

Evaluation Report – Creating Space (Yotzrim Makom) - 2025

Yaakov Herzog Center, Submitted to the Matanel Foundation

1. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the 2024-2025 cycle of *Creating Space* was conducted using three complementary tools:

- **Participant surveys** completed at the end of the program.
- **Personal interviews** with selected participants.
- **Internal staff reflection** analyzing educational, artistic, and logistical components.

This mixed-method approach enabled a holistic assessment of the program's artistic, educational, emotional, and communal impact.

2. Key Findings

Artistic and Emotional Impact - Participants reported significant artistic renewal and emotional recovery following the events of October 7. Many expressed that the program enabled them “to open their hearts again” and return to creative work after a prolonged period of stagnation.

Learning and Identity - The Beit Midrash-style sessions, integrating Jewish sources with personal and collective memory, were described as “transformative” and “deeply grounding.” Participants noted meaningful growth in their understanding of how Jewish texts can inspire contemporary artistic expression.

Community and Group Dynamics - The intimate, women-led cohort created a strong sense of trust, belonging, and mutual support. Compared to the first cycle, this year demonstrated greater group cohesion, deeper sharing, and more sustained collaboration beyond the formal sessions.

3. Comparison to the Previous Year

- **Year 1 (2024):** Focused primarily on rebuilding cultural activity after the national trauma, with broader community events and a larger, more diverse format.
- **Year 2 (2025):** Demonstrated *deeper* internal work, stronger artistic engagement, deeper learning, and tighter community-building.
- The partnership shifted from a municipal collaboration (Dimona) to a regional one (Shafir), expanding the project's presence in the Negev.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations for the Future

The 2024–2025 cycle showed that *Creating Space* is evolving from a one-time cultural initiative into a **sustainable regional framework** for Jewish-inspired artistic creation. The strong demand (over **50 applicants** for only 15 spots) highlights the necessity of continued and expanded support.

For future cycles, we recommend:

- Increasing group capacity to accommodate high demand.
- Developing an alumni track to maintain long-term community engagement.
- Continuing evaluation through structured participant feedback and regional partner input.