Pesach At Hillel: What Makes The 2nd Night Different From The 1st

By Jessica Fedin ‘17, Civic Intern

2014’s Passover seders extended beyond Dartmouth Hillel to the broader college community as Jews and non-Jews celebrated together. On the first night, 220 students gathered throughout the Roth Center for Jewish Life to celebrate and engage in cross-cultural understanding. The diversity of the seder reflected both Hillel and Dartmouth’s values of inclusivity, respect and dedication to learning. Hillel members led the seder with the class of 2017 representing their “baby” status on campus by asking the four questions.

The service included students’ reflections on Passovers spent at home, which added deeper insight into the myriad of ways people celebrate. Hillel President, Elana Folbe ‘15 recalled how her family “would invite people from homeless shelters and neighbors of other faiths,” to her family seders in Detroit. Vice Presidents of Religion, Sam Libby ’17 and Nick Parillo ’15, worked on the first-night service, the Haggadah, and making sure everything ran smoothly.

Dinner, catered by the kosher Pavilion, included chicken, veggies, sweet potato, chocolate macaroons, and cake. David Becker ’13, led the Magid with parodies including “Let it Go,” “Flourless,” “Single Levites,” and “Matzah Ball.” The quirky tunes kept everyone entertained.

The second night brought 230 students together for eight seders that were held throughout campus including Alpha Phi, Zete, Beta, and in the Korman Library. For students who went home for the first night of Passover, being able to have a second night seder in a location of their choice allowed them to spend the second night with their “on-campus families.”

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Much of the preparation for the entire week of Passover was coordinated by Hillel’s administrative assistant, Claudia Palmer, who tirelessly oversaw menu planning, organized many deliveries, and supervised the thorough cleaning of the kitchen for chametz. Hillel’s ability to coordinate seders to over 400 people in the Dartmouth community is just another reflection of the vibrancy of Jewish life on the Dartmouth College campus.

Students gather for a unique 3rd night seder in the Roth Center
Proverbs states, “A good name is worth far more than great riches.” This has been a difficult time for our “Dartmouth.” Dartmouth is now associated as a place of heavy drinking, of discrimination against minorities, and sexual assault. Imagine a student graduating from Dartmouth who says, “I learned lessons of a lifetime.” The listener might now think, “I wonder what kind of lessons the graduate is speaking of.” Indeed, the name of Dartmouth may be something less than “the price of rubies” (Proverbs 31:10).

However, the Dartmouth story is incomplete without a narrative beyond its academics or life outside the classroom - religious and spiritual life. The countless hours devoted to improving the soul of students through moral discourse from a faith perspective is beyond “the price of rubies.” The Tucker Foundation, of which Hillel is an integral part, emphasizes the heart, the mind, and the hand. This is our work.

When there are crises of faith, whether theological or of oneself, there are students who turn to us for a steadiness in the midst of what can feel like a terrible storm. At Hillel, we aim to provide an anchor for such students and that too is a life lesson, for one day, it will be their turn to be that steadfast-post for others. Over 450 students attended two nights of Seders. Many kept kosher for Passover throughout the Festival. On the 7th night, we had a kosher for Passover meal from the Pavilion, made kiddush, recited motzi, and recalled the celebrations of Seders past and present. How beautiful are the children of our people!

I speak of students, who for six hours without interruption stood on the porch of Collis and read over 9,000 names of those who perished in the Holocaust. 24 students read these names. Every 15 minutes the Kaddish was recited. Every student fulfilled their commitment. No one cancelled. No one was late. No one forgot. Hillel Executive Board President Elana Folbe ’15 was present the entire time. That evening, 40 students gathered on the Green for a closing service to Holocaust Remembrance Day. Many shared personal stories of relatives who survived and relatives who did not survive.

Perhaps the name “Dartmouth” has been diminished in recent time. It is also being restored and righted by the work many do each day. With your ongoing and generous support, the name “Dartmouth” will return to its rightful place in the minds of those who hear its name as being more valuable than riches by those who hear its name.

Rabbi
Hello alumni, parents, and friends.

I hope you all had a wonderful Pesach and are enjoying the onset of spring, as slow as it feels. The snow has finally melted off the green and spring term is fully underway. Before we know it, the ’14s will be off into the real world.

