



MIT Hillel Update



End of Chanukah Greetings to Alumni, Parents, and Friends in Cambridge and Beyond...

Pictured Above:
Thanksgivukkah dreidel hack atop Building 10, View from Killian Court

Executive Director's Update



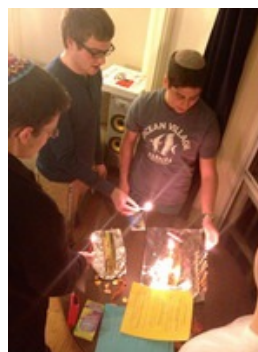
As the end of our eighth day approaches: Happy Chanukah! I hope this year was particularly joyous and thankful with the overlapping Thanksgiving holiday. From the banner above and the close-up picture right, our student hackers took full advantage of the Thanksgivukkah celebration to put a turkey dreidel on top of MIT. If you look closely, they even chose the Israeli letters for the dreidel – nes gadol haya *po*, a great miracle happened *here*. Now whether that was the miracle at Plymouth Rock or the miracle that the semester ends within a few weeks is up for debate...



Once students returned from the long Thanksgiving weekend, Chanukah was marked in many ways across campus. From the annual test tube menorah lighting in Lobby 7 – this year with metal salts coloring the flames (see below) – to parties in dorms, fraternities, and sororities, Jewish students spread light throughout the MIT community.



The celebration of Chanukah marks the ancient struggle between Greek and Jewish society. It was the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers who created a dichotomy between the natural and supernatural, between science and religion, and even science and ethics, that continues to the modern day.



Perhaps continuing the Maccabean rebellion, our students inherit this mantle of thinking and ask for more than this one answer. As part of our past month's activities, Physics Professor Jeremy England gave part two of a TechTalk series entitled "Chanukah Miracles and Scientific Method," which looked at the philosophy of science, uncovering of Truth, and biblical texts. Many of our students desire more conversation about truth, ethics, and morals. MIT Hillel Board of Directors student director [Greg Kravit '15](#) wrote an [op-ed in the Tech](#) requesting more ethics education as part of his undergraduate experience.



Personally, I also explored all these issues off-campus, as I participated in a gathering

In This Issue

- [MIT Mentshn of Mention](#)
- [Director's Update](#)
- [Torah from Tech](#)
- [2014 Annual Fund](#)
- [Planned Giving](#)
- [On the Calendar](#)

Mentshn of Mention



Aaron Rose '17
asrose@mit.edu

My full name is Aaron Samuel Rose, and I was born December 14, 1994. I was born in Chicago, IL and lived in Highland Park, IL for 12 years until I moved to Boca Raton, FL right before seventh grade. In Chicago I went to Sager Solomon Schechter Day School, a school affiliated with the Conservative movement, for elementary school and sixth grade. In Boca I went to the Hillel Day School of Boca Raton, a Modern Orthodox middle school, for seventh and eighth grade, and the Weinbaum Yeshiva High School, also Modern Orthodox, for high school. I have two siblings, Sophie, who is now a senior in high school, and Jonah, who is a freshman in high school. For the past 8 summers I have been attending Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, first as a camper and last year as a counselor for the Shoafim (going into eighth grade) age group. At MIT I am currently in 8.01, 18.02, 3.091, and 14.01 and plan to study either course 2 or 6. (For the non-MIT-course-literate, that's math, physics, material science/chemistry, and



of a select group of twenty clergy, scientists, and journalists this past week. Gathered by [CLAL](#) (National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership), those of us participating in [Sinai and Synapses](#) looked at ways to move beyond simplistic views of science and religion, to create new tools and language in the conversation surrounding science and religion. We began our day discussing how

science has changed, impacted, or influenced our views on religion, and how religion has changed, impacted, or influenced our views on science. I will be bringing these discussions into more Hillel -- and MIT -- activities as we move ahead.

Over the next couple weeks, we lead up to exams. Students have time to learn and relax in a number of Jewish ways: our monthly women's Rosh Hodesh group; a *cappella* group [Techiya's](#) fall concert; a Birthright alumni learning session on Reconstructionist and Humanist Judaism; MITklabim ("accepted")'s LGBTQ Shabbat dinner; weekly \$4 Shabbat dinners; and text studies with Senior Jewish Educator, Rabbi Gavriel Goldfeder. As the month then ends, our next Birthright bus explores Israel. Never a dull (or unenlightened) moment.

I have no doubt that long beyond the burning of any of our menorahs, these conversations will continue. I am excited to be leading, challenging -- and being challenged by -- our students as we all grow.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM'97
rabbif@mit.edu

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Naomi Stein. Naomi has an SM ('10) in Civil Engineering and a dual masters in Transportation and City Planning ('13). She is fascinated by planning processes and multi-actor decision-making in the transportation and planning worlds. She lives in Somerville, works in Boston, paints, and swims. She can be reached at negstein@alum.mit.edu.

This time of year brings to us an interesting convergence of three narratives. This week's Torah portion, Vayigash, describes the climactic conclusion of the Joseph story. The long-lost brother reveals himself, embraces his brothers, and brings his entire family into the land of Egypt. Joseph somehow finds a common place for his two identities: a son of Jacob, and a powerful

Egyptian ruler.

Also at this time we are celebrating the festival of Chanukah -- a story of rebellion against the forces of assimilation. The Chanukah narrative glorifies the decision of a few to stand up and remain different.

And finally, as our full refrigerators and perhaps yet full bellies remind us, this year added another holiday to the trifecta: Thanksgiving. That the historical events of Thanksgiving provide cause for celebration can be seen as a troubling claim. Some even take it as an opportunity to point to our past and to ask if we have really learned how to deal with difference. I see Thanksgiving as a day that developed its own narrative of significance, not in place of, but in addition to the uncomfortable historical origins: Thanksgiving is for thankfulness and remembered shared history, and a reminder to reconnect and to belong to our family and to our community.

