



MIT Hillel Update



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

What does the Jewish proclivity for debate, humor, and great holidays all add up to?

MIT Hillel's Annual Latke-Hamentaschen Debate!

1. Tally Portnoi '17 and Prof John Carroll (Sloan) cheer for Team Latke.
2. The debate is about to begin. 10-250 is full and all are ready to laugh.
3. Noa Ghersin '14 rallies the crowd for Team Hamentaschen.

Videos soon to come!

Mentshn of Mention



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I am a sophomore majoring in mechanical engineering (course 2). I love being at MIT. Everyone is passionate about something. I look forward to going to my classes to learn something new and figure out how it can be used in new applications. I also love that torque, force, stress and strain are parts of everyday conversation, not just in lecture.

This year I took on the responsibility of being a Peer Network Engagement Intern, a Jewish intern at Hillel, with the goal of engaging more Jews in Jewish life. I started hosting "Shabbatlucks" this year. About once a month, a group of Jews get together on Friday night to celebrate Shabbat and the end of the week with a potluck dinner of delicious home cooked food. I wanted to create a place where people could celebrate Shabbat even if they lived far away from Hillel, so I began hosting these Shabbatlucks in my dorm, Next House, which is the farthest undergrad dorm from campus. These dinners are a great excuse to take a break from work, and they often last over two hours with us socializing after we eat. I have also organized events to celebrate holidays, including

Executive Director's Update



I could easily fill an entire message from activities of just the past week! Read on, and expect to become energized (and perhaps exhausted) from the descriptions alone.

One week ago, we kicked off Hillel Careers UnliMITed, 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 was Joanne Kamens P'15, PhD, Executive Director, Addgene and an MIT Hillel Board Member.

This past Friday was ShabbAM: Shabbat Across MIT. Instead of our weekly centralized Shabbat dinner, student hosts cooked and prepared meals, inviting friends from within their living groups to have more intimate Friday night dinners in their dorms and fraternities. More students than ever before participated, including many Birthright alumni, who continue to strengthen the relationships created during the 10 days in Israel and deepen the Jewish interests sparked by their trips.

Immediately following Shabbat, on Saturday night, MIT's ice hockey team hosted the [Israeli national ice hockey team](#) in an exhibition game. Our Engineers played well and were heartily cheered on by a Hillel section in the bleachers. I believe I now owe the new Israeli Consulate General, Yehuda Yaakov, (who threw out the first puck) a local Boston cream pie for their 7-6 victory over MIT. AJ Edelman, a Jewish senior who plays goalie for MIT, had this to say about the game: "I was in for the first 25, and we were winning 3-2 at that point. I am secure in the knowledge that for my 25 minutes we beat 'em!" For both sides it was a true win, "Go, Jews!"



By Sunday morning, a delegation of two students, Noa Ghersin '14 and Jesse Kirkpatrick '15, and two MIT Hillel staffers were in (what would become very snowy) DC for the AIPAC Policy Conference, meeting hundreds of fellow college students and mingling with 14,000 of their newest friends. In addition to absorbing information from sessions on amazing new Israeli technology, panels on





Hillel and Israel on campus, and conversations with Israeli and American politicians, the students emailed back to friends on campus that the MIT rabbis (meaning me and Rabbi Gavriel Goldfeder) could become the biggest thing on campus if we could learn from the powerful preaching style of the pro-Israel African-American Chicago South Side preacher who had 14,000 people enthusiastically standing, swaying and clapping during one General Assembly gathering.

As the last three paragraphs all illustrate, pro-Israel feeling at MIT is strong – and takes many positive forms and dimensions. Most students at MIT see Israel in light of the ideals of innovation, scientific and technological progress and entrepreneurial spirit that MIT elevates so highly. That, more so than politics on our extremely apolitical campus, drives Israel activity and Israel connection. We are having another strong registration season for Birthright and our unique summer MIT Birthright Extension that allows students to explore the hi-tech side of the country. A number of Hillel students will be in Israel this summer as part of [MIT's MEET](#) and/or [MISTI-Israel](#) programs. MIT Hillel was present at the J Street Conference earlier this year. A collaboration with the David Project has four students making allies among non-Jewish organizations on campus, as they regularly meet to become better educated about Israel. Hillel leaders organized showings of *The Gatekeepers* and *Waltzing with Bashir*, and moderated conversations following both movies focused on the use of cinema to promote a cause and allowed students to safely discuss and reflect upon their reactions to what they had seen.

To return to describing this week's events, I am writing today from South Florida. The weather, compared to the beginning of March in Boston, is incredible, though I'm not on vacation or at the beach. Our "Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT... On the Road" program was in Aventura, FL for the third year, creating community among Jewish alumni and parents while hearing from a leading MIT Jew. Our speaker was Paul Levy '72 (pictured center), a member of the MIT Hillel Board of Directors. His topic was about creating a culture that helps prevent accidents in hospitals. Thank you to him and to our hosts, Jose Waingarten and Elizabeth Laduzinski P'15 and (newly) P'18 as well (pictured). I also used the travel opportunity to recruit at Florida day schools, promoting our incredibly strong Jewish life at MIT. Have a high school student interested in MIT? Have her/him contact us! It's a great place to be a Jew.



Most of the past month was as packed, as will be March. Fun, education, and Jewish identity formation never end in Cambridge as we enrich the Jewish lives of our students to prepare them to later enrich the Jewish people and the world.

Finally, happy Purim! Pictured are are some virtual mishloach manot/Purim gifts from Michelle Teplensky '14 and Hillel staffer Marissa Feinman.



