



# The Star



W&L



## IN THIS ISSUE

**Director's Corner**

**High Holiday  
Sermons**

**What Could be  
Better than  
Optimism?!**

**and more**





## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

*Maggie Shapiro Haskett*

Dear Friends of W&L Hillel,

What gifts the fall of 2021 brought us! The ability to return to in-person gatherings and a version of campus life that looks and feels much more familiar has been a welcome relief. Our Hillel community has returned in force, and we are seeing more student engagement with our programming than ever before. Judaism and Jewish life were never meant to happen in isolation, and there is tremendous joy in simply being able to come together as a community once again. As you'll read in this edition of The Star, our student leaders are tremendously motivated to create a thriving Jewish community in Lexington, and their efforts are paying off beautifully.

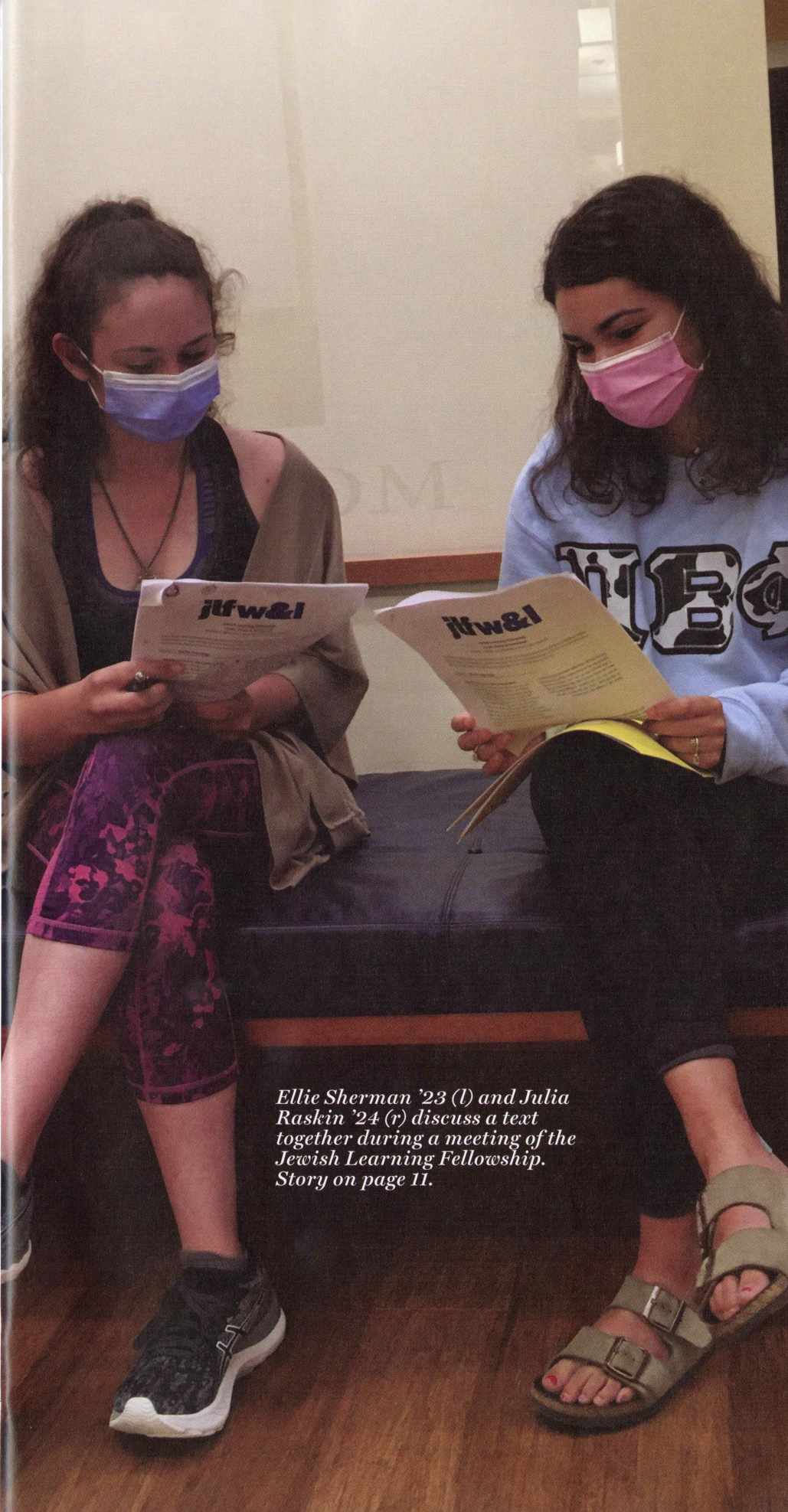
We look forward to the official reopening of our Hillel Community Kitchen during the first part of 2022. Thanks to some small adjustments, the kitchen will be a fully kosher facility accommodating both meat and dairy food preparation. Best of all, the kitchen will serve as a resource to Jewish students who wish to keep kosher as well as Muslim students who wish to observe halal.

The new year also holds the promise of a return to our Hillel student travel program. Mindful of the possible impacts of COVID, we are planning a week-long immersive Jewish learning retreat in the Outer Banks over February Break. Student leaders are already hard at work developing sessions for their peers, including a whole series of Jewish cooking classes!

Finally, we are loving the renewed opportunities to welcome alumni, families and friends to Hillel. If you are in Lexington, please drop by! The eCafe is open Sunday through Friday for breakfast and lunch, and you are always welcome at many of our events, as well. Last but not least, we hope you'll pencil in a visit to Lexington in fall 2023 to help us celebrate the Hillel House's Bayit Mitzvah, the 13th anniversary of the dedication of the building.

