



The Star



W&L



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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Maggie Shapiro Haskett

I haven't been keeping a careful count, but I think it's safe to say that I've made close to 200 loaves of challah since the start of the 20-21 school year. All that challah got packed into "Shabba-totes" for our DIY Shabbat program and every week students could sign up and receive everything they need to host Shabbat dinner in their homes. Some weeks we include a sweet treat, other weeks there is a holiday-related gift, and for Pride Week I even broke out the food coloring and made rainbow challah for everyone. (And yes, my counters might still be a little rainbow colored!) There's always kosher grape juice for kiddush, dorm-safe battery-operated candles to light, and we cover the costs of a nice dinner too.

People have told me it's crazy, above and beyond the call of duty, to make homemade challah for my students every week, but in all honesty, I love it. For a short time, years ago, I had my own tiny business, catering baked goods and it's been fun to stretch my baking muscles again, bringing people joy fresh from the oven. I've been working from home since last March, and serving as the "virtual learning coach" to my two boys, so punching down a rising batch of dough in between Zoom calls hasn't been much of an imposition. And who doesn't love the sweet scent of fresh challah filling their home every week?

But most of all, I love making the challah for what it represents – a growing resilience and sense of Jewish independence in our students. When covid began spreading in the US last spring, we began making adjustments to our Shabbat dinners at Hillel even before official restrictions were put in place; rather than pass challah hand to hand, we pre-sliced the loaves and folks came up one at a time to grab a piece. We abandoned buffet-style meals and counted our blessings that early March was warm enough for us to gather outside. But as we all know, those accommodations were just the beginning of what covid would require of us. When gatherings were limited to 10 or fewer and communal meals were prohibited the first question I heard from students was, "But what about Shabbat?!" They turned to me with the question, but they would quickly find the answer in their own homes.

In a remarkably short time, our students have gone from depending on Hillel to offer them a Shabbat experience to feeling confident in creating their own. Every week they send me pictures of their celebrations and I love to see their new traditions and the personal touches they all add. Some order carryout from the same restaurant every week, others go to the trouble of setting a beautiful table, and some have created an entire Friday night routine with their roommates that kicks off with candle lighting. Covid has challenged our students to take ownership of their own Jewish practices and values, and I feel so honored to be able to support them with a couple of loaves of challah as they embrace that challenge every week.

While I can't wait to once again see students spilling out the front door and scattered across the Hillel House deck on a Friday night, I hope DIY Shabbat will remain a part of our larger Shabbat repertoire. We're creating a Jewish community at W&L Hillel, but we're also empowering the next generation of Jewish adults, one loaf of challah at a time.

*B'vracha, with blessings,
Maggie Shapiro Haskett
Director of Jewish Life*



Hillel student president Sam Bluestone '22 (standing) and Hillel Events Manager Dan Wetterhahn '21 greet students picking up DIY Shabbat totes on the Hillel House porch.

Hello, W&L Hillel community!

This year has been one like no other, and as a community we have faced challenges that have not been seen in years past. With that being said, I am so proud of how our Jewish community has come together to support one another in these difficult times. I am proud of the student leaders who have stepped up to create meaningful programming and engagement opportunities for students on and off campus. I am proud of our Jewish first-year students for engaging with Hillel and Jewish life despite experiencing an unorthodox first semester of college. I am grateful for all of the hard work that Director of Jewish Life Maggie Shapiro Haskett has put in this year to ensure that Hillel continues to foster an inclusive Jewish community. I am also grateful for the generous support of our alumni and other donors, whose continued support for Hillel and Jewish life on campus help make our success possible. Despite the challenges that this year has presented, I have never felt so lucky to be a part of the W&L Hillel Jewish community, and I can't wait to see what we will continue to accomplish together!

Shalom,
 Sam Bluestone '22
 W&L Hillel Student President

**2020-2021 HILLEL
 STUDENT LEADERS:**

- Sam Bluestone '22, *President*
- Ian Bodenheimer '22, *Vice President*
- Hayley Huber '23, *Engagement Chair*
 & *Advancement Associate*
- Brooklyne Oliveira '21, *Secretary*
- Sarah Leckman '21, *VMI*
Cadet-in-Charge
- Ellie Sherman '23,
Religious Life Chair
- Andrew Tartakovsky '23,
Speakers Chair
- David Honig '24, *Israel Chair*
- Julie Phipps '22, *Co-*
Social Action Chair
- Kai John-Blunch '23, *Co-*
Social Action Chair
- Bo Garfinkel '21, *Education Chair*
- Hunter Roberts '23,
Novack Fund Chair
- Julia Raskin '24, *First Year Liaison*
- Sean Whaysman '23,
Advancement Associate
- Jake Winston '24,
Administrative Assistant

HILLEL ADVISORY BOARD

- Prof. Jeffrey Schatten, *Chair*
- Arie George '08, *Secretary*
- Prof. Hank Dobin
- Annette Green
- Barry Levin '69
- Prof. Harvey Markowitz
- Lev Raslin '11
- Andy Reibach '87, P'18
- Chaplain John Casper, *VMI, ex-officio*
- Dean Tammy Futrell, *ex-officio*
- Sam Bluestone '22, *ex-officio*
- Maggie Shapiro Haskett, *Director of*
Jewish Life, ex-officio

