



## 2024 – 2025 Participant Bios



**Alex Vtorov**

*Macaulay and Hunter Colleges*

*Hometown: New York, NY*

I'm in my 4th year out of 5 as a physical chemistry and linguistics double-major at Macaulay and Hunter Colleges. I'm a civics and culture intern at Hunter Hillel, the Jewish undergraduate liaison to the faculty senate's Israel/Palestine committee, and am currently working on a machine learning project with the Sefaria API. My family is of (relatively recent) Kievan extraction, and instilled in me a very post-Soviet Jewish cultural identity, if not a religious one. Since I've started college, I've significantly recommitted to participating more actively in Jewish spaces both on- and off-campus. To that end, I'm also a college fellow at Yeshivat Hadar and intend to matriculate to their Beit Midrash in summer 2025.

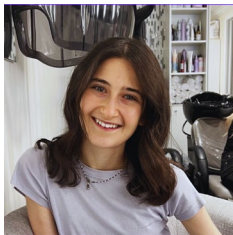


**Amit Sapir**

*University of Florida*

*Hometown: Boca Raton, FL*

I'm a senior studying biomedical engineering at the University of Florida. I am proud of my Israeli-American identity, and have been involved in Jewish leadership after my mechina gap year in Israel, taking on leadership roles in SSI, AJC, JNF, and more.



**Ari Kohn**

*Harvard University*

*Hometown: Falmouth, MA*

I am a junior at Harvard studying Politics, Philosophy and Economics. I am particularly interested in trust in higher education and public institutions. I grew up around the world because my parents are architects, so we lived where their projects were; however, I went to high school in Toronto. At Harvard, I am active in growing pluralism of ideological, cultural and religious differences on campus through a program I started called Intellectual Vitality. I also am involved in research at Harvard Business School on Organizational Behavior, and am an undergraduate fellow in the Safra Center of Ethics. I am interested in how communities form and sustain trust.



**Clementine Leonard**

*University of California, Santa Cruz*

*Hometown: Berkeley, CA*

I'm a sophomore at UC Santa Cruz studying history and legal studies. I went to a Berkeley Hebrew school, and grew up surrounded by mostly secular and reform Jews. Although I didn't grow up religious, I've always felt very connected to Judaism and see it as an integral part of my identity. I love to sing and play guitar

(I went to art school for middle and high school), and right now, I am training to be a DJ at my school's radio station.



**Danielle Tsvilikhovskaya**

*DePaul University*

*Hometown: Vernon Hills, IL*

I'm an I-O Psych Grad student in Chicago. I was Chabad President at DePaul, currently a Jewish Faith in Action Scholar, and have taken Sinai Scholars.

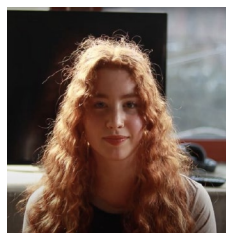


**Deena Shamoelian**

*Hofstra University*

*Hometown: Cedarhurst, NY*

I grew up in Long Island, New York, and attended Bais Yaakov for K-12. I am a pre-law student, double majoring in History and Global Studies at Hofstra University. I am the treasurer for our Hillel and deeply involved in our Chabad. I also helped another Jewish organization, Chavaya, become a student government-recognized club on Hofstra's campus. After October 7th, a couple of friends and I realized that there was a need for a strong pro-Israel voice on campus. We have since started a Students Supporting Israel chapter on our campus, of which I am the president. In my work with Israel advocacy, I have become a Hasbara fellow and am running with the Aish slate for the World Zionist Congress.



**Elena Elsenstadt**

*University of Chicago*

*Hometown: Philadelphia, PA*

I am a junior at the University of Chicago studying history and Romance languages and literatures. I grew up in Philadelphia, where I attended Jewish schools and a Quaker high school. At college, I write and edit for my campus newspaper, as well as a political and cultural review. I am also part of a stand-up comedy group at UChicago called "Life of the Mic." This summer, I was a reporting intern at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, where I wrote about the first Trump attempted assassination and enjoyed a lot of driving around rural Pennsylvania. In my free time, I like to travel, hang out with friends, and sing.



**Elisheva Feintuch**

*Yale University*

*Hometown: Shoham, Israel and Riverdale, NY*

I grew up in Israel and in Riverdale, New York, and am currently a junior at Yale, majoring in Ethics, Politics, and Economics. I graduated the Modern Orthodox high school SAR in 2020 and spent two gap years researching international affairs and policy matters before Yale. I'm interested in the intersection of state-level politics and policy with global challenges and institutions. Passionate about community-building, I've served as a senator on the Yale College Council for my residential college, and am currently co-President of our Hillel Student Board and co-leader of a Jewish-Christian interfaith group. I also run a student ambassador program for the Yale Admissions Office and freelance as a research assistant and editor. In my free time, you'd catch me making new friends, walking, doing creative writing, reading epic fantasy or playing piano.



