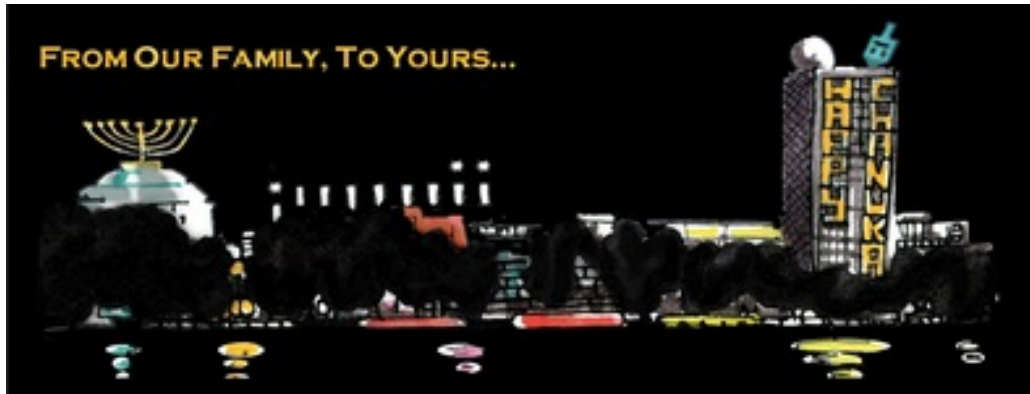




MIT Hillel Update



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

Executive Director's Update



Happy Chanukah! Chanukah is a celebration of rededication to Jewish values and learning, ideals at the core of Hillel's mission. Addressing students and families at Family Weekend Shabbat Dinner earlier this semester, Professor David Karger (Course 6) reminded them that lecture halls and labs are only pieces of the college learning experience. Much growth occurs in alternative settings around campus. Heading toward Chanukah this past month, Hillel has focused on some of these non-academic classes – spanning a wide-range of topics from serious text study to “only at MIT” fun and nerdiness.

Reb Julia Appel, Hillel's Jewish Educator, has filled her calendar meeting with Jewish students, connecting with them "where they are at" and engaging them in conversations about how Judaism fits into their lives. Listening to their interests, she develops classes from her lunch meetings and coffee dates based on student interests. Reb Julia's latest session, "The Meaningful Life," looks to various Jewish thinkers – ancient to modern – to seek answers to creating lives of goodness and purpose.

Continuing a series of Israel speakers and opportunities, representatives from the Ayalim Association, a model for 21st century Zionism and student



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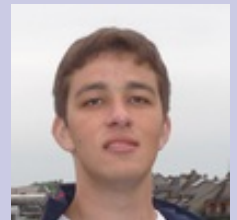
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Menschen of Mention



Robert Brik '12

I am from Richmond, Virginia and majoring in Mechanical Engineering. I've found that Hillel offers a wide variety of opportunities for interactions with the greater Boston Jewish community. Like many others, I was first drawn in by Hillel's smaller events, such as dinners with professors and study breaks. However, I became more involved when, after strong encouragement, I went on one of the 10 day Birthright trips to Israel, now led by MIT's Program Director, Eliad Shmuel. Along with other Boston Jews, MIT students spend ten days

entrepreneurship, visited Hillel. We heard from two Israeli students involved in creating a foundation of student villages which serve as pillars



of social outreach and the creation of new communities. Their aim: to generate a tangible change on the Israeli periphery of the Negev and Galilee regions. The Ayalim talk is serving as an inspiration for social justice thinking among Jewish students at MIT.

Rabbi David Levy, Director of Admissions for the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary led a well-received lunch text study entitled, "Kept from the Beit Midrash, A Rabbinic Look at Access to Torah."

And for something completely different, Hillel co-sponsored "Bagels and Topology," a Sunday afternoon of creative bagel slicing with the Math Department. Students attempted, and some even succeeded in creating Mobius strips and linked bagel loops. Edible Course 18 p-sets – does it get any better? Maybe with lox and cream cheese.



Happy Chanukah,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Will Friedman '02, VI-3, an adjunct instructor of Talmud and Hebrew at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he received his MA in Talmud and Rabbinics. Will looks forward to ordination in Spring 2011. He can be reached at williamf@alum.mit.edu.

Lighting Chanukah candles is among the most vivid of my memories. As a child, I remember being with my family as each of us lit his or her own menorah; in college and afterward, I recall being surrounded by friends, the lighting of the candles being a moment of calm before rushing off to work on p-sets, to code final projects, or to prepare for final exams. Last Chanukah, I found myself traveling in the US on vacation from my studies in Israel, visiting family and friends, and ended up lighting my menorah in a different home every night. That experience prompted me to think about rootedness and rootlessness, stability and wandering, and how they relate to the experience of Chanukah.