Shortly after commencement, Rabbi Boraz will lead a group of students on the 13th annual Project Preservation trip, this time to Lutowiska, Poland. This milestone is an incredible achievement, representing now more than 200 students who have traveled to eastern Europe, to countries such as Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Kosovo. It also represents 13 different towns and the Jewish cemeteries that have been fenced, weeded, beautified, and resurrected thanks to the dedication and hard work of Dartmouth students and their local partners. The “bar mitzvah” of this program is a testament to Dartmouth College Hillel, its staff and student leaders, and their commitment to finding creative and significant ways to change the lives of students.

I participated in the first two Project Preservation programs to Sopotskin and Indura in Belarus, and then as a staff leader to Jurburg, Lithuania. These are the kinds of life events that Dartmouth College Hillel provides and the impact of these programs on students’ Jewish and personal identities is immeasurable.

Amidst a time of reflection for Dartmouth student life, Hillel is a beacon as a social, education, and spiritual model that works. We believe in creating physical space and programming outlets that allow students to explore on their own terms, while encouraging exploration with professional staff. This is not only vital for building Jewish identity, but also for building community in a university environment at large.

Our success is entirely dependent on the support and generosity of our alumni, parents, and friends. We thank you for all you have done for us and ask for your continued help in improving and growing our organization. So much of our future as a people is dependent on students at universities exploring their self-identities and forging bonds with Judaism, Israel, and our ancestral culture. It is our mission to enable these bonds and our commitment to provide the support necessary for students to do it in their own way. Rabbi Boraz, Emma, Claudia, and the Hillel interns work tirelessly to make this a reality and it’s your support that enables them to do so.

For those of you coming up for reunions (myself included!)— stop by the Roth Center while you’re in town and say hello. We look forward to welcoming you with open arms and showing you first hand the impact Dartmouth College Hillel has on our students and community.

I wish you all a quickly warming spring and look forward to seeing you in Hanover soon.

L’Shalom
Evan Konwiser ’03 Tu’08
Chair, Dartmouth College Hillel Board of Overseers
Birthright Winter 2013: Camel Riding, Dead Sea Floating, and Snow!

Photographs by Rebecca Schantz ‘16 and Asaf Zilberfarb ‘17

“My time in Israel taught me to be grateful for what I have back in America and proud to be part of the Jewish community. These 10 days were some of the most impactful of my life. I have grown more religious and taken advantages of the Jewish opportunities at Dartmouth. In addition, I have begun to contribute to the Jewish community here at Dartmouth through my work as VP of Membership."

- David Mannes ‘17

“My Birthright trip was certainly different from what I expected, but no less amazing for that. It was interesting to be somewhere where Judaism is not just found in trace amounts, but everywhere and as a part of daily life for many people. I was struck by the different concept of citizenship that I saw in some people- the idea that each citizen has an urgent duty to help Israel. That was the most surprising thing for me—except, of course, the freak snowstorm that trapped us in our Jerusalem hotel for three days.”

- Emma Lape ‘16
This past December, Asaf Zilberfarb ’17, led Dartmouth Hillel’s 10-day Birthright Israel trip where highlights of the journey included: celebrating a special Shabbat in Tiberias, riding camels in the Negev desert, spending a night in a Bedouin tent, and floating in the Dead Sea. The students brought a little Hanover weather to Israel. Towards the end of the trip, an unusual Jerusalem snowstorm kept everyone hotel-bound for nearly three days.

Becoming a Birthright Israel trip leader fulfilled another level of Asaf’s desire to represent his country abroad. His first Birthright experience was in 2012 when he went as a member of the Israeli Defense Forces. As a soldier on the trip, Asaf felt a renewed sense of appreciation for his country as he saw it through the eyes of the American college students.

While on the 2012 trip, Asaf came to realize the importance of sharing his personal experiences from Israel with American peers. This cemented his desire to study abroad. Not long after his first Birthright Israel trip, Asaf applied to colleges in the United States.

Shortly after arriving in Hanover this past fall, Asaf became involved with Dartmouth Hillel. When the opportunity to lead the December Birthright trip arose, he felt as though his journey as IDF soldier to American college student trip leader had come full circle.

Asaf describes leading the December trip as more personal and intense than his experience with it as a soldier. In addition to showing off the Israel he has always loved and known, he felt like he was showing his home to new friends, not just American tourists.