**Emma Schwarz**

*Vanderbilt University*

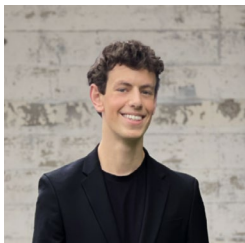
*Hometown: Phoenix, AZ*

I'm a sophomore at Vanderbilt University, majoring in Human & Organizational Development, and minoring in Creative Writing and Business.

I'm originally from Phoenix, Arizona, and went to Jewish day school for K-8.

I'm super involved in Chabad and Hillel, and in my free time, I love to rock

climb and go backpacking. I also love to read and write!



**Gabriel Krause-Grosman**

*Boston College*

*Hometown: Boston, MA*

I'm a sophomore at Boston College studying Political Science and Transformative Education. In particular I'm interested in methods of reforming educational structures to promote equity and student growth, as well as exploring the transformative power of informal education in fostering

community connections. I grew up attending a pluralistic Jewish day school, which deeply shaped my belief in the importance of inclusive, pluralistic spaces for Jewish students where dialogue is not only tolerated but actively encouraged. As the event coordinator for my school's Hillel, I'm committed to continually improving this aspect of our community. At BC, I engage with timely topics through my role as managing editor of *Al Noor*, an undergraduate Middle Eastern journal. In my free time, I enjoy being outdoors, traveling, and making music (mainly violin and DJing).



**Grayson Kaufman**

*Stony Brook University*

*Hometown: Cary, NC*

I am a sophomore psychology major at Stony Brook University. I was raised in a secular interfaith household, and I have been involved in Jewish leadership since I was about 16. I was a local and international leader in BBYO for two years before graduating and becoming a volunteer and staff

member. Now, I am on the executive board of Stony Brook University's Jewish Student Association and am the President and Founder of the university's Students Demand Action chapter for anti-gun-violence advocacy. I am fascinated by the behavioral and developmental psychology of children and adolescents and am a Research Assistant for an on-campus laboratory studying neuromelanin in teens. I hope to attend graduate school and stay in academia for the duration of my career.



**Haylie Keller**

*University of Alabama*

*Hometown: McKinney TX*

I'm a junior at the University of Alabama with the hopes of becoming a Pediatric Optometrist in the near future. I love to be involved in literally anything and everything, which currently includes being involved with Greek life, research, ambassador programs, and Jewish Life on UA's campus. I've

grown up as a Jew in the South for majority of my life, which with the help of organizations like BBYO and Chabad, has formed a strong Jewish Identity. I'm really interested in the genetic linkage between all Jews, beyond that of being talmudically connected alongside

how we all fit in this grand puzzle. In my free time I enjoy hanging out with friends, playing card games, and enjoying music in all its forms!



**Henry Karpovas Lisak**

*University of Minnesota*

*Hometown: São Paulo, Brazil*

My name is Henry Karpovas Lisak, I am a sophomore studying Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Management at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. I am an international student from São Paulo, Brazil, and I am a very proud liberal Jew. I studied in a Jewish school for my whole life. I currently serve as the VP of Campus Relations for my local Hillel, representing them in my student government, as well as an Israel on Campus Coalition Fellow. I am also a rower in the Minnesota Men's Crew team, and I am currently founding a chapter of an engineering association (ASHRAE) on my campus. Last, I am currently working with interfaith relations with other religious institutions, in an effort to create a better climate on campus for all.



**Ilan Berdy**

*University of California, Los Angeles*

*Hometown: Irvine, CA*

I'm currently studying Mechanical Engineering at UCLA. I attended Tarbut V'Torah for high school and spent a gap year at Yeshivat Orayta before college. My interests lie at the intersection of aesthetic design and functional utility, and while my career path is still evolving, I'm drawn toward the business world. On campus, I'm actively involved with UCLA Hillel, the club rock climbing team, and the Student Alumni Association. Post-grad, I plan to move to NYC to explore new opportunities.



**Ilan Podolski**

*Brooklyn College*

*Hometown: Brooklyn, NY*

Hi, my name is Ilan. I come from a Soviet Jewish family. I am part of Hillel, Chabad, and AEPi at Brooklyn College. I come from a relatively non-religious family, but have been exploring my religious heritage more in college.



