



MIT Hillel Update



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

The Students, Board, and Staff of MIT Hillel

Celebrating in the Sukkah, left to right: David Wyrobnik '15, Miriam Prosnitz '15, Jessie Mueller '11 G, Sarah Toledano '15, Morrissa Brenner '13, Vivian Hecht G, Zach Abel G, Aaron Hecht, Jacob Hurwitz '14

Executive Director's Update



Our banner above shows the joy of students hanging out together in the MIT Sukkah. All the fall holidays, though, feel very long ago, as everyone is now deep into the semester: work and play, p-sets and ice cream socials, lab research and Israel programs are all packing calendars.

Just a sampling of three exciting end-of-October events:

MIT welcomed Israeli artist-in-residence Diana Gilon, who led a broad cross-section of students in creating a collaborative mural illustrating themes of peace, coexistence and interfaith values. Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, Baha'i, Buddhist, Muslim faiths were represented in the planning, design, and creation of the canvas. Another diverse group of Israelis and Palestinians brainstormed aspects of the artwork together. Students simply walking past the painting site outside the Student Center also gave input and grabbed a paintbrush. The final mural will be displayed inside the Religious Activities Center.



ConnecTech held its kickoff program, a lunch and learn: When the "Social" and the "Justice" do Battle. A dozen students debated the gray areas of value systems. ConnecTech is an initiative that connects Jewish MIT students with Israeli students at the Technion through Jewish learning and social justice. The two groups communicate and learn together throughout the year, while volunteering in their communities, forming personal connections that will culminate in a trip to the other university, to experience life and science first-hand in each other's cities.

Under the leadership of Tzedek Chair, Benjamin Francis '13, Hillel students are partnering with St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church to feed the hungry by operating a soup kitchen that will help hungry people in Cambridge's Central Square area during the holiday season.



In This Issue

- [MIT Menschen of Mention](#)
- [Director's Update](#)
- [Torah from Tech](#)
- [Kosher Meal Plan](#)
- [Donor Thanks](#)
- [On the Calendar](#)

Menschen of Mention



Isaac Oderberg G

I am a second year graduate student in the Department of Biology. I am from Los Angeles, California and received my Bachelor's in Molecular and Cell Biology from the University of California, Berkeley. I am in lab of Peter Reddien; my research project will focus on studying regeneration in flatworms.

After finishing my graduate school interviews all over the country, I ended up deciding on MIT for a number of reasons. The biology department had a variety of faculty working on many interesting questions, I got the impression that the department takes care of its graduate students, and the graduate students I met seemed quite happy where they were. When comparing MIT to each other school I interviewed at, I just could not turn MIT down.



Filling in the other moments, our staff continues to engage students' diverse interests; kosher dining is drawing increased interest from students – both weekdays in Maseeh Hall and on Shabbat; MIT Students for Israel (MITSi) organized “A Night of Blue and White” to celebrate Israel; and the Hillel Dodgeball team plays on. I sometimes



wonder where classes and school fit in, with so much going on.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Meena Viswanath '11 (Course I-C), currently a Masters student at Georgia Tech, working to finish in one year while getting married in the middle. She can be reached at meenav@alum.mit.edu.

It has been a season of beginnings for us. We have encountered a new Jewish year; a reaffirmation of our Torah learning; and for some, a new school year; and for me personally, a new location, a new school, and soon, a new family! What should all these beginnings mean to us?

Creation is the ultimate beginning. On the sixth day, G-d creates Adam, who is the purpose of all creation, and the first thing G-d does after creating him is to give him the directive: *"P'ru u'r'vu,"* be fruitful and multiply.

The next story is a most drastic beginning: the destruction of the world through the Flood and its recreation through Noah's family. When the world is wiped clean, and Noah and his family emerge from the Ark, they, too, are given the mission: *"P'ru u'r'vu,"* be fruitful and multiply.

We encounter the beginning of monotheism through Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. He chooses to begin his life again halfway through, moving from Haran to Canaan, accompanied by his internal directive of spreading God's word.

