

Cleveland  
**Hillel**



**23/24**  
**IMPACT**  
**REPORT**



# A NOTE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

As we reflect on the 23/24 school year, we are filled with gratitude for the incredible impact our community has had on Jewish students in Cleveland and Oberlin. Despite the challenges we faced, we persevered, adapted, and continued to thrive.

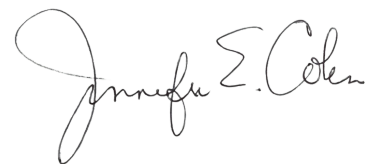
This school year, we celebrated milestones, forged new partnerships, and embarked on exciting initiatives. Together, we tackled important issues, advocated for justice, and made a difference on campus and in the world around us. From engaging discussions and thought-provoking lectures to dynamic social events and service projects, we provided opportunities for personal growth, leadership development, and Jewish learning.

**Our commitment to empowering Jewish students on campus remains unwavering**, and we are dedicated to fostering a vibrant and inclusive community where every Jewish student feels seen, heard, and supported.

As we look ahead to the upcoming school year, we are filled with hope and determination. With your continued support and involvement, we will build upon the foundation we have laid, furthering our mission of nurturing the next generation of Jewish leaders and strengthening our community for years to come. Thank you.



**Jared Isaacson**  
Executive Director



**Jennifer Cohen**  
Board President



# 23/24 AT A GLANCE

**Take a look at some of the incredible things Cleveland Hillel has accomplished this school year.**

We hosted over 250 events, including Shabbat dinners, holiday celebrations, social gatherings, and educational programs, bringing together hundreds of Jewish students and community members.

We organized engaging discussions, guest lectures, and workshops exploring a wide range of topics, including Jewish history, tradition, ethics, and contemporary issues surrounding Jewish identity in Israel and the diaspora. We facilitated our Jewish Learning Fellowship, and Torah study sessions, **providing opportunities for over 1,000 students to deepen their understanding of Judaism and connect with their Jewish identities.**

In the aftermath of October 7th, Cleveland Hillel launched advocacy campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness about issues in Israel and the US, to combat antisemitism, and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus. **We have also fought hard to make sure all Jewish students on campus feel seen, valued, and heard,** and to create a safe and welcoming environment for students to learn, grow, and just be.



**906**  
SHABBAT  
MEALS  
SERVED



**1012**  
STUDENTS  
ENGAGED

**450+**  
COFFEE  
CHATS



**250+**  
EVENTS





# DONOR SPOTLIGHT

## JENNIFER COHEN

CLEVELAND HILLEL BOARD PRESIDENT

With over 40 years of experience in human resources and leadership development, Jennifer Cohen is a seasoned executive coach and leadership consultant, committed to nurturing the future leaders of the Jewish and Cleveland communities. Throughout her career in Northeast Ohio, she has dedicated herself to fostering personal and professional growth in others.

Jennifer's journey with Hillel began during her college years at Ohio State University. Initially, she attended just one program, but her involvement deepened when she joined Cleveland Hillel's board through a Federation development program. Since then, she has served on the board twice, for a combined total of over 20 years, and officially became president in January 2024.

In her leadership role, Jennifer focuses on keeping students connected to their Jewish identities while pursuing higher education. She is passionate about supporting programs that provide role models, foster leadership development, and offer meaningful engagement with Jewish leaders.



**“Cleveland Hillel embodies its core mission of helping Jewish students continue to live a rich, valuable Jewish life. Hillel is focused on engaging with the campus community in combatting Jewish hate, and addressing some of the structural biases that are built into higher education.”**





# SHABBAT



## Shabbat at Cleveland Hillel is more than just a weekly tradition.

Shabbat is a cherished opportunity for our community to come together, connect, and find meaning in the beauty of Jewish tradition.

On Friday evenings, students gather to celebrate Shabbat with warmth, joy, and a sense of belonging. We offer several types of Shabbat services for students from all backgrounds, many of which are student-led. Shabbat dinners are provided at no cost to students.

Our Shabbat services and dinners are not only a time for festive meals and lively conversation but

also a space for reflection, gratitude, and spiritual renewal. Whether students are seasoned observers or exploring what it means to be Jewish, all students are welcome to join us as we light the candles, say the blessings, dine together, and embrace the peace of Shabbat.

**“Shabbat dinner is an incredible experience. There is something beautiful about coming together to say kiddush and share a meal, putting aside whatever political or religious difference we have to come together in a pluralistic community.”**

– Ben R., CWRU '25

## SHABBAT HOSTING LAB

Shabbat Hosting Lab at Cleveland Hillel offers students a new Shabbat experience. This innovative program provides students with the tools, resources, and support they need to open their dorm room, apartment, or home, and welcome other students into their Shabbat experience.

Students learn the art of hosting, explore diverse customs and traditions from each other, and cultivate meaningful connections with fellow students. From planning the menu to setting the table, our Shabbat Hosting Lab empowers students to create memorable moments and build lasting friendships through the beauty of Shabbat.



# JEWISH EDUCATION



## SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Our Summer Internship Program at Cleveland Hillel offers an unparalleled opportunity for students to gain valuable professional experience, develop leadership skills, and make a meaningful impact in the Jewish community.

Through hands-on projects, mentorship from seasoned professionals, and immersive learning experiences, interns at SIP are empowered to take on leadership roles, explore their passions, and contribute to the vibrant life of our organization. Recent SIP participants have interned for several organizations and businesses like the Jewish

Educational Center of Cleveland, Effective Leadership Academy, Jewish Family Services Association of Cleveland, New Heights ABA, LLC, Oberlin College Archives, and the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.

