

# *MATANEL FOUNDATION*

## *ACTIVITY REPORT*

**Program:** The research group "Kabbalah and Society" (as part of The Matanel Chair of Kabbalah Studies at the Ben-Zvi Institute)

**Year:**2025-26

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 Society

Year of activity: 2025-26

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

Mail: [ido@ybz.org.il](mailto:ido@ybz.org.il)

Phones: 052-2788935

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

Number of active participants in the program: 22 (12 Matanel fellows, 10 non-fellows)

Estimated number of impacted participants: 22

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines): The research group has been meeting monthly since the beginning of the academic year (October 2025), with the final meeting to be held on June 25, 2026. In each meeting two group members present their research, with an emphasis on work-in-progress and open questions. The concluding meeting is planned as a double session, with four presentations – the last one being a methodological talk by prof. Boaz Huss of the Department of Jewish Thought at Ben Gurion University in the Negev.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.): Overall, the group will meet 9 times. While not all members took part in every meeting, the commitment of the group (and especially the Matanel fellows) is highly impressive in terms of both participation and engagement. The main achievement of the activity is the creation of a group in which genuine scholarly exchange is taking place. Researchers in very different stages of their career (from doctoral students to established professors) and various academic disciplines (Jewish thought, history, literature and more) read each other's work and

discuss it in depth, and the contribution of these discussions to the members' work is many times invaluable.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...): As the activity is still ongoing, we have not yet collected official feedback from the participants. However, from informal talks (and as can also be discerned from the participant testimonies attached to this report), the format has been productive and the group in general served its main purpose well – to foster the academic study of the relationship between Kabbalah (theology and practice) and the society in which it is created, disseminated and lived, and especially to support and advance the work of the members of the group and the Matanel fellows. After the conclusion of the group's work we will decide about the best way to make its' fruits available to the scholarly community, whether through as special journal issue dedicated to the members' articles or through individual publications in which the Matanel fellowship will be acknowledged. Since this is the first year in which this activity is conducted, no comparison is possible, but from comparison which other research groups in which I and other members have participated we can easily say that the work done within the context of the group showed high levels of commitment and engagement. In future years, widening the circle of fellows will allow for an even richer and more diverse environment, from which both the group and its members will benefit.

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