



 **hillel@stanford**

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear friends,

One crucial marker of a maturing intellect is the ability to hold conflicting truths. Learning to do this successfully is a key skill for thriving in pluralistic environments, be that Stanford, Hillel, or our broader society. It is an honor to support young adults on their journeys of intellectual, spiritual, and identity formation. As an institution, we also stretch to hold conflicting truths. Held in tension with each other, they shape the reality within which Hillel pursues our vision to inspire emerging leaders, connect every student to meaningful community, and ensure the sustainability of the Jewish future.

As Hillel's closest supporters, we want to share with you that this year was a study in contrasts. Rather than Dicken's "best of times/worst of times" formula, we prefer the Talmud's wisdom "elu v'elu divrei Elokim chayim/these and these are the words of the living God." This teaching reminds us that wise leaders and strong communities can hold simultaneous conflicting truths.

**A question we heard often this year was "Is Stanford a good place to be Jewish?" While the answer is a resounding "Yes!"** there is important nuance in the tension between four conflicting truths which shaped our experience on campus in the last year.

**1: We experienced a significant increase in antisemitic incidents at Stanford**, mostly in the form of graffiti (swastikas) and vandalism (mezuzahs damaged or taken from doors). This is absolutely unacceptable, and the failure to identify any perpetrators is incredibly frustrating. **We are glad that Hillel is the first place students turn to when they experience antisemitism**, and we want to see many fewer incidents. To this end we are working with partners in several areas of the Stanford administration to address the problem and reverse the trend.

**2: This year Stanford University made an extraordinary reckoning with its own historic antisemitism**, specifically in terms of admissions. As the result of the report of the Presidential Task Force on Jewish Life, Stanford President Marc Tessier Lavigne acknowledged and apologized for the university's past behavior and committed to meaningful steps to address its impact today. This includes the incorporation of education about Jewish identity and antisemitism in the University's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, the formation of a Jewish Advisory Council, and a commitment to strengthening the relationship between Stanford and Hillel. This year, the Stanford Alumni Association also launched the Stanford Jewish Alumni Network (S-JAN). If you are an eligible alum, please join!

3: Despite the challenges of Truth #1 and the awful impact of the pandemic on their college experience and personal development, **more students than ever are connecting with Hillel and campus Jewish life.** Of the approximately 600 Jewish undergrads at Stanford, 94% took a class, shared a meal, celebrated Shabbat, or had coffee with a Hillel staff member last year, and 32% of them did this 6 or more times, or traveled with us to Israel, Poland, Argentina, or NYC. Of the approximately 1200 Jewish graduate students and post-docs, 40% connected with Hillel, and more than 100 Israeli grad students and their families are part of the thriving Israeli@Stanford community. These stats represent more than 1000 students actively engaged in their Jewish lives through Hillel this year, at 300 events or programs.

4: **Inflation and shifting donor priorities are making the work of raising the money to fund all of this excellence harder than ever, but you can be our heroes and turn this around.** Inflation-related costs increased 10% last year. If you are reading this, you are likely already a Hillel supporter. Might you consider being a Hillel hero? If you are in a position to increase your annual gift, 2023-24 would be an amazing year to do this. Or consider a multi-year gift to help us engage a new rabbi. Finally, if you are thinking about retirement or estate planning, consider including Hillel at Stanford as a beneficiary, which is an incredible way to ensure that the future of Jewish life at Stanford is your legacy for generations to come.

These and these are the words of the living God...**Jewish college students need our support more than ever and this is a great time to be Jewish at Stanford.** Thank you for your partnership in this whole and holy enterprise.

*Rabbi Jessica Kirschner*

**Rabbi Jessica Kirschner**  
Executive Director

ADI BITTAN

**Adi Bittan**  
President of the Board of Directors





# A MESSAGE FROM OUR STUDENTS

## This year, we made Jewish life thrive at Stanford.

Jewish life at Stanford grew immensely through the Jewish Student Association (JSA) and the support that Hillel provides. Hillel and JSA put on a variety of events, including weekly bagel brunches, “mega” shabbats attracting hundreds of students, parties like Special D, Galentine’s night, class dinners, our own Jewish matchmaking experiment (“nice to meet Jew”), and more. We saw exceptional engagement, both with events targeting already involved students as well as events aimed at larger audiences, meant to attract students newer to Stanford's biggest Jewish community.

While the Jewish community this year was marked by its fun and vibrancy, our community, unfortunately, also had to cope with a slew of antisemitic acts. Many students were deeply affected, particularly by the frequency of incidents.

