

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation report draws on multiple sources to assess the progress and interim outcomes of the Matanel Fellowship for Global Jewish Leadership. The primary quantitative data comes from a *mid-program reflection survey* administered immediately following the immersive Shabbaton in Budapest. While this survey focused heavily on the retreat itself, it also included broader questions about how fellows are feeling, what they are learning, and how they see themselves growing through the program. At the time of writing, no post-program survey has been administered, as the fellowship is ongoing and will conclude in November 2025. Additional qualitative insights come from oral feedback shared by program facilitators—some of which was relayed directly by fellows during group conversations, informal moments, and reflection circles. Together, these sources offer a meaningful snapshot of where things stand at the midpoint: what’s resonating, what’s shifting, and what might come next.

Participant Overview

The 2025 Matanel Fellowship cohort includes a total of 15 fellows representing three countries. Seven are from Israel, four from Poland, and four from the United States. This geographic mix reflects the fellowship’s core mission: to build real relationships across borders and create a space where young Jews from different backgrounds can explore shared values, ask hard questions, and imagine a future together.

Budapest Survey Analysis

To check in on how fellows were experiencing the program thus far, we distributed a mid-program survey following the immersive Shabbaton in Budapest. The survey included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions designed to capture emotional impact, group dynamics, content engagement, and personal growth. Seven of the sixteen fellows completed the survey. Their responses were reviewed for recurring themes and meaningful moments, and quotes were

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Key Trends Identified

1. Deepened Sense of Global Jewish Peoplehood

From the very first session, the fellowship invited participants to think expansively about what connects us as a global Jewish people. Over the months, fellows met guest speakers, engaged in lively debates, and got to know each other's personal stories. The retreat in Budapest allowed these ideas to come alive in new ways—especially through shared Shabbat experiences and honest conversations about history, identity, and community. What emerges clearly from the survey is that fellows are walking away with a more personal and profound understanding of Jewish Peoplehood.

In the mid-program survey, every fellow agreed that they felt more connected to the larger Jewish community as a result of the retreat, and all respondents affirmed that they saw value in their unique Jewish story. These outcomes reflect one of the most deeply held goals of the fellowship: to make global belonging feel real and personal.

"That we are so connected no matter what! Our differences make us stronger. We're like a family that fights and debates but can never be disconnected" — Maya, USA

"I learned that there is so much more to learn about global Jewry — and that I've only just scratched the surface." — Yakira, USA

"I understood more about how uneven the Jewish community in the world is, but united. I realized how common our challenges are even if they are different and/or affect certain communities more than others, and the importance of the younger generation in the Jewish community to overcome the challenges and maintain the unity and connection between the communities." — Tomer, Israel

2. High Emotional Impact of Jewish Historical Sites

Walking through Budapest together, fellows encountered the layered history of Jewish life in Europe—not just intellectually, but in a way that was embodied and emotional. Visits to the Dohany Street Synagogue and the Danube Shoe Memorial created powerful moments of shared reflection.

"A personal highlight for me was visiting the Great Synagogue, where I truly felt like I was part of something much bigger. Another powerful moment I'll never forget was seeing the shoes on the

Danube River — it was deeply moving and left a strong impression on me.” ~ Avihu, Israel

*“The Neolog synagogue, getting to know the group members, and the conversation with local Jewish community representatives.” —
Tomer, Israel*

These encounters reminded many fellows that Jewish identity is shaped not only by memory, but by the choices we make to show up, rebuild, and lead.

3. Recognition of Personal Role in the Jewish Story

In the survey, 86% of fellows indicated that they felt more motivated to take on leadership roles within Hillel or their broader Jewish community. For many, this wasn’t just a confidence boost—it was a mindset shift. Fellows began to see themselves as contributors to a shared Jewish future, with something meaningful to offer.

“I learned that I have influence and pride in being part of the global Jewish community.” — Avihu, Israel

“I connect to people more easily than I thought. This experience helped me find my voice.” — Tsuf, Israel

This growing sense of purpose speaks to the heart of the Matanel Fellowship: supporting young Jews in stepping into their roles as engaged, compassionate, and courageous leaders.

Participant Suggestions for Improvement

While most feedback was positive, three fellows offered thoughtful suggestions to enhance future retreats. Two specifically recommended allowing more unstructured time for reflection and relationship-building.

“Maybe more free time – it was very scheduled.” — Tsuf, Israel

One fellow asked for deeper engagement with local Jewish communities beyond institutional leaders.

“I think meeting with more Jewish community members — especially younger people — would have added a lot.” — Yakira, USA

These suggestions are helpful reminders of how important balance, presence, and peer connection are to the success of immersive programs like this one.

Conclusion

The Matanel Fellowship for Global Jewish Leadership is still in progress, with several sessions left to go before it concludes in December 2025. What we can already see, though, is that something powerful is taking root. Fellows are building meaningful relationships across cultures, wrestling with complex ideas, and stepping into new roles as leaders in their communities. This interim report—based on the Budapest mid-program survey and facilitator insights—captures just one chapter in a much longer journey. A final evaluation will follow the program's conclusion, offering a fuller picture of its long-term impact and the stories our fellows carry forward.