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 showing off with Dead Sea mud 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

Mentshn 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 less 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 Israeli 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 this morning. 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 Lateke-Hamentaschen Debate.

L’shalom,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM’97
rabbi@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 Tzitzev 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 singing 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.

*Tzitzev* 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 Tzitzev 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,
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 UniMI Ted: February 27, Zesiger Sports & Fitness Center (building W35)

Hillel Careers UniMI Ted 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 hillelsrsvp@mit.edu for more information!