



MIT Hillel Update



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.



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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) Shmuel '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 jenny@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 *lulavs* (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 hid 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."



the people I have met, interacted with, and formed strong relationships with. There are so many interesting students both in and outside the walls of W11 (the Religious Activities Center) thanks to the Hillel community; many of them are now some of my closest friends. I enjoy being involved in Hillel events because I want to help spread the love of this community throughout campus. Welcoming new people into the community is a very rewarding experience for me. I get to meet them myself, and see them add their own flair to the community. Because the MIT Jewish community is relatively small, each and every individual student contributes to Hillel with his or her unique personality.

In the midst of my busy life as an MIT student, Hillel helps remind me to enjoy Shabbat and holidays. It is not just a place or club, but a community that reminds me of home. When I'm caught up in p-sets, Hillel reminds me of where I'm from and therefore why I am here. My friends on the fencing team; in the photography, arts, and yearbook communities; and in my home, Bexley Hall, are wonderful individuals who complete my life. Hillel is yet another place where I have found friends who have been there for me through the good and bad, and shaped who I am today.

Working as the Hillel Freshmen Engagement Chair (FEC) this year has been loads of fun. I was fortunate enough to be on campus early for orientation to prepare kosher meals with friends (since the new kosher meal plan did not start until Labor Day Weekend) and meet many of the new faces on campus. Working as FEC has taught me the importance of listening to what the people, or in my case the freshmen, want. My job starts with getting to know freshmen, which is something I would do anyway. Then I let them tell me what they want to get out of Hillel. Now I am at the stage where I work with freshmen to see through their desires and needs.

This past June I was fortunate to go on MIT Birthright, a free trip to Israel for 18 to 26 year olds, and it truly was the trip of a lifetime. MIT Hillel and MISTI MIT-Israel started a Birthright extension program this year which took us to see some of the many Israeli high tech companies and to visit with MIT alumni living in Israel. I can't say enough how great it was to visit Israel with other MIT students and Eliad, Hillel's Program Director, as our guide.

In August, I had the opportunity to attend the Hillel Engagement Institute, an International Hillel Leadership conference. I got to have fun with other MIT students



[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 downloaded as a PDF).

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

Friday, October 14: Family Weekend Shabbat-Sukkot Dinner

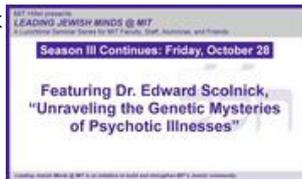
If you are on campus, stop by Kresge Oval and the MIT Sukkah. To join Hillel for Shabbat dinner in the sukkah during Family Weekend, [sign-up online](#) or email kosher@mit.edu.

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...](#)

and staff and learned about organizing and getting other people involved. I am planning on organizing an inter-college Hillel event with friends from other universities in the Boston area and its surroundings. Hillel is a resource to help Jewish students maintain a Jewish identity on campus. Whether you go to Hillel for weekly Shabbat dinners, celebrate one holiday a year at Hillel, play on our IM soccer team, or come to get free food at our study breaks, Hillel is successfully serving its purpose. It provides a warm environment for Jewish students to meet each other, regardless of their religious backgrounds and levels of commitment to Judaism.

I'd like to wish the entire MIT community a beautiful new year filled with health, happiness and success!

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



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