



MIT Hillel Update



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

Pictured above, left to right:

1. **Welcome to MIT Hillel, Class of 2015!** (back, L-R:) Elisha Yadgaran, Greg Kravit, Jesse Kirkpatrick, Barbara Schloss, Jen Plotkin, Inbar Yamin and (front, L-R:) Ben Niewood, Ben Schreck, Lee Gross enjoy dinner at Hillel
2. **MIT Grad Students Conquer the Boston Harbor Islands:** Left to right: Ethan Sokol, Isaac Oderberg, Anna Tarakanova, Naomi Stein, Jeremy Sher
3. **Grads relax at a Summer Concert in Boston:** (L-R:) Hannah Durschlag, Daniel Steinbrook, Naomi Stein, Alan Deckelbaum

Executive Director's Update



For a couple of weeks now, I have been watching the arrival of the Class of 2015 -- and smiling right along with them as their eagerness for MIT infuses campus with expectations of fresh, new beginnings (even through a move-in weekend tropical storm). It's a wonderful time to be in a college environment!

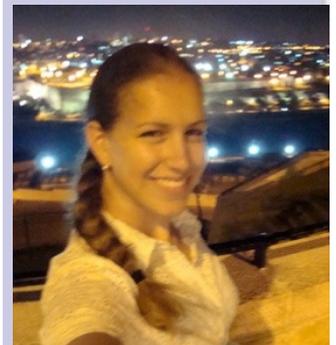
MIT Hillel -- our staff, our student leaders, and our unlimited energy -- are ready to engage the incoming freshman and first-year graduate students. Four undergraduates joined me, Eliad Shmuel, Hillel's Program Director, and Shoshana Gibbor, Hillel's Birthright Coordinator, at an international Hillel Institute this summer. 500 students and hundreds more Hillel professionals gathered for a week to train, grow, celebrate, and learn from each other. Leadership and community organizing skills were the focus -- skills immediately put to use during last week's Orientation Week. Student leadership growth is one of our core areas of focus this year.

With four weeks to reach out and meet students before the High Holy Days, FYSH (First Year Students at MIT) events are drawing well.

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Menschen of Mention



Aviva Siegel '13

My name is Aviva. I'm a junior at MIT studying applied math with a concentration in linguistics. I'm originally from outside Boston, a suburb called Natick. When I applied to MIT three years ago, I actually had no intention of coming here. I wanted to go to a liberal arts school. But I really liked the figure skating club on campus, and I had an amazing time at Campus Preview Weekend. It also helped that MIT gave me quite a bit of money. So I am here, and I am absolutely loving every minute of it. I would not want to be anywhere else in the world.

I first came to Hillel for Friday night Shabbat services. I was looking to engage more with my Judaism, and as a Reform Jew,

The long-anticipated opening of Maseeh Hall with its kosher eatery ([see below](#)) represents a momentous change for the Jewish community at the Institute. Spread the word that kosher dining and kosher catering are now available at MIT. [The press is fantastic!](#) The food is even better!

All the excitement can be overwhelming – not so different from a first-year’s initial visit to her academic advisor. Hillel is here for the communal support, down-time, and Jewish growth that can and will accompany the rigorous MIT experience. I look forward to sharing it all with you, our alumni, parents, and friends as the year progresses.

L’shalom,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Jeremy Barkan [Course V '81]. Jeremy lives in Jerusalem with his wife Lisa and sons Shachar and Haim; the Barkans welcomed MIT Birthright Extension students into their home this past June. Jeremy is a graduate of the Weizmann Institute and has an MBA from the Kellogg – Recanati MBA program. Jeremy made aliyah shortly after finishing MIT, and keeps himself and his clients busy by helping develop software. When he’s not working with one startup or another, you can find him working with

[Livnot U Lehibanot](#) or on a run around Jerusalem. He can be reached at barkan@alum.mit.edu.

