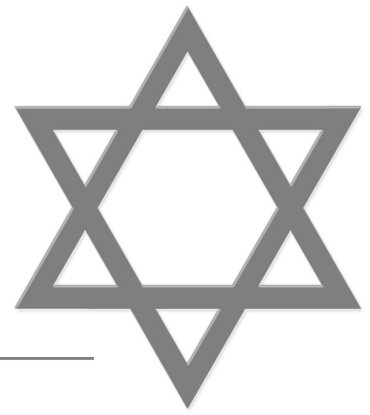




HILLEL

# The Star



WASHINGTON AND LEE HILLEL NEWSLETTER

W&L Hillel House, 204 W. Washington St., Lexington, VA 24450-2116

<http://hillel.wlu.edu>

[robinsj@wlu.edu](mailto:robinsj@wlu.edu)

(540) 458-8443

Fax: (540) 458-8155

MAY 2011

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

I spoke to a Hillel student on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah on April 30th. My remarks are reprinted here, somewhat edited. I will be leaving W&L at the end of June; I hope the speech helps express my feelings about my extraordinary experience as Director of Washington and Lee Hillel.

~ Joan Robins

Jared, on behalf of the entire W&L Jewish community, I wish you mazel tov. You did an amazing job, and helped us learn more about the Torah. I like to think about Jews everywhere, at every spot on the planet, reading the same portion, and telling the same stories. The text knits our scattered people together. As you get older, you get a chance to understand the stories in a more mature way. You get a chance to apply their teachings to the changing problems you face.

It has been a pleasure for me to watch you travel on your "Jewish Journey." Today we officially welcome you to the Jewish community. In terms of Jewish law, a bar mitzvah can be counted in a Minyan, the quorum needed for prayer, and may act as a witness in a legal proceeding. Bar mitzvah also signals the start of more mature learning; I know that you are now ready to tackle the moral, ethical, and theological questions of Jewish traditions.

*Continued on page 2*



## JARED'S BAR MITZVAH By Max Chapnick '13

On Saturday, April 30th Hillel held its first ever Bar-Mitzvah in our new Hillel House. The students of Washington and Lee and the Lexington community welcomed Jared Hester into the adult Jewish community.

Jared, a sophomore English major and Russian minor at Washington and Lee was

19 years old when he had his Bar Mitzvah. Jared had never had a Bar-Mitzvah before and had no formal Jewish education before arriving at college. Despite his lack of familiarity with Jewish customs, in his first two years Jared quickly became part of the Jewish community at Washington and Lee, describing his time as, "a wonderful experience".

Joan Robins and I both tutored Jared for several weeks prior to the event. We taught Jared to read and chant prayers and Torah, and helped him with his speech.

The service was well-attended, with approximately 50 guests and included a traditional afternoon Saturday service, a short Torah service, and a Havdalah service. The ceremony was led by Jared and Joan Robins, along with student leaders sophomore Ian Shaw, freshmen Sammy Rosier, and myself. Other students

*Continued on page 2*

## ALTERNATIVE BREAK TO NEW ORLEANS By Rimona Cartun '13

This past February break W&L Hillel teamed up with Jewish Funds for Justice and Rebuilding Together: New Orleans to send a group of eight W&L students and three Metro-Detroit Hillel Students to New Orleans on a community service trip. I was fortunate enough to be one of these students. While in New Orleans,



*Continued on page 2*

Photo credit: Shayna Dodge

*Continued from page 1 (Director's Corner)*

This is a bittersweet moment for me since I know how much I will miss the daily interaction with you and all of the remarkable students at W&L Hillel. In many ways, I look upon many of you as my own kids. I have seen you grow, mature and prosper, and in turn you have given me renewed youth.

When I received the phone call to become the part-time Hillel Director, I felt completely unprepared. During the course of that first year, I absorbed every bit of Jewish knowledge I could find. Through the study and practice of Judaism, I learned that for me, the Jewish way is to continually study, learn, question, and teach. I learned to appreciate and celebrate the holiness of every moment. There are blessings over food, rainbows, new clothes, a day of rest, doing something for the first time, and even earthquakes. I know that I haven't figured it all out yet, though. We are not expected to work out our theology before we begin to live a Jewish life.

