

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: Matanel Perach Zahav – Hillel the Elder
Year: 2024-2025

Name of the Program: Matanel Perach Zahav – Hillel the Elder (588)

Year of activity: 2024-2025

Name of the report's writer: Grace Baker

Function of the report's writer: Director of Resource Development and Communications

Mail: graceb@hillelIsrael.org

Phones: 054-737-7894

Website / Facebook address of the organization: www.hillelIsrael.org

Number of active participants in the program: 38

Estimated number of impacted participants: 350

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

During the 2024-2025 activity year, Hillel Israel's Matanel Perach Zahav program was held on four campuses: Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Ben Gurion. A total of 38 students participated in one-on-one volunteering with senior citizens, many of them Holocaust survivors, meeting weekly to assist with errands, access medical care, navigate bureaucracy (such as Bituach Leumi), and most importantly — to offer presence, conversation, and companionship.

At Hillel Ben Gurion, each student was paired with a survivor through a partnership with Clalit's "In Good Hands" program. Some of these relationships became deeply personal; one student, Uri Goldschmidt, has been volunteering with the same survivor for two years and describes him as a grandfather figure. The two are even planning a roots trip together. "Yehuda has become a grandfather to me," Uri shared, "and this relationship is now an essential part of my life."

An additional 60 students from all the campuses volunteered in groups, meeting seniors in day centers or public markets throughout the year. In Jerusalem, students volunteered to assist elderly shoppers through the bustling Machane Yehuda market, helping them carry groceries, and listening to their stories of immigration, the Holocaust, and early statehood. One student recalled accompanying a survivor to her hairdresser, where the woman proudly introduced them and the initiative to the entire salon. In Haifa, students held a Purim event for seniors in Kiryat Bialik where they played games, sang songs, and celebrated the holiday. Tel Aviv students volunteered at an assisted living facility in Netanya where they cleaned up the overgrown patio and yard, as well as planted flowers in flowerbeds they build by hand.

The program continues to serve as a powerful model of personal, respectful engagement with seniors and Holocaust survivors — offering dignity, continuity, and human connection.

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

Through weekly visits, 38 students formed deep bonds and lasting relationships with the seniors they were paired with, many of which were Holocaust survivors. During visits, the students would take the senior on short outings to the market, for a walk in the park, or to a local cafe. Students often reported about how the conversations flowed easily and they talked with the seniors about everything - personal experiences, life challenges, Jewish identity, dreams, and memories. These meetings often provided emotional support for both the student and the senior. Many students continue to visit weekly with the senior they volunteered with, seeing them now as part of their family. They meet for coffee or outings, and one student is even planning a trip together as he has come to see the senior as a grandparent. (Please see the attached Testimonial document.)

Students also assisted the seniors with practical needs: accompanying them on errands (to the pharmacy or supermarket), helping with digital skills, making bureaucratic calls (e.g., to Bituach Leumi), and supporting day-to-day tasks in the home.

For many of these students, the one-on-one volunteering was a rare and meaningful opportunity to form personal connections with veteran Israelis. It also provided a space to speak Hebrew in a low-pressure environment, which can be a major challenge for young olim navigating university life in a new language. The students talked about how meaningful it was for them to participate in the program and form relationships with seniors and Holocaust survivors in Haifa.

In addition to one-on-one volunteering, students at each campus also participated in group volunteer opportunities as well as learning sessions throughout the year. In Jerusalem, students took part in *Geveret im Salim*, a regular group volunteering in the Machane Yehuda market. They approached elderly shoppers and helped them carry their bags as they spoke with the seniors about their lives. "Our regulars feel more comfortable coming to the market because they know we'll be there. There's a ripple effect — when we help them, they in turn buy gifts for their grandchildren, and the kindness continues to spread," said one student.

In Haifa, students organized a series of intergenerational events at local day centers. One event featured an interactive Purim bingo party with music and singing. A second event focused on cognitive engagement, where students facilitated games designed to stimulate memory, language, and attention skills — a meaningful and enjoyable activity for many of the seniors in attendance. Later in the year, students also led a storytelling project in which survivors were invited to share memories from their childhood. The students then transformed those memories into creative stations — baking, singing, drawing — for other seniors to interact with and enjoy. These programs not only created moments of joy but also fostered a sense of mutual learning and respect between the generations.

In Tel Aviv, students volunteered at a local senior day center, playing games and engaging in holiday-themed programming.

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

The evaluation survey included both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions designed to assess attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes related to volunteering with the elderly. Data analysis employed a mixed-methods approach: quantitative responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify prevailing trends, while qualitative responses were subjected to thematic content analysis to extract recurring patterns, motivations, and reported actions.

This year's evaluation confirms that students not only adopted more positive attitudes toward social responsibility but also took action: initiating or expanding volunteer activities with older adults in their communities. Please see the attached Evaluation Report for more details.

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

Based on this year's success, we recommend continuing to center the program around consistent one-on-one volunteering relationships, which proved to be the most meaningful aspect for students and survivors alike. Students expressed deep appreciation for the trust and connection built over time, and many shared that these encounters added purpose and depth to their weekly routine. To build on this strength, we suggest maintaining regular group meetings that offer space for reflection, mutual support, and skill-building. The early-semester session with the geriatric social worker was particularly effective in preparing students emotionally for their volunteer roles and should be preserved—and if possible, slightly expanded—next year.