



# 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

1. Fun happenings at the AEPi Formal (L-R): Lizzie Rosen '14, Elisha Yadgaran '15, Tomer Mangoubi '14, Keren Greenbaum '14
2. Techiya, MIT's Jewish, Hebrew, Israeli a cappella group sings in their Fall Concert. Lead singers (L-R): Nate Zuk G, Ethan Sokol G, Mauro Braunstein G
3. (L-R) Sharone Small '14, Talya Wasserman '14, Keren Greenbaum '14, and Jonathan Surick '14 enjoy a study break at a Hillel ice cream social

## Menschen of Mention



*Benjamin Francis, Course 18, from Atlanta, GA graduates this June.*

One of the first places I called at MIT was the Hillel office. It was about a week before I enrolled at the Institute as a transfer student, and I wanted to know if Hillel would be hosting Shabbat dinner during my first week on campus. I was assured that somebody would let me know soon. That night I received several welcome emails from MIT students I had never met before. It was so nice to be welcomed with open arms into the community. Hillel has been my home base on campus ever since.

I am happy to report that I have been actively involved with one of Hillel's major projects over the past two semesters. The students and staff of Hillel have set up a soup kitchen in Cambridge that operates every Wednesday, a night on which there used to be no community meal to serve the homeless people in the area. We now serve 15-25 people per week, and we are continuing to grow. It has been a great pleasure and joy to get to know members of the Jewish community as we built this project together.

## Executive Director's Update



November was as busy as ever at MIT Hillel!

On **Outreach Shabbat**, over **125 students** (over 30% of the undergrad Jewish population) celebrated Shabbat at six different student-prepared dinners held across campus. A week later, **Faculty Shabbat** brought students and their professors together for further food and schmoozing.

Graduate students not only held their own Shabbat dinners, but studied Jewish views on the afterlife at a monthly "**Torah and Tonics**" series.



Hillel staff members continued to **engage students** in all walks of campus life, too. Sharing

stories, wisdom, and Jewish connections to greek Jews, varsity Jews, and "just Jews." Orientation is well-underway for students participating in winter break's free **Birthright** experience to Israel. A council of young Jews involved in fraternity and sorority life is bringing together this important MIT population, as well.



As November came to a close, the MIT Hillel Board of Directors held its Annual Meeting, at which we honored MIT Hillel Founder **Norman B. Leventhal '38 by electing him Chairman Emeritus**. Succeeding him as Chairman is Claude Brenner '47, SM'48. Ira Scharf '89, SM'94 continues as Board President. Yashar koach/much strength to all three, as well as to the entire Board for all their work in mapping the direction and strategy for Jewish life on campus! Students will elect a new Hillel board later this week.

December began with dozens of First-Year Students at Hillel (FYSH) enjoying a **midnight s'mores study break**. Executive Director's lesson learned: Injesting late-night sugar is great for problem sets that last into the wee-hours, less helpful when you're immediately



heading home to bed...

Looking ahead to January, Hillel already has a strong line-up of [Independent Activities Period \(IAP\) events](#). The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual [Hummus Experience](#) is the week of January 16,



culminating in a **Hummus Taste-off** of student-created concoctions on January 19, noon, Lobby 10. Also scheduled are classes on "Being a Mensch: What Jewish Tradition Says about Manhood" and "Techno-Kosher: The Intersection of Kashrut, Food technology, and Courses 5, 6-1, and 7;" a tour of the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library; and a visit to the home built by MIT

Hillel alum David Miller '90, SM'91, PhD '07, a Net-Zero Energy LEED Platinum House.

If you are on campus in the coming weeks, join us for the **annual Test Tube Menorah lighting**, December 20, 5pm, Lobby 7 or any IAP events!

An early Happy Chanukah to all!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

## Torah from Tech



*Our Torah this month is taught by Gene Fax, '67, chairman of The Cadmus Group, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in environmental policy analysis and energy efficiency programs. A former President of the MIT Hillel Board of Directors, he is a birdwatcher and an amateur calligrapher, photographer, and military historian. Along with his wife Ruth (also MIT '67), he has three children and seven grandchildren. He can be reached at [gfax@alum.mit.edu](mailto:gfax@alum.mit.edu).*

The twelve-month mourning period for my late father, David Fax, *David Tzvi ben Yosef z"l*, ends in two weeks, and I would like to dedicate these words to his memory. Thank you, Rabbi Fisher, for giving me this opportunity to honor him.

