unique problem here, but creating such a commitment will ameliorate the depth of discussion. On the other hand, flexibility, allowing some to submit late or partial materials allows key scholars to take part. A second issue is the proper way to document and make accessible to the scholarly community (and beyond) the discussions in the workshop. The workshop sessions were intentionally not recorded, to allow for intimate, free, discussions. An important future challenge, thus, is how to profit on the discussions, through some form of publication, not necessarily a classic academic one, but one accessible to the relevant publics.

We have already discussed the possibility of hosting future workshops related to the overall goal of The Matanel Chair of Kabbalah Studies, maintaining the methodological emphasis, most fruitful in this format. We have likewise discussed the possibility of broadening the workshop parameters to include Haredi individuals who are currently working on similar research, even though they do so outside of an official academic context.

Please join the Evaluation Report, the Financial Report and the list of the participants to the program (**as PDF documents**)

- a. The program's designated budget was 12000 NIS.

Expenses:

Coordinator: 5000 NIS

Catering and refreshments: 3500 NIS

Graphics and printing: 1500 NIS

Facilities: 1500 NIS

Office services: 500 NIS

- b. List of participants:

Dr. **Eliezer Baumgarten** (University of Haifa), Dr. **Naama Ben-Shahar** (Bar-Ilan University), Dr. **Moti Benmelech** (Herzog College), Prof. **Avriel Bar-Levav** (The Open University), **Levana M. Chajes** (Hebrew University), Dr. **Maximilian de Molière** (University of Haifa), **Ayelet Walfish Frankel** (University of Haifa), Dr. **Ido Harari** (Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem), Prof. **Boaz Huss** (Ben-Gurion University), Prof. **Maoz Kahana** (Tel Aviv University), **Yinon Kahan** (Hebrew University), Dr. **Yoed Kadary** (Tel Aviv University and Ben-Gurion University), Dr. **Tirza Kelman** (Talpiot College), **Avraham Oriah Kelman** (Stanford University), **Mika Klarman** (TAU), **Efrat Lederfein-Gilboa** (Ben-Gurion University), **Noam Lev-El** (Hebrew University), Prof. **Menachem Lorberbaum** (Tel Aviv University), **Tzvi H. Luboshitz** (The Hebrew University), Dr. **Yakov Z. Mayer** (Hebrew University), **Eugene D. Matanky** (Tel Aviv University), Dr. **Yaniv Mezman** (Yad Ben-Zvi), Prof. **Ronit Meroz** (Tel Aviv University), Dr. **Tamara Morsel-Eisenberg** (Tel Aviv University), **Yehuda Pava** (Ben-Gurion University), Dr. **Leore Sachs-Shmueli** (Bar Ilan University), **Dor Saar-Man** (Tel Aviv University), Dr. **Uri Safrai** (Herzog College and Haifa University), **Yotam Schremer** (The Hebrew University), **Matan (Shalom) Shalom** (Ben-Gurion University), Dr. **Gal Sofer** (Ben-Gurion University), Dr. **Assaf Tamari** (Ben-Zvi Institute and Shalem College), Prof. **Amiel Vick** (Independent scholar), Dr. **Roni Weinstein** (Hebrew University), Prof. **Tzahi Weiss** (The Open University), Prof. **Oded Yisraeli** (Ben-Gurion University), **Hod Zaguri** (Tel Aviv University).

Please join photos – as **JPG files** – and any link or any other document connected to the program which will seem to you relevant – as **PDF document**.

Please join a 5 minutes movie which presents your institution and the particular project supported by the Matanel Foundation. The movie should be accessible to the philanthropic world and to other potential donors.