Greetings from Cambridge
to MIT's Jewish alumni, parents, and friends
on campus and around the globe!

The Students, Board, and Staff of MIT Hillel

1. Toasting our seniors! Pictured, left to right: Sara Dahan, Neta Batscha, Benjamin Francis.

2. Mazal tov, Graduates! Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM'97 celebrates at Hillel's Reunion Reception on Commencement Day with Hannah Durschlag SMBT'12 and Greg Steinbrecher '12

3. MIT Hillel ConneCTech delegates visit Google-Israel with their Hillel Haifa-Technion counterparts. Check out their blog to learn more!

Executive Director’s Update

Mazal tov, Class of 2012!

It was a pleasure greeting, wishing “Mazal Tov,” and high five-ing the graduating seniors and graduate students as they marched past the Religious Activities Center this morning. A bittersweet pleasure I will admit, as I again come to grips with the post-commencement reality that as students embark on new beyond-MIT adventures, it means less frequent personal interactions. I will miss the coffee dates and unplanned Infinite Corridor chats, even as I wish our students great success and meaning as MIT alumni. Stay in touch!

The return of so many Jewish alumni for reunions and to our annual Hillel Reception also brought a well-worn smile to my face. It was a joy to welcome so many of you back. I’m looking forward to Shabbat dinner with more of you tonight – kosher food prepared on campus; a limited taste of the new kosher options at MIT.

While we’ve been celebrating on campus, continuing students have been traveling throughout Israel. MIT Hillel’s first ConneCTech delegation bonded with Hillel students at the Technion in Haifa. Students on both campuses spent the year studying ethical and moral challenges in science through the lens of Jewish texts, and volunteering to improve their home communities. Now they are learning about each other, about Jewish identity in the US and Israel, and about science, technology, and community service in Israel. Many thanks to Boston’s Combined Jewish Philanthropies and the Boston-Haifa Connection for their support in making this incredible opportunity a reality. Here’s an excerpt from the ConneCTech blog about their Shabbat experience: “Imagine our surprise when we heard that the people in this kibbutz [Hanaton] were real-life pioneers! What? How could members of a socialist movement started one hundred years ago be pioneers? We soon found out that this was no ordinary kibbutz. Unlike most kibbutzim, which are primarily secular (a few kibbutzim are orthodox), this kibbutz is the first and (so far) the only kibbutz in Israel where Conservative, Orthodox, as well as Reform Jews actively engage...”

Mentshn of Mention

Jason Strauss ’12 (Course 6), strauss@mit.edu

MIT students have different ways of escaping the rigors and stresses of being an MIT student: sports, sleeping, parties, etc. For four years, my person favorite was - Shabbat Dinner.

I just finished senior year and have been attending Hillel events since my first week at MIT. I grew up in Long Island, NY and attended a private Jewish day school. After visiting MIT during Campus Preview Weekend and seeing the curious research and outlandish personal projects that students work on, I had to accept! The first Friday night of freshman year, I attended Shabbat dinner at Hillel and made friends who would be some of my closest friends throughout my four years at MIT.

Coming to MIT, I wasn’t quite sure what to study and took a variety of classes ranging from entrepreneurship to toy product design, a primer on mechanical engineering. After my first software class, I promptly declared Course 6 (read: Electrical Engineering & Computer Science).

The summer following my freshman year, MIT Hillel organized a trip to Israel to
recognizes that his people are not only physically removed from the
deeply meaningful, the distinction in these two terms is extremely crucial and poignant. The
reason God is angered in this chapter and postpones the people entering the
land of Israel is because the people have not only physically removed from the
mountain, but have committed an even greater sin – they are emotionally
removed from God. God understands that Bnei Yisrael currently have the wrong attitude and thus, even though Paran is so close to Eretz Yisrael, the people are condemned to wandering as opposed to entering the promised land with the wrong attitude and a lack of devotion to God.

This week is not only that of Parshat Bha’alotcha, but it is also the weekend of the graduation of the 2012’s! As a student of this class, I can attest to the fact that we each have spent the last four years working extremely hard, gathering skills that will hopefully be useful for a very long time and have also helped build a strong, lasting community at Hillel and in various other organizations. As students, we each have a great devotion to MIT, and although I am extremely excited to enter the post-college world and put my skills to use, similar to Bnei Yisrael, I am also nervous regarding the future.

Bnei Yisrael wandered the desert for years and began to lose faith, doubting that the future held promise – maybe Egypt or Mt. Sinai were better than Paran or the future land of Israel? We, as upcoming graduates, are at a similar intersection – MIT has been an unbelievably emotionally and intellectually nourishing place for us, so are we entering the “promised” land or actually leaving it? In a way, I believe that we are doing both. MIT, over the past four years, has been a “promised” land for us, helping to mold us, provide us with an unbelievable set of resources and inspire us to use science and engineering to help better the world. Now, we must enter the world, utilizing the skills MIT has given us, and help turn the current world into a “promised” land.

MIT Hillel’s 2012 Annual Fund
Add to Jewish life @ MIT!

Generosity and annual support from alumni, parents, faculty, and friends contributes to a depth of Jewish life, experiences, and growth for the Jews and Jewish community of MIT.

If you like what you read and hear about Jewish life at MIT, add your name to MIT Hillel’s 2012 Donor Roll.

Find out who supports Jewish Life @ MIT.

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Tamid Initiative - Planned Giving @ MIT Hillel

Endowment and legacy gifts truly sustain and build an organization. MIT Hillel is excited to help alumni and friends to create their personal Jewish legacies at MIT.

MIT Hillel invites alumni and friends to consider joining MIT’s Katharine Dexter McCormick (1904) Society (KDMS) and be part of MIT Hillel’s Tamid Initiative by making a planned gift or bequest to MIT for the benefit of MIT Hillel. Your generosity will help MIT Hillel engage the 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