



MIT Hillel Update



Greetings from Cambridge to MIT's alumni, parents, and friends on campus and around the globe!

Pictures above, left to right:

1. Students listen carefully to the facts, humor, and advice of [Neil Lazarus](#), an internationally acclaimed expert on the Middle East.
2. [Maseeh Hall opens Fall 2011](#) -- with a full-meal kosher dining option! This is an historic development for the MIT Jewish community.
3. Alumni/ae toast "*I'chayim*" at our first-ever Boston Area MIT Jewish Young Alumni event.

Executive Director's Update



MIT Hillel is in the news! Our joint [Rosh Hashanah-Eid dinner](#) with the Muslim Student Association not only made both the "Most Emailed" and "Most Viewed" lists for campus news, it also made national news, featured in [Campus Confidential](#), a blog that appears in the New York Jewish Week, and last week the MIT News Office highlighted my return to the Institute and our [Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT](#) faculty luncheons. (You can subscribe to get MIT News, submit your email on the right-side of the [MIT News page](#).)

Even our events not making splashy headlines are still impacting lives. Three themed Shabbat dinners brought together record numbers to enjoy good food and community, and catalyze new relationships between students, between students and faculty, and among MIT families. At Faculty Shabbat dinner, students and faculty shared dinner, stories, and their favorite book (or favorite equation). Family Weekend saw a full-house of parents, siblings, and grandparents joining us on Friday night, with parents making plans to see each other off-campus now as well. And, Outreach Shabbat took dinner out of the Religious Activities Center and into the dorms, attracting students who are not Shabbat regulars. All this at low-cost to students, thanks to \$4 Shabbat dinners!

MIT students also need the down-time to relax away from problem sets during the

In This Issue

- [MIT Mensch of Mention](#)
- [Director's Update](#)
- [Torah from Tech](#)
- [Donor Thanks](#)
- [Maseeh Hall](#)
- [\\$4 Shabbat](#)
- [On the Calendar](#)

Menschen of Mention



Elijah Mena '13

I was born and raised in Ledyard, Connecticut. Growing up, I played a lot of tennis. In high school, I also played trombone and piano in the symphonic, jazz, and marching bands. In addition, I participated in two Discovery Channel national science competitions and various high school math club competitions.

At MIT, I chose to major in chemistry (Course V in MIT talk) because I wanted to do something that interests me and that would leave many career paths open. I also work as the associate photo editor for The Tech, and I enjoy running "bridge loops" along the Charles River or participating in intramural sports when I'm not too preoccupied with schoolwork.

The highlight of my Jewish

week. Part of the mission I have established for our Hillel team is to drink lots of coffee with students - in order to hear their stories, and find ways to connect their already-existent passions with Jewish life. Such one-on-one conversations often have larger impacts; for example, a discussion with one student on environmentalism led to a group conversation about greening MIT Hillel, and now students are creating a plan to make Hillel events more eco-friendly. Students will build upon this theme of Jewish responsibility to the environment with a visiting rabbinical student in November. These activities, and the student networking surrounding them, are raising excitement for an environmentally-themed Alternative Spring Break in March. I'll keep you posted!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by [Rabbi Michal Woll SM '87](#).

One of only two known MIT alumnae rabbis, Rabbi Woll may be reached at mmwoll@gmail.com.

As the fall colors fade, and our memories of the fall holidays do likewise, we enter the holy-day-free-zone of the month of Cheshvan and settle into the weekly cycle of Shabbat and the narrative of the book of *B'reishit*/Genesis. In his opening commentary on the Torah, the Medieval commentator Rashi states, in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak, that the Torah should have begun with *Shemot*/Exodus 12:2: "This month shall be to you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." This verse introduces the instruction for the *Pesach*/Passover ritual and is considered the first precept given to the people of Israel.

Instead, the Torah begins with creation and the stories of our most ancient ancestors. Rashi continues to explain that the account of creation serves to substantiate THE ONE's power over all peoples, not just the Israelites. But this explains only the first chapters of Genesis. It is harder to find the obvious connection between and value of the stories of our foremothers and fathers in light of Rashi's interest in laws and rites.

This echoes the question I proposed this year at Rosh Hashanah, which began a holiday cycle that is also rather divorced from our core story of Exodus and the subsequent revelation at Sinai. Why did the rabbis choose stories of these ancestors to accompany us on our annual journey of self-exploration and repentance?

We spent those Rosh Hashanah days with Abraham, our legendary ancestor, the first to identify himself as a follower of THE ONE, the first to distinguish himself after unified humanity was divided into nations and peoples. And do we witness him doing marvelous things? Not so much. Instead we watch him struggle with the real complications of human life. Once childless, Abraham is now blessed with two boys. We read of laughter celebration. Then we witness him awaken early in the morning, ever fresh and ready to go – once to evict his wife and child, once to slay his remaining son. These are stories that compel us to argue, to question, to debate. To look at them closely, to look at ourselves, and back again.