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

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by David A. Broniatowski, who received the following degrees from MIT: XVI-II SB '04; XVI SM '06; TPP SM '06; ESD PhD '10. He is currently assistant professor of Engineering Management and Systems Engineering at the George Washington University in Washington, DC. He can be reached at david.broniatowski@gmail.com

This drash is dedicated to the memory of Ajzyk, Regina (Mania), and Broneczek Broniatowski, may their memories be for a blessing.

Today, we celebrate the holiday of Purim with levity. People dress in costume, make jokes, and allow themselves to reach the point *ad de lo yada* – “until they do not know” – the difference between “Blessed be Mordechai” and “Cursed be Haman.” Reports of rabbis somersaulting and swinging from the chandeliers are not altogether unexpected; and yet, what is all the revelry about? There are several other events in the history of the Jewish people in which God miraculously intervened to save our collective skins from a genocidal oppressor. Why do we dress up and tell jokes on Purim and not on Pesach or Channuka? I believe that it is because the miracle of Purim was so great in magnitude – and the stakes were so high – that it could only be understood as absurd. The Jews of those days must have harbored a genuine fear of utter extinction. Such a fear, followed swiftly by total salvation, would have created a cognitive dissonance that could only be relieved through laughter. This is expressed in the megilla using the words *Nahafoch hu*, meaning “it was inverted” – everything – the very fabric of reality – was turned upside down.

celebrate holidays, including apples and honey in the Next House courtyard and shofar blowing on the giant swing at Next House.

My MIT experience has been enhanced by my Jewish connection through two wonderful Israel experiences. Last summer I went on the MIT Birthright trip, followed by an internship in Israel through MIT's international program, MISTI Israel. Our Birthright trip had a large number of MIT students on it as well as engineering students from other universities. It was amazing to experience Israel with these people and still be able to see them on campus on a daily basis. We were also able to visit the Weitzman Science Gardens with our Birthright trip, which was a giant science playground, a dream for MIT students.

Immediately after my Birthright trip, I spent 10 weeks as an intern in a lab at Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan working on a project involving antibacterial nanoparticles for use in textiles in hospitals. MIT placed over 50 Jewish and non-Jewish MIT students in internships in Israel last summer and brought us all together for five days in the middle of the summer for an in-country seminar. With such a large contingent of MIT students in Israel for the summer, there were plenty of opportunities for us to travel in large and small groups to explore the country on weekends.

I say “hi” to many people in the hallway and when asked how I know so many people, I often reply that the person is Jewish. MIT, through Hillel and other opportunities, has provided the opportunity for us to connect. Because there are relatively few Jews at MIT (less than 400 undergrads), there is often an instant connection that brings us together and enhances my MIT experience.

In addition to my Jewish activities, I am currently the president of the MIT Figure Skating Club. It is a lot of fun, and I relearned how to ice skate after forgetting most of what I learned from when I was little. Now I am preparing for our annual exhibition where I will skate in a group number and in an ice dance number. Ice-skating is a great break from problem sets.

Thank you for supporting

How did the miracle of Purim come about? Purim is generally understood as a holiday in which the role of God is hidden. Rather, God preferred to manifest His presence through the actions of his devoted followers Mordechai and Esther. Mordechai, known for the depth of his scholarship, and Esther, the Queen of Imperial Persia made the perfect team – Mordechai's wisdom was the perfect complement to Esther's temporal power. Together, they represent *Mens et Manus* and when they united to carry out God's commandments, the very nature of reality was changed in their favor.

This has sadly not always been the case. Nazi Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler carried out massacres throughout the Nazi Reich on a yearly basis, in "retribution" for the deaths of the ten sons of Haman. The timing of these massacres was no coincidence. Indeed, Hitler publicly stated that he considered himself Haman's heir and, 5 years earlier, his spokesman justified the events of Kristallnacht as a pre-emptive strike against the Jews who were supposedly going to do to the Germans what they had done to the Persians during the original Purim story.

So it was that on the Purim 5703, March 20th, 1943, Nazi forces stormed into the ghetto in Czestochowa, Poland, rounding up over 100 Jewish "intellectuals" (including doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, and other prominent community members) and their families. These people were led to the Czestochowa Jewish cemetery, where they were massacred by firing squad and buried in a mass grave. Among them were my great uncle, Ajzyk (Isaac) Broniatowski, his wife Mania, and their 11-year-old son Bronieczek.



Hitler's choice to target intellectuals was also no coincidence, for just as Mordechai and Esther were the leaders of their generation; Ajzyk and his compatriots represented the Jewish traditions of excellence in learning and practice in their own time. To Hitler, these holy martyrs presented a threat to everything that he stood for, and the ultimate means of his undoing.

Our MIT education emphasizing *Mens and Manus*, combined with our Jewish heritage, endows us with a special responsibility, for we have within us the potential to carry forth the best traditions of Esther and Mordechai. I pray that we are judged worthy to have reality altered in our favor this Purim and every Purim to come.

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.

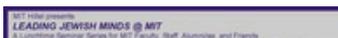
To inform us that you plan such a gift, download and send us a [pledge form](#).

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:

- **March 21: Irving Wladawsky Berger**, Visiting



MIT Hillel!

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



Lecturer at MIT's Sloan School of Management and Engineering Systems Division

- **April 25: Scott Aronson**, Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science



Birthright Summer Trip Registration: now open!

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.



MIT Hillel wishes a hearty "Mazal Tov" to:

- Matt Monheit '14 who was selected to the [2013 Men's College All-America Soccer Team](#), as announced by the Jewish Sports Review. He was one of 11 men's soccer players in Division II and III programs that was tabbed to the first team.
- Mazal tov to Gittel Klein (SM in MechE, '12) on her engagement to James Babendir

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