



## MIT Hillel Update



### Greetings to Alumni, Parents, and Friends in Cambridge and Beyond...

Pictured Above:

Graduate and undergraduate students alike enjoy post-Passover hametz/bread. AEPi sponsored a "Bread Bash" Tuesday night immediately after the holiday, and the Reform Havurah continued the celebration of leaven for a second day with a Post-Passover Pizza Party.

1. Ethan Sokol G, Morrissa Brenner '13, Beth Cholst '16, Aviva Siegel '13
2. Kristine Fong, Grad Hillel

### Executive Director's Update



Food – in all its forms – was definitely the theme of the past four weeks. Maybe that's no surprise, we Jews do like to eat and celebrate, and the motto of many a campus event is "if you feed them, they will come!"

Pies were the theme of the Pi Day study break on 3/14 (group photo of some participants, with the pie remains front and center). While students were

downing pastry delights, regular action admitted students waited for their 6:28pm announcement from the Admissions Office. I have already been in contact with over ninety Jewish high school seniors who have been admitted to the class of 2017. We look forward to meeting and greeting many of them next week at Campus Preview Weekend. We have many (food based) activities planned.



Our second annual Greek Shabbat brought together dozens of Jewish fraternity and sorority students, keeping the Ides of March at bay mid-month. Our campus greeks bonded through shared Jewish experiences over a catered Shabbat dinner at Kappa Sigma.

And then there was Passover. The holiday of matzah. The holiday of suffering. The holiday of complaining about what we can and cannot eat. This year, Passover fell during Spring Break, and I've been hearing great stories from students about their seders at home with families. One favorite is the sophomore who led last year's Hillel seder on campus, and took his newly acquired skill back home to lead his family seder this year. Back on campus, I "adopted" many of the Jewish athletes who remained in Cambridge for Break. Rearranging my living room and dining room to make space, we had two very MIT seders at my home.

If we like Passover, I think we Jews like post-Passover even more. On campus, there wasn't one night of



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### Mentsh'n of Mention



Paige Finkelstein '14  
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Shalom everyone! My name is Paige Finkelstein and I am a junior double majoring in Courses 10 (Chemical Engineering) and 7 (Biology) and double minoring in STS (Science, Technology, and Society) and Course 5 (Chemistry). I originally hail from South Florida, and was attracted to MIT by the endless opportunities given to students here as well as the eclectic Boston/Cambridge population. At MIT I am involved in a ton of student activities. Besides Hillel, I'm class representative of the MIT chapter of American Institute of Chemical Engineers, play for the varsity lacrosse team, serve as an associate advisor for freshmen, an associate chemical engineering advisor for sophomores, a Board Member of the Harvard/MIT Coop, and I am a member of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority.

Outside of MIT I volunteer as an EMT with a local EMS company, volunteer in the NICU at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and work

celebrating eating bread, but two! AEPi, the Jewish sorority on campus, hosted a bread bash immediately after the holiday, and 24 hours later the party continued with a Reform Havurah make-your-own pizza party.



I'm recommending to all students, staff, and faculty that we now hit the gym. Carbs are high in calories, too.

L'shalom,  
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

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## Torah from Tech



*Our Torah this month is taught by Joshua Wise '97 (course 9, after starting out course 2), who then earned an MA in psychology and made his way into K12 education. He is now an assistant principal at the Rav Teitz Mesivta Academy, Jewish Educational Center in Elizabeth, NJ, and is finishing up an EdD in educational administration. He can be reached at [shwize@alum.mit.edu](mailto:shwize@alum.mit.edu).*

As I write this, another Pesach/Passover holiday is now behind us, leaving us to think about the takeaways from the seder and, of course, what to do with all this uneaten matzah. To begin with, it is important to recall that at the seder, we spoke about our transformation from slavery to freedom. But what was really the goal of the Exodus? Was it simply to free the Jewish people from their Egyptian taskmasters? Well, if it were, wouldn't God just have skipped the first nine plagues and gone right to the death of the firstborn? Or even better – just kill all of the Egyptians in one shot! Clearly, God was just getting started.