Serving as Director of Hillel for the past 10 years, I have been blessed to

have had a career in Jewish communal life that provided me with incredible satisfaction and happiness. It has been an extraordinary experience I will cherish for the rest of my life. I have learned so much more about life as a result of your enthusiasm, compassion, optimism and idealism.

Jared, I hope that your participation in Hillel, and this ritual of your bar mitzvah, will help you become part of a solid and portable Jewish community. When confronted with ethical dilemmas, I hope you will have a framework for evaluating right and wrong, and a sense of a God to whom you are accountable. On a lonely Friday night after college, I hope you will remember something that was meaningful at Hillel—warmth in the candles at our Shabbat Shalom dinners, familiar songs and prayers. Maybe even the hard labor involved in the re-building of the house in New Orleans. I hope you experienced a meaningful tradition that will stay with you.

*Joan*

*Continued from page 1 (Jared's Bar Mitzvah)*

and faculty participated including prayers led by sophomores Lizzie Engel and Melissa Horadam, opening and closing of the ark by Rick Sykes and Wayde Marsh and Rimona Cartun, and a gift from Hillel Faculty Advisor Professor Simon Levy.

The service was followed by a delicious evening meal of lox, couscous, humus, and wonderful deserts. Afterwards many of the guests gathered back in the multipurpose room for the hora and Jared was lifted in a chair by several students.

The amount of student participation and enthusiasm, even from non-Jewish students, was incredible. Everyone who attended had a fantastic time.



*Continued from page 1 (Alternative Break)*

we were able to experience the vibrant culture and history of the city as well as help rebuild the house of a woman whose house was completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. We typically worked throughout the mornings and one or two JFSJ programs in the afternoon. Through JFSJ we were able to meet the journalist/author, Jordan Flaherty as well as tour the lower 9th ward with a local community organizer, Tanya Harris.

In our free time, many of us explored the historic parts of New Orleans

including Café Du Monde, Bourbon Street and Frenchman street. We even got to see a few Mardi Gras parades on St. Charles! After a week of hard work, painting, scraping and yard work, we all were looking forward to Shabbat and our day off. Friday night we made the trip to Tulane and had the choice of joining a regular service or a Shlomo Carlbach service followed by a communal Shabbat dinner in their Hillel House.

We concluded the trip with a program about getting more involved with Jewish

social action and what we could do once back at Washington and Lee. The trip to New Orleans showed many of us a side to the city we had never seen before and the struggles that the community still faces. In just one short week, we could see all of our hard work in the transformation of this house.



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## SEDER NIGHT By Samantha Rosier '14

Editor's note: Students were on Spring Break during most of Passover Week, which is why we held the Seder on the last night. Interestingly, the E. Café kashered the café kitchen, and served only Kosher for Passover food. The menu was creative and delicious!

Hillel hosted its annual Seder on the last night of Passover, the first night of spring term. Joan acknowledged the graduating seniors and thanked them for their service to Hillel while the new officers for next year's board were announced. Over one hundred students, faculty, staff, and community members attended the dinner celebration.

First-year Josh Josephson and I led the Seder with help from others in attendance. Each table had a traditional Seder plate, complete with Joan's amazing charoset, and the head table featured an orange and Miriam's Cup in a nod to new traditions. When ten plagues were recited, students mentioned other current plagues on our society, such as racism and homophobia. Everyone acknowledged that we are still working on getting rid of all injustice in the world.

Dining services prepared a complete kosher meal with matzo ball soup, grilled



First-year students Samantha Rosier and Josh Josephson lead the community Seder.

chicken, potatoes and macaroons for desert. Two afikomens were found, one for the community children in attendance and one for the students. The winners received candy jellies for their prizes. The Seder ended with a round-robin version of Hagadyah, The Little Goat, and a competition on who can say the traditional poem "Who Knows One?" in a single breath. Professors and students alike attempted to make it through all thirteen lines in one shot, with a few succeeding and laughter all around.

This year's Seder was a large success and everyone in attendance left feeling grateful for the full meal and the wonderful programs Hillel provides each week.



Howard Rosenbloom '61, Hillel's honoree, and his wife Michelle Gelkin are greeted by classmate Firth Spiegel '61 and his wife, Edie at Hillel's reunion reception on May 13th. Other alumni and students joined the celebration in the Hillel House.