**Jackie Haining**

*Brown University*

*Hometown: Newton, MA*

My name is Jackie Haining and I am from Newton, MA, but currently live in Northampton, MA. Coming from a South African and British Jewish family, connecting with Jews around the country and globe means a great deal to me, and has inspired me, too, to become involved with my Jewish community on campus, where I am a board member of our Smith College Jewish Community. I am a passionate language learner, having studied Russian, Yiddish, Norwegian, Arabic, and Hebrew for various lengths of time, and I am fascinated with researching genealogy, Jewish mysticism, and Hasidus. Rebbe Nachman, one of the Hasidic greats, in particular, inspires me greatly in my practice and day-to-day life. I also love music, playing the clarinet, guitar, and autoharp in genres ranging from klezmer to jazz to folk.

**Julian B.**

*Columbia University*

I love to hike and make music and I'm a student at Columbia University.

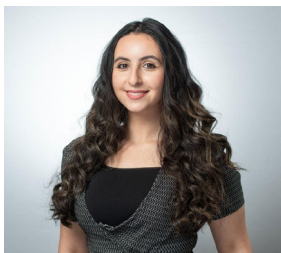


**Lauren Tapper**

*Stanford University*

*Hometown: Chicago, IL*

I am a sophomore studying Political Science at Stanford with an interest in political economy and comparative government. I am originally from Chicago, where I was formerly involved in my local NFTY chapter, and am now a member of my school's Jewish Students Association. I am passionate about using dialogue as a method to address polarization and build relationships across ideological differences. I also love long walks and am an avid iced coffee drinker.

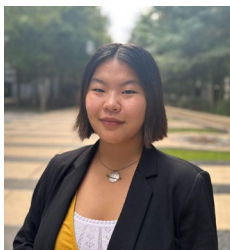


**Leora Elnatanov**

*Brooklyn College*

*Hometown: Chicago, IL*

My cultural background is Bukharian. My parents are from Uzbekistan and hold strong to our cultural traditions that are a diverse fusion of Soviet, Israeli, Persian, Central Asian...and more. I grew up going to all kinds of Yeshivah with different backgrounds. I am currently student leader at Tanger Hillel of Brooklyn College, where I am a board member of the Mizrahi club where we educate and celebrate our cultures.



**Lucy Rapfogel**

*New York University*

*Hometown: Seattle, WA*

Lucy is a senior at New York University pursuing degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and Global Liberal Studies with minors in Public Policy and Business Management. She recently studied abroad at NYU Tel Aviv, which cemented her interest in international peace-building through education and cultural exchange. Lucy was awarded the Gilman Scholarship this past summer and is an NSLI-Y Arabic alumna. Originally from North Carolina, she now calls Seattle her home and loves to hike, ski, and kayak. When she isn't working, you can find her getting boba, reading, or writing her thesis.



**Maddy Hefner**

*University of British Columbia*

*Hometown: Toronto, Canada*

I'm from Toronto but currently study in Vancouver. I grew up in a largely secular environment but have become more religious in recent years. I'm a business student and a Stand With Us fellow. Growing up, I was a competitive dancer, and I still love dancing in my free time. Long-term, I hope to combine my passion for Israel advocacy with my business skills.



**Maya Rosen**

*Harvard University*

*Hometown: Miami, FL*

I am a senior at Harvard where I study Social Studies and the History of Science. I grew up in a Conservative/Reform household. At Harvard, I am involved with efforts to increase open conversation about Israel/Palestine on campus. Broadly, I am interested in questions around the governance/ethics of science and technology, especially as they relate to health. I enjoy spending time in Harvard's outdoors community, reading and editing histories of science, and finding thought-provoking conversations wherever they may be.



**Maya Zimmerman**

*McGill University*

*Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA*

I'm a second-year Urban Studies major with minors in Psychology and Jewish Studies. My academic and personal interests lie at the intersection of physical and mental health, social groups, and the spaces they inhabit. I come from a robust egalitarian background, attending Solomon Schechter in Boston and belonging to Temple Beth Zion, a non-denominational congregation. After relocating to Pittsburgh, I became an active leader in USY, spearheading the region's social justice initiatives. Most critically, I have spent the past twelve summers immersed in the pluralistic environment of Camp Yavneh, fostering my love for Jewish prayer, song, and learning. On campus, I previously held the role of Vice President of Jewish Life at Hillel McGill and now serve as the President, doing what I am most passionate about: cultivating strong Jewish community. Additionally, I teach swim lessons to children with disabilities and am involved with McGill Democrats Abroad.



