



In This Issue

MIT Mentshn of Mention
 Director's Update
 Torah from Tech
 2016 Annual Fund
 Planned Giving
 On the Calendar
 Mazal tov

**Greetings from MIT
 to our Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Parents and Friends!**

A snapshot of Independent Activities Period happenings:

1. Annual Hummus Making class: "Just give chickpeas a chance!"
2. Birthright alumni attend a screening of Oscar-nominated film *Son of Saul*
3. Freshmen Tamar Gray and Josh Fishman teach an introductory Hebrew class

Mentshn of Mention



Harris Stolzenberg '17
hstolz@mit.edu

My name is Harris Stolzenberg and I am a junior at MIT from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I chose to go to MIT because it gave me the best opportunity to pursue a world-class education and to continue playing the two sports I love. I am majoring in finance, which is not a typical major for an undergraduate. However, I am able to take most of my classes at MIT's Sloan Business school, which means a lot of my classmates are Masters and MBA students. When I'm not doing finance, you can find me out on either the football or lacrosse field. I play slot receiver on the football team and attack on the lacrosse team.

I grew up in a Reform household. I went to Hebrew school twice a week as a kid up until my Bar Mitzvah. Once I got to MIT I was so busy with school and sports that I kind of lost touch with my Judaism. One day walking down the Infinite I saw a big blue sign that read "Free trip to Israel". I walked up to the booth and met Shoshanna who convinced me to

Executive Director's Update



Whew! It's only the first week of the term, and I am already saying TGIS, "Thank God it's Shabbat." Of course, our day of "rest" will begin tonight with Welcome Back Shabbat, with over 80 students expected, including a number of reunion tables of recent Birthright alumni, and two after-dinner discussions: one with students who attended a screening of the Oscar-nominated Holocaust film *Son of Saul* last Sunday, and a second with students who had the opportunity to dialogue with Israeli writer Ari Shavit (*My Promised Land*, 2013) throughout the day yesterday in four different intimate gatherings. Ari Shavit attracted fifty of our students -- from Birthright alumni to Friends of Israel board members, from lefties to Likudniks, from yeshiva-trained to cultural Jews -- who explored the relationship of Israel to their Jewish identity in the US. This week also included a day-long leadership retreat for the [new student board](#) (mazal tov to them all!). An Education/Classes open house. A meeting of one of our senior Kindle your Judaism book clubs. Summer [Birthright trip](#) interest sessions and booths in the Student Center. And, of course, multiple coffee dates by every staff member to catch up on how students spent their IAP (Independent Activities Period) in January. A Shabbat nap -- sometime this weekend -- seems in order.



While IAP seems far history after this whirlwind beginning, Hillel's offerings over the month included student organized (and Hillel subsidized) Shabbat dinners, during a time when the meal plans were closed. Jews and Java hangouts, allowing students who run in different social circles to meet each other. A cooking class -- which opened our eyes to the fact that not all students have basic cutting, cooking, and food skills. An exploration of the Jewish values and deeper messages of *Breaking Bad* and its anti-hero protagonist Walter White -- how does the show allow us to think about ethics and choices in our own science? Our annual hummus-making class. And, student-taught Hebrew classes.



As my last newsletter was sent before Hillel International's Global Assembly gathering of Hillel professionals, I did not have the chance to proudly congratulate our teammate, [Shoshana Gibbor](#), Director of Birthright and Israel Programming, for being awarded an Exemplar of Excellence Award at the December Hillel International Global Assembly. As Adam Slakter '17 wrote in one (of eighteen!) letters submitted to nominate her: "One of the qualities that immediately sticks out about Shoshana is how much she loves the students here at MIT. She works tirelessly, never for herself, but so that Jews

As my last newsletter was sent before Hillel International's Global Assembly gathering of Hillel professionals, I did not have the chance to proudly congratulate our teammate, [Shoshana Gibbor](#), Director of Birthright and Israel Programming, for being awarded an Exemplar of Excellence Award at the December Hillel International Global Assembly. As Adam Slakter '17 wrote in one (of eighteen!) letters submitted to nominate her: "One of the qualities that immediately sticks out about Shoshana is how much she loves the students here at MIT. She works tirelessly, never for herself, but so that Jews

on campus can feel connected to their Judaism and feel more like MIT is their home. She is a person that I, as well as many others, look up to as a teacher, role model, and friend. She brings such vibrance and enthusiasm to the MIT Jewish community." A hearty mazal tov to Shoshana; it is an honor to work with her!

