

Matanel Foundation Annual Report – “Crossroads” Seminar

I am pleased to present the summary of the second year of the **Matanel Foundation's "Crossroads" Seminar** at Reichman University.

This year, **15 students** participated in the program. Attached to this report are their names, photographs, and professional backgrounds.

The seminar included **11 meetings** and a **field study tour to the Negev**. A detailed schedule of the sessions and the guest speakers who participated in ten of them is attached to this report. The eleventh meeting, which was held at the students' request, brought together participants with Haredi women from the **Lishma Leadership Program**.

Since one of the seminar's primary objectives is to formulate a vision for the State of Israel in 2048, and because no Haredi participants were enrolled in this year's cohort, we felt it was important to incorporate an additional perspective. The meeting with the participants of the Lishma program provided an opportunity to discuss many of the issues the students had chosen to address in their vision papers.

The topics selected by the participants, which will appear in the upcoming book, are:

- **Tamir Khazani** – Relations between different groups in Israeli society
- **Uri Friedman** – The use of Artificial Intelligence in the education system
- **Batya Sarna** – The structure of higher education in Israel
- **Effrat Keren** – An equitable healthcare system
- **Yarden Peleg** – A shared Israeli language
- **Yael Ben-Dror** – Gender equality
- **Shir Shaked-Marom** – Reimagining Israel's education system
- **Tzach Basol** – Improving the efficiency of the public service
- **Jonathan Reich** – The Israeli–Palestinian conflict
- **Barak Roll** – Decentralizing authority to local government
- **Ora Yasman** – Improving children's and adolescents' mental health through Artificial Intelligence
- **Bathen Vasan** – Belonging and national identity
- **Razy Alshekh** – Local government
- **Eidan Loushi** – A cultural vision for the State of Israel
- **Yosef Eliezer Kublanov** – Judaism and Israeli identity

Following last year's participant feedback, I decided to enrich the program by adding a field study tour. The purpose of the tour was to expose participants to a complex issue that most of them were unfamiliar with, one that can only truly be understood through direct observation.

In addition, the participants expressed a desire to spend an entire day together to deepen their relationships and engage in more informal conversations that are difficult to have during the intensive three-hour monthly meetings.

The tour was originally scheduled for **March 23**, but due to the war with Iran it was postponed to **June 29**.

The topic of the tour was **Bedouin society in the Negev**. This is a pressing issue that often receives insufficient public attention, despite its significance for governance in the Negev as well as for long-term policy planning and decision-making, topics that accompanied us throughout the seminar.

A detailed itinerary of the Negev tour is attached to this report.

Peer Seminar and Book Launch

In addition to the eleven seminar meetings, we held a **two-day Peer Seminar** on **July 12–13**.

During this event, each participant presented a draft of their vision paper to fellow participants and to external reviewers, receiving constructive feedback before submitting the final version.

This year's external reviewers were:

- **Yifat Sela**, Chairperson of Emunah
- **Uri Gil**, CEO of ELKA (the Joint's Center for Leadership and Governance)
- **Eldad Kanti**, Partner at KPMG

Following the feedback they received, participants will revise their papers and submit their final versions by **September 1**.

The Peer Seminar concluded with the launch of the **Vision Book** written by last year's seminar cohort.

It is worth noting that the publication process, including professional editing, graphic design, typesetting, and printing, required considerably more time than anticipated, which is why the launch took place only this year. I hope that the next volume will be published much sooner.

I would also like to highlight the book launch itself. It was an inspiring and meaningful event held at Reichman University in the presence of **Professor Boaz Ganor**, President of the University; **Dr. Ayelet Ben-Ezer**, CEO and Vice President of the University; and **Dr. Ami Bouganim**, representative of the Matanel Foundation. The event also featured a guest lecture by **Professor Dan Ariely**.

The ceremony brought together last year's seminar participants and their families, alongside this year's cohort. It was especially moving to witness the emergence of what is becoming a genuine **Matanel community** at Reichman University.



Participant Feedback and Key Insights

At the conclusion of the seminar's ten regular sessions, participants were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Below is a summary of the findings, including selected quotations from the participants.

Overall Impression

The feedback indicates a **very high level of participant satisfaction**.

Key Findings

- **Likelihood of recommending the seminar to others: 4.8/5** (the highest-rated item)
- **Exposure to new perspectives on civic thinking and leadership: 4.73/5**
- **Deepened understanding of the future of the State of Israel: 4.6/5**
- **Contribution to the development of a personal and public vision: 4.53/5**
- **Overall satisfaction: 4.47/5**
- **Motivation to attend and prepare for each session: 4.47/5**

These findings suggest that participants not only enjoyed the seminar, they felt that it made a meaningful contribution to their personal and intellectual development.

1. A Shift in Mindset

Perhaps the most significant finding is that participants repeatedly described the seminar as having changed the way they think.

Many reported that they learned to:

- Think systemically
- See the "big picture"
- Better understand complexity
- Develop long-term visions rather than focus solely on solving isolated problems

Representative comments included:

"To see the bigger picture and then dive into the details."

"To think holistically."

"To adopt a broader perspective on Israeli society."

"To always remember the core narrative."

These responses indicate that the seminar was perceived not merely as a source of knowledge, but as an experience that fundamentally reshaped participants' ways of thinking.