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





*Ellie Sherman '23 (l) and Julia Raskin '24 (r) discuss a text together during a meeting of the Jewish Learning Fellowship. Story on page 11.*

**2021-2022 HILLEL STUDENT LEADERS:**

- Sam Bluestone '22, *President*
- Robert Salita '22, *Vice President-Internal Affairs & Data Analyst*
- Ian Bodenheimer '22, *Vice President-External Affairs*
- Hayley Huber '23, *Engagement Chair & Advancement Associate*
- Katie Palmer '22, *Secretary & Student Assistant*
- Ethan Schlusel '22, *VMI Cadet-in-Charge*
- Ellie Sherman '23, *Co-Religious Life Chair*
- Mack Rukaniec '23, *Co-Religious Life Chair*
- Gabby Kogan '24, *Co-Speakers Chair*
- Tyler Waldman '24, *Co-Speakers Chair*
- David Honig '24, *Israel Chair*
- Julie Phipps '22, *Social Action Chair*
- Kai John-Blunch '23, *Co-Novack Fund Chair*
- Julia Raskin '24, *Co-Novack Fund Chair*
- Jake Winston '24, *Education Chair & Hillel Program Manager*
- Madison Karlin '25, *First Year Liaison*
- Sophie Huber '25, *Advancement Associate*
- Ana Sandler '22, *Advancement Associate*

**HILLEL ADVISORY BOARD**

- Professor Jeffrey Schatten, *Chair*
- Arie George '08, *Secretary*
- Andrew Bodenheimer P'22
- Sharon Chandler P'22
- Andrew Huber P'23, P'25
- Jami Huber P'23, P'25
- Professor 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  
 204 W. Washington St.  
 Lexington, VA 24450  
 Hillel@wlu.edu  
 @wluhillel  
 540-458-8443



# W&L Hillel Undergraduate Board Retreat

TYLER WALDMAN '24

The 2021 retreat for Hillel's Undergraduate Student Board was a fantastic experience for everyone involved. Whether students were tossing fruit snacks to each other, playing tennis between events or intensely competing in Kahoot, everyone fully enjoyed the experience. Most important, the many great events helped board members create programming for the upcoming year, bond with each other and foster a collaborative environment.

One of the highlights of the retreat was a group trip to Staunton to compete in an escape room challenge. The board was split up into three teams with each group completing their own unique escape room. This event facilitated strong collaborative problem solving, and we quickly learned we had to work together in order to win. Our night in Staunton was a great experience, including dinner out in Staunton's quaint downtown, the escape room, and riding out a tornado warning in the whirlpool at our Airbnb! Everyone acts differently in a stressful environment, so it was great to find out who took the lead to figure out the puzzles in each room and then put our newfound stress-coping skills into action during the storm.

The chance to hold our retreat in a beautiful house just outside Lexington made the experience extra special. Many board

members stayed at the house overnight, allowing us to spend quality time with all members of the board, really bonding and getting to know each other on a deeper level. We held all of our retreat sessions at the Airbnb; collaborating on numerous projects, setting goals for the upcoming year and doing some learning together as a team. It was terrific to start our year together as a team, away from it all.

Another highlight of our leadership retreat was blueberry gleanings with the local Jewish community from Lexington and Rockbridge County. As in years past, the owners of Still House at Blueberry Hill welcomed folks to pick blueberries to be donated to the Rockbridge Area Relief Association food pantry. We were grateful for the opportunity to spend some time together in the mountains and to help give back to our community.

The close of retreat was bittersweet, especially for seniors who worked tirelessly to plan a fun, productive and meaningful experience for our leadership team. We are very grateful to all of them, especially president Sam Bluestone '22, for getting us off to such a strong start this year.



*During their fall leadership retreat, the W&L Hillel Undergraduate Board spent an evening picking blueberries at Still House at Blueberry Hill to donate to the Rockbridge Area Relief Association food pantry.*





*Madison Karlin '25 and Gabriella Kogan '24 enjoy the FYSH kick-off bonfire.*

# FYSH: First-Year Students of Hillel

HAYLEY HUBER '23

**A**FTER MORE THAN A YEAR AND A HALF OF social isolation, lack of in-person programming and incessant Zoom fatigue, the start of the 2021-2022 academic year marked the beginning of something fresh, fun and exciting. The FYSH (first-year students of Hillel) Program could finally get a proper launch.

This year, we welcomed about a dozen first-year Jewish students into the FYSH Program and paired each with a Jewish upperclassman involved in Hillel. The pairing is much like a big-little program in a sorority or fraternity. Each first-year student is paired with an upperclassman to talk to about life, academics, Judaism and anything else. The goal of the FYSH Program is to create a safe, welcoming Jewish space for first-years, giving them an avenue to connect with our best and brightest as well as to give upperclassmen the opportunity to network, give back to the Hillel community and enjoy programming among students in each class.

Aside from offering our newest FYSH a friendly face and someone to hang out with upon arrival at W&L, the FYSH Program features monthly programming for FYSH to meet and engage with one another and with upperclassmen, creating an open, friendly and cohesive Jewish community on campus. This year, our FYSH have enjoyed watching the sun set over

the beautiful Shenandoah Valley from the Blue Ridge Parkway and an ice cream social amidst the gorgeous fall foliage on the Hillel House's back porch. Later this month, we will celebrate the shift to colder weather with hot chocolate and Bob Ross videos for FYSH paint and sip!

As the head coordinator for the FYSH program, I have seen the first-year Jewish students open up with each other and find their place in the broader W&L Jewish community. Attending a small rural campus in the South can make expressing one's Judaism and finding Jewish friends seem daunting. With the FYSH Program and W&L Hillel, Jewish students are free to express themselves as they please and connect with other Jewish students based on shared values, history and culture. They have somewhere to go on Shabbat, friends to say kiddush with, activities to do on Sunday afternoons, and unique opportunities for leadership and personal growth.

