



Slifka

Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale



Hope

By Rabbi Leah Cohen, Executive Director and Senior Jewish Chaplain

Hope gets a bad rap. In daily communication, it is associated with the trivial, "I hope all is well." In emotional parlance, it is the wishy-washy cousin of aspiration. One would be

ridiculed for hoping to achieve a goal. Even grammar takes a dim view of hope placing it in the subjunctive mood which is "typically used to express various states of unreality". Hope is often portrayed as weak and irrational in a world that so values strength and reason.

And yet.... a closer look at hope, or perhaps a look at hope through a Jewish lens might shed a refreshing light on this much-maligned word. Jewish history is one long song of hope. Centuries of persecution and oppression have not led us to a pessimistic worldview. Rather, we abide by an ethos of unending optimism – a unique blend of self reflection, flexibility, resilience and faith pave our way forward even under the bleakest situations. On a recent visit to Israel, I witnessed the plight of the asylum seekers who have landed in Israel from Sudan and Eritrea. Even as the government struggles to make sense of their status, I witnessed Jewish groups on the ground working to feed, educate, house and provide for these refugees' basic needs. Remembering the most repeated phrase in the Torah, these Israelis were living out the words, "you must not mistreat or oppress a foreigner for you were strangers in a strange land." Their actions gave hope to those they served and inspiration to all who beheld them.

Hope is linked to the capacity to dream. Those without hope cannot dream. Seeing what does not yet exist, and believing in one's self agency enough to create the future is the practical side of hope. I see this kind of dream enabling hope throughout our campus, especially when Yale students reach out to help those in the New Haven community. An amazing example of this manifestation of hope is a young man named Josh Feinzig '16. Josh is now a senior and recently won the Gates Cambridge Scholarship, to add to his long list of other awards for his

work in criminal justice policy. As a Slifka Center Tzedek Fellow, Josh was a co-founder of Project Youth Court, a regional alternative juvenile justice system that tries misdemeanor offenses in New Haven. Working within the criminal justice system, Josh gives hope to those who are too young to have lost the right to dream.

Hope is not circumstantial or coincidental. Nor is it a mood, a privilege or a convenience. Hope is a trait that can be taught and modeled, learned and shared. Hope is a choice. I love the Israeli expression, "Ain breira" which literally means, "There is no choice." It is usually said with a slight shrug, and an air of resignation, after discussing the latest disheartening news. However, underneath this seemingly dispassionate response, lies a deep passion to accept what is for now and a foundational belief that things will be better in the future. That is the choice in "there is no choice." That is the kind of hard won hope that characterizes our people.

As we approach Passover, with spring in the air, and a sense of rebirth and re-awakening all around us, let us remember that we are all teachers of hope, purveyors of dreams. In Judaism, hope is not for the weak of will, but rather for those with vision, courage and tenacity to work for a better world.

Chag Kasher v'Sameach!



Yale Rabbis meet in Israel. From left to right: Rabbi Rachel Timoner '91, Rabbi Randy Sheinberg '81, '87 MPPM, Rabbi Tom Alpert '76, Rabbinical Student Deena Gottlieb '15, Rabbi Leah Cohen, Rabbi Beth Kalisch '03 and Rabbi Joel N. Abraham '89.



Profiles in Courage

By Leah Salovey '17

Last spring, when Rabbi Cohen first told me about a spring break trip she was planning to Poland for the following year, I was immediately sold. I was extremely excited about her idea, which she described as being an interfaith collaboration with the Episcopal chaplain in which students of Jewish and Christian backgrounds would discuss issues of moral courage in relation to the Holocaust. I'm a junior European History major with a special focus on Holocaust Studies, so this trip seemed like a perfect opportunity for me, but I was especially interested because I had recently begun to think about the ways in which Holocaust education should and must change in the near future. Growing up in a Jewish community, my experience with Holocaust education was almost entirely based around first hand survivor testimony. But over the previous year I realized that most students do not have access to personal

encounters with Holocaust survivors, and that this would only become increasingly, and then entirely, true over the next five or ten years. I was struck by a serious problem; how do you keep the Holocaust and the message of "Never Again" relevant to students as time passes and one of the most traumatic events of our time becomes more and more like a distant history lesson?