Fast-forward to the birth of the Jewish nation in Egypt. They are taken out of Egypt, and the first act that they do as a unified people is to accept God and the binding obligations of the Torah upon themselves, first in Egypt with the Pascal sacrifice, followed by the more epic acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

This list could go on and on, with beginnings in the Land of Israel and as a monarchy and then back out to exile. In all cases, there is a common thread: beginnings must have accompanying directives. Simply starting anew is meaningless if there is not a goal, a mandate.

The rabbis of the mussar movement picked up on this, and told us that in order for us to change ourselves, to do *teshuva*, we must have concrete acts and resolutions to go along with it. It is not enough to merely state, I will be a better person, I will change. It must be accompanied by a precise objective, such as: I will be more careful in tithing my earnings, or I will attend a weekly Torah class. Ideally, this objective would be bite-size and attainable, such as: I will watch my tongue between 10 and 10:05 AM every day, I will make Kiddush every Friday night. Choosing a concrete goal helps us to focus our attention and ensure that we don't give up or forget our ideal state.

Whether we are facing a routine beginning, such as the beginning of a new year, or month, or week, or even day, or whether we are up against unusual beginnings, such as a new job, a new city, or a new lifestyle, it is important to remember to make it that more meaningful by really focussing on our goals in this new day, which is the beginning of the rest of your life.

Maseeh Hall: Now Serving Kosher!

Also, when I came and visited the Hillel, Rabbi Fisher told me to come to MIT!

I was very involved in Hillel at Berkeley. Over the course of my time there, I went from being just an attendee to a leader in the community. I organized and led Reform services and helped facilitate a number of other events as well. So, when I came to MIT there was no question that I would be an active member of the Hillel community here. I started attending and helping lead Reform services, and as time went on I found myself playing a very active role in Grad Hillel. This past summer I helped organize and run a Shabbat dinner at my grad dorm for fifty people.

What excites me most about being at MIT is that there is a whole lot to be a part of! This semester, I'm a teaching assistant for an undergraduate genetics class, I'm a hall councilor for my graduate apartment; I'm on a committee to bring a distinguished lecturer to speak for the department; I'm actively involved in both the Reform Chavurah and Grad Hillel; and on top of all this, I'm still trying to get some research done in the lab.

There have been several specific moments that make me feel really excited about being at MIT. At one Shabbat dinner at Hillel, one student posed the question to another student at the table: If an airplane is resting on a frictionless conveyer belt, and tries to take off, will it? All of the other conversations stopped and soon, everyone at the table, regardless of their field of study, was embroiled in the debate about what was essentially a glorified physics problem. This was one of those moments when I felt, "This is where I belong." The people here are excited to be here and enjoy what they do, and no conversation is too "out there."

Some of my closest friends at MIT are from

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 Campaign Donors!](#)

Your leadership and generosity contribute to a depth of Jewish life, experiences, and growth for the Jews and Jewish community of MIT.

[Find out who supports Jewish Life @ 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

Window to My World 4 – Winds of Change in Galilee October 17 – December 30, 2011:

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.

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT "Alone Together: Technology as the Architect of our Intimacies" Friday, November 18:

Hillel's popular faculty/staff/alumni lunchtime seminar series wraps up the fall season with Prof. Sherry Turkle. 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!



Jewish Music and Materials @ the MIT Libraries Ongoing:

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...](#)

Hillel, and I can't overstate how amazing it was to step in the door of Hillel my first week at MIT, knowing almost no one, and instantly become part of the Jewish community here. My life has been enriched not just by being part of the community, but by playing an active role in creating the community. As I stood up to start the Shabbat dinner for fifty people, I was really impressed by the scale of something I could personally organize. As the event concluded and people began to leave, they stopped by to thank me for organizing, publicizing, and leading the event, and said that they would look forward to the next one. And that knowledge, that I could create community and enrich other people's lives, that felt pretty good.

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

[Click to view this email in a browser](#)

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

MIT Hillel
40 Massachusetts Ave
MIT Building W11
Cambridge, MA 02139
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