Hillel

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

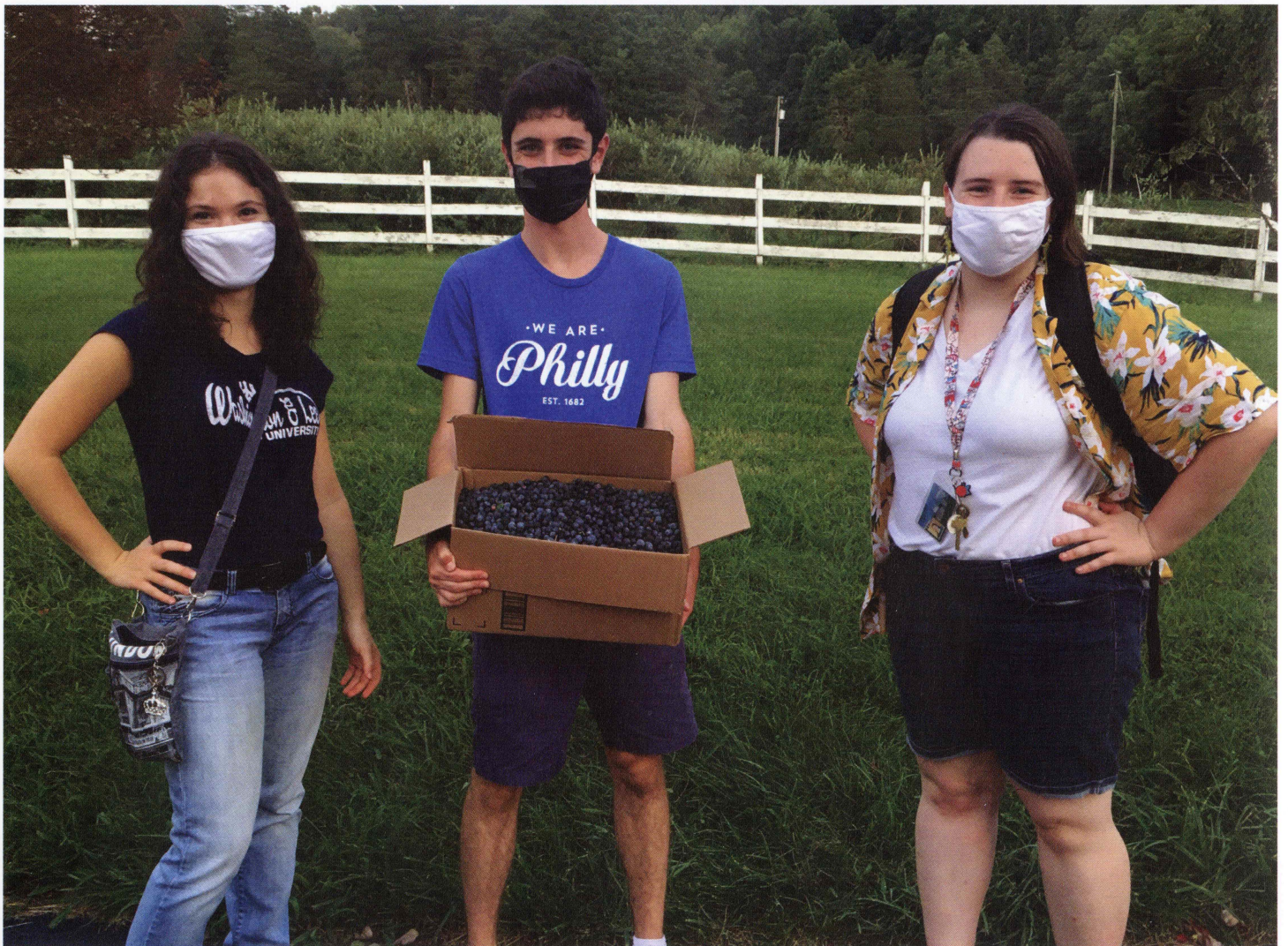
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Starting College in Covid Times

Josh Fingerhut '24

It is 2020 and many age-old traditions and milestones, including the beginning of college, have been altered to protect everyone against the virus that causes COVID-19. After graduating high school virtually, I initially hoped my start to college would be normal. However, as the summer went on and cases continued to climb, it was apparent that would not be the case. My first semester at W&L was marked by the pandemic. On top of traditional college stressors such as grades and social life, everyone was worried over the prospect of being exposed to the virus. Furthermore, necessary restrictions put in place by the university meant that the traditional college experience was very different. Gone were large social gatherings, the rush of meeting an overwhelming number of new people, and many in-person classes. As an athlete on the cross-country team, I missed out on the preseason and the competitions that would occur in a normal year.

However, amongst all of these roadblocks, there were still things that made the semester a lot of fun, including finding a home within W&L Hillel. I participated in the Jewish Learning Fellowship, meeting weekly with other students and our director, Maggie, to discuss Jewish texts and concepts relevant to life in college while making connections with my Jewish peers. I also attended FYSH (First-Year Students of Hillel) events such as pumpkin carving and blueberry picking, which were a lot of fun. Outside of Hillel I was able to run with the cross-country team in a practice setting, which was another great way to make connections and relieve stress. My classes were very enjoyable despite some of them being virtual. I am very excited for my second semester at W&L!



Josh Fingerhut '24, center, shows off some of the blueberries he and other FYSH donated to RARA, a food pantry in Lexington.



Maggie's Challah

Challah for Hunger Rises Again!

Julie Phipps '22

2020 has been a year that none of us could have imagined. Between the tragedy of lives lost as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, tremendous racial injustice, and environmental destruction — among several other crises — we are very grateful that we got to say goodbye to 5780 in September, while the rest of the world anxiously had to wait for January 1. But perhaps the fact that we are able to turn the calendar three months earlier doesn't cut us some slack, but rather calls on Jews around the world to perform *tikkun olam*: the repair of the world.

With all that has transpired, I am tremendously grateful to serve as the co-social action chair at Washington and Lee Hillel this year. After a thoughtful meeting in the *sukkah* with other members of the Hillel Board in October, my co-chair, Kai John-Blunch '23, and I decided that our focus this semester would be Challah for Hunger, an organization dedicated to combating food insecurity in our local community and nationally. The W&L Hillel chapter of Challah for Hunger was brought to life by Jenna Marvet '21 just last year and quickly gained traction. Challah for Hunger is an international organization started by a Jewish student at Scripps College in 2004 that now has chapters on over 80 college campuses across the world.

Challah for Hunger is especially touching because it effectively combines our favorite Shabbat traditions of preparing challah alongside others with giving to those in need by sending the proceeds from each group challah bake sale to organizations that combat food insecurity. With our Challah for Hunger commander in chief, Jenna, off campus and a pandemic still far from being over, Kai and I had our work cut out for us this semester.