However, Hillel at Stanford's Jewish community has only grown closer and stronger. We hosted President Marc Tessier-Lavigne for Shabbat, who shared our concern about growing antisemitism and committed to action. We look forward to actively working with the university to address these issues.

This year of Jewish life at Stanford has been one of warmth, friendship, and meaning. We feel deeply grateful to the many students who have made Hillel and JSA such special communities. Planning events with the other members of the JSA board has truly been the highlight of our Stanford experience, and we are thrilled to pass the baton to the next generation of JSA leaders.

With gratitude,

**Ashlee Kupor '24 and Sophia Danielpour '24**  
Stanford JSA Co-Presidents 2022-23





# Hillel Inspires

Our remarkable students inspire us every day, and each day we work to inspire our students as they explore and express their Jewish identities in personally meaningful ways.



## JOSH '23

"I've had a wonderful time leading Shabbat services at Hillel. I worked with Hillel staff to solidify a traditional/ egalitarian service that would fit our community well. Shabbat services are an amazing way to spend the end of my week, and I'm so grateful for the space to enjoy them here at Stanford."

## LAUREN '26

"I first came to Hillel to make friends. What kept me coming back was the consistently exciting events and opportunities that Hillel offers that strengthen my Jewish identity and improve my college experience."



# HILLEL'S IMPACT

## 94%

of Jewish undergraduates at Stanford found community at Hillel last year.

## 1,120+

students came to Hillel to make new friends and explore their Jewish identities.

## 300+

students came to Hillel six or more times for holidays, Shabbat, tzedek programs, and more.



## 80

Jewish students led our vibrant communities.

## 90

first-year students explored Jewish life through Hillel.

# BY THE NUMBERS

## 550+

one-on-one meetings between students  
and Jewish educators.



## 120

hours of formal  
Jewish learning.

## 3,600

Shabbat meals served.

## 2,000

loaves of challah sold by Challah for Hunger,  
raising funds for local charities.



# Student Spotlight

“

**During a chaotic year on campus, Hillel provided a much-appreciated steadiness in my Stanford life.**

”

During the fall of my first year at Stanford, exciting but overwhelming newness swallowed me. I explored the campus Jewish community, because it provided an immediate sense of familiarity. Also, I wanted to make my Grandma smile through telling her that I am doing “Jewish things” at school.

**Hillel at Stanford has warmly welcomed me and introduced me to countless wonderful friends.** Through being an active member of the Jewish community, I am eager to continue to contribute to the development of the Hillel as an inclusive, lively hub.

**Stella '25**

Here's a picture from the Alternative Spring Break trip I went on with Hillel at Stanford to Nye!



# HILLEL EXPERIENCES AROUND THE WORLD

We see Israel in all her beauty and complexity through Birthright, Onward (summer internships), Shultz Fellowships, and Perspectives (Jewish and non-Jewish student leaders exploring the Israeli/Palestinian conflict). We study tragedy and rebirth in Poland, celebrate Jewish global Jewish communities in Argentina, and explore the Jewish stake in an American *tzedek* issue — this year's focus was the labor movement in New York City.



# 70+

students explored the world through Jewish eyes with Hillel at Stanford.





“

Judaism is a reminder of home;  
of who I am, of where I grew up, and of  
my family. Hillel became my home-away-  
from-home at Stanford.

”

Eden, '26





“

**Hillel is committed to building a vibrant community and bringing Jewish undergraduate and graduate students into a very special space together.**

”

Jake, '25



# HILLEL AT STANFORD

## 2022-2023 HONOR ROLL

The students and staff of Hillel at Stanford wish to thank all those who have pledged their support to our Jewish community. These gifts make our mission's work possible.

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# Thank you to our foundation partners!



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We appreciate those who create a legacy by including Hillel at Stanford in their estate plans.

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Ric and Roberta Rudman  
*Anonymous*

Joan Ross Dornfest z"l  
Ira Forest z"l  
Donald Kennedy z"l  
Herbert Lieberman z"l  
Judith Moss z"l

You can ensure the vibrancy of Jewish life at Stanford for years to come through a bequest, an IRA gift, by including us as an insurance beneficiary, or with a charitable annuity.

Commitment to such a gift benefitting Hillel at Stanford also includes membership in Hillel International's 1923 Society, which honors all donors making legacy commitments to affiliates of the Hillel movement. For more information contact Shira Podhorzer, Director of Development.









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