The 2021-2022 FYSH cohort has been incredibly successful, and I can't wait to watch it grow and mature from a brand-new concept to a permanent feature of W&L Hillel. Our success serves as a model for other Hillels to follow, and our work has been recognized on an international level by the Hillel International Student Cabinet and applauded by Hillel International professionals.



# High Holiday Sermons

In this section, we are pleased to share highlights of the many High Holiday gatherings that marked the start of the Jewish New Year, 5782. You'll find pictures from our traditional tashlich ceremony along Woods Creek as well as from W&L Hillel's innovative take on that tradition, New Year on the River. After a COVID hiatus, we were delighted to once again team up with the Outing Club for an afternoon on the Maury

River. Students and Jewish community members alike had the chance to paddle and seek solitude for their own personal tashlich reflections before joining forces to remove trash from our beloved river. Finally, we continue our tradition of sharing the d'var Torah, or sermon, that our Hillel president, Sam Bluestone '22, gave on Rosh Hashanah as well as that which Hillel Director Maggie Shapiro Haskett gave on Yom Kippor.



*Chris and Arlo Haskett had the biggest – and most unusual – haul of river debris this year, including a rusted bicycle frame, a car wheel and a number of metal fence posts.*

## Rosh Hashanah Sermon 2021

SAM BLUESTONE '22

**G**OOD MORNING EVERYONE, MY NAME IS SAM Bluestone and I am president of the Hillel Student Board. I can't tell you how wonderful it is to be here in person with you all as we welcome in the new year 5782 and reflect upon the previous year that has somehow already passed us by. I am so grateful to Maor for leading us in prayer this Rosh Hashanah, and of course to Maggie for all of the hard work she does to ensure that we have a meaningful High Holiday experience.

This year I am a senior, so this will be my last Rosh Hashanah at Hillel as a W&L student and my last year serving as a student leader on the Hillel board. The more I think about it, the more I realize that this year will be a year of transition for me and for many of us here, so I'd like to share my thoughts on transitions and change, and what Judaism has to say about it as we move into the year 5782.

For me —and I imagine many other people —transitions are scary. Once we get used to the way things are, it's hard to adjust to a new set of circumstances. This leads us to yearn for the past in which we felt more comfortable. On the flip side, sometimes

we can't wait to change our current situation and welcome new opportunities and challenges with open arms. This mindset leads us to completely let go of the past, forgetting the lessons we learned from challenging times in favor of the future experiences we wish to have. The natural question that arises from this reality is how to balance appreciation for the past with excitement for the future when we go through a change.

In Judaism, our rituals and texts teach us that transitions must be marked and celebrated, and that we are a people defined by our ability to cross boundaries. For example, we mark the beginning of the Sabbath with our Shabbat rituals, and we mark its end with Havdalah. We mark the transition into Jewish adulthood with a Bar, Bat, or B'nai Mitzvah. We mark the end of the conversion process with the ritual bathing in the mikveh. We even have a prayer, the "shehecheyanu," which is meant to be said the first time something is done. And that is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to marking transitions in Jewish rituals.

The Hebrew word "ivri," meaning "Hebrew," comes from the root ayin-vet-resh, which means "to cross over" or "to pass." By



definition, Jews are a people defined by our courage to cross boundaries and make the most of new opportunities. Look no further than the story of Exodus, where our people wandered the desert for 40 years to realize the promise of the covenant God made with Abraham. The covenant itself represents an incredible transition for Abraham. He goes from the son of not only an idol worshipper, but an idol manufacturer, to be the patriarch of generations of people who categorically reject idolatry. Sticking on the subject of Abraham, let's remember that he wasn't always named Abraham, just as his wife Sarah wasn't always named Sarah! Before the covenant, he was Abram and his wife was Sarai. Following the covenant, God bestowed upon Abram the name Abraham and Sarai the name Sarah.

It is not a coincidence that changes and transitions are so heavily emphasized in the Jewish tradition. This shows us that they are important and must be honored appropriately. But in a fascinating juxtaposition, these stories that teach us about change remain the same, and have been studied and read for thousands of years. So while we are a people defined by change and transitions, we remember our past and honor our traditions and ancestors.

This past year has been a year of change and transition. We had to adjust to the new reality of the pandemic. Our country has transitioned to a new presidential administration. Our campus community has had to have difficult but important conversations about our institutional history — conversations that have already led to concrete changes on our campus. We also have many transitions on the horizon. W&L and VMI students are moving into a new academic year. In particular, first-year students are beginning their college journey, which is a major milestone in their lives. Graduating seniors are embarking on their final year and look forward to transitions into the workforce, graduate school or military service. The reality is that we all are going through transitions whether we like them or not, and it is important that we not only have the ability to adequately adjust and handle them, but we must celebrate them!

As I learn more about how Judaism handles change, I realize that change must be marked and celebrated. It must be celebrated not as a rejection of the past or a fear of the future, but as a celebration of both with an appreciation for the current moment.

As I head into my senior year here at W&L and my last year as a student leader for Hillel, I've been struggling with how to handle this transition. When I reflect on my time here, I think about how, as a first-year student, I came to Hillel as a new member of the community, unsure of where I fit in. I was met with the most amazing Jewish community I could ask for. That community included Maggie, the student leadership at the time, and my fellow first-year Jewish students, most of whom remain some of my best friends on this campus. I was blown away by how comfortable I was in this Jewish community. This is such a fond memory for me that I find myself wanting to experience it again. It's like a movie where you wish you

could forget the ending just so you could watch it again to experience that same sense of wonder and excitement. Part of my transition is coming to the understanding that I can't go back and experience that again. But at the same time, it doesn't prevent me from remembering it fondly and taking those memories with me into my next chapter.