It can be hard to decide which is more striking – the profound differences between us

experience in college has been my participation in Birthright, a 10-day trip to Israel for college age students. While most Birthright buses just have Americans, our bus also had eight Israeli soldiers during the entire trip. I loved hearing their views and talking to them about their daily lives. One of my best memories from the trip was waking up at 2AM and hiking up Masada in near darkness. We reached the peak just in time to see a beautiful sunrise. I think an MIT senior on the trip also thought it was beautiful – he proposed to his girlfriend at the top!

I also was perhaps surprised at the similarity of Israel to the US. With my trip being the first time in a new continent, I was trying to look for every difference I could find. However, there really weren't very many differences that I could spot. Except for being in a desert and eating a lot of hummus and schwarma, Israel felt like a second home.

After Birthright, I've helped Eliad, Hillel's Program Director, ensure that everyone who can go on Birthright does because we both feel that no one should miss out on this opportunity. I also go to services and Shabbat dinners and sometimes other events as well. For instance, recently I went to hear some Israeli soldiers talk at MIT as part of an event sponsored by the MIT Students for Israel (MITSi). I think that Hillel is a fantastic part of MIT that allows students to do interesting things, such as the Israel Campus Roundtable. During one of its meetings at Harvard, I met students from several Boston-area colleges. We listened and discussed with

and ancient peoples or the profound similarities. As Jews we wrestle with integrating the laws of an ancient culture and making them relevant today. As people, we understand the complicated reality of family, community and nation. Millennia have passed as isolated nomadic peoples limited to a small triangle between continents have evolved to create a world made vast by our knowledge and small by our technology. Yet we relate to a woman aching for a child and to a man who can negotiate on behalf of his people while faltering in the midst of those closest to him.

This past week the traditional Torah reading cycle returned us to the Torah reading for Rosh Hashanah. We were reminded of the power and awe of the High Holy Days and of the personal growth we desired. And for the coming months we will continue to immerse in stories that ask us to focus on our behavior, our intentions, our relationships, our false sense of power - our humanity. The story of creation reminds us of the potential for living on an earth created with Divine wisdom and order. May the rest of *B'reishit*/Genesis help to teach us how.

Todah Rabbah/Thanks again to our Donors!

...and please support MIT Hillel this year!

Thank you to all of our [2010 Annual Donors](#)! Your leadership and support contributes to a depth of Jewish life, experiences and growth for the Jews and Jewish community of MIT.

[Add your name](#) to Hillel's 2011 donor roll.

Coming... Fall 2011: MIT's Maseeh Hall

The opening of Kosher Dining at MIT

The completion of [MIT's Maseeh Hall](#) will add an additional undergraduate living and learning community to MIT's residential options, starting next Fall. The renovated dormitory will include a dining hall designed to encourage informal interactions and to support a full meal plan for residents, as well as dining for MIT community members. Maseeh Hall will create a new gathering place near the geographic center of the campus, and directly across from the Religious Activities Center.



MIT Hillel is especially excited that **Maseeh Hall will feature a Kosher servery, open to all diners!** Various weekly meal plans will be offered. A full kosher meal option is an historic development for the MIT Jewish community.

\$4 Shabbat

\$4 Shabbat dinners! Instituted last year with the help of generous parent and alumni support, these dinners are continuing this year – with a new \$100 subscription plan to cover the full year. Last year's success was measured in increased participation and decreased end-of-the-week stress.

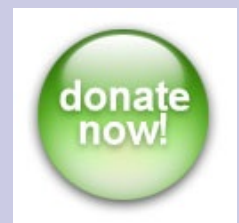


Professor Ruth Wisse, a Harvard professor and author and perhaps, the most eloquent supporter of Israel that I've ever heard.

The MIT Jewish community has been particularly welcoming to me. Whenever my schedule allows me to participate in Hillel activities, I'm very appreciative at how much the community welcomes me and treats me as family.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

Your generous support allows us to help keep Jewish life vibrant on the MIT campus!



Email [\\$4shabbat@mit.edu](mailto:$4shabbat@mit.edu) for more information, or call Hillel at 617-253-2982 to register.

On the Hillel Calendar



Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT, Friday, November 5, "Human and Machine in Air, Sea, and Space" featuring David Mindell PhD '96, Frances and David Dibner Professor of the History of Engineering and Manufacturing; Director, Program in Science, Technology, and Society; Professor of

Aeronautics and Astronautics. [Join us!](#)

Institute Professor Bob Langer SCD '74 speaks at Leading Jewish Minds, December 10.

Splash, November 20-21, MIT's weekend for students grades 7-12 during which the teens can take multiple classes on a huge variety of subjects taught by current MIT students. A great intro to Tech.

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