Ariel Klein, from Great Neck Long Island, credits a supportive community, Yom Kippur services, the ice cream social, and her floormate, Sarah Epstein, for propelling her to be involved in Hillel this year. While never actively commuting to Judaism at home where it was ingrained within her community, at Dartmouth, Ariel discovered that she would have to actively seek a community that shared similar cultures, traditions and values. At Dartmouth, for the first time, Ariel was now in a religious minority.

Ariel’s favorite weekly event is Shabbat dinner, a great way to reconnect with friends and reminisce about the week’s events. Thus far, her favorite Hillel event was when President Wright spoke. Ariel was impressed by the effort of the Hillel community to cook, coordinate servers, contact professors, and publicize. Ariel thinks the work done for President Wright’s talk is inspiring and indicative of how much Hillel can accomplish.

Currently, Ariel plans to major in economics and minor in theatre. In an effort to increase membership, Ariel is spearheading a video project to better communicate Hillel’s mission.

Ariel says that her time as a Board member “has made me engage in Hillel on a more consistent and deeper level than I would have had I not been on the board.” She feels that attending weekly meetings has made her more aware of what goes on with the organization as a whole. As a board member, she’s aware of the issues Hillel must address in order to build a stronger community.

Ariel has organized efforts to encourage members to truly get to know one another rather than gravitate towards the same people, through bonding exercises and ice-breaker activities. Many students spend a lot of time at Hillel, but do not necessarily engage in the type of meaningful or even light-hearted dialogue that truly brings them closer together. Ariel hopes to change that, and help make Hillel even more inclusive, intimate, and community-based than it already is.
Spring 2014 Term President’s Letter: Fulfilling Hillel’s Mission

By Asher Mayerson ’15

Inspiring an “enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning, and Israel” is no easy task. It requires working together as a community to think critically about whether our organization is fulfilling its mission.

This past winter, the leadership of Dartmouth College Hillel engaged in a serious critique of our organization. We were engaging more Jewish students, but what were we doing with their engagement? Our board decided to infuse more substantive Jewish learning, discussion, and content, in order to inspire deep and lasting connections between Dartmouth students and their Jewish identities.

We began engaging in conversations about issues important to Jewish life. We discussed Judaism and civil rights, intermarriage, kashrut, and more. These discussions provided a forum for students to talk about their own experiences while learning from others. The discussions forced us to think about what kind of Jewish community we want to see more broadly.

How do we want the Jewish community to deal with the issue of intermarriage? What role does kashrut play in modern Jewish life? Struggling with these questions enabled us to reflect on our own identities and on the great questions facing the Jewish people.

We also started giving divrei torah during Shabbat dinners, which added even more Jewish content to our Shabbat, bringing the lessons and teachings of the torah into our community.

We had the pleasure of hosting former College President James Wright, who spoke to over 100 students about his research relating to the human costs of war. Bringing divrei torah into the dinner space is another way we are infusing deep Jewish content and meaning into everything we do at Dartmouth College Hillel.

Our community will forever struggle with the question of how best to achieve Hillel’s mission, but I believe we are thinking more deeply about this than ever. With your support, I am confident that we will create the Jewish community that we wish to see on campus.

Although the Roth Center is next to the serene Occom Pond, on any given day, inside the building you will find enormous energy due to the plethora of opportunities for students. Here’s a glimpse at a typical week at Dartmouth Hillel.

Monday: Students begin the week by studying in the library, noshing on Shabbat leftovers and the famous parve cookie dough. The Executive Board meets Monday nights to reflect, plan for future events, and brainstorm ways in which to fully engage Dartmouth’s Jewish community. After the meeting, there’s dinner and discussion for everyone.

Tuesday: The one day of unscheduled Hillel events has eight students teaching or tutoring in the UVJC Hebrew School.

Wednesday: Everyone loves Wednesdays because of Jews and Java. Students stop by the Dartmouth bookstore for coffee and tea with friends and, often, Rabbi Boraz. On farmer’s market Wednesdays, we meet for kettle corn and lemonade on the Green.

Thursday: Thursday nights, Hillel freshman get together, plan events, have discussions, and eat. Sometimes the freshmen cook dinner together in our kosher kitchen.

