Hillel

The University of Chicago
Johanna and Herman H.
Newberger Hillel Center



From the Director's Desk



Dear UChicago Hillel Alumni, Parents, and Friends,

The vision of Hillel, across every campus, is both simple and sacred: “We envision a world where every student is inspired to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning, and Israel.”

The question is how? How do we inspire enduring Jewish commitments? The answer: outstanding student leaders.

As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says: “Leadership at its highest transforms those who exercise it and those who are influenced by it. The great leaders make people better, kinder, nobler than they would otherwise be.”

Here at the University of Chicago Hillel, we are blessed with precisely those great leaders: Jewish students who are ready to lead the way into a bright future for our beloved community.

Across every denomination, our students step up. In Yavneh, the Orthodox community, president Julian Rapaport and VP Adam Burian ensure joyful minyanim are hosted twice a day, every day. In Egal, our Conservative community, co-chairs Brady Santoro, Ethan Levy, and Hannah Stoll nurture weekly Friday night services and a monthly Saturday morning Torah reading. And the effervescent Mila Shulman, the brand new president of the Reform Jewish community, is seeding a fabulous new monthly service with law student Adam Strauss on guitar!

But there's more… On October 7th, it was Maroons for Israel president Eva Kattan and Hillel International Israel Leadership Network Jake Rymer, who led their peers in

memory and advocacy. At Hyde Pickle Deli, our annual distribution of deli sandwiches for tzedakah, it was James Leavitt, Nico Rose, Ella Riebli, and Eli Kanner who organized the community, gave back, and held their heads high with Jewish pride on the quad. In the Jewish Learning Fellowship cohort, it is Max Bloom who has recruited fellow undergrads and grads to engage in intellectual Jewish text study. Every Shabbat, it is Naomi Elkin who bakes challah and Liam Gomberg who puts up cholent to fill our building with warmth and welcome. Every single day, it is the tireless Beka Dychtwald, Hillel RSO president, who interfaces with the University to advocate for funds and friends… The list goes on and on.

Now is the time to build that empowered pipeline. Six incredible students from across the spectrum have been selected to become the Atid Task Force - to co-create a new student board model, gain feedback from their peers, and ultimately seed a student leadership structure which will take the helm by the spring quarter. (Their reflections are below)

The Jewish people, more than ever, need strong leaders. I am proud to tell you that I know exactly where to find them: right here, at the University of Chicago Hillel.

Thank you for your partnership as we work hand in hand to build up tomorrow's generation of Jewish excellence.

Rabbi D'ror Chankin-Gould

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UChicago Hillel is...

Meet our ATID Board

"A place where all types of Jews can be at home together."
Adam Burian

"Where new friends are created and old friendships are strengthened."
Ariel Oberfeld

"A joyful community!"
Hannah Stoll

"A place for community, dialogue, and respect."
Jake Rymer

"Meeting students where they are at."
Rikki Tamir

"Always adapting to meet the moment."
Mila Shulman

Alumni Dvar Torah

"Rupture and Repair"
By Rabbi Jane Kanarek

Ḥayyei Sarah opens with the news of Sarah's death: "Sarah's life was one hundred and twenty-seven years. Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, now Hebron, in the land of Canaan. Abraham came to mourn and weep for Sarah" (Genesis 23:1-2). The Torah is silent about the reasons for Sarah's death. It is also silent about Sarah's knowledge of or reaction to Abraham's near slaughter of their son, Isaac, the *akeidah*. Yet Rashi,

noticing that the news of Sarah's death follows closely after the story of the binding of Isaac, fills in some of these spaces: "Why is the death of Sarah juxtaposed with the binding of Isaac? Because through the news of binding of Isaac, that her son had been prepared for sacrifice and had almost been sacrificed, her soul flew out from her and she died." In Rashi's telling, Sarah dies from the trauma of her son's near-death at the hands of his father. Midrash Leviticus Rabbah renders this tale even more tragic. It imagines a conversation between Sarah and Isaac, where Isaac tells his mother what his father had done. Sarah's cries become the sounds of the shofar.



