It’s a Tuesday night at Colby; eighty students and ten professors are gathered in the Alumni Center, Seder plates and haggadot at each table. We work our way through the Seder- telling the story of Passover, asking the four questions, splitting the matzah, and tasting the bitter herbs. As we recite the prayers, remember our ancestors in Egypt, and savor our matzah ball soup, we participate in the same tradition as other Jewish communities across the world. Even as we perform these same rituals, there is a unique atmosphere each year. We’ve invited the entire Colby community, Jews – both those who are regulars at Friday night Shabbat dinners and those who come less often – as well as non-Jews, many of whom have never attended a Seder or celebrated a Jewish holiday before. We’ve also added our own element to the ceremony: discussions led by students and professors about everyday, modern
incidences of oppression, whether that be the struggle for LGBT rights or pervasive socioeconomic inequality, bringing relevance to the Passover story and reminding us that our own age-old narrative continues to be all too relevant.

The themes of our Seder are echoed in celebrations in the Sukkah, costumed Purim festivities, and barbecuing in celebration of Yom Ha’atzmaut. These holidays give us the opportunity to act on our mission as Colby Hillel. We are building a community of students committed to Jewish tradition, and also one that is unique to us as young adults in Maine.

The past year was one of great growth- as one of the most active student clubs on campus, we organized a spread of diverse events; there were weekly opportunities for study with Rabbi Isaacs, Shabbat dinners and lunches, services at Beth Israel congregation, a Shabbaton celebration with the Hillel students from Bowdoin and Bates, many other cultural events, and a lot of hanging out in the Hillel room in the Pugh center- our home base.

We also know what work needs to be done. Each year gives us more experience to build upon. Looking forward to the upcoming year, we are committed to our mission of building Hillel as a beacon of Jewish learning, observance, and celebration at Colby College. We are poised for an incredible year, and as Hillel continues to grow and develop we hope that you will follow us on our journey. Our new website is up and running, and our Facebook group is a great place to keep up with news, people and resources.

As always, the support of our alumni and greater Hillel community make the incredible programming we do possible. We thank you for your commitments and contributions to Jewish life on the hill. We can’t wait to reconnect with the Hillel community, make delicious Friday night dinners, and – most of all – add new voices to the Shabbat prayers.

- Jane Wiesenber ‘16

### Hillel by the Numbers


- The first Maine Conference on Jewish life is organized at Colby College, renewing the tradition of a New England Conference on Jewish Life.

- A group of 10 students from Maine Colleges, including Colby alums and current students take part in Birthright to Israel, June 2014.

- Hillel hosted over 30 Shabbat and holiday dinners.
Home Hospitality Shabbat

There’s nothing quite like a home-cooked meal, especially when it’s been a long time since you’ve had one. It’s not just the food that we crave, though. Both aspects of that term are important—‘home’ and ‘meal’—we experience them both during Home Hospitality Shabbat.

For our Home Hospitality Shabbat program Hillel students join the Beth Israel Congregation for a Friday night service at the synagogue led by Rabbi Isaacs and then go home with a family from the congregation for a Shabbos meal. Our fall 2013 Home Hospitality Shabbat was a great success, and many students have kept in touch with the families they dined with. One Colby Senior even told me that Home Hospitality Shabbat was the most meaningful event she’d ever attended during her time at Colby.

I had the great luck to join Barbara, an amazing member of the Beth Israel community, for dinner, along with my friend Annie, Rabbi Isaacs, and Mel. Barbara made delicious salmon, potatoes, and homemade challah, and don’t even get me started on the cream puffs she baked for dessert (is it obvious that I’d like to go back to her house for the next home hospitality Shabbat?). The evening was full of laughter, and we stayed until well into the evening talking and relaxing after the incredible meal. I certainly wasn’t the last student back to campus either—the other Hillel students lingered over the Shabbat table, in no hurry to end the evening.

I love all events at the synagogue, but home hospitality stands out for me. I find that we bounce back and forth among groups of people, catching bits of conversations here and there—we can’t help it: when everyone is together, we want to be with everyone. Home Hospitality Shabbat offers us the opportunity to connect with individual people and families in the community-forming great friendships and lasting bonds. We see photos of the whole family, to learn about how we all came to live in Waterville, to find out from where, or from whom, someone learned
that amazing recipe. We get to ask each other questions and hear stories in response. These exchanges, getting to know each other as individuals strengthens our bond as a community.

Though Barbara’s cream puffs make my stomach rumble at the very mention, I am above all looking forward to these Shabbat evenings where the Beth Israel community makes Waterville our other home.

- Laura Rosenthal ’15

Colby students Lydia Nicholson, Sarah Rockford and Colby Alum Bethany Weitzman pose here with Rabbi Isaacs on a hike during a ten-day Birthright trip for students from Maine colleges in June.

Passover over spring break? Colby Hillel students brought the Seder with them to Georgia where the Colby Ultimate Frisbee team competed in a national tournament.
Waterville Jewish Leadership Fellowship

Last year, during my freshman year at Colby, I was one of the first students to participate in the Waterville Jewish Leadership Fellowship (WJLF)- a new program pioneered by Rabbi Isaacs to connect students to the Beth Israel congregation in Waterville.