Each of these stories has an uneasy balance between the maintenance of a unique identity and the ability to become part of or be influenced by something new.

In the Vayigash narrative, Joseph explains how his rise to power in Egypt and full integration into the Egyptian community is a means to an end: saving his family from famine. Still, I can't help but be made uncomfortable by the full extent of Joseph's actions with that power. He uses the threat of starvation to obtain all farmland from the residents of Egypt and then returns it to them under conditions of serfdom. True, his wisdom saves their lives and augments the wealth of the land of Egypt. But does Joseph perhaps absorb too much of the autocratic ways of the Egyptian elite?

And Chanukah: it's a story of victory, the righteous few vanquishing the morally corrupt many. The battle has clear sides, clear moral imperatives, and clear victors. But the social reality of the Jewish community was more complicated. Were the Hellenist Jews entirely wrong in seeking knowledge in the wider Greek world? And was Mattiyahu's public killing of a Jew who sacrificed to Greek gods the appropriate response to internal religious conflict?

And Thanksgiving: how does a community or country choose to be proud to share in collective history and identity, while also not denying past wrongs and the challenges of cultural conflict?

science, chemistry, and microeconomics; my possible majors are mechanical engineering or computer science.)

I had always dreamed of coming to MIT because I think it is the perfect school for me. I am a voracious reader of the news and other science and technology magazines, and it is impossible to pick one up and not read about MIT somewhere in the publication -- MIT is on the cutting edge, and I could not aspire to be anywhere else. I also love Boston; I think it is a great metropolitan area with a lot of going on, the ideal place for me to spend four years of college -- or more.

I originally contacted Hillel as a pre-frosh. I was accepted to MIT, but missed Campus Preview Weekend because I was on the March of the Living (a two week trip for Jewish teenagers to Poland and Israel in memory of the Holocaust). I still wanted to visit campus on a different weekend. I was put in contact with a brother at AEPI and had a great weekend here. I spent a lot of Shabbat at Hillel getting to know the people who were regularly in attendance. When August arrived and it was time for Orientation, I didn't know anyone at MIT, so I came to Hillel to make some friends. I did, and some of the people I met on that first day are still my close friends now. I have been coming back to Hillel ever since.

The largest part of my Jewish involvement at MIT has been pledging and becoming a brother at AEPI. I rushed AEPI and knew immediately it was the place for me and have really enjoyed all the brothers. I also attend services and Friday night dinner a few times a month when I can -- in addition to other Hillel programs I have attended. A few weeks ago I went with Hillel Senior Jewish Educator, Rabbi Gavriel Goldfeder, to see the premiere of the documentary "Unorthodox" and then discuss it. It was a great movie and I really enjoyed the experience. One of my favorite programs Hillel has run this year was Faculty Shabbat. It was nice to meet professors in a non-academic setting, and I thoroughly enjoyed my night.

Being actively involved in Jewish life both complements and supplements the entire MIT experience for me. AEPI is a great fraternity because many of the brothers have

I have been thinking a lot lately about how our daily environment shapes our perceptions, understanding, and actions. I recently graduated from MIT after seven wonderful (and of course tiring) years. As you all very well know, MIT is a unique place. The experience is for most of us an odd mix of flying and drowning. The years are spent in a process of both identity development and of subsuming our identities to a collective pursuit of knowledge and change in the world.

Leaving MIT has brought this into sharp focus for me. My new job is showing me blind spots in my education and awareness. It's pointing out particular worldviews that may not be shared by all of my clients, and that merit informed debate. At the same time, I am wary of losing some of the idealism or stubborn values that MIT helped define within me. This conflict between the inside and outside, the self and the other, the new and the old is something that comes up over and over again in stories about individuals within communities, or about smaller communities within wider national and global contexts. I don't have "answers." I just think we had better pay attention to how we are influencing, and being influenced by, both.

MIT Hillel's 2014 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 MIT's Jewish community.

Thank you to our [2013 Annual Fund donors!](#)

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 2014 Donor Roll!

Tamid Initiative - Planned Giving @ MIT Hillel

Endowment and planned gifts truly sustain and build an organization. MIT Hillel is excited to help you create your personal Jewish legacy 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 Rabbi Fisher, rabbif@mit.edu.

On the Calendar

It was amazing to take Leading Jewish Minds... On the Road to NYC at the end of November.



Professor Robert Langer ScD '74 captivated us with a discussion of "Biomaterials and Biotechnology." In presenting his research and the medical applications for drug delivery, he showed us why we are so proud of Hillel's Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT. A special thanks to Jerry Appelstein '80 for hosting a warm and spirited gathering.

Spring Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT line-up:

- **February 14: Neri Oxman**, Assistant Professor of Media Arts and Sciences at the MIT Media Lab
- **April 25: Scott Aronson**, Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

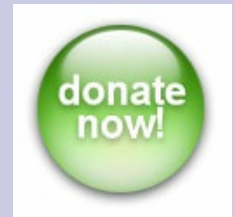


very similar academic aspirations as I do. Socially it is a great outlet, and I spend a lot of my time with brothers or other Jews. Hillel overall has given me a great place to meet great people – it is largely the reason I was initially introduced to AEPi and chose to pledge.

When I went home for Thanksgiving everyone was asking me if I liked MIT and me answer was always, "I love it!" The education is great and I am being exposed to really cool things, but the reason I wake up excited every morning is because of the people I have met and get to interact with everyday, many of whom I met at Hillel.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



[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.

