

NEWS & VIEWS

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Meet the Director: Rabbi Jeff Summit

As Executive Director of Tufts Hillel, Rabbi Jeffrey Summit was disappointed when he found out that only 40 percent of the university's 1,200 Jewish students had been attending Hillel programs.



It was a significant number, but how could Tufts Hillel call itself successful if they failed to engage the other 60 percent? After all, there were 800 Jewish students on campus who had not been involved.

So Rabbi Summit and his staff set about to develop innovative ideas, creating new programs focused on social justice, active citizenship, community literacy, sexual ethics, interfaith dialogue, and genocide education, engaging more than 65 percent of the university's Jewish population, as well as non-Jewish students, and helping Hillel become a campus-wide center for leadership and action.

"I was tired of anecdotal stories of success. I really wanted to track the actual impact – who were we reaching and how?" he said. "So I flipped our success on its back, and we set out to develop programs that could meaningfully engage the 800 students who weren't involved."

Now Rabbi Summit, Emeritus Neubauer Executive Director of Tufts Hillel and a research professor in the Tufts Department of Music and Judaic Studies, is bringing that out-of-the-box thinking to Hebrew College, as the first director of the new [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#).

The Innovation Lab, which launches in September, will support the design and implementation of new student and alumni community-building projects in Greater Boston, ranging from empowering Jewish activists to designing a new minyan to creating more community-wide celebrations, through seed grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Rabbi Summit will lead a group seminar on Wednesday afternoons for Innovation Lab participants, and will also provide one-on-one mentorship and supervision.

“We Jews value tradition and we have a tendency to look to the past as we build communities,” Rabbi Summit said. “But if we are to be thought leaders, we have to be conscious of the profound changes in our current communal landscape. How do we address people’s search for meaning and their hunger for authentic experience in ways that are going to be value added to their lives right now?”

“Over the years, I’ve been paying attention to the ways that Hebrew College has emerged as a hub for innovation and a true pluralistic institution in Jewish life in the United States,” Rabbi Summit added. “I’ve been moved and impressed by the quality of leadership and the outstanding students at Hebrew College. When President Sharon Cohen Anisfeld came to me with this idea, I jumped on the opportunity. I am deeply excited about this project.”

[Read more](#)

Inaugural Innovation Lab Grant Recipients

Twelve Hebrew College graduate students and recent alumni in Greater Boston were named as Hebrew College's inaugural Innovation Lab grant recipients. Projects range from alternative Shabbat communities and mussar groups to a Jewish-Ukrainian Christian interfaith exchange, Jewish musical composition, an online Yiddish language database. Watch for future stories about these fellows and their projects:

Current Students

Eric Feld
Micah Friedman
Michelle Goldhaber
Jackson Mercer
Mimi Micner

Noam Vered Lerman
Jenna Shaw
Lorin Troderman
Moshe Webber

Alumni

Dr. Barbara Merson, PhD `18
Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab `18
Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin, Rab `11

[More about the Innovation Lab](#)



Azamra: A Monthly Alternative Shabbat Community

Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab`18 became a spiritual leader in the Boston Jewish community nearly 40 years, as the leader of B'nai Or Religious Fellowship of Boston, a Jewish Renewal community. Seven years ago, he decided to formalize his role as a prayer leader by becoming a rabbinical student at Hebrew College.

Now Rabbi Friedman, who has helped many seekers rediscover Jewish tradition in meaningful and mindful ways, is bringing his voice and passion back the community as the leader of a new Hebrew College alternative Shabbat community, *Azamra*, from Psalm 146:2 “Azamra l’Elohai b’ohdi, I will sing praises to my God while I exist.” The prayer group, which will meet monthly in the Hebrew College Beit Midrash, is a project of the [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#),

“Many Jews hunger for deeper connections to Shabbat and spirituality. The aspiration of *Azamra* is to create a monthly Shabbat community that opens and renews the heart and soul and reflects the needs of spiritual seekers in the 21st century,” Rabbi Friedman said. “*Azamra* is open to all people, Jews and Gentiles of all ages, Jews and Jew-ish folks longing to connect or reconnect with Judaism, as well as those who are conversant with Shabbat and liturgy, and are looking for deeper understandings and connections to God, Torah and community; or are simply looking for an alternative way to celebrate Shabbat.”

Rabbi Friedman will lead *Azamra* with guitar and joyful singing of *niggunim*, chants and liturgy, as well as meditation, davening, storytelling, poetry, and teachings that will enliven and deepen the Shabbat experience. Rather than doing a full Torah reading, the services will concentrate on several verses during the Torah service. Music will be drawn from both traditional and contemporary sources. Each service will be followed by a pot-luck vegetarian kiddush luncheon.

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COMMUNITY LEARNING



Register for a Hebrew College Fall Class

Registration is open for all Hebrew College community learning courses, including opportunities to take non-credit graduate rabbinical, cantorial, and education courses alongside our graduate students.

Choose from our wide variety of graduate offerings or learn with your peers in one of our other community learning programs:

For Adults

- [Hebrew language Ulpan](#)
- [Graduate rabbinical, cantorial, education courses open to the community \(non-credit\)](#)
- [Me'ah](#)
- [Open Circle Jewish Learning](#) and Young Adult courses
- [Parenting & Grandparenting Through a Jewish Lens](#)

For Teens

- [Prozdor](#) (High School)
- [Makor](#) (Middle School)
- [JTFGB Teen Philanthropy](#) (Jewish Teen Foundation of Greater Boston at Hebrew College)

Learn more

70 FACES OF TORAH



Posts from this [Hebrew College-hosted blog](#) are published weekly in [Patheos](#).

Holding the Shattered Tablets

Parashat Ekev (Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25)

By Rabbi Ebn Leader
Faculty, [Rabbinical School of Hebrew College](#)



In this week's parsha Moshe recounts the story of the ten commandments. But he does not tell only of God's dramatic revelation on Mt. Sinai accompanied by lightning and thunder, and the extravagant betrayal which followed, dancing around the Golden Calf. He also tells of the slow process of re-establishing the relationship between God and the people following the betrayal, and of the humble and much quieter offering of the same commandments for the second time, on a set of tablets Moshe carves to replace the first set he had shattered in anger.

“At that point, God said to me – carve two stone tablets...and I will write upon those tablets, the words that were on the first tablets which you shattered, and put them in the Ark” (Deuteronomy 10:1-2).

Is God offering a fresh start? One way of understanding Moshe's story is that after forty days of talking through God's anger at the people's betrayal, God is willing to forgive the people and begin anew. God will write the commandments again on a new set of tablets Moshe will create, which will be kept by the people in the Ark of the Covenant, affirming the relationship and the commitment from both sides. The whole drama of Sinai, or at least the painful parts, can be left behind.

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