I think that the Profiles in Courage fellowship that Rabbi Cohen and Reverend Paul Carling have developed is the beginning of an answer to this question. Each week, our group of Jewish and Christian students get together to talk about the choices individuals made under impossible circumstances. Through learning about the Holocaust, we are taught to confront our own choices, identities, and faiths. We strive to keep the past as an instructional model for the present. It has truly been an inspiration to confront some of the most difficult issues of faith with this diverse and insightful group. I have learned so much throughout this process, and am resolved to continue to learn, change, and grow with this group as we journey together to Poland and Germany in March.



Crown Street Reunion

By Naomi Weinberger '88 and Michael Lewittes '89

Lecha dodi rising in unison up Harkness Tower, followed by the walk down those stairs at 305 Crown Street. The men are in ties and jackets, while the women are looking stylish in skirts. After catching up in the building's basement, eventually we hear the sounds of kiddush. A line forms to wash hands, and moments later challah is being ripped and passed along. There's no more work. It's officially Shabbos at Yale. It's the Kosher Kitchen.

It was Shabbos evenings that went late, with conversations that lingered well after birkat hamazon. It was davening in the morning, lunch and group games in the afternoon. Maybe you met up motzei Shabbos at Claire's. Come Sunday, we might return for brunch because of those special connections we were making at that special place. It was the Kosher Kitchen.

During the week, tables would form and reform. One moment you were sitting next to a graduate student, the next a freshman, the next an upper classman. Your friend group was older than you and younger than you, male and female alike, all Jews, but from all over, eating kosher together. Within the majesty that is the Yale campus with its glorious dining halls adorned with portraits and carvings, you have chosen to eat here, in a basement off campus. It's the Kosher Kitchen.

Come relive that time and reconnect with your special family at Yale that crossed classes and professional schools August 11-13, 2017 for the first-ever Crown Street Kosher Kitchen reunion.

That's 2017 – not THIS August, NEXT YEAR in August.

Spend the weekend reconnecting with old friends, davening together (in the minyan of your choice) attending special lectures and sessions – run by US, the former students, so many of whom have gone into Jewish Academia, and, of course, enjoying Shabbos meals together again. And don't miss the Sunday Bagel Brunch at the Slifka Center.

Anyone interested in helping to make this reunion as emotionally full as our memories of being together are, please contact Naomi Weinberger at weinbergers@yahoo.com or Jennifer Rogin Wallis at Slifka Center at jennifer.wallis@yale.edu.



Slifka Center and the African-American Cultural Center

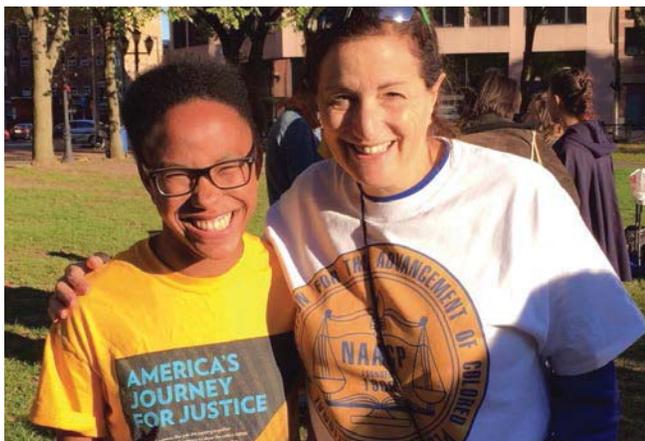
By Abby Johnson '16

This past August I marched in the Atlanta area with the NAACP on its “Journey for Justice.” The march advocated for prison reform, access to quality education for all, and the end of police brutality. People of all backgrounds, faiths, and ages came to march and it was amidst this diverse group that I met Rabbi Cohen. When we came back to campus in September, we decided that we wanted to bring the core theme of the march – the idea that change happens when diverse groups of people come together – back to Yale. With this theme in mind, we worked with Brea Baker, President of the Yale Chapter of the NAACP, to organize a march in New Haven focused on juvenile justice reform. On a crisp fall day, members of different NAACP chapters, students from Slifka and the African-American Cultural Center, elected officials, and New Haven residents walked through the streets of New Haven bringing attention to juvenile justice issues in the state.