**Noah Kassis**

*Harvard University*

*Hometown: Northampton, MA*

Noah is a senior at Harvard College concentrating in Social Studies with a focus field in "Inequality and Working-Class Mobilization in the US." He grew up in a progressive Conservative Jewish community in Northampton, MA, where he went to the local Solomon Schechter K-6 day school and had his Bar Mitzvah at Congregation B'nai Israel. He went to Ramah in the Rockies for several years, and experimented with different levels of observance during high school. In college, he became involved with Hillel as part of the Student Conservative Minyan. He founded an art-based dialogue program called "ArTikkun: Jews Celebrating Disagreement," which seeks to promote ideological pluralism in Harvard's Jewish community. He is also a co-founder and co-director of the Harvard Undergraduate Forward-Thinking Jewish Union, an intellectual community organization of left-leaning Jews promoting open-ended and critical conversations about relevant issues to American Jews.



**Rachel Shela**

*University of Wisconsin*

*Hometown: New York, NY*

My two brothers and I were raised on the Upper West Side of Manhattan by a Reform Tennessean and Modern-Orthodox Londoner. I went to Modern-Orthodox school K-8 and then attended the Heschel School,

where I first encountered pluralism. At Heschel, I was in the a cappella group, on student government, ran the gender equality club, and poked around the literary magazine and environmental club. Outside of school I participated in Witness Theater and volunteered on urban farms. While on my gap year, I studied at Hebrew University and worked on a goat farm. I also participated in Extend which had a profound impact on me. At school I study Sociology and History. Outside of class, I am a fellow at the Center for Interfaith Dialogue, on the Wisconsin Alumni Student Board, and am active at both Hillel and Chabad.



**Remy Herrson**

*SUNY Cortland*

*Hometown: New York, NY*

I am in my senior year at SUNY Cortland. I am from Manhattan and grew up going to public school. I attended Hebrew school all throughout my lower and middle school education. I spent my free time in high school attending USY events, a Jewish youth group. I was on the Eboard throughout my years. I am currently the president of my school's BridgeUSA chapter. It is a non-partisan organization dedicated to bridging the gap between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. The goal is to have events that promote civic engagement in a non-polarizing way. I am the Vice President of Equity and Belonging at the Delta Phi Epsilon Chapter at Cortland as well as the advocacy chair for my Hillel chapter. I plan to go into politics/government. I want to be an elected civil servant for the people regardless of party affiliation.



**Shira Yarimi**

*Adelphi University*

*Hometown: Pomona, NY*

I go to Adelphi University and am studying nursing. I grew up with people of all sorts of Jewish backgrounds as I moved around between New York and Florida. Currently, I'm involved in Hillel and Chabad on Campus.



**Skylar Strudwick**

*University of Minnesota*

*Hometown: Minneapolis, MN*

I am a third year studying Psychology and Sociology on the pre-law track at the University of Minnesota. I research and study human rights, specifically genocide studies, women's rights, and Jewish studies. I serve as the treasurer for the Fellowship of Undergraduates of English, board member on the UMN Student Board, a mentor for the Pre-Law Society, and am on the leadership council with Minnesota Hillel. I conduct research with the UMN Social Psychology Lab, the President's Initiative for Public Health Research, and am working on a project with the Jewish studies department researching antisemitism perceptions on campus. I have worked as a public policy intern for a political campaign and am currently a researcher/ writer with the Human Rights department.



**Sophie Dauerman**

*Yale University*

*Hometown: Shelburne, VT*

I'm a senior at Yale. I grew up just outside of Burlington, Vermont, which is home to a very small but special Jewish community. I spent my gap year at Kol Ami Mechina and at Yale I've been a gabbai of the egalitarian minyan and Hillel Student Board Co-President. I'm majoring in Ecology and Evolutionary biology and love plants. I research plant evolution and have done fieldwork from the Amazon rainforest to the Andes mountains. Outside of Hillel and the lab, I play oboe in a pops orchestra and play tennis.



**Talia Holzman**

*Scripps College*

*Hometown: Reston, VA*

I'm a sophomore at Scripps College. I have grown up in the Reform community, but attended JDS where I was exposed to many different kinds of Judaism. I am involved in my campus' Chabad, and love going to Shabbat dinners with friends. I am a fellow for my school's Humanities Institute, focusing on 'escaping the echo-chamber' and encouraging discourse and dialogue.



**Zoey Ojalvo**

*Vassar College*

*Hometown: New York, NY*

I'm a sophomore at Vassar, majoring in psychology with a Jewish Studies minor. My Jewish background mainly consists of Jewish day school for elementary and middle school, and being on the board of the Jewish Union here at college. I spend a lot of my time playing rugby on my school's team, and other than that I love a good book and/or a good conversation in a hammock on the quad.