**“SIP has allowed me to learn and grow tremendously – thank you to the Mt. Sinai Health Foundation for your support of Cleveland Hillel!”**  
– Brooke

**“My summer working at the Jewish Family Services Association was extremely education and influential for my future career. This support has changed my life, and I am so grateful!”**  
– Alena M.

## JEWISH LEARNING FELLOWSHIP

Students who participate in the eight-week cohort-based Jewish Learning Fellowship at Cleveland Hillel and Oberlin Hillel embark on a transformative journey of discovery, exploration, and growth. Designed for students seeking to deepen their understanding of Jewish tradition and identity, JLF offers a dynamic blend of study, discussion, and experiential learning.

Led by knowledgeable mentors and featuring an engaging curriculum, JLF provides a supportive environment for students to delve into topics ranging from Jewish history and philosophy to contemporary issues and personal reflection.





# ISRAEL ENGAGEMENT

**Israel Engagement lies at the heart of Cleveland Hillel's mission**, offering a dynamic array of programs and initiatives that foster deep connections to the land, culture, and people of Israel. Through immersive experiences, educational opportunities, and meaningful dialogue, we strive to create a vibrant and inclusive community where every student can explore their relationship with Israel in a supportive and open-minded environment.

## Jewish Agency Israel Fellow Program

**Lielle Ziv** was Cleveland Hillel's Israel Fellow from 2022-2024. In her time at Hillel, Lielle worked tirelessly to support students on and off campus, and was been instrumental in connecting with and supporting students in the aftermath of October 7th, leading multiple projects and events.

In the fall of 2023, Lielle taught Kol Yisrael, a 6-week cohort learning program for students to explore big ideas and big questions with Israel as a real-world case study. After the war began, she shifted focus to the events since October 7th, giving space for discussion and questions. Lielle has also created multiple displays on campus to both honor the hostages and encourage productive dialogue among students.

Lielle brought students to hear former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett speak, and spearheaded a discussion with Bassem Eid, a pro-Israel Palestinian human rights activist and political analyst who gave students an in-depth look about the origin of Hamas and the struggles of the Palestinian people. Other initiatives include bringing "Roots", an Israeli-Palestinian grassroots initiative for understanding, nonviolence and transformation, to CWRU to speak with students.

From taking students to the Cleveland Cavaliers vs Maccabi Ra'anana basketball game to setting up a Jewish Day of Unity (כ"ט בנובמבר), Lielle always brought an important perspective to her her work, making her an invaluable member of the Cleveland Hillel team.





## Israel Advocacy Workshops

Our workshops and classes like our six-week-long Kol Yisrael learning cohort empower students to become informed advocates for Israel on campus and beyond using real-world case studies. Through interactive discussions, skill-building exercises, and guest speakers, participants learn how to effectively communicate Israel's story, address misinformation, and engage in constructive dialogue about the complex issues facing the region.

**"I took the Kol Yisrael class in Fall 2023. When we had our first meeting after Oct 7th, it was meaningful to have conversations with people – both Jews and non-Jews – who don't always have the same perspective as me. Discussing Israel and its history helped me understand the larger context, what's happening with the Israeli government, and the larger context to what is going on."**

– Shira S., CWRU '23

## Cultural Celebrations and Festivals

Throughout the year, Cleveland Hillel hosts a variety of cultural celebrations and festivals that highlight the beauty and diversity of Israeli culture. Our annual Israel Week features traditional Israeli cuisine and cultural events that offer students the opportunity to celebrate and connect with Israel's vibrant heritage.

## Speakers & Seminars

Our speaker series and seminars bring leading experts, scholars, and thought leaders to campus to discuss a wide range of topics related to Israel, including politics, history, religion, and innovation. These engaging events provide students with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of Israel's complexities and engage in nuanced conversations about its past, present, and future. Previous speakers have included Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Eid, survivors of the October 7th massacre, Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger and Noor A'wad from Roots, an Israeli-Palestinian grassroots initiative for understanding and nonviolence, and Israeli actor and IDF veteran Yadin Gellman.





# OBERLIN

Since the 1950s, Oberlin College and Conservatory has offered its Jewish students the opportunity to create a Jewish community on campus. It did so initially by offering a small number of programs staffed by a part-time professional.

Beginning in the 1970s the Cleveland Hillel has provided full-time staff and a small but comprehensive slate of programs and services.

**Oberlin College has always had a unique Jewish community**, with many students coming from both a politically and religiously liberal background. The history and numbers of Jewish students attending the college (estimated between 20-25% of the student population) has resulted in a naturally vibrant and dynamic Jewish

activity. We strive to sponsor cutting-edge programming on campus, especially on issues of gender and social justice. Arts and culture have also played a significant role in program development at Oberlin College Hillel, and an appreciation for deeply engaging Jewish educational content remains strong with our student population.

Hillel staff at Oberlin help cultivate Jewish student leadership and life by facilitating daily and weekly gatherings of Jewish students, drop-in get-togethers in the Hillel lounge space, weekly meetings of Jewish interest groups, and many large social and educational programs. Many gatherings on campus this year have been created around developing opportunities for focused micro-communities / cohorts to develop and build community.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Weekly Shabbat and holiday celebrations
- Hillel's Jewish Learning Fellowship (JLF). This year's topics have focused on the following curricula: Life's Big Questions and Pursuing Justice
- A Kosher kitchen and dining program that is run and supported by the College and AVI, their food services provider.

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