Fundamentally, Chanukah is a festival celebrating the reestablishment of roots – the climax of the Maccabean revolt being the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. And yet that was not to last. Political unrest continued after the revolt, and within two hundred years war and exile would return to the Jews in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, commemoration of Hanukkah continued, its tenacity noted by the fourth-century Babylonian sage Rav Yosef: "Chanukah is different [than other minor holidays]

traveling around Israel, learning the traditions, and experiencing the culture. Like many others coming back from the trip, I wanted to be more involved in Hillel. And I encouraged others to go on the trip.

For me, the great thing about MIT Hillel is that it is not limited to just one place. It is encouraged to explore a range of Jewish activities, and to go to events such as Krav Maga at BU or Shabbat Dinner in a dorm. I have gone on Hillel trips to the Improv Asylum and visited traditional Jewish locales in Brookline. The Hillel staff are always open to new ideas, and when a couple of students wanted to play indoor soccer last winter, Hillel quickly agreed to host a team. The soccer team brought together a wide variety of people, some of whom were not very familiar with Hillel, but then decided to go on a Birthright trip and have since become more involved. In this lies MIT Hillel's strength, the ability to combine all the various opportunities and facets of MIT to create a stronger sense of Jewish life on campus.

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



because its miracle has been publicized." (Talmud Bavli Rosh Hashanah 18b) In the felicitous explanation of Rashi (R. Sholomo Yitzhaki, 1040-1105, France/Germany): "It was already revealed to all of Israel by the fact of their observance of [Chanukah] and treatment of it like a Torah commandment, and it would be improper to cancel it." How did a holiday established to commemorate the rededication of a spatially-moored structure survive the destruction of that space and become so entrenched in the experience of the people?

The answer, I believe, derives from the nature of the commemoration itself. A second-century source embedded in the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 21a) pithily says: "The *mitzvah* (commandment) of Chanukah: one light per household." By making the locus of the mitzvah the household, the Sages created an experience that was replicable in all times and all places. And while the fortunes of the Jews might change, and the extent to which they could display their lights to the outside world would vary depending on the congeniality of their non-Jewish neighbors, the sharing of sacred ritual and memory in the family context was too powerful to relinquish. Rootedness in family replaced rootedness in space.

What, then, of those of us uprooted from family and not yet rerooted? About this, the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 23a) records a dispute between third-generation Babylonian sages: "Said Rav Sheshet: 'A guest [in someone else's lodging] must light [himself].' Said Rabbi Zeira: 'Originally when I was in my teacher's home, I would contribute some money to my host [and only the host would light]. After I got married, [and was away from home], I would say: Now, certainly I don't need to light, because they are lighting for me in my home.'" This is a *mahaloket* (dispute) over how to manage the feeling of uprootedness. Rav Sheshet embraces the feeling of uprootedness and manages it by requiring the person root himself through observance of the *mitzvah*, connecting to his own tradition and practices. Rabbi Zeira, in contrast, feels rooted by creating bonds with others, even tenuous and temporary ones.

It seems to me that these two approaches are complimentary. Indeed, while normatively one may follow Rabbi Zeira's opinion (see Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 677:1), in cases where one is physically disconnected from one's hosts (*ibid.*) or is not sure whether one's family will light for him (i.e., when one is psychologically disconnected from them; see Mishnah Berurah 677:2), one must light one's own menorah. Personally, while I was on the road, I needed the grounding that came from Rav Sheshet's insight, and lit for myself every night. One final *halakhah* (rule), derived from a statement of the mid-fourth-century Rava (B. Shabbat 22b), brings home this central element of Chanukah: "One must light in the place where one places [the menorah]" and one may not move it afterward. That is, the lighting of the menorah is the ultimate grounding experience – once lit, it cannot be moved. Many have the custom of remaining near the lights for a time, some even waiting until they go out. Thus, for me, Chanukah is the holiday of grounding, of finding rootedness in a world given to rootlessness and wandering. I bless all of us that this hanukkah we may find our grounding, in our tradition, in our connection with others, and in ourselves. *Hag Urim Sameah*/Happy Festival of Lights.

On the Hillel Calendar

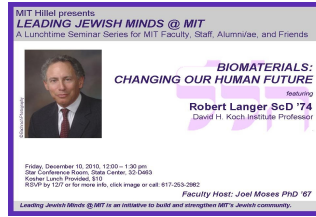


Chanukah, December 1 (evening) - December 9.



Annual Test Tube Menorah Lighting, Monday, December 6, 5 pm, Lobby 7. If you are on campus or in the area, stop by for the lighting of the menorah, singing of Chanukah classics, and entertainment by MIT's only Jewish, Hebrew, and Israeli a capella group, Techiya.

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT, Friday, December 10, "Biomaterials: Changing our Human Future" featuring Bob Langer, ScD '74, David H. Koch Institute Professor. [Join us!](#)



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 (we will publish a mid-year listing soon after January 1).

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

The opening of Kosher Dining at MIT

[New Kosher meal plan beginning in September 2011 makes MIT News!](#)

MIT's Maseeh Hall which opens next Fall 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. 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 continue, thanks to generous parent and alumni support. There's still time to subscribe a student for the remainder of the academic year at \$75. Last year's success was measured in increased participation and decreased end-of-the-week stress. This year's version features even better food!



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

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