Before the school year started, I knew that I wanted to find a way to explore and develop my Jewish identity at Colby, but I didn’t know what form this would take. It was only when Rabbi Isaacs reached out to me and asked if I would consider becoming a fellow, about that I truly began to consider what I wanted out of my Colby College experience. I realized that the fellowship would be a great opportunity to become a part of the community I knew I would be searching for once I started school.

As a Waterville Jewish Leadership Fellow, my responsibilities included helping teach Hebrew School at Beth Israel synagogue and tutoring a bat mitzvah student named Abigail. Tutoring Abigail was a highlight of my freshman year at Colby. Abigail was mature and dedicated to her bat mitzvah preparation, and I enjoyed getting to know all of her family. One memory that stands out from our studies is sitting down with together to learn Torah trope- the cantillation marks used to chant Torah. I never learned trope for my bat mitzvah, so we learned together, side by side. It was amazing to see her mature over the course of the year, but even more memorable was to see how we both learned and grew from the experience together.

The WJLF is a comprehensive program with both teaching and learning components. The fellows help teach the Beth Israel Hebrew school once a week, and we also sit down with Rabbi Isaacs several times during the semester to discuss Talmudic text and Jewish leadership skills. My role was two-fold- I shared my knowledge of Hebrew and bible stories, but was also a student, learning from the Hebrew school students, from Melanie Weiss- the director of education at Beth Israel synagogue and from Rabbi Isaacs in the classroom.

The Waterville Jewish Leadership Fellowship was extremely formative for me in my first semesters as a Colby student. I came to Colby from an active Jewish community- in high school I was the co-president of my temple youth group, and I helped teach Hebrew school and tutor b’nai mitzvah students. Leaving the structure and support of my family and friends at home, I knew that becoming involved with the Colby Jewish community would make my transition into college easier and more fulfilling.

College is a time for self-discovery, and exploring my Jewish identity has been an important part of my personal growth here at Colby. The Waterville Jewish Leadership Fellowship has helped me develop new skills, build a supportive community, and explore my heritage. I am thankful to be a part of this new program and I am very excited to continue my work with it during the coming year.

Cara Goldfarb ’16
Maine Conference on Jewish Life

Shavuot is set to begin, but not before the Maine Klezmer band, The Casco Bay Tummlers, get people up on their feet dancing Israeli folk dances under the enthusiastic direction of Lisa Tessler (Colby development staff). These joyous circular dances swing participants into the Maine Conference for Jewish life and this holiday, when we are commanded to engage in Torah study into the wee hours of the morning.

More than 100 Jewish adults and children have congregated in the Diamond Building at Colby -- usually the stage for everything from anthropology to economics courses during the school year. For the Maine Conference for Jewish life, this building has been transformed into a venue for more than 30 lectures and workshops on a range of Jewish topics. Speakers and teachers come from throughout the state and beyond to share their knowledge; they are rabbis, farmers, Colby professors, even a federal judge, and their agenda is anything but homogenous. Lecture and discussion topics range from the History of Israeli-Egyptian Relations and to Modern Applications of Shmita (Jewish agricultural laws) to Israeli Poetry.

This rich smorgasbord of Jewish learning is a resolute demonstration and affirmation of the strength and diversity of the Jewish community in rural New England. Celebrating Shavuot through the conference for Jewish life highlights the specificity of Jewish life in Maine- which lies both in its improbable geography- away from large urban American centers and in the pluralistic nature of the communities.
that have taken root here in Maine. Colby, too, is the ideal setting for this conference, as it is the only college in Maine with an independent Jewish Studies department.

Each morning before the day’s classes and workshops begin, three minyanim of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox worshipers, conduct services in classrooms next to one another. This is perhaps the one of the most amazing parts of the conference: the respectful balance among and inclusion of Judaism’s diversity of practice, and each participant’s solidarity with the Jewish community in Maine. This was the goal of the Maine Conference for Jewish life: to learn about oneself and others by engaging in learning and discussion.

This gathering also gave the community an opportunity to bid farewell to Rabbi Akiva Herzfeld and his family as they prepare to make aliyah. It was also an occasion to welcome Rabbi Sruli Dresner and his wife Lisa, and their family who have moved from New York to Maine.

After two days of non-stop learning and celebration, Shavuot and the conference come to a close with more dancing and music. “We hope that your memories and your coming experiences build upon what we cultivated at this conference,” says Colby Professor and Rabbi Rachel Isaacs. This event underscores the strong and vibrant Jewish life here in Maine and strong community ties that have been built as a demonstration of that. With newly acquired knowledge and ideas, we leave already looking forward to the next Conference for Jewish Life in Maine next year.

- Sarah Rockford ‘15

Yom Ha’atzmaut commemorates Israeli Independence Day and also coincides with warmer weather in Maine; Hillel students celebrate both by dusting off the barbecue for this annual celebration of Israeli life and culture.
Have you ever felt letdown at the end of a compelling class? Like finishing a great book, you regret that the experience and the narrative have come to an end. This is how I felt at the end of David Freidenreich’s Anti-Judaism Jan Plan seminar during which we examined David Nirenberg’s book, Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition (Norton, 2013).