## REUNION RECEPTION By Sunny Altman '13

The weekend of May 13 through May 15 saw many alumni returning to campus for spring reunion weekend. Among the many Jewish alumni coming back to their alma mater was Howard Rosenbloom '61, this year's Hillel alumni honoree. Mr. Rosenbloom has dedicated much of his life towards Jewish charity, including with the American Technion Society which benefits the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. He is currently a member of the National Board of Directors and co-chair of the Baltimore Chapter Board of Directors. Mr. Rosenbloom also serves as the Director of the Ben and Esther Rosenbloom Foundation and on the boards of Hillel International, the JCC of Greater Baltimore, and the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies. He is also the newest member of Washington and Lee Hillel's Advisory Board.

Mr. Rosenbloom and his wife, Dr. Michelle Gelkin, who also serves on the Ben and Esther Rosenbloom foundation, were honored with a reception in the Multipurpose Room of the Hillel House. Mr. Rosenbloom's friends, classmates, and other Jewish alumni celebrated both his generosity to Washington and Lee Hillel and Israeli Independence Day with traditional Israeli food. Current Jewish students also attended the event to speak with the alumni about current Jewish life at W&L.



## THE GREAT LATKE- HAMENTASHEN DEBATE

*By Melissa Horadam*

Although I was unable to attend the grand event last year, this year I was given the great opportunity to host the annual Latke—Hamentashen debate. This was the first year where the epic event was held at the new and impressive Hillel House. If you are unfamiliar with the debate, it is a tradition that originated at the University of Chicago and has been adopted by university Hillels all over the country. This was the fifth consecutive year where Washington and Lee University hosted its own version of the “Great Debate.” Like every year before this one, four well-respected professors came together and ruthlessly debated which Jewish delicacy is, in fact, yummi-er.

On the side of the latke were Professor Christian Haskett of the Religion

Department and Professor Richard Marks of the Religion Department. Both of these clever warriors of the potato used their intensive knowledge of language and religion to argue that the latke is the most delicious treat. On the side of the Hamentashen, Professor Harlan Beckley, Director of the impressive Shepherd Program used “long lost scriptures” from the Bible to argue on the side of the Hamentashen, while Professor Robert de Maria of the Journalism Department used the historical and anecdotal approach to argue Hamentashen superiority.

Both sides put forth exciting and entertaining arguments for their teams, but Latkes reigned supreme after the votes were tallied. Latkes and Hamentashens were supplied for all the audience

members, and considering how little of each treat was left over, I would say that both sides won. Hosting this event was fun and challenging. Jared Hester, my co-host, and I had a wonderful time introducing the professors, which of course had nothing to do with the fact that we were roasting them. This is undoubtedly my new favorite Hillel event at Washington and Lee. After all, what is better than free noshing and watching your favorite professors make fools out of themselves?



*Holocaust survivor Magda Herzberger speaks to students and community members as part of Hillel's Holocaust Remembrance week.*

**F**OR HILLEL'S ANNUAL HOLOCAUST Remembrance Week program, we had some truly wonderful events this year. Before the end of winter term, Hillel sponsored a Vigil Against Oppression. This annual event aims to simultaneously honor those who died during the Holocaust and increase awareness of other genocides and human rights violations in the world. Professors Shane Lynch and Barry Kolman coordinated

beautiful choral and orchestral pieces that complimented the readings of poems and Holocaust victims' names.

At the beginning of spring term, Hillel continued with the HRW program with a survivor speaker and a Yom Ha Shoah service. Magda Herzberger, a vivacious and resilient woman, spoke to an audience of W&L students, faculty, staff, and Lexington community members. Mrs. Herzberger eloquently told her story and integrated her own poetry into the lecture. To conclude this year's program, Hillel sponsored a Yom Ha Shoah service with a candle lighting ceremony, readings, and songs. Dean Hank Dobin led the service, and this year he called on students to discuss their experiences in Israel. Shabbat dinner followed the service.

The Holocaust Remembrance Week committee would like to thank everyone who helped plan the events this year. The week was a great success, bringing students, faculty, and community members together to honor those who died in the Holocaust. At W&L Hillel,

we are firm believers in social activism, community service, and promoting human goodness through faith, and this programming is an important way for us to ensure that such a horrible event as the Holocaust never happens again.



