



In This Issue
 MIT Mentshn of Mention
 Director's Update
 Torah from Tech
 2014 Annual Fund
 Planned Giving
 On the Calendar

HAPPY PURIM!!

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

1. Graduate students Nate Zuk, Jasmine Florentine, Isaac Oderberg, Amelie Raz celebrate at Queen Esther's Ball
2. Purim fun at Hillel: Suri Bandler '17, Jason Fischman '17, Noam Buckman '16, Morris Alper '16
3. Taylor Pearl '15 makes a Purim bag of hamentaschen and goodies for friends.

Mentshn of Mention



Nate Zuk, Graduate Student
nzuk@mit.edu

Executive Director's Update

Happy Purim!



The month of Purim, the month of Adar, is one of my favorite months. I have a long standing tradition of wearing funny hats, a different one each day leading up to Purim, with the intent to make people smile, laugh, and take themselves less seriously. Whether it's the monster pictured to the left, or a fish, or lobster, or hamburger, or King Tut headdress, or money, or buffalo, they are all pretty ridiculous, and they do a fine job of bringing some comic relief to students, staff, faculty, chaplains, and campus.

Our students have embraced Purim in a number of creative ways this year:

- The student board spent the week tabling in Lobby 10. They sold Purim goodie bags with hamentaschen and candies to "send" to friends. All the money collected went to [Yad Chessed](#) for matanot l'evyonim (gifts to the poor), which distributes food on Purim to more than 500 Jewish families in need. The students who "received" the bags got an email telling them to come to Lobby 10 for pick up. Once at the table, the receivers, in turn, usually bought bags of their own. It was a brilliant rotating and cascading group of students interacting with Hillel board members and staff at the table. What made me particularly proud, is that the students connected with [all the practices of Purim](#) that usually get forgotten in the "Oh, that's the holiday you're supposed to get so drunk you don't know the difference between good Mordechai who saved the Jews and bad Haman who wanted to kill them..."
- Women in the Theta sorority had a hamentaschen baking party.
- Grad Hillel organized "Queen Esther's Ball" last night with MITKablum (MIT's LGBT Jewish group), a modern take on the Jewish calendar's most wild holiday. Students ate, danced, argued about the role of Esther's passing privilege in her ability to save the Jewish people, and competed for best costume.



My name is Nate, and I am a 4th year graduate student in both the Health Science and Technology program (jointly affiliated with Harvard and MIT), and the Speech and Hearing Bioscience and Technology (SHBT) program at Harvard. My research focuses on the transmission of information in the auditory system. As an undergrad I studied biomedical engineering at the University of Rochester. There I discovered that I could combine my interest in sound with my interest in biomedical engineering by studying the neuroscience of the auditory system. I never thought about applying to MIT until a principle investigator I worked for at Purdue university encouraged me in that direction. I feel very privileged to be here at MIT.

Many of my classmates are Harvard students, but when I joined the SHBT program it was still affiliated with MIT. Coming to MIT was one of my first times in Boston so I didn't know anyone. Back at Rochester I was moderately involved in Hillel for the social atmosphere, and many of my friends in the juggling club were also very involved in Hillel. With this in mind, I thought the Grad Hillel shabbat dinners would be a great way of meeting people. Grad Hillel was one of my first social

- Mystery organizers, called "Shushan Associates", put on a banquet meal this afternoon.
- Of course, there were megillah readings, the traditional chanting of the story of the Book of Esther.
- Purim is popular... to keep the celebrations alive, the undergraduates are throwing another Purim costume party on Saturday night.

There is a lot to love about Adar... our students embracing fun, taking helping others seriously, and connecting more deeply to each other are just a few reasons to be proud to be an MIT Jew.

Purim sameach,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM'97
rabbif@mit.edu



Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Sophie Rapoport '07 (Course 18). Sophie has been teaching and working in the Jewish world in New York and Nashville since graduating from Pardes with a Masters in Jewish Education in 2009. She has loved being a professional Jew, but is delighted to be transitioning into software development at the end of the school year! She can be reached at rapoport@alum.mit.edu.

In memory of Miriam Halachmi z'l, who moved all who were skilled (and those who were not yet skilled) to give of their time and energy to the school she oversaw, and the synagogue she loved.

The end of the Book of Exodus deals with the construction of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, where God's presence is to abide among the Israelites as they travel through the desert. God tells Moses to have the Israelites collect donations to build a sanctuary in which he will dwell. He then dictates the architectural plans, which Moses is to have the Israelites carry out.

In this week's Torah reading, Parashat Ki Tisa, the collections for the Mishkan begin, as each member of the community is called to contribute a half-shekel toward a census, whose proceeds fund a copper laver for the Priests. God then singles out Betzalel, who is divinely endowed with artistic skill and talent, to oversee the design and building of the Mishkan.

These plans, however, are waylaid as Moses' delay on Mount Sinai induces panic. The Israelites proceed to build the golden calf, and Moses shatters the tablets at the foot of the mountain. Ultimately, God forgives the people, and offers a renewed covenant. Moses again goes up the mountain to carve the tablets, and when he returns, his face radiates with divine glory, causing the people to shrink back in fear. God's presence will again dwell among the Israelites, but an unbridgeable gap remains between heaven and earth.

This year, in comparing the instructions for building the Tabernacle given in Parashat Terumah and Parashat Vayakhel, I noticed a striking shift in project management strategy. In Parashat Terumah, we read God's instructions to Moses:

*Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him. And these are the gifts that you shall accept from them: gold, silver, and copper; blue, purple, and crimson yarns, fine linen, goats' hair; tanned ram skins, dolphin skins, and acacia wood; oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the aromatic incense; lapis lazuli and other stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. **And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. Exactly as I show you — the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings — so shall you make it.***

According to the initial description, the tabernacle is to be crafted from materials donated by anyone whose heart moves him, exactly according to God's blueprint. In fact, God was to be directly involved at every level of the project. God's finger etched the words into the original stone tablets which were to be placed in the ark. God selected the artisans Bezalel and Oholiav, who were to build the Mishkan EXACTLY as God showed Moses. This plan, however well it may have worked in theory, never makes it to the people and is never executed.

