



MIT Hillel Update



Hag Sukkot Sameach/Happy Sukkot from MIT Hillel!

A happy, healthy, meaningful new Jewish and academic year!

The Students, Board, and Staff of MIT Hillel

Executive Director's Update



Hag sameach! Happy Sukkot! What a great metaphor this holiday is for our students. On Sukkot, we are taught to move from our familiar and safe homes and structures to the temporary, new, vulnerable space of the sukkah. This holiday occurs as our students move from the relative comfort of high school and home to the exciting and even sometimes scary growth of the college and grad school years. It is an incredible opportunity and blessing to be working with these emerging adults!

As part of the excitement of the return to campus, MIT Hillel immediately jumped into student engagement and programming. Three Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur services and multiple holiday meals attracted students, alumni, and faculty over the High Holy Days. On the second night of Rosh Hashana, we had a particularly meaningful evening when the Muslim Student Association and Hillel held a joint dinner to celebrate the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the Jewish New Year. Over 40 students attended, a 50/50 mix of Jews and Muslims, and learned from and with each other, and in the words of one, "...realized that, at the core, we were just students hanging out with other MIT students." (At the end of this week, look for a write-up on the evening in the Campus section of the [MIT News office website](#).)

During Rosh Hashana Conservative services, my address to the students encouraged them to more deeply connect with Israel, through visits, advocacy, and personal knowledge. I was not just sermonizing; I offered opportunities. Four Technion undergraduates came to MIT this fall to work in MIT labs, an experience organized by Hillel students involved in our Hibur program; having these Israelis at our September Sukkot events helped build new connections and friendships. Birthright registration

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MIT Spotlight:

Menschen of Mention



Sharone Small '14

My name is Sharone Small, and I hail from West Hartford, CT. I came to MIT hoping to major in Course 1C (that's civil engineering).

Last year I visited several colleges as I decided where to apply and then where to attend school. To be honest, the first thing MIT accrued in its favor was when the tour guide pointed to my rainbow-striped knee-socks and said, "Nice socks." This experience started my growing sense of the friendliness and excitement found on the MIT campus. The quirky, intelligent "personality" of MIT has been evidenced by many of my experiences so far, from the system of numbers and acronyms that apply to absolutely everything, to the demonstration of how to make

was strong again for this upcoming winter's trip, and we are looking forward to taking these participants on our first-ever MIT Birthright Extension, highlighting the HiTech-side of Israel. Finally, later in the term, the Israeli Consulate is bringing [Neil Lazarus](#), an Israeli communications consultant, to Boston and MIT Hillel to teach effective advocacy skills.

We know at MIT that time does not stand still – and neither does MIT Hillel. I look forward to continuing to update you on the Jewish energy and passion and activity on campus!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Benjamin Epstein '10, Course 20. He can be contacted at bepstein@alum.mit.edu.

Judaism: Intelligently Engineered, Scientifically Sound

Jewish tradition has always played a significant role in my life. Since my recent graduation from MIT, however, I wondered: what would happen if I subjected my culture to the sort of analysis I studied for four years? Does our Jewish way stand up to the rigor of a solid engineering project? Of a good scientific paper? I decided to examine two engineering and two scientific benchmarks to see what I found.

Group design: Every good engineering design class has one distinct feature: design projects are done in groups, whether designing road systems or new drugs. Indeed, we similarly see in the Talmud that little is unilaterally declared. Nearly every tradition is debated and challenged, and the conclusion is the result of thorough discussion if not actual confluence of opinions.

Realistic constraints: While keeping an ideal in mind, Jewish tradition works within the boundaries of reality. Economic viability is a relevant concern to ritual obligations, for instance, and non-ideal circumstances are addressed fully and not dismissed as invalid. The Torah also describes itself as accessible to every person and not solely the spiritual elite – a user-friendly tradition, noting about itself that “it is not too baffling for you” (Deut. 30:11).

Peer review: All good scientific publications are peer reviewed by a third party. The Torah explicitly supports such peer review of itself. Moses claims that when the nations of the world see Judaism manifest, they will exclaim, “Surely that great nation is a wise and discerning people!” (Deut. 4:6). Judaism expects to create a tradition that is not only internally consistent but valuable from an objective perspective as well.

Source citations: Scientific papers are laden with copious references. Nearly every rabbinical statement, whether in the Talmud or the writings of Maimonides, explicitly

ice cream out of liquid nitrogen. Another great example of this spirit is the atmosphere of MIT Hillel.

