



MIT Hillel Update



We're playing under the lights at MIT Hillel!

Happy Chanukah from the whole team!

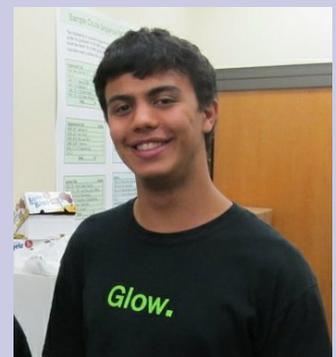
Above:

MIT (Jewish) Student-Athletes strike a pose to honor "Team Maccabee:"

Michelle "Tep" Teplensky '14, Field Hockey, Somers, NY; Ali Finkelstein '16, Crew, Boca Raton, FL; Matt Monheit '14, Soccer, Rydal, PA; Andrew Hochstadt '16, Volleyball, Roselle, IL; Andrew Acker '15, Basketball, Merion Station, PA; Russell Spivak '13, Football, Scarsdale, NY; Jeff Sperling '15, Tennis, Los Angeles, CA; Paige Finkelstein '14, Lacrosse, Boca Raton, FL; Abby Klein '14, Track & Field, Bethesda, MD; David, Wyrobnik '15, Fencing, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Photographer: Lizzie Rosen '14, Riverdale, NY

Mentshn of Mention



Max Plaut '14
mplaut@mit.edu

I am currently a junior at MIT, and I am double majoring in course 3 & 8, although I haven't done much for the course 8 part yet. I am from Cedarhurst, NY, which is a part of the community generally referred to as the "5 Towns" on Long Island.

I originally decided to come to MIT because I was interested in science and, in particular, engineering, and when I got in, I saw no way that I could not come here. What got me here is one thing, but what keeps me here are the people. I had friends in high school, but it wasn't until I got to MIT that I felt like I truly fit in somewhere, like I actually belonged where I was. And the Hillel community has been a huge part of that.

If I am honest about it, the real reason that I first set foot in Hillel was only because I am Orthodox. The first Friday night at MIT, I went to minyan, as I had every Friday night for most of my life. Then, I stayed for dinner and met all the people who are involved in Hillel as well as the staff. Then, I came back the next day for SLAMIT (Shabbat lunch at MIT). My first and best friends at MIT are all members of the Hillel community.

Since then, I have been heavily involved in the Jewish community in, around, and outside Hillel. My first two years at MIT, I lived on Burton 2, in one of the kosher suites. I am a

Executive Director's Update



Happy Chanukah!

Take bright and inspired MIT students, give them a Chanukah theme, and sit back and enjoy creative engagement with Chanukah!

- How best to teach preschoolers about the miracle of oil? Or, at least the "miracle" that oil floats on water? Find MIT Hillel

volunteers to do some hands-on experiments involving density. Bringing together science, Judaism, and education is the focus of on-going projects with local Jewish preschools.

[Read the blog.](#)



- *Need a theme for an a cappella concert?* How about Tchiya's "Case of the Missing Menorah"? Thankfully, the lamp was "found" before MIT's annual Test Tube Menorah Lighting, attended by a celebratory crowd in Lobby 7 Monday night. (You can even [hear part of the concert.](#))



- *Looking for a good gift to give for Chanukah?*

Undergrads hosted a night of speed dating "All I want for Chanukah is You!" Hillel students from surrounding campuses expanded the selection pool.

- *Which "House" do you live in on campus?* Chanukah is both a communal and a "home" holiday. Student-led menorah lightings are coming to a dorm, fraternity, sorority near you! Over a dozen Chanukah parties and candlelightings, each representing local House



culture, are happening with Hillel assistance this week.



I can only stretch a Chanukah theme so far...

capping the excitement of the last couple weeks was the visit of Technion (the "MIT of Israel") Hillel students as part of our joint ConnecTech initiative.

Throughout the year, students on both campuses explore moral and ethical issues related to science and technology, volunteer in science-related ways in their local communities, and then travel to the



other's campuses and cities – visiting hi-tech start-ups and labs run and/or created by Jewish alumni and getting to understand how Judaism plays out as part of their own and their community's identities. It was inspiring for our students to hear from a Technion student that being in Boston showed him that there is a "second Israel" for him to call home.

See the blog for [more info and pictures](#). Many thanks to the Combined Jewish Philanthropies' Boston-Haifa Connection for making this people-to-people connection a reality and success.

Happy Chanukah,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

P.S. MIT Hillel is collaborating with a number of other Hillels to help out NY communities hit by Hurricane Sandy. Volunteer opportunities are from Jan 6 - Jan 11 for as many days (full days only) as desired. Housing and transportation will not be provided. Contact hillel@mit.edu for more info.