Friday: By mid-afternoon on Fridays you can smell challah baking. At 5:00 p.m., we gather for Torah study session; Rabbi Boraz always provides an open environment to discover how Judaism relates to our lives. After Torah study, there’s a Shabbat service. Whether it’s a conservative, reform, or learning, students are given many opportunities to pray in a warm environment. Following services, there’s Kiddush, ha’motzi, and the recent tradition of joining arms and singing “Shalom Alechem” before eating. We end Shabbat dinner with Birkat Hamazon and catching up with old and new friends.

Saturday: During Shabbat, Hillel students hang out in the Roth Center or take walks around Occom Pond.

Sunday: Hillel students teach morning Hebrew School classes. Several times a term, we have a bagel brunch.

No matter what day it is, our vibrant Hillel offers something to all Jewish Dartmouth students.

Winter 2014 Term President’s Letter: A Week at Hillel

By Elana Folbe ‘15

A Week at Hillel

Spring and Winter Presidents Asher Mayerson ’15 and Elana Folbe ’15
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Your support makes possible the wonderful Jewish opportunities at Dartmouth that are described in these pages and on our website. Thanks to you, we are able to further Hillel’s mission to enrich the lives of Jewish students so that they can contribute to the Jewish people and the world. We deeply appreciate your commitment to Jewish Life at Dartmouth.

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It’s easy to support us online! dartmouthhillel.org

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Dartmouth College Hillel
The Roth Center for Jewish Life
5 Occum Ridge
Hanover, NH 03755
603-646-0410

2014 Nixon Scholars-in-Residence

On April 1, Dartmouth Hillel welcomed Rabbi Robin Nafshi and Cantor Shira Nafshi from Temple Beth Jacob in Concord, NH as the 2014 Nixon Scholars-in-Residence. Tamara and Daniel Nixon ’55 established in the Scholar-in-Residence program in order to extend and enrich Jewish life on campus and in the Upper Valley community.

The program included a “What Matters to Me and Why” talk at the Tucker Foundation, a public lecture in Rockefeller, an intimate dinner in the Korman library, and concert and Q&A moderated by Prof. Steve Swayne of the music department.

In both the Tucker Talk and public lecture, Rabbi Nafshi shared the pivotal moment for the reconciliation between her sexuality and activism.

In her public lecture “Coming Out But Staying In” Rabbi Nafshi talked about her journey from a New Jersey childhood in a conservative family, her political activism at NYU and Cornell law school, and her reconnection with Judaism. Rabbi Robin discussed her involvement with Congregation Sha’ar Zahav in San Francisco where she was welcomed into a progressive, LGBTQ community.

Following the Roth Center dinner, Cantor Shira performed in the sanctuary. Rabbi Robin narrated the performance, which included a wide range of songs from Debbie Friedman to traditional prayers.

The Nixon Scholars event provided the Dartmouth and Upper Valley community with a compelling look at gay issues within the Jewish Community.

Emma Wunsch joined the staff of Dartmouth Hillel October 1, 2013. For most of the last ten years, she has taught English Composition in New York City and New Hampshire. She also writes freelance articles for the local parenting magazine Kid Stuff.

Emma moved to the Upper Valley from Brooklyn almost 6 years ago and lives with her family in Lebanon. Her husband, Nick, teaches photography at Colby-Sawyer College and they have two daughters: Georgia is in kindergarten and Dahlia just turned 4.

Emma is excited to be in a position where she can work to successfully steward Hillel both within Dartmouth and the Jewish community at large. Emma has truly enjoyed getting to know Rabbi Boraz, Claudia, and, most of all, the wonderful Dartmouth students. In her free-time Emma likes reading, writing fiction, biking, yoga, and watching movies. She can be reached at 603.646.1288 or Emma.l.Wunsch@dartmouth.edu

Cantor Shira Nafshi performs in the Roth Center sanctuary

2014 Nixon-Scholars-In-Residence: Cantor Shira Nafshi and Rabbi Robin Nafshi and their daughter Liba Ma’ayan with Tamara and Daniel Nixon ’55 and Rabbi Boraz
Dartmouth College Hillel
The Hub of Jewish Activity at Dartmouth College

Dartmouth Hillel seeks to promote a welcoming community to all those who identify with or are interested in Judaism. Hillel is dedicated to providing resources to help students express and explore Judaism on campus; it strives to engage students of all observance levels through religious, cultural, social, and educational programming. Along with weekly programming, Hillel hosts many special programs including: Passover services, an Israeli film series, Shabbat dinners, and Havdallah, just to name a few.