Yerushalayim/Jerusalem is most often described by the richness of its images – “Jerusalem of Gold,” of its streets that span decades and centuries, and of many faces of its very heterogeneous population. In the month of Elul leading up to Rosh Hashana, Yerushalayim is remarkable for its sounds; for the early morning calls to “*Selichot*” [penitential prayers of the High Holy Day season], of school children harmonizing the traditional sing-song of the holiday season, of the hustle and bustle of harried shoppers in the *Machane Yehuda* market looking for the “*Simanim*,” special fruits of Rosh Hashana. However, no other sound is more prominent than the early morning *Tekiyot*/blasts of the Shofar. This morning, I used my son Haim’s shofar. Since Haim hears with the assistance of two cochlear implants, his hearing and blowing of the shofar has special significance.

However, quite to my surprise, the Musaf/additional service of Rosh Hashana begs a comparison between Shofar and prayer.

In the daily weekday Amida prayers, the blessing of *Sh’ma Koleinu* concludes “For You listen with compassion to the prayer of Your people Israel. Blessed are You, God, who listens to prayer.”

In the Musaf of Rosh Hashana, the blessing of the special *Shofarot* section concludes, “For it is You who listens to the sound of the shofar and hears the ‘tru’ah’ and none is like You. Blessed are You, God, who hears the sounds of the tru’ah of

the simplest way I knew to do that was through Friday night services. After just a few weeks of attending almost every week, I came to realize how beneficial to my stressful MIT life this was. Celebrating Shabbat allows me to take a deep breath after a week of academic work and remind myself what my priorities are.

Hillel thus is very important to my mental health. Many MIT students forget how important it is to feed their mental health, since it never gives tests nor conflicts directly with academics, but I work hard to prioritize treating myself well. As a result of that, I am at the Hillel building pretty regularly and have grown close with several other Jewish students there. I try to stay for Shabbat dinner most weeks, which is a great opportunity to socialize. This also allows me to meet students who identify with other movements within Judaism. I often sit at dinner with a group of students who attend MCM (MIT Conservative Minyan) services. However, I don’t spend much time with my friends from Hillel elsewhere on campus. One of my key goals for this coming year is to build a few more close friendships with Jewish students.

This summer I attended a leadership conference at Washington University in St. Louis run by International Hillel. We spent a good part of our time learning about engagement work. I now have a new set of tools in my repertoire that will help me strengthen my friendships with other Jewish students.

I am a co-chair of the Reform Chavurah (mainly because I show up regularly), and as a group this past year, we began to increase the number events beyond services. We began

God's people Israel with compassion.”

Prayer is called by Maimonides *Avodah She'balev* – “The service of the heart.”

However, it is very clear that this service is not only verbal, but has a specific form and halachic/legal structure. So what role does the Shofar and its sounds play as a “supra-lingual” form of prayer that are not served by our verbal prayers ? [Or, as in my previous late-night design meeting, wasn't the first protocol good enough?]

I was particularly touched by the explanation of the modern Hassidic commentator Shem Mishmuel [Rav Shmuel Bornstein]. Shem Mishmuel describes the shofar as a “service of the heart” similar to prayer, but different in its spiritual standing. In prayer, the spiritual yearnings “of our hearts” ascend and are then articulated by our mouth and faculties of speech. However, our mouths and the faculties of speech necessarily envelop the pure spirituality of our prayer with material form. This material form is in stark contrast to the purity of the prayer of our heart. The shofar stands on its own spiritually, not being bound to humanity's material existence, and has no need to envelop its transmission in the material. In this way, the shofar is able to serve as a faithful vehicle for the most spiritual yearnings of our hearts. As the Shem Mishmuel continues in his explanation, verbal prayer can only serve those spiritual yearnings that can be articulated. However, there are many deep feelings that we cannot easily put to words. The shofar is able to faithfully transmit our deepest and most complex feelings, unhindered by the limitations of our intellectual or verbal faculties.

I personally find the sound of the shofar to be a spiritually grounding and anchoring experience that I cannot express only in words. Indeed, auditory distractions, fatigue and the ever-increasing competition for our attention can make it very difficult to sustain clarity and focus in our prayers. For me, the sounds of the *tekiya*, *shevarim* and *tru'ah* are able to cut through all this daily noise.