The other side of this is that I have been a member of student leadership all four years of my time here at W&L. How can I just leave this organization that I have poured so much work into over the last four years? Last week, we had our annual student leadership retreat, where we came together to bond as a group and work on our vision for the upcoming year of Hillel programming. Each day, as we walked out of the building, Robert, one of our VPs, and I would remark on how well the day went. "Today went perfect" was a common phrase between the two of us. That wasn't because of anything we specifically had done, but it was a testament to the passion for inclusive Jewish community that fuels our board for the 2021-2022 school year. Ultimately, it made me realize that the future of W&L Hillel is in the hands of incredible student leaders who are committed to creating and sustaining a meaningful Jewish community on our campus. I can't wait to see everything they do, and rest assured that I will be back to visit and see it for myself.

I also have to say that this is a special community. For those of you who will be here after I leave, I envy you, and if you haven't already, I hope you realize what a special community this is. This Jewish community has given me so many friends, memories and experiences that will stick with me for the rest of my life, and for that I am eternally grateful. I don't think anyone could have put it better than Andy Bernard in the series finale of "The Office" when he said, "I wish there was a way to know you were in the good old days before you actually left them."

While I know that there is a lot I will be leaving behind here, I also know that there is a lot ahead of me. My Jewish identity will be coming with me somewhere else, but it will always be shaped by the communities I have been a part of, especially this one.

This is the transition that I have been thinking a lot about, but as we head into the new year, everyone here has a transition to think about. At the very least, you are headed into a new year! I encourage you all to think about your transition. Think about the past that you'll be leaving behind. Think about where you are now. And finally, think about where you will be going. There is always something to celebrate, and as the Jewish tradition teaches and the Jewish identity mandates, you will be expected to cross boundaries. You will be expected to embrace change. You will be expected to honor and remember the past. This Rosh Hashanah, in a world where the only constant is change, have the courage to cross boundaries and celebrate it. Thank you, and Shana Tovah, may you have a happy and healthy new year.





*Top-inset: Ellie Sherman '23, Hillel Director Maggie Shapiro Haskett, Hayley Huber '23, Julie Phipps '22 and Julia Raskin '24 enjoy post-paddling cupcakes to celebrate Maggie's birthday.*

*Full-page: Hillel kayakers celebrate a beautiful afternoon on the Maury.*





Maor Greene (left), a rabbinic student from the Jewish Theological Seminary, leads W&L students, faculty, staff and community members in a traditional tashlich ceremony beside Woods Creek.

# What Could be Better than Optimism?!

MAGGIE SHAPIRO HASKETT

**A** FEW WEEKS AGO, I SENT OUR STUDENT leadership team a meme that said that everyone giving a sermon this year should be able to just stand up at the front of the sanctuary, wave their arms around and yell, “I’m so overwhelmed! I don’t know what to say!” to which the congregation would respond, “L’chaim!” and then everyone would drink and we’d move on.

I joked that that was a sneak peek of my sermon, but really, friends, “I’m so overwhelmed! I don’t know what to say!”

There is a lovely tradition among Hillel directors of sharing our High Holiday sermons in the days before the *chagim*, the holidays. I love the window into my colleagues’ worlds, reading the words that they chose to comfort, challenge and console their communities. And although our campuses are wildly different, the sermons reveal how much unites us in the work of nurturing the next generation of Jews. The details may differ, but typically, we all are moved to speak on the same major world events each year.

But not this year.

This year, my colleagues are talking about COVID, climate change, racial justice, reproductive justice, voting rights, 9/11, the Taliban, the January 6 attacks on the U.S. capital, BDS campaigns on campus, rising antisemitism, the Israel/Hamas violence in May, Zionism, anti-Zionism, social isolation, mental health and burnout, just to name a few topics.

As my grandfather used to say, “If it’s not one thing, it’s everything.” And this year, if we pause to really consider the list of pressing issues facing us, it really can feel like everything.

I’m so overwhelmed.

*We’re* so overwhelmed.

Yesterday afternoon, I shared with Maor just a smidge of what I was thinking of talking about this morning (9/11, gun violence, and COVID denial), and they responded, “Wow, you’re in a dark place.”

So – God forgive me – I scrapped that sermon and cracked open my laptop last night to write something else.

You see, I’ve been with so many of you through so many dark moments since we last sat together in this room, and I realized last night that there’s just no need for us to rehash any of it. You don’t need me to tell you about the challenges we’re facing as individuals, a community or a nation – we’re all living it in real time, both together and on our own, and by now we’re all just a little too well acquainted with the details.

I realized last night that an academic unpacking of a passage from today’s Torah or haftarah portion probably wasn’t going to be of much use either. It’s all very well and good to point out the lessons we might take from Jonah, but when we’re still caught in the middle of the storm, I don’t know that there’s much capacity to learn. And I couldn’t get comfortable with the notion of standing up here and trying to offer reassurances



that things would get better. You don't need me to tell you any of that stuff.

So instead, I simply want to name and reflect the two things I'm seeing and feeling in our community this year: First, that we are living with a large and lingering darkness, and second, that we have an astounding capacity for hope.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks famously wrote, "Knowing what we do of our past, no Jew can be an optimist."

"Optimism," Sacks wrote, "is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the belief that, together, we can *make* things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one."

Looking back over the last year, we can all easily agree that passive optimism just isn't going to cut it. If we learned anything, it is that we have to actively work to make things better. And as is so often the case, my students have been my greatest teachers.

At the risk of going back on my promise not to regale you with tales of woe, I'd like to share an example of active hope.