We are using the extended winter break to become certified as CfH leaders and equipped to lead group bakes and work further toward the goals of the organization. While we are currently unable to hold in-person bakes, we intend to provide extensive virtual programming in the upcoming semester. This might include an occasional virtual bake, but our hope is to primarily focus on the *tikkun olam* piece of the experience by educating our participants on key social justice issues through a Jewish lens. We believe that providing others with this background knowledge will lay the foundation for a greater impact in their contributions to Challah for Hunger and the outside world.

We are so excited to take on this incredibly important role this semester. We look forward to seeing you all as soon as possible!

FYSH: First-Year Students of Hillel

Sean Whaysman '23

During this unprecedented year, W&L Hillel took a fresh spin on first-year engagement. To engage first-years with Hillel in a semester dominated by online classes, social distancing, quarantines and anxiety for first-years on campus, the Hillel Executive Student Board, along with W&L Hillel Director Maggie Shapiro Haskett, decided to launch a new program: First-Year Students of Hillel. Each Jewish first-year was offered the opportunity to be paired with a Jewish upper-division student who was actively engaged with Hillel, creating a Greek life-style Big/Little program. For most Jewish first-years, this was their first chance to interact with someone outside of their class year during a semester that didn't offer many other options. The FYSH program was incredibly successful in helping Jewish students make their first friends on campus, and in engaging them with Hillel.

W&L Hillel, while adhering to the university's guidelines, managed to provide fun programming for its Jewish first-years. We hosted a socially distant ice cream social for the Bigs and Littles to get to know one another in a group setting, as well as a Halloween pumpkin carving event (pictured below). As a sophomore, FYSH was the most meaningful part of my Hillel experience this year, as it allowed me to engage a bunch of fresh faces with all that Hillel has to offer, as well as pass down any helpful advice I could as someone who had already been through the first-year experience. All in all, it looks as though FYSH will live on even after the vaccine, and will continue to be a mainstay of W&L Hillel engagement.



Some of the Hillel Big & Little FYSH show off their pumpkins! L-R: Josh Fingerhut '24, Tyler Waldman '24, Jake Winston '24, Julia Raskin '24, Sam Bluestone '22 and Sean Whaysman '23.

High Holiday Sermons

It has become a tradition for the W&L Hillel student president and the director of Jewish life to both offer a sermon, or *d'var torah*, during one of the High Holiday services each year. Although many of you were able to join us via Zoom and may recall these thoughts, we hope you'll enjoy the opportunity to read and reflect with us again on the themes of the holidays.

Saying "Hineinu" A Rosh Hashanah D'var Torah

Sam Bluestone '22, W&L Hillel Student President

Good morning, everyone, my name is Sam Bluestone, and I am the president of the Hillel Student Board. Even though we can't all be together in person, I am grateful that we can be together virtually and in spirit as a collective W&L, VMI, Lexington and Rockbridge County Jewish community. I am also grateful that Jack and Luisa are joining us to lead our community in prayer. And of course, a big thank-you to Maggie for all of the hard work that she has done to make sure High Holidays are meaningful for our community during these difficult times.

It's always refreshing to begin a new year. The new year gives us an opportunity to turn over a new leaf and start fresh. We reflect on the good and the bad from the previous year, and work on how to move forward. The new year brings a sense of hope and optimism to us as a community and as individuals. This year feels different, and I think it's easy to feel conflicted as we move into 5781. On one hand, we want to feel that same optimism that we feel every new year, and maybe we especially yearn for that optimism because of how difficult this past year has been. On the other hand, we might struggle to feel this optimism. We might feel betrayed that the optimism we had last year did not quite come to fruition. How can we continue to trust our optimism when we feel robbed of a year that we prayed for last Rosh Hashanah, and after we atoned for our sins on Yom Kippur?

I think this presents a difficult conundrum for us as Jews, and I feel it myself. Despite this, I am optimistic going into 5781, and we can look no further than the *parashah* we read every Rosh Hashanah, the Binding of Isaac, to explain why. In this story, God appears to Abraham and tells him

that he must sacrifice his first and only son, Isaac. Abraham listens to God's command and brings his son to the mountain that God specifies in the land of Moriah. Abraham binds Isaac and prepares him for the offering, and just as he is about to kill him, an angel appears and tells Abraham not to kill Isaac. The angel explains that it was a test to determine Abraham's commitment to God.

Every Rosh Hashanah I put myself in Abraham's place, being told by God to sacrifice my son. I may not have a son myself, but every time, I conclude that there is no way I could do such a thing.

Abraham's actions are an incredible example of the trust that he has in God, the Covenant and himself. He has the trust and confidence in himself to say "*Hineni*," the Hebrew word meaning "Here I am." He says this not only to God, but to his son, Isaac, and the angel that intervenes right before Abraham is about to slay his son. "Here I am." This statement does not seem particularly strong on the surface, but digging deeper, it is clear that the word choice is intentional. The word *hineni* only appears 17 times in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Samuel and Isaiah. By contrast, *hi'nih'ni*, meaning "I am here," appears a total of 161 times in those same books. In fact, these words are so similar in Hebrew that they have the same exact spelling, but use different vowels.

There are several other notable examples of important moments in the scriptures when *hineni* is used. Jacob said it in response to God calling to him in a dream, Moses said it when he was talking to God through the burning bush and Isaiah said it



Ruth Bader Ginsburg with President Dudley.

when God was seeking a leader. This should signal to us that Abraham is truly present for *this* moment. Abraham is not where he is by accident. He is not in an arbitrary moment. He is in this moment, and he communicates this to God by saying “*Hineni*.” Abraham does not say “*Hi’nih’ni*, I am here for a challenge,” he says “*Hineni*, here I am, for any and all challenges that I may face.”

Abraham is brave and strong for what he did. He had the utmost faith in God and in the Covenant, and I think that it can inspire us to say “*Hineni*” in our own lives. It teaches us that there will be trials and tribulations, but when we say “*Hineni*,” we are saying as individuals that we are truly here for this moment, just like our ancestors were.

But we can do better.