The shofar serves not only as a communication vehicle for us humans, but also for God. The sound of the shofar features prominently at the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The redemption will be heralded by the sound of the great shofar.

May the shofar of the New Year herald reconnections for each of us- reconnections with God, reconnections with our families, reconnections with each other as human beings - and may this be a year that the world will hear the great shofar of redemption.

Shanah Tovah!

MIT Birthright Connection

When many people think of Birthright (the free Israel trip for 18-26 year old Jews), they imagine a whirlwind tour of the historical side of Israel- the old city of Jerusalem, Masada glowing at sunrise, an idyllic kibbutz nestled by a Galileen lake. But Israel is much more than a Biblical fossil - it is a technological and industrial powerhouse, producing the most high-tech start-ups per capita of any nation in the world and boasting several of the most prestigious universities. A group of eight MIT graduate



reaching out to Jewish students who might want to do things with other Jews, but who might not be as interested in attending services or in coming to Hillel. This has been a lot of fun because I get to plan events that I want to attend! Last December during Chanukah, we hosted a dinner featuring Indian food and *sufganyot*/doughnut making; that was a blast, and it introduced us to many Jewish students we didn't know. This year, one of my secondary goals is to plan further events that reach students interested in more than weekly Shabbat activities.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



and undergraduate students had the unique opportunity to see this side of Israel during a five-day extension to the traditional Birthright program, organized by MIT Hillel exclusively for MIT affiliates.

This past summer's participants designed a newsletter of their experiences to share the amazing high-tech side of Israel they experienced. [Read more.](#)

Maseeh Hall: Kosher Dining Now Open!

With Shabbat dinner on September 2, Kosher Dining officially began at MIT! Many, many years in the making, MIT now has a full all-you-care-to-eat dining plan, with a kosher servery, providing kosher food on campus at no extra cost to diners.



Read the [Boston Jewish Advocate](#) article about it [here](#).

Todah Rabbah/Thanks again to our Donors!

...and please continue to support MIT Hillel this year!

Thank you to all of our 2011 Annual Donors! Your leadership and support contributes to a depth of Jewish life, experiences, and growth for the Jews and Jewish community of MIT. Watch for a complete list of 2011 donors in the next issue.

If you like what you read and hear about Jewish life at MIT, [add your name](#) to Hillel's 2012 donor roll.

On the Hillel Calendar

Tuesday, September 14:

Birthright Registration

Tell your students to register: www.israelwithisraelis.com.

Email MIT Hillel's Birthright Coordinator, [Shoshana Gibbor](#), for more information. birthright@mit.edu



Wednesday night, September 28-Friday, September 30:

Rosh Hashana

To learn more about services, meals, and happenings on campus, check out [our flier](#).

Tuesday, October 4:

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT

We kick off the Fall lineup with 2011 Nobel Laureate in Economics, Prof. Peter Diamond PhD '63. Not in the Cambridge area? Look for announcements of "Leading Jewish Minds on the Road"... we may be coming to a city near you!

Friday night, October 7-Saturday, October 8:

Yom Kippur

To learn more about services, meals, and happenings on campus, check out [our flier](#).

Wednesday night, October 12-Friday, October 21:

Sukkot

Friday, October 14:

Family Weekend Shabbat-Sukkot Dinner

If you are on campus, stop by Kresge Oval and the MIT Sukkah. To join Hillel for Shabbat dinner in the sukkah during Family Weekend, email hillel@mit.edu.

October 17 – December 30, 2011:

Window to My World 4 – Winds of Change in Galilee

Visit the MIT Rotch library, 7-238, for this [MIT Library Photograph Exhibition](#) from an annual competition open to all those residing in Israel and the Galilee.

Ongoing:

Jewish Music and Materials @ the MIT Libraries

A new fund established by MIT alumnus Michael Gruenbaum '53 has enabled the [Lewis Music Library](#) to add more Jewish music to its collection. It is open to the public in 14E-109. [Learn more...](#)

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