



## MIT Hillel Update



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

The Students, Board, and Staff of MIT Hillel

1. Inbar Yamin '15 and Adam Gleitman '13 construct the sukkah frame on Kresge Oval.
2. Jason Strauss '13, Caroline Morganti '16, Gal Yehoshua G, Noa Ghersin '14 build the roof of the sukkah on Kresge Oval.
3. Naomi Stein '11 G considers the "big questions" posed by MIT Hillel's Ctrl-Alt-Delete -- Rebooting for the New Year initiative.

### Executive Director's Update



September is always a whirlwind. Students arrive. We welcome them, or welcome them back. Begin to meet them. Start to learn their stories. And then the Jewish holidays descend. Services. Classes. Apple and honey-themed study breaks. Introspection. Reflection. How do you slow down an MIT pace when you just began to understand or re-live it?

Leading up to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, Hillel began a poster campaign to help students and guests, faculty and families, Jews and non-Jews to think about "rebooting" as the year began. Signs across campus (picture above) screamed out in vibrant colors: **Ctrl-Alt-Delete**, and asked a "big question" about life. "How do I contribute to my community?" "Whom do I need to forgive?" "What cause or idea do I want to explore more fully this year?" "What would you attempt this year if you could not fail?" The group discussion on the holidays drew students who attended services, and many who wanted to make "something" of the High Holy Days, but not through a traditional prayer experience. Emotional and intellectual energy, deep listening, and thoughtful reflection were powerfully present at each conversation.

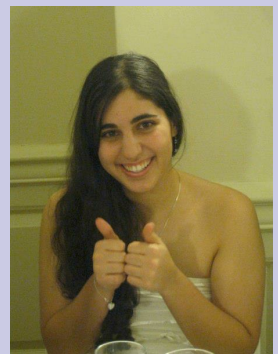
After Yom Kippur, I had the pleasure of sitting down with newly inaugurated President Rafael Reif. With "Service" a central theme he is promoting for MIT, I asked our MIT President how Hillel could be of service to him and campus. He was excited that Hillel was doing activities like **Ctrl-Alt-Delete** – reaching out to all Jews on campus and engaging them in ways that help them learn to think about well-rounded growth, helping them determine what their Jewish and human journeys will entail. I'm elated that that is seen as worthy to the Institute, as it is key to my vision that every Jewish student graduate from MIT seeing life through a Jewish lens.

At Conservative services on Kol Nidre, as we began Yom Kippur, I delivered a sermon and charge I am calling "Mens et Manus." It is about the power we all – as MIT students, faculty, alumni, and community – hold in our hands. You can download it [here](#); I welcome your thoughts and reflections. Email me your comments, or simply to be in touch: [rabbif@mit.edu](mailto:rabbif@mit.edu).

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### Mentshn of Mention



**Inbar Yamin '15**  
[inbar@mit.edu](mailto:inbar@mit.edu)

Hi, my name is Inbar Yamin. I am originally from Boston, MA, and I am studying Course 3 (Materials Science and Engineering).

What brought me to MIT? I get asked this question a lot, and so I have thought about it quite a bit. Of course there are many factors, like all the academic opportunities MIT has, how it is close to home, how there is kosher food in the dining hall... the list goes on. In the end though, it came down to the people. Everyone is friendly, eager to learn from each other, and motivated to succeed. Everyone made it clear that it does not matter where you come from, what your political values are, whether you went to a prep school or a small town public school; it is your ideas and interests that matter.

Deciding to go to MIT was very exciting, but I was also nervous. I had gone to a Jewish day school my whole life, and going to MIT would be a big change. I knew early on that I would be involved with Hillel. I saw Hillel as a place which would offer something familiar at school when everything else was different. And Hillel

From the High Holy Days, we have moved to the holiday of Sukkot. MIT Hillel has a sukkah, our temporary, outdoor hut/home, erected on Kresge Oval. And, with prayers that the sun reigns this week, each day we have outdoor activities planned. We have a barbeque. We have a "Shake it in the Shack" milkshake and "shake-able" games (Boggle, Yahtzee) study break. And we enjoy peaceful downtime with friends and community, apart from the frenetic pace of everyday life. That's another service Hillel is ideally suited to offer to everyone on campus.