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Ilana Goldhaber-Gordon PhD'02 (Course 7). She is now studying for rabbinic ordination at the Academy for Jewish Religion in California. She lives with her husband and two children in Palo Alto, CA. She can be reached at ilana@post.harvard.edu.

Mi Yimalel. It's not what you think. Or is it?

Every time I think I understand something about Chanukah, I discover a deeper layer with an opposing meaning. And then, I find another layer under that one. In this sense, it is the perfect Jewish holiday -- the holiday of dialectics.

An example is the popular songs, "*Mi Yimalel Gevurot Yisrael*." You can hear a recording of it [here](#). It is a beautiful song, and it sounds very spiritual, doesn't it?

Guess again! It's true that the opening line is a direct reference to Psalms 106:2. But the verse in Psalms reads, "*Mi yimalel gevurot Hashem, who can voice the heroisms of God, declare all of God's praises?*" The song-writer, a musician name Menashe Ravino, replaced the word "God" with "Israel". Ravino is suggesting that we are the true heroes, not God.

In case we missed the message, the second verse makes it clear. *Shma!* Listen! That word can refer to only one thing: the Jewish declaration of the oneness of God. The immediate next phrase quotes the blessing recited over the Hanukah candles: "Blessed are You, God. . . who did miracles for our ancestors, in days past, in our own day." But the song deletes the words about God and miracles. It declares instead: "In days past, in our own day, a Maccabee rescued and redeemed us."

Menashe Ravino moved from Eastern Europe to Palestine in 1924. He wrote *Mi Yimalel* in the 1930s, as he watched the Nazis prepare to roll over Europe. "And in our day, all the people of Israel will unite, and rise up, and be redeemed," he charges in his song. Don't just sit there and wait for God – do something!

Today, a quick search on You Tube for "Mi Yimalel" gives a broad selection of singers: men in *kippot* with long beards, school children ranging from liberal to Orthodox, Israelis and Americans, even Christmas carolers who chose this as their token Jewish song. I suspect few of them realize that the words are a challenge to the glory of God.

Even knowing what the words mean, I am touched in a spiritual way by the song. It feels like a prayer to me. In our generation, few of us still expect heroics from God in the form of supernatural miracles. And so, for the most part, the rebellious anger at failed expectations is gone. What remains is the

member on the Executive Board of AEPi, the Jewish fraternity on campus. I am currently one of the gabbais for the Orthodox minyan. I served as head mashgiach for Shabbat and holidays in the kitchens. And I just generally try to be around to help out, whether it's the Hillel center that needs cleaning, or a friend who needs someone to talk to.

What really excites me about MIT is how everyone on campus can be so different and still have so many of the same values. Everyone has differing opinions on things like politics, religion, the human condition, and all sorts of things. And yet, almost everyone you talk to has a sense of wanting to learn, and of wanting to use science and engineering skills to better something. This single commonality, the respect for science and desire for a better world, I think, holds the campus together in an amazing way, and allows for an even deeper respect and understanding of the differences between people, and I believe this extends even more into the MIT Jewish community.

Many Jewish communities have the tendency to exaggerate the differences between small groups within them. In my two and a half years years at MIT, however, I have seen nothing but mutual respect and understanding in the community for one another, despite religious or ideological differences. This, to me, is the way things should be, and I love the community here for it.

My time at MIT has been greatly defined by my involvement in the Jewish community. And, I am loving my time at MIT and would not trade it for anything.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



genuine hope that we can unite and bring redemption to this world. Working together, we can bring light into the dark.

Being Jewish has some things in common with being a good scientist. Examine one layer. Appreciate it. Then dig underneath, and appreciate the new, distinct meaning you find there.

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!

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.

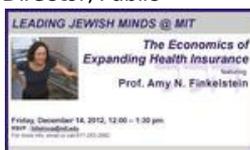
To inform us that you plan such a gift, download and send us a [pledge form](#).

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).

On the Hillel Calendar

Friday, December 14: Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT

Amy Finkelstein, Ford Professor of Economics and Co-Director, Public Economics Program, National Bureau of Economic Research, will be speaking on "Economics of Expanding Health Insurance: Evidence from the Oregon Health Insurance Experiment." You can still [reserve a space](#).



Not in the Cambridge area? Look for announcements of "Leading Jewish Minds on the Road"... we may be coming to a city near you! Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami tour stops now being planned.

MIT Hillel wishes a hearty "Mazal Tov" to:

Vivian Hecht (Course 20, PhD candidate) and Aaron Hecht on their November 18 wedding in Los Angeles.

MIT Hillel Board of Director's member Mara Daniel Baraban '04 and Josh Baraban (Course 5, PhD candidate) on the birth of their son, Moshe David, on November 27.

A lifetime of happiness and joy to all of them!

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

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