Wishing you meaningful adventures in the New Year!

L’shana tova!

The Students, Board, and Staff of MIT Hillel

Pictured: MIT Birthright Israel Summer 2011, Dead Sea

Executive Director's Update

L’shana tova! With over 100 students attending a free first night Rosh Hashana dinner, apples and honey were in abundance, and MIT Hillel began 5772 with sweetness and joy. It was a pleasure to see so many undergraduate and graduate students celebrating together. What a great start to the Jewish year!

I especially enjoyed getting to share my thoughts on being a Jewish engineer with the Conservative minyan on first day Rosh Hashana. My sermon is available here. I hope you will share your thoughts.

Leading up to the High Holy Days, Reb Philip Sherman, Hillel’s Jewish Educator, set up a booth on the Infinite Corridor to advertise events and (three flavors of) services; putting out round challot and honey for the tasting, he attracted many students to take a second look – and to stop for a nosh between classes. Many also encouraged their friends, Jewish or not, to sample this Rosh Hashana treat. One comment overheard, “Oh, wait, Guys, hang on – you have to try this bread, it’s challah, and it’s amazing! We used to eat this all the time when I was a kid. Have more.”

Yom Kippur this year falls during Columbus Day weekend, which provides ample time after the fast, minus the distraction of classes, to build the MIT Sukkah. If you are in the Cambridge area, the Sukkah is open all week; come enjoy a meal or just hang out with Hillel. Families coming for MIT’s Family Weekend, sign up for Shabbat dinner in the sukkah! (See below for more information.)

Of course, the holidays aren’t all that is happening at MIT Hillel. For students: Lectures on Israeli current events; first-year students’ at Hillel (FYSH) ice cream outing; Hebrew @ MIT beginner classes; the Hillel Dodgeball team’s season opener; the Reform Chavurah’s sushi sampler; walks along the Charles with Hillel staff.

Menschen of Mention

Elizabeth Rosen ’13

Hi! My name is Elisabeth Rosen. I grew up in The Riverdale section of the Bronx in New York City. I am a sophomore, course 9 (Brain and Cognitive Sciences).

I came to MIT because I love the sciences, but more importantly wanted to be a part of this amazing school. There is always something interesting going on, whether it is a school sponsored activity or individuals building something cool.

I knew that I wanted to continue to develop my Jewish identity in college. Getting involved in Hillel was the obvious step. What made it easy was that MIT Hillel is such a welcoming place thanks to the wonderful people working there for whom Hillel is not a job but a passion.

The defining aspect of my experiences at MIT thus far is...
And for faculty, staff, and local alumni: Professor Peter Diamond, current Nobel Laureate in Economics, addressed a packed house on the US debt problem and unemployment crisis. A stellar start to Season III of Hillel's Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT.

It's been a busy start to the fall. There is something for everyone in the new year.

I wish everyone in MIT's Jewish community a meaningful, happy, growth-filled New Year!

L'shana tova,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

Torah from Tech

Our Torah this month is taught by Jenny A. Lichter '04, PhD '09, Course III. Jenny is currently in her final year at Harvard Law School and plans to embark on a career in patent law. As the wife of MIT Hillel Program Director Eliad Shmuel, Jenny has been blessed to remain a part of the MIT Jewish community. She can be reached at jenny1@alum.mit.edu.

Succot and Simchat Torah: An Opportunity for Jewish Pride and Public Discussion

The holidays of Succot and Simchat Torah are often seen as secondary to the more popularly known holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. While it is true that Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are the ultimate periods of personal introspection and prayer, Succot and Simchat Torah offer a unique chance for the Jewish people to both publicly display pride in their Jewish heritage and reach out to the community at large.