We can do better than just *hineni*. Again, *hineni* means “Here I am.” It is an individual declaration of presence and commitment. But why should we limit ourselves to saying this as individuals?

At *this* moment, *hineni* is not enough. We must say “Here *we* are,” *hineinu*. The suffix “nu” added to the end of a Hebrew word makes it collective. For example, the words *avoteinu* and *eimoteinu*, words that we hear often in our prayers, mean our fathers and our mothers, respectively. *Hineinu* turns an already strong word, *hineni*, into an even stronger word that encompasses the collective. Rabbi David Cohen of Congregation Sinai in Wisconsin says it best in an article he wrote about *hineni* and *hineinu*. He says:

To say “*hineni*” is to admit that I cannot be fully present without a community to say “*hinenu*” — “here *we* are.” Indeed, we Jews are a hopelessly communal people. Our individual efforts accrue meaning and gain purpose when we make them with others.

To me, this is incredibly profound, and it taps into one of the things I love most about Judaism: the emphasis on community. We were not given the Torah to read in isolation. We were given the Torah to read with each other, as a community. We are meant to engage in fierce debate and controversy and to ask the difficult questions that will end up making us better people. Declaring our presence is no exception to this ideal. As a collective, we must say “Here we are.”

In times like these, we’ve learned that pulling together as a collective is the most powerful thing we can do as Jews, members of the W&L, VMI and Rockbridge County communities, and as humans living on this Earth. Our small and close-knit community is successful because we stick together and we have each other’s backs. As students and as community members, we come together to support each other, in good times and in bad.

So today, it is not enough to say *hineni*.

In order to fight for racial justice and equality, we must say “*Heneinu*, here we are.”

In order to combat a deadly pandemic, we must say “*Heneinu*, here we are.”

In order to protect the planet from climate change, we must say “*Heneinu*, here we are.”

When we mobilize and go to the polls and vote this November, we must say “*Heneinu*, here we are.”

In order to pursue justice, as we as Jews are commanded to do, we must say “*Heneinu*, here we are.”

And although we are all deeply saddened by the passing of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, her legacy is one defined by moments when she said

“*Hineni*, here I am.” She fought for causes of justice and inclusion for those without a voice, across the country and even in our community, fighting for coeducation at both VMI and the Law School. Her life and legacy has undoubtedly inspired us all to say “*Hineinu*, here we are,” to carry on her work. May her memory be a blessing.

This concept of *hineinu* is why I have faith that we can truly come together, like we always have as Jews, and say “*Heneinu*.” I think the new challenges that 5780 has brought us as well as the ancient and timeless story of the Binding of Isaac both should give us hope that there are better days ahead.

So I challenge all of you to gather your communities and say “*Heneinu*.” Tell the world that you and your community are here.

Shabbat shalom, shanah tovah, may you have a sweet and blessed new year.

“Say ‘Heneinu’, tell the world that you and your community are here.”

SAM

What Might Help?

Yom Kippor Sermon, 2020

“It’ll take you three years to really feel like you know what you’re doing.”

Early on in my first fall here as director of W&L Hillel, Joan Robins, our Hillel matriarch, told me to expect it would be three full years until I felt like I knew what I was doing in this job. And as in so many things, Joan was right.

In part I think the three-year rule holds because there are just so very many moving pieces that we’re expected to master as solo Hillel professionals, but also, there are a large number of things we only have to attempt once a year, like giving a sermon during the High Holidays.

And so here I am, three full years behind me. If I’m honest though, thanks to COVID, I can’t honestly say that I feel like I know what I’m doing.

Nearly every piece of my work has been impacted — and dramatically altered — by the pandemic. Normally a large portion of my work would happen in this building; now I’m only here for a couple of hours a week. Usually I’d see dozens, if not hundreds, of students in person each week over the course of Hillel programs, one-on-one conversations or at Shabbat dinner; this fall, I’m lucky if I see 10 in person over the course of a week, and even then, it’s outdoors or at a distance and for only a few minutes.

But the students and I are still in close touch; we text all the time, or Facetime for the big-deal conversations. We have Zoom for leadership team meetings and our beloved Jewish Learning Fellowship seminars. And every once in a while, I’m lucky to have an honest to goodness email exchange with a student.

And while it does feel like I’m learning new ways to do the central work of connecting with students, I still feel like an absolute beginner. There is no model, no template. No one’s written up the best practices, and I don’t have a mentor to turn to who will tell me how she managed to keep a Hillel community connected during *her* first pandemic.

I’m sure each and every one of you feels like that too. If we’re honest with ourselves, I think we all would have to admit that more than six months after COVID shut down our schools and our nation, we still don’t have any more than a few fleeting moments in which we feel like we know what we’re doing. As a friend said to me, “We’re building the plane as we fly it.” Most days, I feel pretty confident my plane is staying aloft and is more or less on track for an on-time arrival at its destination, but boy am I hustling, nailing down the fuselage while keeping an eye on the horizon.



Director of Jewish Life, Maggie Shapiro Haskett’s son, Arlo, age 9, visits the neighborhood pig on his ritual morning walk.

But there are less confident days too. *Is* my plane still on course? How in the world am I supposed to hammer *and* steer, to say nothing of getting peanuts, Cokes and the occasional Shabbat dinner to those kids back in coach? Is there even a point to trying to keep the whole thing aloft?

When I revisited Jonah in preparation for the holidays this year, his story resonated on a whole new level. I think we can all relate to feeling required, obligated — called, if you will — to do something that seems wholly impossible and terrifying, and with no real reason to trust that there will be a positive outcome. And we can all relate to the desire to escape.

Jonah always used to strike me as just a little bit cowardly, but not anymore. I don’t know about you, but a few days to myself on a nice little sea cruise sounds fantastic, even if the accommodations are a bit *unusual* and *odiferous*. If I stop and really try to think about what COVID demands of us — how long it might be until we can pack this room again for Shabbat, or how many months until I get to hug my students, to say nothing of my parents, I want to pull a Jonah. I want to — if even just for a minute — pretend this whole mess isn’t

happening, that I can't hear what I'm so clearly being directed to do and catch the next ship out of Nineveh.