May this new year bring joy, health, meaning, good connections, and an ability and desire to serve the world we are so blessed to live in.

L'shana tova/happy New Year,  
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97



## Torah from Tech



*Our Torah this month is taught by Bonnie Kellermann '72 (Course 17, after changing her major 8 times). After earning a Masters degree in Social Service Administration (MSW) from the University of Chicago, Bonnie came back to work at MIT in 1974. She has been Assistant Dean for Students, Associate Director of Admissions and Director of the MIT Educational Council, Associate Registrar, Recording Secretary in the Treasurer's Office, and*

*now serves as Director of Special Constituencies in Resource Development. She also teaches figure skating at MIT. She can be reached at [bonnyk@alum.mit.edu](mailto:bonnyk@alum.mit.edu).*

When Rabbi Michelle Fisher first asked me if I would consider writing something for Hillel's monthly Torah from Tech column, my first reaction was "You've got to be kidding. Isn't that column supposed to be for people to describe some aspect of their Jewish life? I don't have a Jewish life." Sure, I'm Jewish by background. My brother even got "bar-mitzvahed". However, after his bar-mitzvah, my family dropped out of temple. They did not consider it important for girls to have religious education. Since my brother is 13 1/4 years older than I am, I went to temple in the womb for a few months, but that was the extent of my exposure to temple and a religious education.

Sure, I like Jewish food as much as the next guy. I always consider bagel, lox, and cream cheese to be a great treat. Although I didn't care for it much as a kid, I've grown to like gefilte fish with horseradish. And matzoh ball soup is definitely a winner. (For those who are interested, ask me about the annual matzoh ball parties I had for members of my then boyfriend's fraternity, ΣAM, and women in McCormick Hall.) It turns out that matzoh ball soup is a great way for folks to bond. Talk about the ultimate comfort food!

Yes, I like potato latkes. (Sorry to the hamantaschen fans - there may be some compelling arguments one can make about triangles vs circles, but when it comes to taste, IMHO there really is no comparison.)

I enjoy observing Jewish holidays that involve food, so will gladly accept invitations to a Passover Seder whenever such is extended to me, and I've even been known to participate in a post Yom Kippur break fast party even though I had not fasted.

So is this my Jewish life? Jewish food? Why would Rabbi Fisher even think that I might have something to write about?

Maybe it's all about a sense of community. I do consider community to be important in my life. When I was ready to graduate from MIT, I did some soul searching to figure out what I wanted to do after I graduated. I realized that there had been a pattern of experiences in my life that had been very rewarding for me: being a counselor at a camp for children with cerebral palsy, being a tutor to a child from a single parent low income home, among others. I really liked helping people try to get as much as they can out of whatever opportunities they have. So I decided to get a masters degree in social work after I graduated from MIT. Being a Social Worker is a great way to help people make the most out of their opportunities. I never actually worked as a Social Worker. After I got my MSW I found my way back to the MIT community (there's that community word again) where I have held various positions in the MIT administration. Though most of my jobs, have, indeed, been focused around building communities, including my present job. Part of

was different. And Hillel pulled through. My first meal at MIT was actually Shabbat dinner at Hillel, and I left that night with about ten new friends. From then on, I knew I would want to be a part of the Hillel community. I decided during my first semester that I wanted to be Freshman Engagement Chair on the Hillel Board. All the upperclassman at Hillel had helped me adjust to life at MIT so well, that I wanted to make sure that new students coming in following me would feel the same way.

I helped plan Hillel Campus Preview Weekend events like Pizza and Board Games and Tie-Dying MIT Hillel Shirts. My goal was to show all the pre-Frosh who were trying to decide where to go to school that MIT Hillel has a special community that is hard to find elsewhere. Our size allows us to be closer and know others better. We are one community, rather than a few smaller communities who happen to share the same space. During Orientation Week this August, I helped plan a Make your own Pizza night and a festive Mexican Night Dinner. Through these fun events, the orientation committee (made up of upperclassman volunteers) showed the freshmen that Hillel is more than just a practical organization that helps Jewish students find kosher food and a place to pray on Friday night, it is a social community, a place to make friends, and build connections that will last longer than our four short years at MIT.

