



MIT Hillel Update



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

The Students, Board, and Staff of MIT Hillel

1. Ben Frank '14 and Irina Kholodenko '12 enjoy a camel ride on the winter Birthright Israel experience.
2. Exploring the history of Boston at the Norman B. Leventhal ('38) Map Center at the Boston Public Library as part of a Hillel Independent Activities Period field trip.
3. Student hummus "chefs" share their creations at the 5th Annual Hummus Experience: "Give Chick Peas a Chance!"

Executive Director's Update



It's the first day of classes! I began my day at MIT's gym at the Z-Center, where I regularly workout, always wearing a Hillel t-shirt. Today, my shirt spelled out "M.I.T." in Hebrew, and led to a conversation with a sophomore who now wants to take a [Hebrew@MIT](#) student-taught Hebrew class. I ran into two other Jewish students at the Spring Career Fair -- and

connected them with a young Hillel alum promoting his local startup. A morning of great networking.

With all this going on, already the past six weeks of Winter Break and MIT's Independent Activities Period feel like long-ago memories. Here's a wrap-up and walk down December/January's "Memory Lane."



Another successful Birthright Israel trip explored the land and people of Israel, adding a dozen more MIT students to the ranks of Birthright alumni. We have an audacious goal of a full bus -- 40 MIT and Wellesley students -- traveling to Israel this summer, being inspired and enriched by this immersive opportunity. The energy and sense of exploration all of these students bring back to campus continues to deepen each individual's Jewish identity and to broaden the campus-wide pride in and knowledge of Israel. Encourage your student to register on February 14-15 at [israelwithisraelis.com](#).



Feeding over 500 tasters, the 5th annual [Hummus Experience](#) introduced five new student hummus flavors this year. The winning team/ flavor was "Messrs Bentry and Lolpert's Silk Road Hipster Hummus with Grapefruit Black Tea Infusion," a creation of Leah Alpert '13, Molly Kozminsky '12, Jeff Guo G, Katelin Schutz '14, and Jamal Elkhader '13. [Check out all the recipes!](#)

A short T-ride down the Green Line brought us to the home of David '90, SM'91, PhD'07 and Karen Miller -- a Net-Zero Energy LEED Platinum House that matches their environmental and Jewish values. Also exploring the world off-campus, graduate students "shul-hopped" each Friday night of January, visiting different synagogues for a variety of Shabbat davening experiences. As the banner photo above illustrates, one



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Menschen of Mention



Matthew Monheit '14

My name is Matthew Arthur (Avi) Monheit. I'm from Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, a suburb just a short drive outside of Philadelphia. My family belongs to Keneseth Israel Reform Congregation, where I attended Hebrew School, became a Bar Mitzvah, and attended Confirmation activities when I didn't have soccer practice. When I was home for the High Holy Days in high school, I enjoyed going to the preschool of our synagogue to help out with those too young to attend services with their families.

At MIT I am majoring in Chemistry (Course 5) with a minor in Energy Studies and a humanities concentration in Spanish. I came to MIT to be among the smartest students in the world with the encouragement of the guys I met on the soccer team who told me I'd fit right in. I drop by the Hillel occasionally to have a chat with members of the staff or celebrate a Shabbat dinner. I am currently helping to plan a Hillel-sponsored Greek Shabbat dinner at my fraternity to encourage Jews on campus who are not normally involved with Hillel activities to meet other Jews on campus and celebrate Shabbat. Outside of Hillel, I am a member of the Men's Varsity Soccer Team and



can learn a lot from maps; a third tour took us to the [Norman B. Leventhal Map Library at the Boston Public Library](#), where participants explored the collection, and learned about Norman Leventhal '38's founding of MIT Hillel.

Israel education now kicks off the new term, with a talk by Yisrael Ne'eman, an Israeli specialist on the Middle East Conflict, the Land of Israel, Jewish History and Israel/Zionist Ideologies. Fun social events close out the month including a greek Shabbat dinner at Kappa Sigma, the annual [Latke-Hamentaschen Debate](#) (2/25, 8pm, 10-250), and the Boston-wide "Jews on Ice" skating party at MIT's Johnson Ice Rink. Torah classes, Shabbat dinners, and *tzedek*/justice work at the Hillel soup kitchen round-out the middle weeks.



I'm looking forward to it all!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by David Stiebel '09. David hails from Detroit, studied MIT undergrad course 18C, and was involved with Hillel, AEPI, and Hibur (the MIT-Technion connection). After graduation, he worked for Bain & Company in Chicago, and recently moved to Jerusalem to study in Yeshiva Shapell's for a year. He can be reached at stieb@alum.mit.edu.