It's not just us, and it's not just Jonah, who have felt utterly incapable of bearing up under the challenges and burdens placed in front of us. The Torah is jam-packed with fragile, fearful human beings who, just like us, are doubtful of their capacities and more or less entirely convinced God has gotten it wrong by allowing the situation to devolve to the point where they — *we* — are going to have to be the ones to do something about it.

Aaron, the executor of the very first Yom Kippor ever, is one of those people. In traditional communities, the Torah reading on Yom Kippor begins:

V'yidaber Adonai el moshe acharei mot sheni bnei Aharon bkorbtam lifnei Adonai v'yamutu

"And Adonai spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of Adonai."

This is the first verse of the 16th chapter of Leviticus, but it references Leviticus 10, verses 1 and 2, in which two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, bring "strange fire" as an offering to God, something that the text says they had not been "enjoined to do," and they die as a result, in an instant.

It is important to take note of these verses for a number of reasons. First, we must note that God asks Aaron to perform the Yom Kippor ritual. The Temple was understood to be the physical home of God on Earth while it stood, and as such, the Israelites were obligated to maintain it as a pure and holy space in accordance with God's teachings. A defiled Temple would result in God absenting God's self from the people, and so in Leviticus 16, we receive detailed instructions for purifying the Temple.

As the original High Priest, Aaron is the person most obviously qualified to perform this essential task, but note how our reading contextualizes Aaron and situates the purification ritual: Aaron is identified by his two sons who died when they drew too close to God, and the new purification ritual is situated "after the death of the two sons of Aaron." We are being cued to pay attention to the fact that a father, grieving the loss of two sons who sought God, is being directed to perform the ritual.

After Nadab and Abihu are killed, the text tells us Aaron was silent. Plenty of people keep quiet in the Torah, and almost never are we explicitly told that they are remaining silent. Aaron's silence is notable, and it indicates shock and dismay. There are a plethora of instances in which figures in the

Torah cry out to God in anguish or argue with God over God's seemingly arbitrary and unjust actions. And yet Aaron remains silent. Far from indicating he accepts what has happened, I read his silence as a crisis of faith.

In the intervening chapters Aaron is instructed not to mourn for Nadab and Abihu, and he is instructed not to drink wine or intoxicants when entering the Tent of Meeting. Then come a great many verses in which Moses and Aaron are giving the Israelites all sorts of instructions about what sorts of animals can be eaten, how to cope with myriad forms of personal impurity and how to make a wide variety of offerings. There are so very many rules between Leviticus 10 and 16 that the average reader would be forgiven for being surprised that the text brings up Aaron's status as a bereaved father at the start of reading. This is a signal that it is important.

I think we can relate to Aaron, and to his sons. Nadab and Abihu were the sons of the High Priest of the Israelites and were no doubt doing something that felt right and natural — they were bringing an offering to God. Sure, they were young and didn't follow directions exactly, but who would fault youthful exuberance? Their motivations were undoubtedly positive;

they meant no disrespect for authority and certainly couldn't have known they ran the risk of defiling the Temple. How could it be that doing something that came so naturally and was born of such a joyful place could be enough to bring about Nadab and Abihu's demise? How dare God take their lives? And how could we possibly read Aaron's silence as acceptance? Surely he's stunned and utterly bereft of hope; is there any sense in crying out to a God who would

take his sons from him just because they got a little creative with the incense ritual?

Six dense and opaque chapters later and we are reminded that Aaron is a grieving father just before he is charged with the single most important ritual in the entirety of the Temple service. Why?

Let me ask you a question: What rituals have you missed since March? What has been changed, diminished or simply vanished altogether?

I sat at the head of my Passover table, and while it was lovely to welcome family and friends and students from coast to coast to my Zoom *seder*, it wasn't the same.

I recorded a video to congratulate my beloved Class of 2020 students during their online commencement ceremony instead of cheering for them and hugging them on the Colonnade in May.

**"Ritual matters...
ritual can help and
heal... rituals connect
us... comfort us... and
tell us who we are."**

MAGGIE

I watched my own daughter's virtual college graduation from my dining room, on a Zoom call with our extended family.

Instead of celebrating the Fourth of July in my hometown with my parents and my brother as we have for decades, we just stayed home and made due with care packages and a socially distant popsicle party with the neighbors.

I've attended Zoom *shiva*, and we're missing two family weddings that were dramatically curtailed due to COVID.

My boys started third and 11th grade by logging on to laptops in the basement rather than reuniting with friends and teachers back at school.

And I know I'm one of the lucky ones. The losses, even among this little group of folks gathered for services today, would be staggering if we made space to hear them all. They take all shapes, but I don't think we have attended enough to the many rituals we've been deprived of by COVID and the toll those losses are taking.

Ritual matters, and ritual can help and heal in ways that nothing else can. Judaism knows this and insists that we perform rituals often and at every major juncture of our lives, both as individuals and as a community.

Rituals connect us. Every Friday, Jews all over the world gather for Shabbat dinners. We light candles and we all sing the same blessing. We say the same words of blessing over wine, handwashing and the breaking of bread, and we all sit down to the ritual of a gracious meal shared with loved ones.

Rituals comfort us. After the passing of a loved one, we can count on seven days of *shiva* to be relieved of quotidian demands and instead be attended to by family and friends. And we can look forward to lighting a *yahrzeit* candle every year, and on Yom Kippor to more publicly remember those we are missing every day.

Ritual reminds us who we are. Jews don't just know the words of the Shema, we know to close our eyes and even cover our face with our hand to focus intently on the core statement of our faith every time we say it. The choreography of a Torah service, the *oneg* afterwards, the way your house smells every year after you cook *latkes* — these gestures, songs, noshes and smells tell us we are Jews and that we are a part of something so much bigger than ourselves, because we know that all over

the world, others are saying, doing, eating and smelling the same things we are.