Succot and Simchat Torah seemed designed for public displays of celebration. On Succot, it is customary for Jews to carry their lulavim (palm fronds) and etrogs (citrus fruits) to and from synagogue. We eat (and sometimes even sleep!) in succahs, festively decorated outdoor huts. Jewish law requires that a succah be built with a view of the stars – it cannot be hidden under branches or a roof overhang – further ensuring that the succah is a highly visible structure. Finally, at the very end of the autumn holiday period, we celebrate Simchat Torah, which is often accompanied by dancing with Torahs in the streets.

Rabbi Lazer Gurkow, a London rabbi who serves as a scholar on the website askmoses.com, has noted that Succot is an occasion to display Jewish pride. He believes that public displays of Jewish pride affirm our identity, and help us internalize our commitment to Judaism.

But beyond Jewish pride, public displays of celebration also offer a unique opportunity to engage the non-Jewish and unaffiliated Jewish public. Just like Passover rituals are designed to elicit questions from children, Succot and Simchat Torah rituals can be puzzling to outside observers and can lead to a thoughtful discussion about Judaism and Jewish holidays.

MIT Hillel’s celebrations of Succot and Simchat Torah are very public: the MIT Hillel succah sits on Kresge Oval, visible from the student center and Massachusetts Avenue, and on Simchat Torah, MIT students have been known to enthusiastically dance and sing in Lobbies 7 and 10. Furthermore, MIT Hillel has taken advantage of the visibility of these celebrations to engage those outside of Hillel. In years past, MIT Hillel has held open houses in the succah that are open to the entire MIT community, and has provided information about Succot and other aspects of Judaism.

As Succot and Simchat Torah approach, we should follow MIT Hillel’s lead and remember that the High Holidays are not just about our personal, internal growth and relationship to God. The autumn holiday period is also a time to be proud of our heritage and an opportunity to share our unique culture, enriching the lives of everyone around us.

Maseeh Hall: Now Serving Kosher!

MIT Kosher Dining is off to an incredible start! Many years in the making, MIT now has a full service, on-campus dining plan, featuring kosher food at no extra charge. Maseeh Hall: "MIT's home for Kosher dining."
Download the Boston Jewish Advocate article about MIT kosher dining.

Todah Rabbah/Thank you to our 2011 Annual Donors! ...and please continue to support MIT Hillel this year!

Thank you to our 2011 Annual Donors! Your leadership and generosity contribute to a depth of Jewish life, experiences, and growth for the Jews and Jewish community of MIT.

If you like what you read and hear about Jewish life at MIT, add your name to Hillel’s 2012 donor roll.

On the Hillel Calendar

Friday night, October 7-Saturday, October 8:
Yom Kippur
To learn more about services, meals, and happenings on campus, check out our flier (it will be downloadable as a PDF).

Wednesday night, October 12-Friday, October 21:
Sukkot

Friday, October 14:
Family Weekend Shabbat-Sukkot Dinner
If you are on campus, stop by Kresge Oval and the MIT Sukkah. To join Hillel for Shabbat dinner in the sukkah during Family Weekend, sign-up online or email kosher@mit.edu.

October 17 – December 30, 2011:
Window to My World 4 – Winds of Change in Galilee
Visit the MIT Rotch library, 7-238, for this MIT Library Photograph Exhibition from an annual competition open to all those residing in Israel and the Galilee.

Friday, October 28:
Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT

The Fall lineup continues with Dr. Edward Scolnick speaking on “Unraveling the Genetic Mysteries of Psychotic Illnesses.” In the vicinity of MIT, join us! Not in the Cambridge area? Look for announcements of “Leading Jewish Minds on the Road”… we may be coming to a city near you!

Ongoing:
Jewish Music and Materials @ the MIT Libraries

A new fund established by MIT alumnus Michael Gruenbaum ’53 has enabled the Lewis Music Library to add more Jewish music to its collection. It is open to the public in 14E-109. Learn more…

Tel: 617.253.2982
Fax: 617.253.3260
mit.edu/hillel
Email: hillel@mit.edu

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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

MIT Hillel
40 Massachusetts Ave
MIT Building W11

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