I, however, imagine Sarah's death a bit differently. The close translation of Genesis 23:1 that I provided above also opens a space for another reading. Because it is in the construct state, the word *shanim* ("years") is shortened in the verse to "*shenai*." Rabbinic wordplay allows me to read "*shenai*" out of context with another translation, the word "two." That is, Sarah has two understandings of her life (*shenai ḥayyei sarah*), one from before she receives the news of the *akeidah* and one from after.

When Sarah learns from her son what his father had done to him, she finally understands the trauma of what she did to Hagar and Ishmael by casting them out to the desert. Sarah dies from a doubly broken heart, for her son and for Hagar and Ishmael.

I see Sarah as a tragic and courageous woman. And, I ask what might this story of Sarah's death have to offer us?

The Talmud teaches: Said Rabbi Yohanan in the name of Rabbi Meir, "Anyone who does not accompany another person or who does not allow himself to be accompanied, it is as if he spills blood." (Bavli Sotah 46b)

Returning to these difficult stories of our ancestors' lives is an act of accompaniment. When we are willing to encounter and confront their tragic imperfections, we tell them — and by proxy ourselves — that they, and we, are not alone. We claim that learning from our ancestors does not necessitate their perfection or ours. But in this willingness to encounter what is difficult lies a seed of hope.

Toward the end of *Ḥayyei Sarah*, we learn of Abraham's death and we are told that his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, come together to bury their father. It is a moment of accompaniment that is also a moment of profound familial repair.

Rabbi Jane Kanarek (Ph.D. '07) is Professor of Rabbinics and Dean of Faculty at Hebrew College.

Mensches of the Month

This Simchat Torah, we celebrated endings and beginnings by honoring our 4th years and the leadership roles they've held at UChicago Hillel.

In our Egalitarian minyan:

Kallat Torah: Dalia Pustilnik
Kallat Bereishit: Beka Dychtwald

In our Yavneh minyan:

Chatan Torah: Julian Rapaport
Chatan Bereishit: Jake Spitzer!
Chatan Maftir: Joey Rosenfeld!





Since we last spoke...

October opened with remembrance. From October 5 through 7, we hosted the October 7th 100 Human Story exhibit, giving students space to sit with the stories of those taken from us. On October 7 itself, we joined Chabad and other campus organizations for a community ceremony marking the anniversary, standing together as one campus.



Just a week later, Family Weekend filled our community with energy and warmth. Families joined us for Shabbat services, a family style BBQ Shabbat dinner in Reynolds Club, followed by morning services and our Family Weekend reception on Saturday. It was a joy to welcome so many of you to campus, to see familiar faces, and to meet so many new ones. Thank you to every family who joined us and made the weekend such a success.



We also launched Women of Valor, a new series led by our Director of Engagement, Eva Rosenthal, that brings inspiring women to our building to share their work and stories with students. Our first guest was Professor Erin Galgay Walsh of the University of Chicago Divinity School, who led a fascinating conversation on rethinking early Christianity through Judaism.

The month ended on a delicious note with our annual **Hyde Pickle Deli**! We set up shop on the Quad and served freshly made deli sandwiches (each with a pickle, of course) to more than 90 students. Students could sponsor a sandwich for a neighbor in need through our partnership with the Food Run Project in Hyde Park. It was Jewish deli culture and tzedakah on the same plate, and a chance to share a little love with the entire UChicago community.





Upcoming Events

11/5: Sefer Society Shabook Club grand opening

11/6: Yavneh, Egalitarian, and Reform Shabbat Services & Dinner

11/8: A Cozy Bagel Brunch

Sigd Celebration of Ethiopian Jews with Spiritual Life Office

11/11: Lunch & Learn Series with Dean Robinson (Dean of Divinity School)

11/14: Shabbat Day Board Games

11/19: Women of Valor Lunch & Learn with Jessica Kirzane (Professor of Yiddish)

11/19: Meet & Greet with Rabbi CG in New York

11/20: Friendsgiving Shabbat

11/22: Meet & Greet with Rabbi CG in Los Angeles

11/23-11/29: Thanksgiving Break

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