In fall 2019, antisemitic posters appeared on our campus encouraging students to boycott a particular product alleged to have ties to the Israeli army, and things just deteriorated from there. We were in the throes of responding to that situation when COVID hit in early 2020, and you could hardly have faulted an optimist for believing that our antisemitism troubles would soon get better as everyone scattered and our attention was pulled elsewhere.

Unfortunately, as many of you know, things did not get better – they got decidedly worse.

But that's where hope comes in.

Our Hillel student leadership team wanted – *needed* – things to get better for the Jewish community, and they got to work *making things better*. I'm looking around the room, and so many of the people who taught me how to actively hope – and *work* – to make things better are here. Hayley Huber '23, our Hillel engagement chair, launched a club dedicated to bringing students with diverse viewpoints into educated, respectful dialog about divisive topics. Sam Bluestone '22, our Hillel president, logged countless hours on Zoom last summer learning from professionals in the Jewish communal world how best to support his community, and he puts that learning into practice every day. Ian Bodenheimer '22, one of our VPs, is speaking in a number of forums, on campus and off, on behalf of his Jewish peers. Our education chair, Jake Winston '24, is hard at work designing a year-long educational series on the Israel/Palestine conflict. Our other VP, Robert Salita '22, is doing the quiet, essential work of building relationships

across lines of difference in our campus community. And Sean Whaysman '23 is making us laugh with ferociously funny PowerPoints and allowing us all to breathe a little easier thanks to his fierce defense of anyone who share his passion for his birthplace, Israel. These are just a few examples of how this community is actively working to make things better.

Sacks tells us, "It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope."

There is an astounding amount of courage in this room. It takes courage to do all of the things our W&L student leaders are doing to make things better. It is courageous to have hard conversations with friends, classmates, teachers and administrators. It is courageous to advocate for what you need.

And it is courageous to create new things, try out new ideas and risk failing in the service of making your community better and safer.

There is another sort of courage represented here today, and one I don't think we often enough pause to truly recognize. VMI cadets are a fixture here at Hillel, and although your uniforms make you stand out, I think we overlook the profound fact that they represent

an incredible courage: the decision to pursue a life of military service. Sure, right now you're also goofy college kids doing all the usual goofy college kid things, but you're also preparing to dedicate your very lives to the idea that you can make things better. The courage it takes to make that commitment is breathtaking.

Sacks concludes, "Jews have never – despite a history of sometimes awesome suffering – given up hope."

We're suffering right now. I see it, we all see it. We are living through a dark and difficult moment.

And we are never, ever giving up. We have hope – active, courageous hope – and we are not giving up on the idea that we can make things better.

I know my students are probably sick of hearing it, but I could not possibly say it often enough: thank you.

Thank you for the inspiration you offer me every day, and thank you for the work you do for your Jewish community.

Because of you, I have hope. Because of you, I know that things can get better, because every day I see each of you doing the work.

Thank you.

G'mar chatima tova. May we all be sealed for good this year.

**"It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope."**





*Sam Bluestone '22, W&L Hillel Undergraduate Student Board president (center), casts bread crumbs into Woods Creek during a traditional tashlich ceremony.*

## High Holiday Reflections

SAM BLUESTONE '22

**H**IGH HOLIDAYS AT W&L ARE ALWAYS A highlight for me. They give me a chance to stop and reflect as I head into the new year full of hope and excitement. They also give me the opportunity to engage with the spiritual side of my Judaism that I don't often engage with. One of the most difficult parts of last year's High Holidays was not being able to be in person with the community for services. Although we still had a meaningful marking of the new year via Zoom services, there is nothing quite like gathering in person with the Jewish community here in Lexington. This year, we were fortunate enough to bring an officiant to campus to lead us in prayer. Maor Greene, a fifth-year rabbinic student from the Jewish Theological Seminary, joined us and fit right in,

connecting easily with students and people from the Lexington and Rockbridge Jewish community. Best of all, we were able to welcome our community back to the Hillel sanctuary for services. Although we still had to implement COVID protocols and adhere to our value of pikuach nefesh, saving a life, having everyone in the sanctuary to celebrate together, in person, made my experience powerful and meaningful. One of the things I value most about Judaism is the focus and commitment to community, and I felt that strongly this year during our High Holiday services. I am incredibly grateful to have had such a positive experience for Rosh Hashanah for my senior year at W&L!



# Connections Between Two Worlds: Israel and Palestine Educational Series Hosted by Washington and Lee Hillel

DAVID HONIG '24



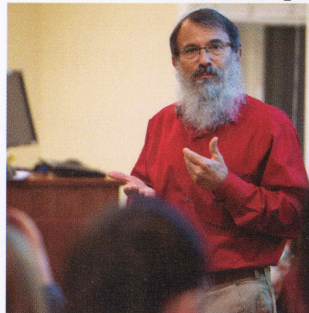
*Shadi Abu Awwad tells W&L students about his experiences growing up in the West Bank and coming to work with Roots to create a culture of nonviolent coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.*

**T**HE ISRAEL AND PALESTINE CONFLICT HAS persisted for over 70 years, since the announcement of independence of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948. The complex history of this conflict stems from social, political, cultural and religious factors from both sides. With both sides arguing that they are more justified than the other, divisiveness has only grown over the years. As the conflict persists, misconceptions and misunderstandings about the issue only grow deeper and more dangerous. In order to better understand this critical issue, W&L Hillel is hosting a year-long educational series to directly address and educate the university community on the conflict.

This program was created and is currently led by Jake Winston '24, the W&L Hillel board's education chair. Winston's goal for the educational series is to educate Jews and non-Jews alike on the Israel and Palestine conflict, with hopes that they will leave each event with a new and deeper understanding of the conflict. In order to do this, educational activities will challenge students to evaluate their prior knowledge, potentially question their own beliefs, and collaborate with other students to seek deeper understandings and possible solutions to the conflict.