Aaron was shaken to his core, shocked into silence by the death of his sons, and God's answer — God, who chose Aaron and who chooses us to be God's partners in this world — God gave Aaron a ritual. God, who could have responded to Aaron's grief and disillusionment with anything from resurrection of the dead to haughty indifference, gave Aaron a ritual to perform.

God has given us rituals too, and we've taken the liberty of creating a good many more for ourselves. The last six months have seen many of those beloved rituals changed almost beyond recognition, if not disappeared entirely, but a good many remain.

We're here today, participating in the ritual of Yom Kippor. Changed, yes, but still very much *our* ritual. We're fasting, we're gathering such that we can, we're reading Torah and singing the songs that touch a place in our hearts nothing else can. It helps.

There's a half-built *sukkah* at my house, and soon there will be another here on campus. Maybe this is the year you'll build one too? Because if there were ever a year to embrace the ritual that gets us out of doors *and* allows us to welcome guests safely, this is the year for celebrating Sukkot! It will help.

My nine-year-old, Arlo, and I take a walk every morning, just before he has to log in to start his virtual school day. We walk to the corner and say good morning to a green rubber pig that happens to live on a neighbor's retaining wall. It's silly and it's sweet and it's just a few minutes, but it helps.

So my question to you is, what would help? What are the rituals that are still available to you right now? What rituals can we creatively adapt and adjust to fit the demands of the pandemic? Could you follow Arlo's lead and dream up a ritual or two of your own? Is there something sweet and maybe a little silly, something that wouldn't take too much time that just might help?

God offered Aaron ritual in the face of one of the greatest heartaches imaginable. We are gathered here now, beneficiaries of millennia of ritual...

What might help?

G'mar tov. May you be sealed for good.

Civic Engagement Speakers Series

Brooklyne Oliveira '21

W&L HILLEL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SERIES

"Lincoln and Douglass: Champions of Free Speech"



What role does free speech play in promoting justice and the common good? Prof. Lucas Morel will explore the rhetoric of two giants of political oratory, Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, to demonstrate why diverse expressions of political opinions are necessary for self-government to flourish.

SEPTEMBER 10TH | 7PM - 8PM | ZOOM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED -- USE THE QR CODE OR LINK BELOW!

<https://tinyurl.com/yys2xxhx>



Hillel
WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

W&L HILLEL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SERIES

"A Citizen's Guide to the 2020 Presidential Election"



Join us as Professor of Politics Bob Strong discusses trends in election polls, the state of the presidential campaign, and what we might see on election day!

OCTOBER 15TH | 7PM - 8PM | ZOOM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED -- USE THE QR CODE OR LINK BELOW!

<https://tinyurl.com/y4l8estx>



Hillel
WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

W&L HILLEL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SERIES

"Truth or Consequences: Journalists in the Pursuit of Truth in 2020"



Please join Professor of Journalism Toni Locy in a discussion of the challenges journalists face as they confront the fake news label and grapple with differences between false balance and fairness in tumultuous times.

OCTOBER 22 | 6:30PM - 7:30PM | ZOOM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED -- USE THE QR CODE OR LINK BELOW!

<https://tinyurl.com/y6tj3g>



Hillel
WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

As the 2020 election approached in a monumental year, Co-Speakers Chairs Andrew Tartakovsky '23 and Brooklyne Oliveira '21 coordinated and hosted a speaker series dedicated to promoting civic engagement and voter turnout during the election season. Taking advantage of the expertise of Washington and Lee faculty, the Hillel Civic Engagement Series consisted of three virtual talks led by W&L professors. Attendees were encouraged to submit questions to the faculty following their talks, prompting community discussion and consideration of pressing civic issues.

The series kicked off Sept. 10 with John K. Boardman, Jr. Professor of Politics Lucas Morel and his talk entitled "Lincoln and Douglass: Champions of Free Speech." Through an exploration of the rhetoric of these two figures, Professor Morel offered an incredibly engaging discussion, arguing that diverse expressions of political opinions are necessary for self-government to flourish.

Next, the series welcomed William Lyne Wilson Professor of Politics Bob Strong on Oct. 15. Professor Strong, who teaches a course on elections during presidential election years, offered

"A Citizen's Guide to the 2020 Presidential Election," bringing to the series up-to-date polling and voter registration information. He provided listeners with a measured perspective on what to expect on election night, as well as the unique factors and circumstances of the 2020 election.

Finally, Professor Toni Locy of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications brought the series to a close on Oct. 22 with a talk on "Truth or Consequences: Journalists in the Pursuit of Truth in 2020." Professor Locy, who has 25 years of professional experience, discussed the challenging situation of journalists covering the 2020 election, as well as the Trump presidency, and the somewhat tenuous relationship of the press to the public.

Coupled with W&L Hillel's hugely successful Motivate campaign, the Civic Engagement Series provided W&L students, alumni and faculty information they needed to stay informed and involved in the face of a highly anticipated election. Given the record-breaking turnout of the 2020 presidential election, W&L Hillel is proud to have played a part in mobilizing and motivating the wider W&L community.

Antisemitism on College Campuses: A Conversation with Deborah Lipstadt

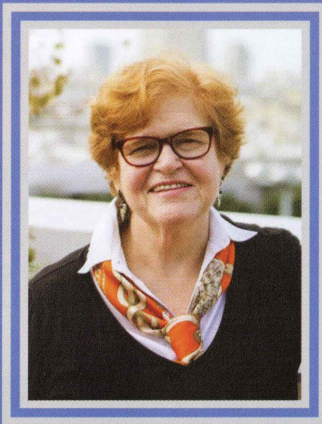
Ian Bodenheimer '22

ANTISEMITISM ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

A CONVERSATION WITH

DR. DEBORAH LIPSTADT

Hosted by the Weinstein Scholars



.....
WEDNESDAY,
OCT. 21

7:00-8:00PM ET
//
6:00-7:00PM CT
//
4:00-5:00PM PT
.....

REGISTER USING THE LINK
OR QR CODE!