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



P.S. If you will be in the Cambridge area at the end of the month, we have scheduled the [Annual Latke Hamentaschen Debate](#) for [Purim Katan](#) (in Hebrew calendar leap years, "Purim" in the extra leap month), February 22, 7pm, in 10-250. We have a great, diverse lineup of debaters (see below). All are welcome!

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Inbar Yamin, Class of 2015 (Course 3, Materials Science and Engineering). Inbar is currently a first year medical student at University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, MA. She can be reached at inbar@alum.mit.edu.

I once saw a T-shirt in a store on Ben Yehudah Street in Jerusalem. It had a list of 10 or so nations or empires that have tried to destroy the Jewish people, ancient Egypt, Babylonian Empire, Roman Empire, etc., listing that they are all gone, and yet the Jewish nation remains strong and thriving. Of course I knew these facts, but I had never thought how unique it was that after thousands of years there are still Jews. What is special about the Jewish Nation? Why have we survived for so long against all odds? Of course it a combination of many factors, but I think a main reason is תורה שבעל-פה, or the Oral Torah. The Oral Torah is a living, breathing set of laws that evolves as the world and society evolves. With the guidance of what is written in the Torah, and thousands of generations of passed down interpretations, discussions, and precedents, the oral law allows Halachah and Judaism to remain relevant in a world that is changing rapidly.

This week's parasha/Torah Reading is Mishpatim. It mainly consists of a list of civil laws pertaining to slaves, assault, stealing, and property damage and also contains some laws about observing holidays. Some of the more well-known commandments are listed: an eye for an eye, not mistreating foreigners, not working on Shabbat, not eating leavened bread on Passover, and not eating meat with milk. So many *mitzvot*/commandments are listed, and yet there are no real details or explanations for them. For example, an eye for an eye, according to oral tradition, should be interpreted to mean that the punishment of gouging out someone's eye is not to gouge out their eye, but rather that they must pay monetary compensation for the damage that they have caused. The power of the oral tradition is that, as questions arise about situations that were not possible thousands of years ago, like using electricity on Shabbat, there is a central framework built into Judaism to tackle those questions. It is not a mere commentary on the Torah, but a set of laws that has its own authority within Judaism. The framework does not mean that the answer will be evident for every situation or that everyone will agree about the answer. Rather, it works because it keeps the discussion open, and allows for multiple disagreeing opinions to be valid at one time and thus necessitates continued to discussion and teachings.

A similar process exists in scientific literature. As new research is pursued, multiple theories exist and try to answer the same question. Data is presented for all the theories in the literature, and often there is some data that proves the theory, but other data that contradicts it. Problems arise however, when opinions are not discredited based on data or facts, but rather because of politics. It stifles the process and prevents an evolution of ideas because disagreeing opinions are discredited, while the status quo is held as fact. I think the same holds true for Judaism. While it can be disconcerting or frustrating to know that there is not one answer to your halachic question, with the Oral Torah, we know that no matter what is happening in the world, we, as a nation, will have a set of laws that will always be able to guide us and help us thrive.

MIT Hillel's 2016 Annual Fund
Add to Jewish life @ MIT!

go on Birthright. It turned out to be one of the best choices I've made at MIT thus far.

Birthright is unlike any other trip I've ever been on. It's 10 days of nonstop action. I got to see and experience so much in such a short period of time. I visited cities like Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. I slept in a Bedouin tent, a Kibbutz, and even a five star hotel. I prayed at the Western Wall, floated in the Dead Sea, and climbed Mount Masada. All of this was great. All of these experiences were eye opening. However, the most powerful and life changing part about Birthright was the people I got to meet. The bond that was formed between the people on our bus was special. I made friends, both Israeli and American, that I hope will last a lifetime.