That march was just the beginning of a renewed relationship between the African-American Cultural Center and Slifka. In addition to the march, I’ve worked with Director of Jewish Student Life Juli Goodman on outreach for a spring break trip and this March students from Slifka, the African-American Cultural Center and other campus organizations will take part in a service trip to the Mississippi Delta. Additionally, over the next few months, Rabbi Ratner and I will be organizing a dialogue series between students from Slifka and the African-American Cultural Center. The dialogue series will explore the history of the relationship between the two communities since the Civil Rights Movement and will focus on ways that the African-American and Jewish communities on campus can continue to support each other.

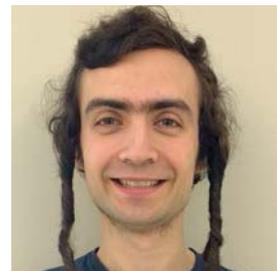
I hope that these collaborations are just the beginning and that groups from the two centers will continue to work together because the joint initiatives of this past year have already brought many students and administrators together in good conversation and advocacy work!

Abby Johnson '16 with Rabbi Leah Cohen at the Journey for Justice March in Atlanta.



Jewish Graduate Student Life at Yale

By Michael Rutenberg-Schoenberg '18
Ph.D. Candidate



It's 6:00 pm and Shabbat is quickly approaching. So are my 12 guests, 10 of whom I've actually met. Squash curry is still simmering, and enchiladas are in the oven. The table is not set—I may have to ask my guests for help—but amid the frenzy, I smile. Soon, over Kiddush wine and sweet challah, we'll be reveling in deep conversation and connection.

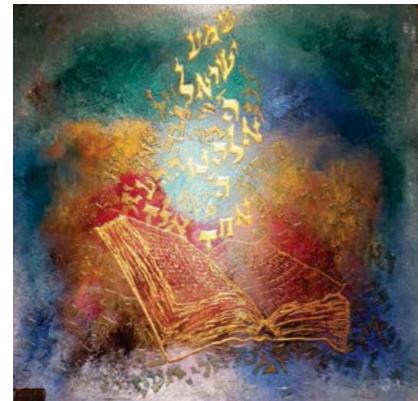
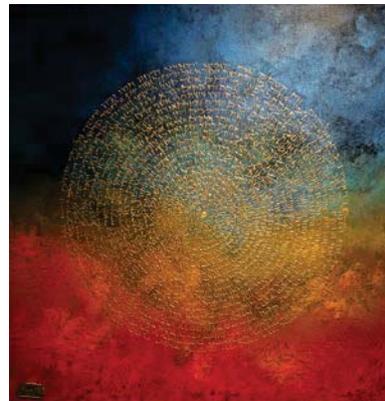
Coming to Yale as a graduate student, I was immediately excited by the vibrant Hillel community at Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale. The opportunities for religious life are wide-ranging, with the whole gamut of religious services, weekly Shabbat dinners, and a plethora of cultural events. But having left the intentional community that is the undergraduate college experience, I was still searching for personal connection. No longer did I live just a few doors away from my closest friends, nor did we eat together in our college dining hall. JGAP—Jewish Graduate Students and Young Professionals at Yale—helped greatly along the way. It was over drinks at a happy hour that I met an Israeli PhD student in chemical engineering who always has me laughing (and speaking Hebrew). At a break-fast after Yom Kippur, I met a law student who is now my partner in crime in cooking Shabbat meals. And at our annual Purim costume party, I met a young couple who, along with their dog, have become an integral part of my New Haven extended family.

JGAP is a nondenominational, pluralistic social community that brings young post-college Jews at Yale and beyond together for social and cultural events. Over the last year, we have hosted over 30 events, ranging from parties on Purim and Chanukah to a break-fast on Yom Kippur, from summer barbecues and Shabbat onegs to ice skating and bike rides up East Rock, from Yale hockey games to a night at the Yale Rep's *Indecent*, about the controversial Broadway debut of great Yiddish writer Sholem Asch's first play. JGAP is a program of Slifka Center that is primarily peer-run, under the advisement of Slifka Center staff.

Developing a vibrant Jewish community is a lifelong journey, and an exciting challenge – one in which connections with others count tremendously. In an age where we are plugged more into our cell phones than into our connections with other, experiences of Shabbat and engagement with Jewish life gives us a particularly special way to have a meaningful, in person connection. As graduate students, this is often our first opportunity to build an adult Jewish community and I am grateful to Slifka Center as they partner with us in this journey.

