



MIT Hillel Update



Greetings from MIT Hillel to Alumni, Parents, and Friends in Cambridge and Beyond...

Sometimes it's all about the food!
And, in particular, where you can get your hummus fix...

Pictured Above:

1. IAP Hummus Making: the returning team of Andrea Wallentin '16 and Zev Bimstein '15 creates a second year's winning flavor: "Greek Feast"
2. Enjoying falafel -- of course, with hummus -- in the center, Liz Walker '16 on the streets of Israel with fellow Birthright participants.
3. Over 450 MIT samplers enjoyed the five student-created flavors at Hillel's 7th Annual IAP Hummus Experience (center in purple: Alec Bogdanoff G)

Executive Director's Update



Winter Break and Independent Activities Period (IAP) always provide fun and respite from the normal stress and demands of MIT's academic schedule. Hillel loves creating opportunities for informal learning, personal reflection, and, of course, food during the month and half between when exams end in December and Spring Registration Day comes in February.

On December 25, our winter Birthright participants were already in the air to Israel heading into their ten-day experience exploring Israel. (Read Aviv Cukierman '14's reflections in the right-hand column.) This trip is not vacationing (despite the guys

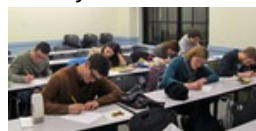
here); not only is the pace too intense, but the goal is to spark Jewish identity growth while creating relationships and community. Upon their return we create follow-up plans for each participant, building upon the personal interests, questions, and Jewish goals



they expressed during the trip. Most of our Birthright alumni become more engaged with the MIT Jewish community, seek out further education about Judaism, and become Hillel leaders. It is an inspiring transformation. Birthright registration for our summer trip begins February 18 at israelwithisraelis.com.



Hillel has always been a major player during IAP. Educational offerings expanded this year to include interfaith conversations like "Abraham, on the mountain, with a knife: An Abrahamic faiths text study" and a trip to the Museum of Science to see and discuss the new Jerusalem IMAX film. Jewish views on the afterlife, on mandatory military service, on rituals, and on ghosts and golems also inspired attendance. Students taught as well as learned: (right) Dalia Leibowitz '16 stood in front of the Hebrew 101 classroom with participants from Hillel, MISTI-Israel, and the general MIT community. She even [blogged about it](#) on the Admissions Website.



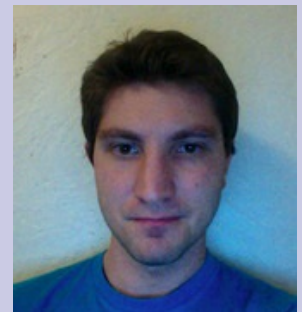
And what IAP would be complete without Hummus? Our five student-created flavors for the annual Hummus Taste-Off this year were: Pumpkin Pie Hummus, Honey Nut Humm-os, Nutty Girl, SerenDIPity Salsa Hummus, and the winning flavor-- Greek Feast. [Cedar's](#) will again make a run of



In This Issue

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

Mentsh'n of Mention



Aviv Cukierman '14
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My name is Aviv Cukierman and I'm a senior majoring in physics and math at MIT. As a child I attended a Jewish elementary school and my family was a member of a Conservative synagogue in the Northern Virginia suburbs. After my Bar Mitzvah my family and I became less religious and by high school I considered myself to be culturally but not religiously Jewish. In high school I also discovered my passion for physics and math, which drove me to apply to MIT as my top choice school. At MIT I joined the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity and occupied myself mostly with coursework. Currently I'm waiting to hear back from graduate schools with regards to admissions decisions for PhD programs in physics.

My aunt urged me to meet with Rabbi Fisher, whom she met as the principal of the Hebrew School in Rabbi Fisher's synagogue. I attended a few Hillel meetings at Rabbi Fisher's encouragement, but eventually stopped going as I became more involved in my studies and my fraternity. Until I heard about the MIT Birthright trip my involvement with the Jewish community at MIT was practically nil.

I had already known about the Birthright trip from friends and family but had never had



the winner, and we will again have cartons of hummus to sample and eat from now until Passover. Proudly, over half the hummus chefs were Birthright alumni. Maybe one day we'll export to Israel... After tasting and voting for their favorite flavors, some 450 people continued on to taste professional hummus (and JP Lick's once-a-year Hummus Ice Cream) and to learn about Israel and Israel activities through and around MIT. My favorite wish on the Israel Peace Week "Peace Means..." wall is shown.



All good things must one day come to an end... registration day for the Spring Term was Monday, and classes are back in swing. And yet, there's more to come: check out [the calendar below](#) for information on a new Hillel mentoring program to more Leading Jewish Minds luncheons to the annual Latke-Hamentaschen Debate.

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

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by MIT Hillel's Director of Development, Marla Choslovsky SM'88. Marla comes to MIT Hillel from PEJE, where she administered a philanthropic grant for Jewish day schools. Her move to professional development stems from a decade of volunteer fundraising for Solomon Schechter Day School. She is a Sloan alumna, SM class of 1988. She can be reached at marla360@mit.edu.

It is with great joy that I join the team at MIT Hillel, and with a bit of trepidation that I introduce myself to the community with a *d'var Torah*. In my first weeks on the job I am definitely more of a learner than a teacher.

The Torah portion *Titzaveh* is a detailed instruction book for Moses. It continues the theme of furnishing the tabernacle that was started in portion *Terumah*, with specs for the priestly vestments, the breastplate, certain sacrificial animals, anointing the priests, rituals, and the altar. The reading is followed by *Ki Tissa*, an action-packed section that includes the how-to's of census-taking and related tax assessment, the singling out of Bezalel's artistic skill, the golden calf debacle orchestrated by Aaron and Moses' subsequent shattering of the first two tablets, and the culture-building directives for observing Pesach and Shavuot.