Now that I am back at MIT I hope to get more involved in Jewish life. Whether this is in the form of Israel advocacy on campus, or going to Shabbat dinners, or even just hanging out with the people I met on this trip I don't know. What I do know is that I left a little piece of myself in Israel and took a little piece of Israel home with me.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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





This month's number: 290. That's how many thank-you notes there were from me to all of you. As we all know, end of calendar year is a very popular time for people to make their charitable contributions. Even though the letter is a form letter, I handwrite a personal note on each and every one. I want you to know that those are not formulaic on my part. I look up each and every donor to learn more about you and your interest in Hillel. Is this your first gift, or have you been supporting us for decades? Is there a significant change in your giving level or timing of your gift? When did you graduate – is it a reunion year for you, or were you a classmate of one of our board members? Do you live locally, or somewhere that Michelle may be traveling to? Are you a past board member, or were you on the student board when you were an undergrad? (We are constantly striving to fill in historic records on these questions.) Do you have a connection to a current student that is

motivating your gift? I know that we will never get to meet everyone in person, so this exercise helps me to individualize and personalize each gift, and hence to express gratitude on behalf of MIT Hillel in a truly heartfelt way.

And so you can know me in the same way, my answers are: As an alumna, I have been supporting MIT Hillel for as far back as our records go (1990), but probably not much beyond that, since I graduated Sloan in 1988. My gift has increased since I've been working here, partly as an example, and partly as a result of seeing first-hand the work of the program staff. (I recently asked to sit in on Rabbi Goldfeder's class about Walter White, the protagonist of the tv show "Breaking Bad" – it was awesome.) I have learned that I overlapped on campus with many of you, but since I only ventured to Hillel for High Holidays and a Torah and Chocolate class, didn't really meet others outside my Sloan existence. One of my Sloan classmates has served on the MIT Hillel Board of Directors, but before I was working here. I do not have a direct connection to any current students, but I'm hoping that a certain one of my kids applies to MIT for grad school when the time comes.

As always, it is an honor to join with you in maintaining and building a strong Jewish presence at MIT. I thank you for your support of MIT Hillel's mission and Rabbi Fisher's leadership.

Thank you,
Marla Choslovsky SM '88,
MIT Hillel Director of Development
marla360@mit.edu

Add your name to MIT Hillel's 2016 Donor Roll!

Tamid Initiative - Planned Giving @ MIT Hillel

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.

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. To inform us that you have already planned such a gift, please contact us directly or [let us know in writing](#).

On the Calendar

Annual Latke-Hamentaschen Debate! February 22, 7pm, 10-250

- **Team Hamentaschen**
 - Ina Lipkowitz (Course 21L)
 - David Vogan (Course 18)
 - Lionel Kimerling (Course 3)
- **Team Latke**
 - Aram Harrow (Course 8)
 - Chris Capozzola (Course 21H)
 - Stephen Van Evera (Course 17)
- **Moderator**
 - Bob Ferrara '67



Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT: Spring Line-up

- **February 12**, Hazel Sive, Professor of Biology, Member of Whitehead Institute, MacVicar Faculty Fellow: "Power from the Embryo: Building and Healing with Cells"
- **March 11**, Ed Roberts '57, SM '58, SM '60, PhD '62, David Sarnoff Professor of Management of Technology, Founder and Chair of Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship, Co-Founder and Chair of MIT Sloan Entrepreneurship & Innovation MBA Track
- **May 13**, Eran Ben-Joseph, Head, Department of Urban Studies and Planning

MIT Hillel wishes a mazal tov to:

Shoshana Gibbor, MIT Hillel's Director of Birthright and Israel Programming, for earning an [Exemplar of Excellence Award](#) at Hillel International's Global Assembly in December.

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97 for being highlighted by International Hillel in their [News and Views blog](#).

If you have life-cycle events or milestones to share with the MIT Hillel community, please [let us know](#).

**Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal
Center for Jewish Life at MIT
40 Massachusetts Ave, Building W11
Cambridge, MA 02139**

Tel: 617.253.2982
hillel.mit.edu
Email: hillel@mit.edu

[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.