Slifka Arts & Literature

Dorit Gur

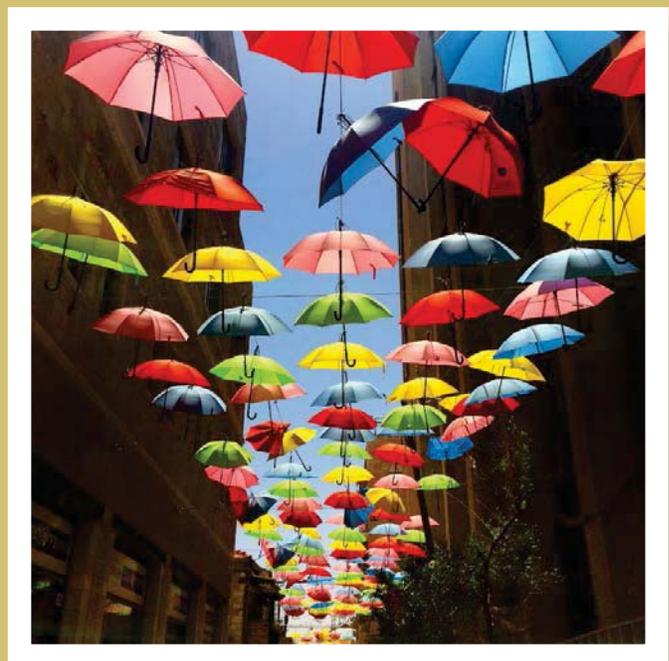


Left: Panorama of Allan and Leah Rabinowitz Gallery featuring many of Dorit Gur's work in her exhibition curated by Eddie Maza '18 and Hannah LaBovick '18.

Middle: "Bereshit Spiral (Genesis)" by Dorit Gur – the first chapter of Genesis is written in a spiral that symbolizes the initial harmony that existed in the beginning of creation. Dorit writes from the outside-in to reflect the reversing of moving back to the source and to the initial harmony

Right: "The Golden Triangle" by Dorit Gur – Combines Shma Israel, Ana BeKoah and the 72 God Names. The Prayer Ana BeKoah inside the open book and the Shma Israel letters hover above it along with the 72 Names of God that are written across the painting as well as on the sides and are half transparent in order to emphasize God's presence in every moment whether we see it or not

Derech HaEinayim Sheli: Israel through the Eyes of the Yale Community.



Slifka Center hosted an exhibition called, *Derech HaEinayim Sheli: Israel through the Eyes of the Yale Community*. The exhibition featured stunning photographs taken by Yale students including this one by Naomi Gutkind '16, entitled "1000 Parasols".

Slifka Center is initiating a new program called **Kindle Your Judaism**. Accepted students will embark on a literary journey that will spark their interest in Jewish literature. Program participants will receive a Kindle, loaded with several e-books relating to Jewish thought and literature. Periodic book discussions will be facilitated by Associate Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier.

Kindle



Reform Chavurah

By Emily Briskin '15, YSPH '16

While I don't remember many exact details of my freshman move in day four years ago, I can still recall the relief that I felt as I sat down in Slifka Center's Beit Midrash for my first Friday night services as a Yalie. As the months passed, I came to look forward to those few hours of Shabbat peace and reflection with Reform Chavurah, and now it's difficult to imagine a week without it.

The Reform Chavurah meets every Friday night for an hour of song and prayer and plans special group outings and holiday celebrations. I didn't realize all of the careful planning that goes into crafting a Shabbat service until I became a co-leader of Reform Chavurah. I learned alternative ways to craft a D'var Torah, different methods for introducing parts of the liturgy, and which tunes are excellent with a guitar whereas which others are successful a capella. But my favorite part of Reform Chavurah is our weekly tradition of welcoming the Sabbath Bride with Lecha Dodi and then welcoming one another by introducing ourselves and telling the group about the best part of our week. Some of my most meaningful friendships at Yale have grown out of this seemingly small gesture—just sharing one tidbit of information each week.

We have also built our community through a variety of events outside our usual services, cooking and eating together at events like Shabbat at the Yale Farm, Havdallah campfire songs and s'mores on the beach, a Hanukkah brunch, and an off-campus Shabbat dinner. I have been thrilled to see so many freshmen embrace Reform Chavurah this year, and I know that this community will continue to offer a warmhearted respite from the stress of campus life.