The Israel and Palestine Educational Series includes numerous events designed to cultivate new understanding of the complex issue, including film screenings of the movies "Oslo" and "The Green Prince," a book club that will read "Letters to my Palestinian Neighbor," and a speakers event. The educational series kicked off on October 25, 2021, with a screening of "Oslo," which depicts the secret negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians which led to the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords. This movie provided students with a better understanding of the tensions between both sides of the conflict and was a great starting point for the educational series.

In November, we welcomed two representatives of the Israeli and Palestinian peace-building organization Roots/



*Rav Hanan Schlesinger addresses a group of W&L students during his visit with Roots.*

Shorashim/Judur, Rav Hanan Schlesinger, an Israeli settler, and Shadi Abu Awwad, a Palestinian, both from the West Bank. Schlesinger founded the organization with Abu Awwad's uncle in 2014 in order to foster understanding and a commitment to nonviolence among both Israelis and Palestinians. Roots recognizes the legitimacy of both groups' claims to the entire land and models peaceful coexistence

founded in respect for the other. Schlesinger and Abu Awwad spoke at a number of events, reaching students, faculty, staff and community members alike. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from them and their work.

Winter Term will kick off with the first meeting of the Israel and Palestine Book Group, and in March, we will welcome foreign policy scholar, author, and journalist David Makovsky of the Washington Institute and Johns Hopkins University, who will share his expertise on the conflict. With events like these and more in the future, the Israel and Palestine Educational Series will continue to offer W&L community members opportunities to learn and make new connections.

*\*Note: Masks were removed for the photos.*



# The Jewish Learning Fellowship: Learning and Friendships to Last a Lifetime

IAN BODENHEIMER '22



*Tyler Waldman '24 (l) and Sam Bluestone '22 (r) read and discuss a text in the Hillel library during a JLF session.*

**A**S A SENIOR ENTERING MY LAST SEMESTER IN college, I have spent a lot of time looking back at my time at W&L. I think about the good times and bad times, and what has made me grow into the person I am today. A recurring theme in these thoughts is the Jewish Learning Fellowship and how it has impacted my learning and education more than I ever could have imagined. I started JLF my first year, and it has provided me an environment where I can share my beliefs on complex ideas and build on those ideas with my peers. My ideas have been sharpened, changed and challenged through these discussions, but more importantly, I have also gained a newfound appreciation for the depth of Judaism and Judaic discussion. Learning through this lens has given me a unique perspective on my community at W&L and the Jewish community, and I will take this perspective with me as I continue in post-W&L life. The broad range of

topics we covered in JLF helped to broaden my horizons and contributed greatly to my open-mindedness.

Not only did I learn so much in JLF, I also created lifelong bonds and friendships with my fellow Jewish students. I met some of people through JLF that I will be close with for the rest of my life, and it is in no small part because of our shared experiences and connection in the fellowship. I am so appreciative of this program for guiding me in this way, and I wouldn't trade my time in JLF for the world. None of this would have been possible without the direction and advice of our Hillel director, Maggie Shapiro Haskett. She facilitated JLF in a way that allowed people to be themselves while also being challenged and growing as individuals. I am sad to be leaving this community in the spring, but will always remember my time at JLF as some of my best!



# Jewish Life at VMI

MAGGIE SHAPIRO HASKETT

**J**EWISH CADETS FROM VIRGINIA MILITARY Institute make up a small but vital part of our Hillel community, and we were delighted to welcome them back to the Hillel House at long last this fall! The semester got off to a strong start with 11 first years joining us for a traditional “Rat Sunday” feast of bagels and schmears, followed by long phone calls to friends and family, and even longer naps on just about every horizontal surface in the building. First years from VMI were a core part of our Shabbat dinner

crew, including two special young men, David Poe and Max Kleeberg. David is just discovering his Russian Jewish heritage and has found an eager teacher in Max, who was raised in an Orthodox community in Skokie, Illinois. This fall also saw the continuation of a new favorite VMI tradition, the Ring Blessing Ceremony. Cadet Noelle Heilpern asked Maggie to bless her ring in an especially poignant moment outside J.M. Chapel. The text of that blessing is included below.

## Ring Blessing, Virginia Military Institute, November 19, 2021

- I. Blessed are you Adonai our God, who brings joy into our lives.
- II. Blessed are you Adonai our God, who has created you cadets as embodiments of holiness and the Divine.
- III. Blessed are you Adonai our God, who has endowed you cadets with the potential to live a life of courage, generosity, commitment and hope, and who has endowed you with a great capacity for learning and service.
- IV. Blessed are you Adonai our God, who has surrounded you cadets with friends and family, teachers and mentors who love you and will support you throughout your life.
- V. Blessed are you, Adonai our God, who has entrusted you cadets with the work of transforming the world through your service to humanity.
- VI. Blessed are you Adonai our God, who has created places and communities of refuge for you, to whom you may turn when times get tough and you need others to help you find strength.
- VII. Blessed are you Adonai our God, who illuminates the world with happiness and contentment, companionship and contentment, and most of all, the promise of peace in Jerusalem, Israel and all the world. May you cadets always be blessed to play a small part of bringing God’s holy light to all, strengthened and prepared by your time at VMI and always encouraged by this ring, this tangible sign of the great faith, trust and joy we, your community and your family see in you.