2. A Sense of Purpose and Inspiration

Many respondents described feeling inspired and motivated to take action.

Recurring themes included:

- Courage to initiate
- A desire to make an impact
- Belief that meaningful change is possible
- Stronger commitment to public engagement
- Greater willingness to take responsibility

One participant wrote:

"Nothing can stand in the way of determination."

Another wrote:

"The seminar helped fuel our dreams."

These comments demonstrate that the seminar inspired not only intellectual reflection but also a genuine motivation to contribute to society.

3. The Power of the Group

One of the most encouraging findings was the extent to which participants emphasized the importance of the group itself.

For many, the most meaningful moments of the seminar were:

- Conversations among participants
- Sharing personal stories
- Discussions following the guest lectures
- Getting to know people from diverse backgrounds

There was a clear sense that participants learned not only from the speakers, but also from one another.

The seminar therefore became more than an academic program—it evolved into a community of thoughtful, engaged individuals learning together.

4. Guest Speakers Left a Lasting Impression

Although participants appreciated the speaker series as a whole, several lecturers stood out in particular.

Itamar Ben-Meir (The Metro Project)

His lecture received the **highest average rating (4.53/5)**.

Participants repeatedly described it as:

- Inspiring
- A compelling example of how vision becomes reality
- Motivating them to continue learning after the lecture
- Demonstrating how ambitious ideas can be translated into practical implementation

Itzik Debash

Although his quantitative score was slightly lower (likely reflecting greater variation among respondents), he was one of the lecturers most frequently mentioned in the open-ended responses.

Participants described him as:

- Inspiring
- Practical
- Providing concrete tools
- A true practitioner who combines vision with action

Miri Rosen

Participants praised her for:

- Clarity of thought
- Analytical approach
- Ability to present complexity in an accessible way
- Her framework for developing a compelling vision

Dr. Nasreen Haddad Haj-Yahya

Dr. Haddad Haj-Yahya generated considerable interest and was also the speaker whose lecture elicited the widest range of reactions.

Some participants described her lecture as one of the most significant of the program, noting that it challenged their assumptions and exposed them to new perspectives. Others felt that her presentation was overly forceful or reflected a one-sided viewpoint.

Rather than viewing this as a weakness, it may be seen as evidence that lectures provoking genuine debate are often those that leave the strongest and most lasting impression.

5. The Writing Process: Valuable, with Room for Further Development

The writing component received the **lowest average rating among the seminar's various elements (3.67/5)**.

Participants consistently requested more opportunities for:

- Writing workshops
- Peer review sessions
- Draft development
- Group discussion of written work

These responses suggest that participants highly valued the writing process and wished to receive even more structured guidance and feedback as they developed their vision papers.

6. A Desire for More Time

Perhaps the most recurring request throughout the feedback was simply **for more time**.

Participants expressed a desire for:

- More time for questions and discussion with guest speakers
- Longer group discussions
- Additional seminar sessions
- Longer lectures

One participant summarized this sentiment by writing:

"It simply wasn't enough—ten lectures are not enough."

This should not be viewed as criticism, but rather as a reflection of the high value participants attributed to the seminar and their desire for an even deeper learning experience.

7. Topics Participants Would Like to Explore Further

Participants also suggested several additional topics they would like to see included in future seminars, among them:

- The Israeli–Palestinian conflict
- Judea and Samaria (the West Bank)
- Violence within Israeli society

- The LGBTQ+ community
- More in-depth discussion of the most controversial issues facing Israeli society

These suggestions indicate that participants are eager to engage with some of the most complex and sensitive issues shaping Israel's future.

Concluding Reflections

The seminar succeeded in creating a community of individuals who think differently about their public responsibility and about the future of the State of Israel.

Rather than being perceived as a series of lectures, the program became a personal, intellectual, and collaborative journey that influenced how participants think about leadership, vision, and public engagement.

The Seminar's Three Greatest Strengths

1. **Creating a genuine shift in participants' ways of thinking and their ability to develop a long-term vision.**
2. **Building an outstanding community characterized by a strong sense of belonging and mutual trust.**
3. **Bringing together inspiring speakers who successfully connected visionary thinking with practical action.**

Three Key Areas for Improvement

1. **Provide more structured guidance and feedback throughout the writing process.**
2. **Allocate additional time for discussion and interaction with guest speakers.**
3. **Further strengthen the facilitation of group discussions to ensure that every participant feels heard and that conversations remain balanced, respectful, and genuinely pluralistic.**

In my view, the feedback provides compelling evidence that the seminar achieved its central objective: not merely to expand participants' knowledge, but to shape their worldview and strengthen their commitment to public leadership and civic engagement.

Overall, this was an exceptionally successful year in which participants underwent a meaningful personal and intellectual journey.

One particularly encouraging indication of the program's long-term impact was the attendance of last year's participants at the Vision Book launch, held exactly one year after they had completed the seminar. It was evident that the friendships they had formed, the sense of community they had built, and their commitment to public action remained as strong as ever, testimony to the lasting influence of the program.

Looking Ahead

The seminar's success in creating a community of individuals who think differently about their public responsibility and about the future of the State of Israel is a testament to the power of dialogue and collaboration. As we look ahead, we are confident that the program will continue to inspire and empower participants to lead with vision and integrity.