Inspiration and Personal Growth

During the Exodus from Egypt, God performed amazing wonders and miracles, such as the ten plagues and the splitting of the sea. The midrash says that while crossing the sea, even the lowliest Jewish maidservant reached high levels of prophecy that later prophets never achieved. This is known from the verse in the Song of the Sea, which says, "This is my God, and I will glorify Him." The word 'This' tells us that every Israelite was able to perceive God tangibly, which is a very significant level of prophecy.

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz z'l asks an intriguing question: After experiencing amazing levels of prophecy, why did these Israelites not remain at those heights and go on to become amazing prophets? Instead, they remained simple lowly Jews, with no remaining prophetic abilities. In fact, shortly after this experience, they even lost their faith and began complaining against God about a lack of water and food. Why didn't the prophetic experience have any effect on them?

One answer to this puzzling lack of growth on the part of the Israelites can be explained by a story/analogy (heard from Charlie Harary). Imagine you are lost in the wilderness in the dark of night with no moon or any lights to guide you. You are trying to find your way back home, but have no idea which way to start walking because of this complete darkness.

Suddenly, there is a dazzling flash of lightning overhead, which lights up the whole area for an instant. There are two ways to react to this lightning.

Some people are so impressed and dazzled by the lightning, that they stand looking at the sky in awe and wonder, totally inspired by the natural phenomenon that lit up the night sky.

Other people, however, use that flash of lightning to look around them and study the landscape. Even though the lightning lasted only a moment, they are able to see the proper way home. Even though the dark of night takes over again, they are able to point themselves in the right direction and start walking.

Both people experienced the same inspirational lightning, yet only the latter made progress toward his or her goal.

We can now understand that the lowly maidservant at the splitting of the sea was shown a flash of inspirational lightning from God. She was given a moment experiencing the highest levels of prophecy. However, instead of using that inspiration to take steps toward God and to drive personal growth, she simply basked in the awesomeness of the moment, until the inspiration was gone and she was back in the same spot. She remained a lowly person.

We experience flashes of inspiration throughout our own life as well. These

Kappa Sigma Fraternity, and I look forward to seeing the Jewish members of those organizations at the dinner we're hosting in a couple weeks. I look forward to meeting friends of friends and making new Jewish friends at the event.

This past winter break I had an amazing Birthright trip with 9 other MIT students, 41 Harvard Students, and 7 IDF soldiers. It was my third time in Israel (I was also there for the Maccabiah Games in the summer of 2009 and my brother's Bar Mitzvah on top of Masada in the winter of 2011), but going with other students who are experiencing similar day to day lives on campus as well as understanding the values of the Israelis in our group made the experience exceptional. It's awesome to have friends at Harvard and in Israel, and I wish I could do the trip all over again.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



can range from experiencing an amazing Shabbat, to hearing a heart-warming story on the evening news, or even to learning about a recent scientific breakthrough at an MIT lecture. These events inspire us as Jews and as human beings, but the effect is usually shortlived, and we often return to our daily routine unmoved.

Instead, we should take advantage of these brief moments of inspiration, Jewish or not, and use them to grow and improve ourselves. During each of these experiences, we should take a moment to think, "How can I translate this into some sort of personal growth?" With this approach, we should merit to take a few steps forward every day, continuously growing and becoming better people and better Jews.

MIT Hillel Jews in the News

Check out all the great press about MIT Hillel and our alumni in just the last two months!

Chanukah Test Tube Menorah Lighting:

- [MIT News Office](#)
- [MIT Department of Student Life News](#)



Annual Hummus Experience:

- [MIT News Office](#)
- [The Jewish Daily Forward](#)
- [Boston.com](#)

Sigma Alpha Mu Reunion:

- [Technology Review \(specifically: picture and caption\)](#)

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

Birthright Israel Registration for Summer Trips Tuesday & Wednesday, February 14-15

Tell your students to register for this *free* 10-day Israel experience, including MIT's unique Birthright Extension, visiting the hi-tech world of Israel: www.israelwithisraelis.com. Email MIT Hillel's Birthright Coordinator, Shoshana Gibbor, for more information: birthright@mit.edu



Annual Latke-Hamentaschen Debate Tuesday, February 21, 8pm, 10-250

Don't miss this exciting debate between the fruit-filled hamentaschen cookies and the fried latke potato pancake. You can catch up on prior years' debates at hd.mit.edu.



"Olympics Uber Alles" February 10-12 and 17-19, Kresge Little Theater

A new play by Prof. Samuel J. Bernstein of Northeastern University tells the true story of discrimination during the 1936 Nazi Olympics. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at tickets.neu.edu.

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT

"These things happen.

Why people get hurt in hospitals, and what we can do about it."

Paul Levy '72

Friday, March 16, noon, Maseeh Hall.

Hillel's popular faculty/staff/alumni lunchtime seminar series continues. Our second presenter for the spring term is Paul Levy '72, Former President and CEO, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. 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...](#)

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