

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: The international conference "Kabbalah and Modernity" (as part of The Matanel Chair of Kabbalah Studies at the Ben-Zvi Institute)

Year: 2026

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 and Modernity

Year of activity: 2026

Name of the report's writer: Dr. Ido Harari

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

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<https://www.facebook.com/ybz.org>

Number of active participants in the program: 45

Estimated number of impacted participants: 45

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

The international conference "Kabbalah and Modernity" took place on December 2-4 at the Ben Zvi institute, Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem. The conference opened with a keynote lecture by Prof. Moshe Idel on the evening of December 2, followed by two full days of parallel sessions presenting talks by dozens of scholars from Israel and abroad. Each day ended with a keynote lecture – Prof. Boaz Huss on the second day and Prof. Elliot Wolfson on the third day. The program allowed for intensive and fruitful discussions both during the sessions and in-between them, and the conference offered its participants a unique opportunity to receive invaluable feedback on their work and to foster academic ties.

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

The main achievement was the successful organization and completion of a rich and diverse international conference, bringing together scholars from different disciplines (Jewish thought, Jewish history, literature, anthropology, philosophy, art history, and more) and different career stages for three days of rigorous intellectual engagement on the wide topic of "Kabbalah and Modernity". With well over 40 speakers (not including session chairs), and nearly twice as many non-speaker participants in the

audience, the conference was one of the central events in the field of kabbalah research during the past academic year. The dense program offered participants the opportunity to hear talks by some of the main figures in the field alongside work by young and up-and-coming scholars, as well as receive feedback from many different academic points of view. The three keynote lectures (two in person and one via Zoom) also attracted a large crowd of "lay" listeners.

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

Feedback was collected orally and via email from most of the participants. As this was the first conference held by the Matanel chair, no direct comparison was possible. However, all participants appreciated the high scholarly quality of the conference in general and of the talks and sessions in particular. Besides this, the two main points that emerged from the feedback collected were that on the one hand, the great variety of the talks and sessions was one of the main advantages noted by participants, and on the other hand the large number of parallel sessions caused some speakers to miss sessions they wished to attend. In future conferences we will try to preserve the richness of the program while making an effort to avoid parallel sessions whenever possible, so as to allow participants to attend all of the sessions they wish. In addition, we will keep up the partly-successful effort to include Haredi researchers, who's level of scholarship is many times no lesser than that of academics.

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

1. Financial report:

The program's designated budget was 8,200 NIS.

Expenses:

Coordinator: 4,500 NIS

Catering and refreshments: 3,700 NIS

(19,140 NIS for video recording and editing was covered by Yad Ben Zvi)

2. List of participants:

Prof. **Moshe Idel** (Hebrew University), Dr. **Zohar Maor** (Bar Ilan University), Dr. **Yael Levi** (Hebrew University), Dr. **Steven Weinberg** (Stiftung Neue Synagoge, Centrum Judaicum), Dr. **Merav Fima** (Monash University), Dr. **Avishar Har-Shefi** (Bar Ilan University), Dr. **Maximilian de Molière** (University of Haifa), **Aviv Luban**, (Bar Ilan University), Dr. **Leore Sachs-Shmueli** (Bar Ilan University), **Itay Moryossef** (Hemdat College), Dr. **Guy Paz** (Waldorf school "Adam" in Jerusalem and David Yellin College), Dr. **Uri Safrai** (Herzog College and University of Haifa), Dr. **Avi-Ram Tzoreff** (Open University), Dr. **Ronel Atia** (Orot College), Dr. **Tehila Gado** (Hebrew University), Dr. **Gabriel Abensour** (Polonsky Academy, Van Leer Institute), Prof. **Oded Yisraeli** (Ben Gurion University), Prof. **Raphael Schohat** (Bar Ilan University), Prof. **Clémence Boulouque** (Columbia University), Dr. **Sarit Cofman-Simhon** (Emuna Academic College for Arts and Design), **Lea Wohl-Segal** (Haifa University), Dr. **Emma Gashinsky** (Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance), Prof. **Boaz Huss** (Ben Gurion University), Prof. **Daniel Abrams** (Bar-Ilan

University), Prof. **Elke Morlok** (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt), **Matanya Elitzur** (Ben Gurion University), Dr. **Ori Werdiger** (Ben Gurion University), Prof. **Yossef Charvit** (Bar Ilan University), **Rachel Verliebter** (Bar Ilan University & University of Hamburg), Dr. **Eli Rubin** (Chabad.org), **Ziv Goren** (Ben Gurion University), Prof. **Daniel Reiser** (Herzog College), Dr. **Assaf Tamari** (Shalem Academic Center & Ben Zvi Institute), **Levi Morrow** (Hebrew University), Dr. **Tchiya Fruman** (Ben Gurion University), Prof. **Yossef Schwartz** (Tel Aviv University), Prof. **Roni Weinstein** (Hebrew University), Prof. **Jonatan Meir** (Ben Gurion University), **Tom Parnass** (Hebrew University), Dr. **Ido Harari** (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute), Dr. **Rachel Rosner** (Hebrew University), **Aviad Goldman** (Ben Gurion University), **Barak Hoffman** (Hebrew University), Prof. **J. J. Kimche** (University of Austin, Texas), Prof. **Elliot R. Wolfson** (University of California, Santa Barbara)

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**.

- Photos sent separately with this report

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.

- All sessions from the conference are accessible on Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AkYyF_UTQc&list=PLsV2x9W174Zdy0qrNJe_iREAnPohJIwt9