<https://tinyurl.com/yyruwszw>



Made possible with support from the Division of Student Affairs, the Office of the Provost, The Roger Mudd Center for Ethics, the Washington and Lee School of Law and the Department of Religion

Hillel
WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

Hillel@HOME

Solving problems for college students usually means finding a microwave to heat up your ramen noodles. However, when Jewish students face systemic and historical problems like antisemitism, it is comforting and empowering to experience support from your community. Washington and Lee Hillel went above and beyond in providing this support by introducing us to Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, the world's leading expert on modern-day antisemitism, and allowing our whole Hillel community to learn from her about the task of combating antisemitism around the world and on college campuses.

I had the honor, along with my fellow Weinstein Scholars, Tyler Waldman '24 and Andrew Tartakovsky '23, of interviewing Professor Lipstadt this past October in an event that was livestreamed nationally on Hillel International's Hillel@Home platform. Dr. Lipstadt shared her research and experiences with antisemitism in a conversation that left many of us inspired and hopeful. I thought the evening's most powerful moment came at the very end, when Dr. Lipstadt reminded us that Jewish people are not defined by antisemitism, but rather we are able to thrive despite it. She emphasized that Jews and Jewish students control the narrative on Judaism, and that this was critical in the fight against antisemitism. Her closing thought was deeply moving and wrapped up her talk perfectly.

Having the opportunity to ask questions of someone as insightful and knowledgeable as Professor Lipstadt was a true honor. This would not have been possible without the work of W&L Hillel, and the opportunities W&L Hillel provides students to hear from such distinguished guests is unmatched. I look forward to continuing the conversation on antisemitism, and know that I am now better equipped.

Finding a Jewish Home with JLF

Lillian Weitz '22

I am half Jewish. It's a part of my heritage that I've always proudly claimed, but one that's been met with very mixed reviews from others. Some people claim that I can't just be Jewish, and that if I don't practice actively then I cease to be Jewish. To make my Jewishness even more contentious, my dad is my Jewish parent. My mom raised me Episcopalian, as she is, and I never really experienced any Jewish practices or culture unless I was with my dad's side of the family. I don't actively practice Judaism or Christianity, but I haven't actively rejected either religion. I don't look stereotypically Jewish. I don't have a super Jewish last name. Plainly, I've always had a strange, in-flux relationship with that part of my identity, sometimes even dubbing myself a "fake Jew" in the past to bring jest to a sometimes uncomfortable conversation.

When I joined Hillel's Jewish Learning Fellowship, I was a bit nervous, questioning whether I was Jewish enough to be there. I was fortunate to be welcomed into a group of peers, many of whom had grown up Jewish. I loved listening to all of their experiences, and interestingly enough, I discovered I wasn't the only one with tension around their Jewish identity or who struggled with people telling them they're not really Jewish. That validated my experiences as a non-practicing half-Jewish person and allowed me to reclaim my Jewishness

in ways I hadn't been able to before. I never felt alienated sharing my experiences during JLF seminars or hearing others, but rather that the different perspective I brought to the table was as equally valued as all the others.

In each JLF seminar we explored a different "big question" by reading and discussing a handful of passages from traditional Jewish texts. I've never touched a Torah in my life, so I didn't always know who the people we were reading about were or recognize any specific scriptures, but that didn't matter at all; I never felt guilty or uncomfortable with our texts even though I was reading most of them for the first time. I never felt as though there was an unspoken prerequisite to know anything about Judaism, and everyone seemed to value my contributions even though they didn't come from a familiarity with the texts. It felt like we were all asking these big life (and not religiously specific) questions and reading their paired texts for the first time together.

Participating in JLF was a refreshing experience and helped me feel more comfortable and confident in claiming my Jewishness. It also provided some time out of my week to escape all other obligations and just contemplate broader, bigger questions. I definitely recommend it to anyone — Jewish, non-Jewish, or half Jewish.



Lilly Weitz '22, second to the right, hosts a DIY Shabbat for her pod-mates.

W&L Hillel Wins Election Contest

Lindsey Nair

Story originally appeared in the Columns, November 2, 2020



Andrew Tartakovsky '23 served as W&L Hillel's lead civic engagement intern this fall. Under Tartakovsky's leadership, his team of civic engagement interns engaged more students in Hillel's MitzVote program than on any other campus in the nation.

Some Washington and Lee University students kept a close eye on the numbers as Election Day approached — not just presidential election polls, but also the leaderboard in a national contest to see which college's Hillel could drum up the most interest in voting.

W&L Hillel, the Jewish life organization on campus, ended their involvement in the MitzVote campaign with the highest score. W&L Hillel outperformed chapters at larger universities, such as the University of Pennsylvania and Northeastern, by an astonishingly wide margin: As of Nov. 2, W&L's group had racked up 56,638 points to the closest competitor's 15,671.

"I don't think they're going to catch up," said Andrew Tartakovsky '23, W&L's lead civic engagement intern and speaker chair. "I wish them well, I really do!"

The Hebrew word "mitzvot" refers to the 613 commandments found in the Torah, which provide the framework for leading a righteous life, and many would argue that exercising the

right to vote is a righteous thing to do. MitzVote, a play on that word, is a partnership between Hillel International and Motivote, an online platform that encourages young people to vote by offering tools and information such as personalized voting plans and social engagement. The MitzVote competition challenged Hillels at colleges and universities across America to see which could engage the highest number of students to join Motivote before Election Day, thus earning points in the competition. W&L Hillel connected more than 10% of the student body with Motivote.

"When Hillel International launched MitzVote over the summer, I was struck by just how easy the Motivote platform makes it for students to figure out how and where to register and vote," said Maggie Shapiro Haskett, director of Jewish life at W&L. "But what convinced me that this was an initiative worth bringing to campus was the truly non-partisan spirit of the effort. MitzVote inspires and empowers our students to be actively involved citizens with both the practical how-to information they need as well as unbiased facts about the

candidates and issues on the ballot. I had a hunch that the competitive twist would be a hit with W&L students, and it's been fun to see how motivated they are."