Bonds of Our Judaism

By Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier, Associate Rabbi and Co-Director of JLIC at Yale

Slifka is a community with a variety of different communities, which overlap and interrelate in multiple ways. What is so wonderful is that everyone gets along, working together to form a very diverse, yet unified community.

One of the more close-knit communities we are fortunate to have at Slifka Center is a group of students who are deeply committed to traditional aspects of Jewish life, and especially Torah study and Davening (praying) together as a community. I am proud to count myself among them, both as a religious individual and as a rabbi.

The group is very diverse: It includes men and women of very disparate backgrounds, who identify in different ways religiously, and it incorporates undergraduates, graduate

students, professors and community members. But what unites us is greater than what divides us. We are brought together by a shared interest in studying the Torah that has been a hallmark of the Jewish People for millennia, to unite as a community before God in prayer, and to celebrate Shabbat as a religious community. Whether it's a weekly Pizza and Learning class taught by a visiting scholar, a Tuesday evening Maariv, a joint breakfast following an early morning Shacharit, or a sumptuous Kiddush consumed on Shabbat morning, the bonds of our Judaism hold us together.

Among the many positive things that this community offers is that it serves as a vertically integrated community. It is said that the Yale experience imposes stark boundaries between its undergrads, graduate students, professors, and non-Yalies, such that undergraduates' horizons are largely limited to their collegiate peers; they rarely have serious contact with those outside the ages of 18 and 22. Building a close-knit, faith-based community allows for a cohort of people bound together not by circumstance but by commitment to a shared goal, building a thriving Jewish religious life.

Hinei Mah Tov Umah Na'im Shevet Ahim Gam Yahad, how good and how pleasant it is for our community to dwell together!



Egal: Community and Spirit

By Luke Peilen '18

My very first day at Yale was a Friday: freshman move-in day. I had never been to New Haven before, and was consequently both mildly lost and overwhelmed. Hearing that the Slifka Center was hosting a Shabbat dinner for new incoming freshmen, I wandered over in an attempt to place myself amidst the chaotic bustle of move-in weekend.



What I found at Slifka was a remarkably welcoming and engaging community of Jews at Egal minyan. Egal is a wonderfully diverse community, filled with Jews of all sorts of backgrounds and relations with Judaism. With my somewhat limited background, I was immediately welcomed into a community where I was encouraged to explore my Judaism more deeply, and to take more charge of my Judaism.

Through a host of Shabbat and weekday services, Egal offers many varying types of prayer experiences, encouraging Jews to participate as actively as they desire. Via various opportunities for learning within and across other minyanim, Egal encourages students to study Jewish thought and practice, allowing students to take a more meaningful role in their Judaism.

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Above all else, though, the community of people that constitute Egal is its greatest strength. A union of many involved students with a wide variety of interests and passions in and outside of Judaism, Egal is a community of warm, welcoming, and bright students who approach all aspects of life with a fervor and intensity that creates an exciting and energetic Jewish community. My experience at Yale has been in many ways defined and bettered by this wonderfully vibrant community.

My Israel Story

Birthright Reflections

By William Ellison '18

This winter, I had the wonderful opportunity to go on Birthright with thirty-five other Jewish Yalies. What was particularly powerful about this experience was rediscovering myself and the land of my people, Eretz Yisrael, alongside my fellow Yalies and with seven Israeli soldiers. I had been to Israel three times before, twice with my family and once with my eighth grade class, but those experiences hadn't been nearly as meaningful. Exploring the Jewish homeland with fellow young Jews is a joy that can hardly be put into words: I felt that we were both understanding ourselves individually as Jews and collectively as members of the Jewish community, Am Yisrael, as we hiked up Masada, explored Tel Aviv, and prayed at the Kotel. Although I was friends with several of the Yalies before the trip, I not only became much closer to those friends during the course of the trip, but made many new friends, both Yalies and Israelis, that I know I will be close with forever. During the trip, I came to more fully grasp that I am part of something greater than myself, an ancient people with over



The entire Yale student Birthright delegation with Yonatan Millo, center, with blue baseball cap.

five thousand years of history that continues to not only survive, but also thrive, redefining and improving itself every day, both within its ancient homeland and around the world. I would highly recommend Birthright to any Jewish Yalie intent on trying to comprehend him or herself and his or her place at Yale, in the Jewish community, and as part of the human experience.