I found the class and this text compelling because of the way Professor Freidenreich wove together a picture of historical perspective vaulted into contemporary scenes. Nirenberg says it better than I, and in his book seeks "to demonstrate how different people put old ideas about Judaism to new kinds of work in thinking about their world; to show how this work engaged the past and transformed it; and to ask how that work reshaped the possibilities of thought in the future."

Learning about recurring tropes of anti-Judaism in modern culture was personally valuable because it encouraged me to consciously reexamine cultural norms - where they come from, and who they benefit or exclude.

Happily, unlike finishing a great book, I had the opportunity to continue this course of study with Professor Freidenreich during the spring semester-delving deeper into the topic and the work I had already started. Over the course of the semester I developed and refined my understanding of Nirenberg’s working thesis, and I also used this foundation to build upon with

Lessons from the Anti-Judaism Symposium
my own writing and research. Research I had the opportunity to present in front of David Nirenberg himself at the Anti-Judaism Symposium professor Freidenreich organized last April. A number of panelists, including Nirenberg, came to Colby to lead round table discussions and share their own work on Anti-Judaism themes.

As I reflect on the total experience of studying with Professor Freidenreich in the Jewish Studies Department and my participation in the Anti-Judaism symposium I recognize it as a formative experience in my college career. I pursued a subject that I felt passionately about and gained the confidence to present my ideas in front of a very learned audience- two skills that will serve me as I move forward into senior year, and beyond Colby.

- Ben Zurkow ’15

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**Aunt Jeans Mandel Bread Recipe**

This is a recipe from my Great Aunt Jean in Chicago. The recipe was a gift from her neighbor, a fabulous Jewish cook. It’s the kind of Rosh HaShanah treat you’ll make new year after new year. – Sarah Rockford

**Ingredients**

- 3 eggs
- 3/4 c granulated sugar
- 3/4 c oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 T salt
- 1 1/2 T baking powder
- 3/4 c chopped nuts
- 2 1/2 c sifted flour

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- 1/4 c granulated sugar
- 2 T cinnamon

**Instructions**

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Mix all ingredients, (except the 1/4 c sugar and cinnamon), in the order given with electric mixer.
- Blend to make smooth dough. Place on greased cookie sheet in four narrow long strips. (The dough will be sticky.)
- Mix sugar and cinnamon together. Sprinkle over dough. Bake until light brown. Remove from oven cut in slices and turn on sides to toast about five minutes. Makes four or five dozen.
Words from the Rabbi

It is a pleasure to share the successes of Colby Hillel. Last year, we had an incredibly successful Colby/ Bowdoin/ Bates Shabbaton with over 100 folks in attendance. Our Passover Seders were huge, fun, and incorporated texts that conveyed the core messages of Passover to a diverse crowd. As has been the case for the past two years, Hillel students made sure dinner was on the table for every Shabbat, and worked hard to ensure every student who walks through the door feels welcome. Many times during the year, students from Hillel and beyond came together for our “Thai and Torah” and “Israel: Data and Debate” series to deepen their Jewish knowledge. In these series, students explore contemporary topics through the lens of ancient texts, such as Torah and Talmud. Through our Thai and Torah series, students came to understand how our tradition can provide insight into contemporary issues, how to read and engage with traditional Jewish texts, and deepened their relationships with one another and me. In our Israel Data and Debate series, we showcased the best of Israel education in a Hillel setting. Students gained basic knowledge of Israeli history, how to read primary documents related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyze classical Zionist theories, acquire a robust vocabulary for discussing challenges and triumphs in contemporary Israeli society, and how to discuss these topics in a way that advances understanding. Through this series, I provided a pathway for students to confront challenging chapters in Israel's history while maintaining pride in its tremendous achievements. Our year ended with a birthright trip to Israel, where I had the pleasure of sharing the riches of our homeland with a dozen students from Maine colleges.

This year bore unique fruit because this was the first year that we began to
fundraise as a Hillel. With the help of many students, alums, parents, and friends (Cara Goldfarb ’17, Ben Fine ’17, Ben Zurkow ’15, Jane Wiesenberg ’16, Jacob Marx ’13, Andrew Fabricant ’13, and Andrea Birnbaum ’13 the Weitzman family, the Cohen Family, the Zurkow family, the Shane family, and the Geller family), we toured the East Coast sharing the successes of Colby College Hillel. We have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars so far. When we complete this campaign, we will be sure that there will always be a rabbi on Colby’s campus to teach Hebrew, lead the Hillel, and serve the Waterville Jewish community. Todah Rabbah (many thanks) to all our fans and supporters who have contributed so far – your support means so much to our community.

I am excited to begin a new year at Colby Hillel, building on our past successes and fulfilling our promise. Shannah Tovah u’mitukah! A happy and sweet 5775.

B’vrachot - With blessings,
Rabbi Rachel Isaacs