*Alan Corwin '62 gives a tour of his “Biblical Images” art collection, donated to the Hillel House. Students, faculty and staff enjoyed learning about the collection, and expressed gratitude to Alan for his lovely gifts.*

## Farewell from the Co-Presidents

**W**OW. WHAT A YEAR. WE OBSERVED THE HIGH HOLIDAYS ON CAMPUS WITH A STUDENT RABBI, WENT ON A CHALLENGING but rewarding service trip to The Big Easy, and celebrated the Bar Mitzvah of one of our own members. Did I mention that we have a brand-new Hillel House? The importance of this new House to our organization cannot be overstated. The ground-breaking year (no pun intended) we have just completed is a sign of things to come. Hillel is as prominent as ever in campus life, and the once-unsatiated hunger for Kosher Deli in Lexington has finally been satisfied. Students here are very busy, through involvement in athletics, Greek organizations, clubs, and societies (not to mention academics). But we also have Hillel. We come together in the Hillel House and observe Shabbat every Friday evening not because we have to (we do not), not because we have always done so (many of us have not), but because we want to. I am graduating this May, and regrettably Joan is handing over her position as well, but I have no doubt that our Hillel will continue to grow and prosper due to the quality of its members and the strong support of the university, community, and alumni. Thanks for everything.

Sincerely,  
Brian Cherry '11

**E**VERY YEAR BRINGS UNEXPECTED SADNESS ALONG WITH UNEXPECTED HAPPINESS. WHILE THIS YEAR MARKED MANY MONUMENTAL milestones for W&L Hillel, we also say goodbye to someone who is a foundation of this organization. Joan has been more than a mentor to both the students and community members of Washington and Lee; she's the mother of our Jewish family here on campus. We also send our seniors off with the hopes of them achieving success in whatever field they choose. Let us not forget that as freshly minted "adults," we must positively contribute to our communities, to our families, to our futures, and to the world. As some of us say our goodbyes, we remember that we were once the newcomers. And as we leave, more new faces enter to create different stories and shape new experiences, but will foster familiar emotions. The end of another school year brings us a step closer to the beginning of a new adventure, yet even so, we can view everyday an end unto itself. We should treasure each day as a new experience not to be taken for granted. What new discoveries lie ahead? With bitter-sweetness, Brian and I would like to send everyone off into the summer, but expect many years of strong student, faculty, and community support for years to come. To life, L'Chaim.

-Lev Raslin '12

## A VERY INTERESTING PROFESSOR: ANDREI MALAEV BABEL

By Jared Hester '13

This past March, Hillel students had the wonderful opportunity to pair up with the W&L Department of German and Russian, inviting playwright, actor, and professor of theater Andrei Malaev Babel to perform two of his one-act plays in the Stackhouse Theater. Babel, originally from Moscow, currently lives in Sarasota, Florida where he teaches in the New College of Florida's Division of Humanities. According to the division's webpage, Babel is "regarded as one of the leading experts on the Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov, and Chekov theater techniques." Babel received his M.F.A from the Vakhtangov Theater Institute in Moscow. He has also trained under

actress and director Alexandra Remizova, the co-founder of the Vakhtangov Theater. In addition to his position at the New College of Florida, Babel has taught at The Catholic University of America in D.C. Throughout his career, he has received numerous accolades for his innovations in acting technique.

During his time in Lexington, Babel spoke to students about his work in acting and his life growing up in Moscow, while still managing to indulge in a very lively and entertaining dinner at the Sheridan Livery and a relaxing lunch the next afternoon at the E. Café. Beyond the wonderful food, Babel graced us with his humor and expert know-how, simultaneously joking with student

Max Chapnick about the "locality" of his dinner fare and discussing the strength of his acting program at the New College with Florida-native Samantha Rosier. After Ali Greenberg and Natasha Lerner discussed the recent proliferation of Jewish life on campus, Babel explained the intricacies of the show he would perform later that day. Having translated the semi-autobiographical writings of his grandfather, Jewish-Russian writer Isaac Babel, whose works reflect the religious oppression of the various USSR regimes, the younger Andrei adapted the stories to the stage, adding music, lighting, and dramatic on-stage costume changes. The performance was very well-received by viewers.

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