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By Yonatan Millo, Jewish Agency Israel Fellow at Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale

When I was 22, as an Officer in the Israel Defense Forces, I took part in Birthright Israel as one of the Israeli soldiers who join the trip. What I expected would be a fun a time, ended up being one of the most meaningful and emotional experiences I had during my army service. This past winter I had the pleasure of co- leading the Yale

Birthright Israel campus trip with Rabbi Leah Cohen, Executive Director and Senior Jewish Chaplain. The trip gave me the opportunity to show Yale students the different sights and faces of Israel and provided the educational platform to discuss with them in depth the many issues facing my country today and through out its history. However, going to Israel with them, also and once again had a profound impact on me. At a time when many Israelis feel they are losing touch with one another and what brings them together in Israel, experiencing my home through Yale students unblemished eyes inspired me. Thanks to them, I had rediscovered the beauty of my country and what makes us unique as the Jewish people. Above all, my journey to Israel with a group of Yale students ended up giving me hope for my country today and for a better future to come.

William Ellison '18 (left) forming the "Y" in YALE at Masada at sunrise.



Yale students at Shuk HaCarmel in Tel Aviv. From left to right: Aviva Abusch '18, Julia Katz '19, Benjamin Jacobs '17, Nikita Saleev '19, Bernard Stanford '17, Motti Shubert (soldier), Felice Doynov '17 MM.





Lia Weiner '19 (4th from left) with other Yale students during December's trip to the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

Hartman Institute Reflection

By Lia Weiner '17

When I first walked in to the Jerusalem Stone-covered Beit Midrash in the Hartman Institute, I wasn't sure what to expect. When I walked out of it one week later, I was a changed person. The program confronted so many of the hard questions, which we ordinarily tend to avoid. Why do we, as American Jews, care about Israel? What narratives have we been taught to avoid? How do we engage with others who think differently? The Hartman curriculum did not shy away from addressing the hard truths of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With speakers ranging from Jewish scholars, to Palestinian businessmen and Israeli artists and politicians – we left the program with a more nuanced view of the conflict and the role we play in it. Moreover, spending a week with fellow students reexamining our community and forming friendships that have proved to last far beyond that week has been a remarkable opportunity. As an Israeli, Hartman allowed me to reclaim my Judaism. Hartman embodies Jewish pluralism, a phenomenon that is devastatingly lacking in Israeli society. Though our discussions I was able to understand the importance of Jewish values in my life, and the role they have always played in my decision-making. I was encouraged to challenge the meaning of "choseness," finding that for me it was marked not by exceptionalism or superiority, but rather a responsibility and dedication to create a better world.

Yalies In Israel Reflection

By Sarah Sukin '19

I didn't expect to spend my summer in Israel last year, but I'm so glad that I did. Every time I left the house, I was on a new adventure. Grocery shopping became bargaining at the shuk and getting to work was a test of my limited Hebrew. I'll admit that I got on the wrong train once, but I still managed to find my way. The Yalies in Israel program also created a sense of community through the group of Yalies living in the bayit and activities like hosting Shabbat dinner. Everyone was dedicated to making the most of both their work experience and the opportunities of being abroad, from learning to cook together to climbing Masada. Experiencing Israel was amazing, and Slifka Center's programming was integral to making last summer so great.

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 Yale students during a day trip hike to Masada with Sarah Sukin '19 (3rd from right) and Juli Goodman, Director of Jewish Student Life on end at right.



Slifka

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80 Wall Street, New Haven, CT 06511



Coming to New Haven for your upcoming reunion? Please join us for Shabbat Dinner, Sunday Bagel Brunch or at any point throughout the weekend. Check our website for our weekend schedule or call 203-432-9419 for more information. We look forward to welcoming you to your Jewish alumni house at Yale.

slifkacenter.org/reunions



Yalies having fun at Slifka Center's inaugural "Slifka Formal". From left to right: Sarah Cohen '18, Gabby Deutch '18, Isabella Berglund-Brown '19 and Joel Abraham '18.

Slifka

Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale

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