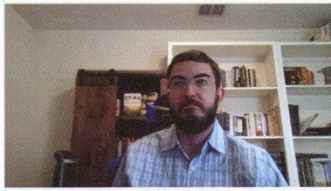
*Top: Hillel Director Maggie Shapiro Haskett hugs Cadet Noelle Heilpern after blessing her ring.*

*Bottom: VMI first years gather on the Hillel front steps for a quick smile before returning to post.*

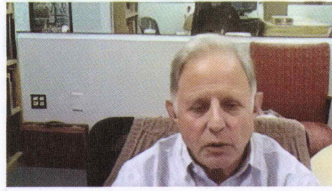


# Washington and Lee Jewish Life Oral History Project

JAKE WINSTON '24



Arie George '08.mp4  
Oct 12, 2021 by Win... ...  
266.6 MB



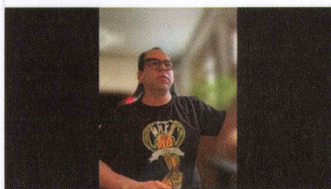
Barry Levin '68.mp4  
Nov 10, 2021 by Win... ...  
201 MB



Herb Rubenstein '74....  
Nov 8, 2021 by Winst... ...  
176.8 MB



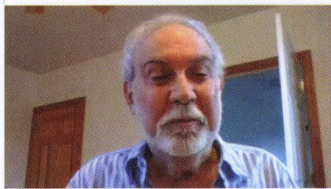
Joan Robins.mp4  
Nov 19, 2021 by Win... ...  
64.8 MB



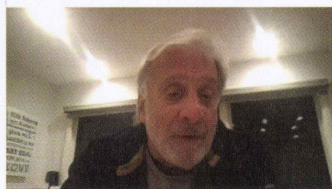
Lev Raslin '12.mp4  
Nov 17, 2021 by Win... ...  
73.7 MB



Paul Weinstein '55.m...  
Oct 21, 2021 by Win... ...  
159.9 MB



Dr. Richard Marks.m...  
Nov 17, 2021 by Win... ...  
89 MB



John Zamoiski and E...  
Nov 10, 2021 by Win... ...  
260.9 MB

**A** BLEND OF JUDAISM AND HISTORY SEEMED too good to pass up when our Hillel director, Maggie Shapiro Haskett, asked me if I was interested in launching an oral history project for Jewish life at Washington and Lee. As a history major, this project gave me the opportunity to combine two passions of mine.

Oral history is the collection and study of historical information using sound or video recordings of interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events. Through the W&L Jewish Life Oral History Project, we want to give Jewish alumni; current and past faculty and staff; and current students opportunities to tell the story of Jewish life at the university. It is important to me to document what the campus has looked like for Jewish students and faculty over the years because this is a facet of campus history that hasn't yet been recorded. The project will allow us to create and maintain a warehouse of stories for all to listen to and learn from so our history will be one that is shared for years to come. Later in 2022, look for a website sharing all of the wonderful interviews.

Through the project so far, I have been able to meet and talk to some wonderful alumni, all with their own Jewish Washington and Lee story to tell. The experience has been everything I could have hoped for; along with combining my passions for Judaism and history and meeting amazing alumni, I have been able to hone my interviewing and writing skills. Only Hillel could have offered me this opportunity. I am grateful that Maggie and W&L Hillel have given me the chance to launch this project and work to bring the untold stories of Jews at W&L to life.

**We would love to include your story in the Washington and Lee Jewish Life Oral History Project! Please contact Project Manager Jake Winston '24 at [winstonj24@mail.wlu.edu](mailto:winstonj24@mail.wlu.edu) or call W&L Hillel at 540-458-8443.**

*We are grateful to Arie George '08, Barry Levin '68, Dr. Richard Marks, Lev Raslin '12, Joan Robins, Herb Rubenstein '74, Hon. Paul Weinstein '55, Eric White '74 and John Zamoiski '74 for being our first round of oral history interviewees.*



# Over the Rainbow with Challah for Hunger

JULIE PHIPPS '22

**K**AI JOHN-BLUNCH '23 AND I WERE HONORED to take on the leadership of Challah for Hunger at W&L Hillel after the founding member of our chapter graduated last year. For us, Challah for Hunger is an incredible way to both engage with and give back to the community.

When our Hillel Undergraduate Board met to discuss the upcoming events, we eagerly raised the challenge of turning Hillel's annual rainbow challah baking event with the Queer Liberation Alliance (QLA) into a three-way collaboration with Hillel, QLA and Challah for Hunger. This would require extra marketing, complicated logistics to collect both challah orders and sign-ups for baking shifts, and a bunch of baking! We anticipated 25 attendees from VMI and W&L, and received orders for 14 loaves of challah to bake for members of the community.

Kai and I had our work cut out for us for sure, which was evident by the seven bags of flour and many other ingredients we brought back to our kitchen on Oct. 20 to prepare the dough for the next day's event. Per Hillel Director Maggie Shapiro Haskett's recommendation, we prepared 12 batches of challah: two of each in red, orange, yellow, green, blue

and purple to create beautiful six-strand rainbow loaves the next day. Luckily for Kai and me, we had a team of seven that included friends of Hillel and board members spread across two kitchens to get the work done. The dough rose beautifully overnight, almost popping out of its Ziplock bags, and before the event we were able to roll out 39 strands to accommodate our orders.

As I suspected, this event really brought the community together. Once we started rolling and braiding with the members of QLA, I understood how important teamwork was. How incredible was it that we were able to prepare 39 loaves of challah in an hour? Hillel President Sam Bluestone '22 and Religious Life Chair Ellie Sherman '23 took the lead on showing the other students how to complete a six-strand braid, and took great joy in sharing their Jewish tradition of making challah with others while also standing in solidarity with the LGBTQ community during Lexington's Pride Month.

We are so pleased with how this event turned out, and we look forward to more upcoming bakes. Rumor has it CFH pivots to make sufagniyot for Chanukah!