Immediately following the discussion of Pesach in the Torah is Shavuot. Shavuot marks the climax of the Exodus from Egypt with God's revelation of the ten commandments at Mount Sinai. God himself speaks to the Jewish people! A nation that just two months earlier escaped from slavery. God had taken the Jews out of Egypt for a purpose and here it is - to receive the Torah.

Curiously, though, Shavuot is unique among the biblical holidays in that it is not listed with a date. Rather, we are instructed to count "7 full weeks" beginning with the second day of Pesach, with Shavuot being the 50<sup>th</sup> day of this count. But why the need for counting? Couldn't the Torah just give us a date as it did for Pesach and Sukkot?

The Torah directs us to count because Shavuot and Pesach are connected. This is the count of the Omer. Every day for seven weeks a barley offering was brought in the Temple to prepare us for the holiday. This was a joyous time which marked the advance towards the holiday of Shavuot, which commemorates the receiving of Torah at Mount Sinai. (It wasn't until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. that the time between Pesach and Shavuot became a period of semi-mourning). So then, the better question might even be – shouldn't this be a countdown? If Shavuot is what we are looking forward to, wouldn't it be more dramatic to count how many days are left until the super special holiday of Shavuot?

The answer comes back to the transformation from slavery to freedom. In Egypt, the Jewish people had spiritually sunk to a catastrophic level. And yet, in just a few short weeks, they elevated themselves to the point where they were worthy to stand at Mount Sinai. What was their secret? They changed their behaviors and habits one day at a time. It's like the old joke – "How do you eat an elephant? – One bite at a time." There's no secret here. One day at a time, one step at a time. Pesach and Sukkot, which have dates listed in the Torah, arrive whether we are ready or not. Shavuot represented by the receiving the Torah, on the other hand, is a function of our hard work and desire. Let's go for it!

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## MIT Hillel's 2013 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.

women's hospital, and work at Boston Medical Center in the phlebotomy/EKG department.

I also founded Project Helmet, an initiative where I received a large grant to purchase and distribute free bicycle helmets to the MIT community. Last month I distributed 80 helmets in under 15 minutes; I now have over 250 more requests!

I was brought to Hillel because my Jewish heritage was important for me to maintain in college. Going to synagogue on high holidays and participating in a Shabbat dinner every once in a while was something special that I did with my family at home, and they were traditions I did not want to lose just because I went to college. At Hillel, I have met a bunch of friends and other students who share similar values as I do – it's pretty nice knowing I'm not the only person craving some challah over Passover!

Because of Hillel, last summer I had the opportunity to participate in Birthright (a free trip to Israel for Jews!). This summer I am participating in MISTI-Israel (my research will be fully funded). My MIT experience has been positively influenced by my involvement at Hillel, and I'm looking forward to getting to participate in more events in the future!

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## Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



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 2013 Donor Roll!

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### 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 Danny Watt, MIT Hillel's Director of Development, [dwatt@mit.edu](mailto:d watt@mit.edu).

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### On the Hillel Calendar

#### Thursday, April 11 - Sunday, April 14: Campus Preview Weekend

Know a newly admitted Jewish pre-frosh? Please [let us know](#), and we'll wish them a mazal tov.

#### Friday, April 12: Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT: David

**Kaiser**, Germeshausen Professor of the History of Science Department Head, Program in Science, Technology and Society Senior Lecturer, Department of Physics. "Einstein's Legacy: Studying Gravity in War and Peace." [Let us know](#) if you are available and can attend.



**Friday, May 3: Richard "Dick" Wurtman**, Cecil H. Green Distinguished Professor Emeritus, "A New Strategy for Ameliorating the Memory Disturbances of Alzheimer's Disease"

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