Looking around this past Friday night, I took pride as I saw all the freshmen at Shabbat dinner. They were not sitting by themselves, but were all mixed up at tables with upperclassman or even graduate students, talking, laughing, and complaining about work together. It was nice to see how our community at Hillel has grown, and it was nice knowing that with the help of the Hillel staff and the orientation committee, I was able to introduce new students to this community which means so much to me.

**Thank you for  
supporting  
MIT Hillel!**

my current responsibility is to create a sense of community among the members of the Katharine Dexter McCormick Society (KDMS), those who have made provisions for gifts to come to MIT after their lifetimes. Another part of my job is making connections with families who wish to direct gifts to MIT in memory of a loved one. I also greatly enjoy teaching figure skating at MIT, something I have been doing for over 40 years (since I was an MIT student), and developing the community of figure skaters at MIT. And then there is my volunteer work. I serve as President of MIT's Class of 1972 and Vice President of the MIT Club of Boston (and former President) and I've been President of the Association of MIT Alumnae (AMITA). Why do I do these things - to promote opportunities for interaction in these various constituencies which, here it is again, helps to build a sense of community.

But what's this got to do with Torah from Tech? Maybe nothing. But maybe, just maybe, although I never, as a child, had any religious education, there is a set of cultural values that are part of my being Jewish, and maybe, just maybe, some of the things I find important in life were influenced by my Jewish heritage. Maybe that's why I so enjoy participating in the *Leading Jewish Minds* series MIT Hillel has developed for alumni, faculty, and staff.

So what is my Jewish life? A sense of values that says that it is important to try to help others, enjoying a sense of community of being among others who share these values, and, of course, enjoying Jewish food.

Best wishes to all for a happy new year and may you take pride in knowing that you are doing whatever you can to make life better for those around you and enjoy a sense of community of being around others who share these values.

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### **MIT Hillel's 2013 Annual Fund Add to Jewish life @ MIT!**

The generosity and annual support of alumni, parents, faculty, and friends contributes to a depth of Jewish life, experiences, and growth for the Jews and Jewish community of MIT.

Do you like what you read and hear about Jewish life at MIT? Please help us create vibrant Jewish life at MIT, and lasting commitments to Judaism. [Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2013 Donor Roll while the year is still new!

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### **Tamid Initiative - Planned Giving @ MIT Hillel**

Endowment and planned gifts truly sustain and build an organization. MIT Hillel is excited to help alumni and friends to create your personal Jewish legacies at MIT.

We invite alumni and friends who care deeply about Jewish life at MIT to consider joining the Institute's **Katharine Dexter McCormick (1904) Society (KDMS)** and be part of the **Tamid Initiative** by making a bequest to MIT, for the benefit of MIT Hillel. Your generosity will help MIT Hillel engage today's students, securing our Jewish future with confidence.

To inform us that you plan such a gift, download and send us a [pledge form](#).

MIT and MIT Hillel are eager to help you meet your objectives. For more information, please contact Danny Watt, MIT Hillel's Director of Development, [dwatt@mit.edu](mailto:d watt@mit.edu).

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### **On the Hillel Calendar**

**Sunday, September 30 - Tuesday, October 9: Sukkot**

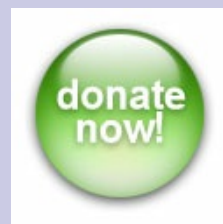
**Friday, October 12: Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT**

We kick off the Fall lineup with Political Science Professor Adam Berinsky speaking on "Opinion Polls and American Politics." Space is limited, so [reserve a space now](#). Not in the Cambridge area? Look for announcements of "Leading Jewish Minds on the Road"... we may be coming to a city near you!



**Friday, October 12: Family Weekend Shabbat dinner**

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



Coming to visit MIT for Family Weekend? Join us for Shabbat dinner. MIT Hillel Board Member and MIT Dean of Admissions, **Stu Schmill '86**, will share some reflections on the upcoming Supreme Court case on affirmative action, Fisher vs. University of Texas at Austin. [Listen](#) to Stu discuss on Radio Boston the Amicus Brief recently filed by MIT. [Sign up](#) for dinner appreciated. Cost is \$13.50/person.

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