*Students show off their rainbow challah braiding skills.*





*W&L Hillel's religious life chair, Ellie Sherman '23, pauses for a moment of quiet reflection beside Woods Creek during the tashlich ceremony.*

## Shabbat Services at Hillel

ELLIE SHERMAN '23

**W**HEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL, I WAS RARELY able to attend Friday night Shabbat services. I was able to attend Saturday morning Torah services more frequently, and I fell in love. Even though I was the youngest person by at least 20 years most Saturdays, the atmosphere of the service, and the preceding Torah study, was something truly incredible. The love and kindness of the congregation, the wisdom of the rabbis, the power of the Torah... together, these created an atmosphere unlike any I had experienced. I left feeling content and like I was a part of something bigger and greater than myself. Essentially, Saturday morning services were a time of solace and refuge among the chaos of work, school and preparing/applying for college.

I will never forget the first time I entered Washington and Lee's beautiful Hillel building for my first Shabbat as a W&L student. I met the amazing Hillel director, Maggie Shapiro Haskett; the then-president of Hillel, Lee Bernstein '20; our current president of Hillel, Sam Bluestone '22; and many more wonderful people who instantly made me feel safe and welcome. Moving to a rural community for college meant going from a big city to a place with a small Jewish population and no nearby rabbis, so the solace of Hillel was reminiscent of the services back home, even in a new school, a new state, a new life. I found a piece of home.

During my first year, I led a few small Friday night services, each around 30-45 minutes with some traditional prayers and liturgy. Sophomore year, I was ecstatic to join the Hillel Board as the religious life chair. Unfortunately, COVID left us in a highly unusual situation where we could no longer meet in person for Shabbat. Although I was able to lead a virtual Passover Seder for the Hillel community, we weren't able to add virtual Shabbat gatherings to our lineup of other virtual and DIY programming during the 2020-21 academic year. This year, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be in person with my peers again, helping to lead Shabbat services and being a part of Jewish life on campus. Now that we are in person, I finally have the chance to recreate the love and community I felt back home at a Saturday morning Torah service with my W&L family.

Regardless of religious affiliation or lack thereof, our services are inclusive, with any and all welcome. I am so grateful to be a part of a community that not only allows, but encourages and helps students to create meaningful experiences. These services meant so much to me back home, and I know that they will be just as, if not even more, meaningful here at Washington and Lee.



# Identifying and Combatting Antisemitism: W&L Hillel Launches Two New Initiatives

MAGGIE SHAPIRO HASKETT

**I**T IS NOT UNCOMMON TO HEAR LEXINGTON referred to as a “bubble,” insulated from the ugliness that is too often part of normal life in bigger cities and on other college campuses, and to a large extent, that really is true. Unfortunately, we are not entirely immune to the challenges of the day, including antisemitism.

According to the FBI’s most recent hate crimes report, antisemitism is the most common form of religiously motivated hate, and a recent report from the American Jewish Committee found that one quarter of American Jews personally experienced antisemitism during the last 12 months. A study conducted during the summer of 2021 by the Anti-Defamation League and Hillel International revealed that among American college students, one third experienced antisemitism on campus during the past year, with a sharp increase coming during the violence between Israel and Gaza in May 2021.

Sadly, these studies are representative of our experiences on campus and in Lexington, but we are not willing to accept this as the new reality for American Jewish communities. In response, W&L Hillel launched two new initiatives this fall designed to help our entire community identify and combat antisemitism wherever and however it may appear.

W&L Hillel was selected to join the second round of the National Coalition Building Institute’s “Taking on Antisemitism” pilot for the 2021-22 academic year, together with Macalester College, the University of Illinois and the University of Iowa. The Hillel directors and Jewish chaplains from our four campuses met monthly with NCBI’s founder and CEO, Cherie Brown, and Stephanie Low, board member and director of NCBI’s Jewish Affinity Group, to learn their coalition-building approach. Then, immediately after the close of the semester, teams made up of Jewish students, faculty and staff from each campus gathered via Zoom for a three-day training. We learned tools for identifying and confronting the antisemitism we encounter in our lives as well as leadership techniques for building diverse coalitions we can turn to for mutual support whenever bias

incidents and hate crimes occur. We will put that learning into action over the course of the next semester, creating a coalition-building program tailored to W&L’s campus and supported by NCBI staff.

During the fall semester, I also developed and premiered our “Identifying and Combatting Antisemitism” workshop series. Drawing on materials created by Berkeley Hillel and the UC Berkeley Center for Jewish Studies, as well as the new antisemitism curriculum presented by Hillel

International, W&L Hillel now offers both one-off and multi-session workshops for anyone in the community interested in learning more about identifying and combatting antisemitism. This fall, I was invited to present to students, faculty and staff at Southern Virginia University and also had the opportunity to share the workshop with W&L faculty and staff. The new year will bring opportunities to share this information with

our wider community, including staff and administrators at our local schools and members of the Rockbridge Area Ministerial Association.

The response thus far has been heartening. Many of our non-Jewish friends and neighbors have shared that they simply don’t know much about antisemitism and feel unqualified to identify, much less speak out about, all but the most egregious examples. Our programs help fill in the knowledge gaps and offer some easy, practical action items. And perhaps even better, a number of Jewish students have told me how grateful they are that these resources are being made available to the wider community. For too many of them, they’ve felt the obligation to shoulder more of this fight than is reasonable to expect of any college student, and the toll has been high.

It is my hope that through intentionally cultivating a diverse coalition of campus community members who are committed to equity and safety for all, and through increased education, we will soon see that antisemitism truly has no place in Lexington or at W&L.

**Unfortunately, we are not entirely immune to the challenges of the day, including antisemitism.**





*Students gather on the Hillel House porch prior to the start of a FYSH event. Story on page three.*



# The Star

Washington and Lee University  
204 W. Washington St.  
Lexington, VA 24450

---

Nonprofit Organization

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Washington and  
Lee University