I first came to Hillel for its kosher food and Shabbat services. After I spent Saturday afternoon during Campus Preview Weekend as a pre-frosh playing board games in W11 (the Religious Life building where the Hillel Center is located), I knew I would find more: a small but strong Jewish community, friends for Friday night *Tisches* (gatherings to share food and song), Saturday board games, and leftovers eaten at *Seudot Shlishit* (the Saturday afternoon/evening meal). By the end of Orientation week, I appreciated that the students' level of responsibility and commitment was another unique asset of MIT Hillel.

This year I'm looking forward to the challenging classes (especially my engaging chemistry lectures in 3.091), painting my room over the Independent Activities Period in January, and times at Hillel with friends on Shabbat and holidays to just relax and play Munchkin after an intense week.

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



cites Biblical verses as background and provides complete cross-referencing to other relevant or source material. Indeed, the sides of a page of Talmud overflow with citations to verses and rabbinic statements.

While this analysis may be entertaining, it does contain something valuable. It suggests that our tradition and culture takes itself seriously – as seriously as an engineering project. Like a product design, it expects to have value and function for real people within the constraints of the real world. It trusts no individual's opinions alone. Derivations are not hidden behind veils of secrecy; transparency overflows the pages of our literature, allowing anybody to both confirm and delve fully into traditions for themselves, as well as facilitating continued development and challenge. It even submits itself to the burden of proof of external validation. As scientists and engineers, we should be proud of our heritage, for it is a heritage that takes itself seriously and therefore allows us and invites us to access it and engage with it just as honestly and seriously as well.

Todah Rabbah/Thanks to our Donors!

Thank you to our Donors!

Thank you to all of our [2010 Annual Donors](#)! Thanks to your leadership and support we are able to provide a depth of Jewish life, experiences and growth for the Jews and Jewish community of MIT.

We look forward to your [continued support](#) for Jewish life at MIT!

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT

From strength to strength...

The first year of Hillel's Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT faculty lunch seminar series was a great success including such prominent speakers as:

- John M. Deutch '61, PhD '66, Institute Professor: "Correcting the Shortcomings of US Energy Policy, 1973-2010"
- Mildred S. Dresselhaus, Institute Professor of Physics and Electrical Engineering and one of the first women faculty at MIT: "My Adventures with Nanostructures"
- Jonathan Gruber '87, Professor of Economics and Director of Health Care Program at the National Bureau of Economic Research: "Health Reform in the U.S.: Where are We and Where Do We Go from Here?"
- Samuel Jay Keyser, MIT linguistics and philosophy professor emeritus, and Nancy Kelly, former Administrative Officer in the Office of the President at MIT: "Mulling the Balkans"
- Robert Weinberg '64, PhD '69: "What Our DNA Tells Us About Our Origins: Origins of Humanity and Origins of Ashkenazi Jews"

Our second year begins with Professor Christine Ortiz, Dean of Graduate Education and Director MISTI-Israel (see [calendar](#) below). Rounding off the fall semester will be David Mindell PhD '96, Professor of History of Manufacturing & Technology, ESD & Director of Science, Technology and Society and Bob Langer SM '48, Institute Professor and Professor of Chemical Engineering & Biological Engineering.

\$4 Shabbat

\$4 Shabbat dinners! Instituted last year with the help of generous parent and alumni support, these dinners are continuing this year – with a new \$100 subscription plan to cover the full year. Last year's success was measured in increased participation numbers and decreased end-of-the-week stress.



Email [\\$4shabbat@mit.edu](mailto:$4shabbat@mit.edu) for more information, or call Hillel at 617-253-2982 to register.

On the Hillel Calendar

Leading Jewish Minds, Season II Kicks Off: Friday, October 15, Featuring Prof. Christine Ortiz, Dean of Graduate Education, Director MISTI-Israel. [Join us!](#)

MIT Family Weekend, October 15-17. Sign up for Shabbat dinner by Wednesday, October 13, kosher@mit.edu, \$20/person (\$4/student).

Boston Young Alumni Bar Night, Nosh, Schmooze & Booze: Monday, October 18, 2010, 7-9 pm, Tavern in the Square, 720 Mass Ave. RSVP by October 13 to hillelsvp@mit.edu.

MIT Alumni Leadership Conference, October 22-24. [ALC Details](#). Come to [Shabbat dinner](#) at Hillel on Friday night, 7 pm.

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