With Moses gone, the people propose a divine building project of their own devising: a god to walk before them. Aaron is eager to appease the masses, and launches a successful campaign to collect gold for an idol.

Fast forward three Parshiot and we read Moses' instructions to the Israelites:

Take from among you gifts to the Lord; everyone whose heart so moves him shall bring them — gifts for the Lord: gold, silver, and copper; blue, purple, and crimson yarns, fine linen, and goats' hair; tanned ram skins, dolphin skins, and acacia wood; oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the aromatic incense; lapis lazuli and other stones for setting, for the ephod and the breastpiece.

mine) was one of my first social circles at MIT, and I met many of my current friends though these shabbat dinners.

I've been amazed by the sense of community among graduate students at MIT, and the number of events available for graduate students (many of my college friends have told me that I sound like a freshman). Grad Hillel is no exception. I have been on the Grad Hillel Student Board for a few years helping organize events, and I am currently the Treasurer of Grad Hillel. In my 1st year, I joined the Jewish a cappella group Techiya, and was music director for a few years. I never imagined that I would be so involved in the MIT graduate community. In fact, I had never been an executive board member nor a leader of a student group until becoming a graduate student at MIT.

Grad Hillel is also very open to the 20-30s Jewish community in Cambridge. When college and high school friends would come to Boston for work, I've invited them to come to one of our holiday events or our Shabbat dinners. A number of them have met lots of people in the area that they wouldn't have so easily otherwise. I think this is one of the best qualities of being a part of Grad Hillel. The Jewish holidays are all about community building --

getting people together, inviting strangers into your home to join a meal. Grad Hillel has helped shape my experience at MIT by doing this so well, and I think it's improved the experience of living in the Cambridge/Boston area for many of my friends outside of MIT as well.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



And let all among you who are skilled come and make all that the Lord has commanded:

The raw materials and plans are the same as the original, but the scope of communal involvement in the project has been broadened. Not only are the people to bring the materials they are moved to donate, but they are invited to give of their skills as well. The result of Moses' building fund appeal? The people are so generous with their gifts that Moses must command them to stop giving!

Aaron's failure as a leader stemmed from a lack of vision. He succeeded in collecting donations from a wide swath of the community by giving into their immediate fears and desires. Moses, on the other hand, brings God's plan to fruition by inviting the entire community to give of their talents.

Project management is difficult, and requires delicately balancing a firm vision with faith in the skills of the people who are to bring the project to life. This is compounded when working with volunteers, who may be untrained, but often have tremendous untapped talent. The best community leaders, like Moses, are able to channel these hidden talents among their members toward a sacred purpose.

May we all be blessed with teachers like Moses who help us to use our skills to build a home for God in this world, and may we apply his wisdom as we teach our own colleagues, students, and children.

Purim Sameach!

MIT Hillel's 2015 Annual Fund

Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To our current and future supporters:

MIT prides itself on being a meritocracy and a welcome place for first-generation college students. In the post WWII era the student body here was as much as one-third Jewish. At that time, we Jews were represented well beyond our 2 percent share of the general population, all the more so because MIT never had quotas against Jews, as many institutions did at the time. As a result, Hillel's alumni donor base today is exceptionally broad.

Today on campus, Jewish students make up about 10 percent of the student body, still many times above our demographics. The long-term strategic implication of this is that future generations of MIT Hillel will not be supported by a donor base that is triple the size of the current

user base. In order to plan for that eventuality, our needs go above and beyond our annual budget.

We are very pleased to announce that MIT Hillel was accepted into Hillel International's Life & Legacy initiative, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. This is a follow-up to a similar program we did three years ago, and MIT Hillel is one of only four schools across the country to be selected for both iterations. With training from Hillel International provided by support from Grinspoon, we are working to strengthen our foundation by growing our endowment.

Our donor records go back to 1990, and one quarter of our current donors gave us a gift back then. Many of these donors have been with us every single year over that tenure, and some no doubt go further back. If you are among those who have chosen to support Jewish life at MIT over a lifetime, perhaps you will consider a gift to endow Hillel as part of your personal legacy. Michelle and I are excited about connecting with MIT Hillel's most enduring supporters over the next two years.

Of course, we stay focused on today as well. We invite you to [join us this year](#) in supporting Jewish life on campus. Here is an [overview of our needs](#) this year. We are always happy to meet with donors in person, to learn why MIT Hillel is important to you and to talk about why your support makes all the difference.

It is an honor to join with you in maintaining and building a strong Jewish presence at MIT.

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

Add your name to MIT Hillel's 2015 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

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT Spring line-up

- **Friday, March 20** – Felice Frankel, Research Scientist, Center for Materials Science and Engineering
- **Friday, May 1** – Alan Guth, Victor F. Weisskopf Professor of Physics and MacVicar Faculty Fellow

SAVE THE DATE

Something new for Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT! Local alumni – have you always wanted to attend an LJM lunch seminar, but never been free on a Friday at noon? Now is your chance! We are pleased to announce that Danny Weitzner of CSAIL will reprise his talk from last semester in an evening event. Details to follow, but mark your calendar for the evening of Wednesday, May 13. Help us plan for space – if you think you might attend this event, [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
mit.edu/hillel
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.

DELIVERED
BY
**Vertical
response**
Try It Free Today!