Shapiro Haskett asked Tartakovsky to come up with a strategy for the contest, and he started by recruiting a diverse team of interns with connections to Greek life, the Office of Inclusion and Engagement, athletics and other areas. He and those interns — Olivia Allen '23, Sarah Beaubé '23, Judy Park '22, Katie Palmer '22, Charlie Moore '23 and Mack Rukaniec '23 — invited each student organization at W&L to form a team and compete against other organizations on campus.

"We took a whole-school approach," Tartakovsky said, "as opposed to schools that kept it mostly inside Hillel."

W&L Hillel offered to make a donation to the charity of the winning team's choice or to make a direct financial contribution to the team's organization. Incentives will be awarded to the two teams with the highest and second-highest total number of engagement points, and to the team with the highest average number of points per member.

The top team on campus was Pi Beta Phi, which had recruited 69 of its 83 members to Motivote as of Nov. 2. Chapter president Sadie Pruett '21 encouraged most of that participation by frequently sending a link to Motivote and encouraging her sorority sisters to get involved.

"I think one reason it went so well for us and why our chapter got so involved is because it's an important topic for so many of us," Pruett said. "Many of us are politics majors and are very politically engaged, and we have a very wide spectrum of political views."

Once students join Motivote, she said, they have access to information about how to register and where to vote. It generates text messages to members with information such as the deadline for mail-in ballots or the deadline to register to vote. It also encourages social engagement such as posting a selfie with an "I Voted" sticker. "It's a cool way to get people involved and see how easy it is," Pruett said.

Both Tartakovsky and Pruett said anecdotal evidence leads them to believe that college-age Americans are highly motivated to vote in this election.

"The saying in politics is that the youth vote is always four years away, but it never really seems to come," Tartakovsky said just before the election. "This year, judging by people's level of enthusiasm for one or the other candidate — or neither of them — it may come to pass. People really seem to be taking advantage of the resources available to them."

Pruett has noticed a great deal of interest in former high school classmates, and even more in the W&L student body.

"I think we see how important it is and that we have the chance to be involved in something bigger than ourselves," she said. "It's a big deal."

Shapiro Haskett said she's proud of Tartakovsky and the rest of the Hillel team for making the competition a big success.

"Andrew's strategic networking really paid off," she said, "and I'm proud that Hillel is able to help so many new voters engage in this election."

***"...what convinced me
that this was an initiative
worth bringing to campus
was the truly non-partisan
spirit of the effort."***

MAGGIE SHAPIRO HASKETT

W&L's Maggie Shapiro Haskett Named Richard M. Joel Exemplar of Excellence by Hillel International

The award honors professionals whose passion and devotion to the Jewish campus community enrich the lives of Hillel students.

Erica Turman

Story originally appeared in the Columns, December 15, 2020

Maggie Shapiro Haskett, director of Jewish life at Washington and Lee University, was named a Richard M. Joel Exemplar of Excellence at Hillel International's annual global assembly on Dec. 14.

The award honors professionals in various stages of their careers whose remarkable passion and outstanding devotion to the Jewish campus community enrich Hillel students' lives and ensure that the organization reflects a culture of excellence, which sets a standard for all Hillel professionals to emulate.

Shapiro Haskett was nominated for the recognition by her peers and received the award virtually in front of nearly 1,000 Hillel professionals from around the world.

"I was shocked when I got word of the award," said Shapiro Haskett. "Previous winners are seasoned, innovative Hillel professionals that I look up to as role models and leaders in the work of supporting Jewish life on campus, so it's humbling and a real honor to find myself in their company."

Shapiro Haskett joined W&L as the director of Jewish life in 2017. During her time on campus, she has increased collaboration and partnerships with many other organizations, especially those that serve underrepresented students at W&L.

"Maggie Shapiro Haskett exemplifies how Hillels throughout the world continue to inspire and support students, notwithstanding the profound challenges and disruptions of this past year," said Hillel International President and CEO Adam Lehman. "We're always proud of the work of our talented professionals, but especially now given how they've reimaged Hillel experiences to meet the unique needs of students during this period."

In response to COVID-19, Shapiro Haskett worked with student leaders and colleagues across campus this fall on inventive ideas that allowed students to engage with one another while respecting COVID-19 restrictions. In one instance, Shapiro Haskett came up with the idea for a Shabbat program that allows students to receive a "Shabba-tote" filled with necessary items to host their own Shabbat dinners with roommates or close contacts in their own spaces on campus. She also introduced First-Year Students of Hillel (FYSH), a new initiative to connect incoming W&L students with upper-division students.



"This award is really a testament to the impact and strength of W&L Hillel and the talented students who make up our community," Shapiro Haskett said. "I

am only the second solo pro director ever to be named an Exemplar of Excellence, and it would not be possible without the team of student leaders that work alongside me to create our community. The award is a recognition that a Hillel or campus doesn't need to be big in numbers to be a place that nurtures and creates an innovative and supportive Jewish community."

Founded in 1923, Hillel has been enriching the lives of Jewish students for more than 90 years. Today, Hillel International is a global organization that welcomes students of all backgrounds and fosters an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning and Israel. Washington and Lee Hillel is inclusive and dedicated to offering the entire community opportunities to engage in all facets of Jewish life. Hillel builds Jewish identity by nurturing intellectual and spiritual growth, supporting interfaith engagement and robust community service work.

Hillel Chai-lights



Hillel families gathered via Zoom to light menorahs during Hanukkah this year. Pictured top to bottom, left to right, are Director of Jewish Life, Maggie Shapiro Haskett and some of her family, Noah Gallagher '21, Sam Bluestone '22 and his parents, Becca Telese '20, and Lee Bernstein '20.



Undergraduate students enjoy a safely distanced picnic Shabbat dinner on the Colonnade.



Andrew Tartakovsky '23 (left) holds a shofar, the instrument made of animal horn sounded during the High Holidays, as Hillel Advisory Board Chair, Professor Jeffrey Schatten (center) tells a story about his experience blowing the shofar as a child. Ian Bodenheimer '22(center right) and Sam Bluestone '22, (right) listen on.



Ellie Sherman '23 takes a break from building the W&L Hillel sukkah to get to know the newest addition to the Hillel family, Bear Haskett.

The Star

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