Titzaveh is a boring portion – a lot of details on what to do, no real action, the lead actor in the passive role of just being told what to do, he does not speak or act, and he is not even named. What can we make of this? And why did I not get the assignment to focus on *Terumah*, with its easy development message of everyone voluntarily contributing their gold and silver, or of *Ki Tissa*, with everyone contributing their half-shekels to support the building of the tabernacle? Those would've been obvious messages from your new Director of Development.

I think there is something important to be learned here if we look at this parsha as a bridge between the two seemingly more interesting and relevant readings. What has to happen to move from *Terumah*'s vision from God that is so exciting that people will come forward when Moses shares the plan, to the Epic Fail of the Golden Calf, and ultimately the successful reboot and receipt of tablets? What parallel processing is going on in this section that we do not see, that we can only imagine? What can we identify with?

The Torah portion reads like God is piling on Moses. I am certain that current MIT students can relate to the sense of diminishment from the ever-growing workload, and can envision Moses trying to absorb all of this - without any of the modern recording tools or calendar apps available to us – and figure out how to accomplish so much. God may be providing a comprehensive set of specs, but it is up to Moses to energize an entire population to come together to build something new. Even though we don't see it, Moses has to be learning, memorizing, thinking, strategizing, organizing, and planning concurrently with hearing all of what is being told to him. He has to be understanding that his ultimate responsibility is not merely to ensure that the ark is physically built and the priests have the right clothes to wear, but rather that the people are engaged in, motivated for, and committed to both their individual roles and their communal objective, such that they will stay involved after the to-do list is all checked off. We know that Moses has the leadership skills to accomplish this, because he ultimately does! And yet, as we see in portion *Ki Tissa*, he doesn't get it perfect the first time, he does not plan for the people's fear and uncertainty, of any hesitation. Everybody involved needs to learn and try again, and do a little better the next time.

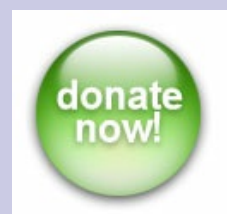
Like Moses, we too are committed to helping each individual contribute meaningfully and according to individual talents, and to building something that is greater than the sum of its parts. As Hillel's new Director of Development, I am grateful for what has been built before,

family but had never had enough free time to consider it as an option. A Jewish friend at my fraternity alerted me to the possibility of going to Israel through Taglit. I decided to go to Israel for a variety of reasons. I was a senior and knew I would finish my applications to graduate school before I left, leaving me with no compelling reason to pursue an internship, perform research, or enroll in a class during the January IAP period. My Jewish friend agreed to go with me, so I would have at least one person I already knew to go and extend my trip with. I had been to Israel before, but only as a child with my parents, and I wanted to experience Israel as an adult. Finally, of course, the trip is free, so it would be a shame not to take advantage of such a great opportunity.

In Israel I was forced to confront my Jewish roots, which I had largely neglected in college. My co-participants were mostly similar to me as secular American Jews, and so I learned about how they dealt with retaining their traditions in face of secularization. The Israeli soldiers we met also provided perspective on the meaning of being Jewish while growing up in an entirely different political environment than the one I came from. On the extension of my trip I met with cousins who live in Israel, allowing me to ponder the issues of Judaism, family, and the Diaspora. Although my thoughts on my experience in Israel have not yet settled, I have realized that Judaism is a force that ties together people from disparate backgrounds into common themes of culture, values, and customs. I can't deny the positive impact of this as a cultural force. In my burgeoning adulthood I will have to grapple with how to include Judaism in my life and involve myself with the Jewish community.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



and I look forward to working together to continue to regenerate and grow.

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 MIT Hillel Director of Development, Marla Choslovsky, marla360@mit.edu.

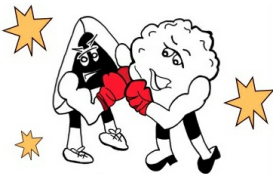
On the Calendar

Spring Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT line-up:

- **February 14: Neri Oxman**, Assistant Professor of Media Arts and Sciences at the MIT Media Lab
- **March 21: Irving Wladawsky Berger**, Visiting Lecturer at MIT's Sloan School of Management and Engineering Systems Division
- **April 25: Scott Aronson**, Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science



Annual Latke-Hamentaschen Debate: February 19, 8pm, MIT Room 10-250



Don't miss this annual debate between the fruit-filled hamentaschen cookie and the friend latke potato pancake! You can catch up on prior year's debates at lhd.mit.edu.

Birthright Summer Trip Registration: opens February 19

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. Contact MIT Hillel Birthright Coordinator, Shoshana Gibbor, sgibbor@mit.edu for more information.



Hillel Careers UnliMITed: February 27, Zesiger Sports & Fitness Center (building W35)

Hillel Careers UnliMITed is a series of career workshops and programs designed to help MIT students develop career skills, explore options and connect with alumni and community members who are eager to advise and mentor them. Our lead-off speaker will be Joanne Kamens, PhD, Executive Director, Addgene and MIT Hillel Board Member. Alumni, staff, and faculty are all invited to join MIT students for this ongoing event series. [Email to learn more...](#)

Leading Jewish Minds... On the Road in Florida!

March 4, Aventura, FL: Paul Levy '72

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

[Contact us at hillelrsvp@mit.edu](mailto:hillelrsvp@mit.edu) for more information!

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