The Torah portion that we will read this Shabbat, "Vayishlach," begins with Jacob's return from the house of Laban to the Land of Canaan. Jacob's first business is to confront his brother Esau, whom he had tricked out of birthright and blessing. Needless to say, Jacob is nervous. "Then Jacob was greatly frightened," the text tells us, and he goes so far as to divide his camp into two halves, so that if Esau should attack one, the other would escape. (Genesis 32:8)

Rashi, writing in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, finds this fear perplexing. Twice God promised to stand by Jacob, assuring him that he will carry on the mission of Abraham and Isaac. The first time was in Jacob's dream as he left the land of Canaan, fleeing Esau: "Remember, I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Genesis 28: 15) The second time was in Laban's house: "Return to the land of your fathers where you were born, and I will be with you." (Genesis 31:3) Did Jacob have so little faith that he could forget what God had promised?

Jacob did not forget, says Rashi. Rather, he worried that God's promises had been conditional—they depended on Jacob observing the law and avoiding sin. How could he know whether he was free of sin? Perhaps he had done something that nullified God's assurances. Rashi expands on the message Jacob sent to Esau: "I lived with Laban," says Jacob in the text, and Rashi adds, "And the 613 commandments I observed." (In Hebrew the two phrases form an elegant six-word rhyming couplet, with a pun on the word "lived.") Perhaps this boast betrayed the sin of pride, on which, Jacob feared, God might turn his back.

Don Isaac Abravanel, who lived 400 years later, objected to Rashi's interpretation. After all, only a few days had elapsed since God's most recent assurance; Jacob didn't even have time to accumulate sins grave enough for God to cancel his mission. And if he worried about sin, why didn't he pray for forgiveness? No such prayer is recorded in the text. Instead, Abravanel

The active continuation of my Jewish education has added meaning and depth to my college experience. It is all too easy to push aside Jewish learning in college for lack of time, but the time spent on Jewish learning adds immeasurable richness to the rest of college life. Hillel's wonderful library of Jewish books has helped me greatly in continuing my education.

In summary, I have enjoyed my first two semesters with MIT Hillel very much, and I am looking forward to one more great semester before graduating.

**Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!**

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



wrote, Jacob's anxiety was like the normal fear of a hero who goes into battle. Before the action he worries about death and consciously steels himself to face the slaughter. Then, once committed, he is able to forget his fears and concentrate entirely on his mission.

Must we choose between one reading and the other? No. The genius of Biblical interpretation is that two apparently conflicting ideas can both be true at the same time, unlike in the physical world (with the possible exception of quantum mechanics). Rashi's reading teaches the importance of humility, especially among those who consider themselves pious. Don Isaac, on the other hand, emphasizes that God's plans don't fulfill themselves; individuals also must take responsibility. Although the commentators disagree on the meaning of the text, their interpretations don't actually conflict; they complement each other. This is how Torah, far from being a fixed entity, continues to expand as the generations add their lessons.

---

## 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 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

### MIT Hillel's Annual Test Tube Menorah Lighting December 20, 5pm, Lobby 7

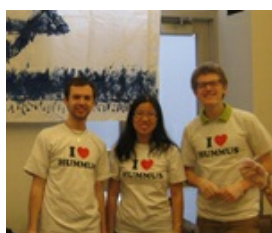
If you'll be on campus for the beginning of Chanukah, stop by Lobby 7 for an MIT Hillel tradition: the lighting of the Test Tube Menorah. A short a cappella performance by Techiya will be followed by the lighting, Chanukah songs, and doughnuts.



### 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.

### 5th Annual Hummus Taste-off January 19, noon, Lobby 10



Join over 200 of the MIT community for [MIT Hillel's Annual Hummus Experience](#) culmination: a taste-off of hummus flavors created by MIT students. Try hummus flavored ice cream from J.P.Licks, and compare student recipes with traditional flavors of hummus from Cedar's, Sabra, and Tribe!

### 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...](#)

---

Tel: 617.253.2982  
Fax: 617.253.3260  
[mit.edu/hillel](http://mit.edu/hillel)  
Email: [hillel@mit.edu](mailto: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.

