



Greetings from MIT to our Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Parents and Friends!

- 1) Rabbi G, Noa Schwartz '21, Anna Rose Osofsky '21, Jesse Michel '19 enjoy brunch in the Sukkah
- 2) MIT Hillel and Technion Hillel members together on the annual ConnectTech visit to Boston
- 3) The MIT Hillel intramural tennis team Nicole Goridokov '21, Eytan Gross G, Noam Buckman '16, G, Amy Vogel '20, and Olivia Siegel '20 before their win against Tang Hall

MIT Hillel Update



Dear Friends,

In Israel there is a phrase "*acharei he'hagim*" which is literally "after the Holidays," but is also an attitude, a reality, and a promise. Summer flows into the High Holy Days and Sukkot, and throughout that period little in the way of what we call "normal work" gets done. Work weeks are shorter with the holidays impinging and interrupting jobs and tasks and the regular flow of school and activities. Folk regularly respond to requests, to projects, to life: "we'll get to that after the holidays..."

I know how Israelis feel. Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot were terrific on campus – and the weather particularly cooperated with all we wanted to do each day. And now, it's *acharei he'hagim*. Welcome to full class, event, and meeting calendars!

I want to give you a taste of just one day of that calendar in the life of our Hillel team. This past week, 10 Israeli student fellows from Technion Hillel arrived for the capstone visit of their yearlong, [award winning](#), ConnectTech peoplehood program with our MIT Hillel fellows. Their orientation day included a discussion of what Hillel is in the US as well as visits to MIT labs and companies around campus and Kendall Square – over the week they also learned about American Jewish life and celebrated Shabbat with Hillel students, among much more. I particularly enjoy watching them see the many ways Judaism is expressed and practiced outside of Israel. Eyes are often wide, and questions are incredulous, as they first-hand experience American pluralism.

As the Israelis were getting over jet-lag, our Senior Jewish Educator had a day of coffee dates: guiding, educating, counseling students about their lives, Jewish life, and campus experiences. He also taught two classes, one on Jewish law and one a session of our Jewish Learning Fellowship, a 12-week commitment to exploring big life topics from a Jewish perspective. Oh, and he was coordinating a discussion for later in the week, a presentation by one of our Hillel students who is also a "Dreamer", impacted by the changing DACA laws.

Throughout the day, outside my office, 30-minute interviews were going on with the 27 MIT students who will be joining our Birthright bus this winter. Their excitement for their first-time peer trip to Israel was palpable.

At lunchtime, I walked past our Rabbinic intern who works with Graduate Students; he was meeting to discuss leadership topics with our graduate student president, in preparation for her board meeting.

My Development Director and Administrative/Development Associate were popping back and forth between each other's desks, discussing invites and replies to our [Leading Jewish Minds on the Road in NYC](#) luncheon with [Jeff Karp](#) on November 14.

The frenetic pace, and yet focused attention on each person and activity, was tangible. By comparison, my day seemed tame, with only staff supervisions meetings, phone calls with stakeholders, mentorship of a new Executive Director at another Hillel, and one coffee with a returning young alum who wanted to catch up and ask for some "next step" guidance. Clearly we're in the whirlwind of after the holidays!

This energy and speed continues through the next month, Chanukah, and then into the end of the term! I look forward to all that we will do and experience.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97,
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Mentshn of Mention



Meghan Cum '19
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My name is Meghan Cum. I am from Berkshire County, Massachusetts and I am a current junior studying Brain and Cognitive Science and Philosophy. After going to Jewish summer camp for nine years, spending four months in Israel in high school, and starting an Israeli Culture club in my high school, it was obvious to me that I would continue embracing and exploring my Jewish identity at MIT. I remember adding my email to every Jewish MIT emailing list I could find after getting my acceptance into MIT. Granted, it took me about a year and a half to become particularly involved in MIT Hillel; at first it was only a few classes with Rabbi Goldfeder every so often. Now, Hillel has become an integral part of my college experience.

My Jewish participation at MIT was sparked by a rule change for Birthright eligibility. After learning I was now eligible, I signed up immediately, and then I signed up for the MIT Birthright Extension, and then I signed up for Livnot (another program in Israel advertised through Birthright). When I came back to MIT, I became programming chair of the Friends of Israel Club, participated in ConnectTech, joined the ICET internship at Hillel to help engage more Jews in Jewish activities, and I am currently enrolled to participate in GTL (Global Teaching Labs) in Israel this January.

This past week, ending just hours after I write this, was the second half of our ConnectTech Fellowship delegation visits. ConnectTech is a wonderful program between the Technion (a Tech school like MIT in Haifa, Israel) and MIT students. Each year, in June, as part of our year long Fellowship, a delegation of MIT students is sent to Haifa for a week to interact with a delegation of Technion students. In October, the Israeli delegation visits MIT.

The objective of this program is to not only to show each delegation what it is like to study or live in each country or college (visiting companies and labs, for example), but to explore the depth and complexity of the differences that exist between being Jewish in the US and being Jewish in Israel. This was a difference that I was not aware of when I lived in Israel for four months in high school, being surrounded by other American Jews. But through Birthright and more specifically ConnectTech, the interactions between the Israelis and the Americans have highlighted these crucial differences, as well as the underlying and connecting similarities. To put it briefly, I witnessed Israelis who, at first, had never much dwelled on what it was to be or how one can be Jewish, and who came to realize that Orthodoxy and secularism are not the only ways to be Jewish. There was a new appreciation for our religion and a part of their identity



Our Torah this month is taught by Bob Rothman '64 (III). Bob has been active in interfaith work in Los Angeles. At one time he was simultaneously President of a Conservative shul and Treasurer of a Catholic Retreat Center, an accomplishment that will almost certainly never be repeated. Being retired gives Bob the chance to get connected to very worthwhile and rewarding activities and to work with fine individuals. He can be reached at bobroth@alum.mit.edu

My major interest after retiring has been the study of the intersection of scripture, history, and archaeology...in other words what were the original precedents of the laws and stories in Torah? I have taken graduate classes at a Jesuit university and studied with Conservative and Orthodox rabbis as well as a lot of personal study toward that goal.

Seventeen years ago, I founded the Dawn Unity Group of clergy, scholars, and laity that promotes interfaith dialog. We recognize that there will always be both important differences among religious traditions as well as areas of similar thought, so, our objective is to explore each through respectful discussion among leaders and scholars of their faiths, and in so doing further understanding among neighbors. These are not debates; there is never right or wrong, only the opportunity to learn the beliefs of others.

This year I will moderate a panel discussion in which Catholic, Presbyterian, Muslim, and Jewish scholars will discuss "The Binding of Isaac." It is familiar to Jews as the Torah portion for the second day of Rosh Hashanah, so familiar it is known simply as the *akedah*. Yet the Catholic priest said Catholics do not know it as "The Binding of Isaac", so the discussion's title was changed to "Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac." Then there is the Muslim adaption of the story in which Abraham heeds the call of God to sacrifice his son, but in the Muslim version this son is Ishmael. Actually I find the two versions to be completely consistent if this troubling story is viewed from the perspectives of Isaac and Ishmael, for in both cases the man responsible for the future of his faith is taught by the founding father Abraham that God's commandments must be obeyed without question, even one so appalling as the sacrifice of his only son and heir, the promised future leader of the faith.

Another example of significant difference is in the Genesis story of Adam. God parades all the animals before Adam and instructs him to choose a name for each. The Qur'an also has God parade the animals before Adam, but in the Muslim scripture God tells Adam the name for each. These two variations can speak volumes on the relation of God and man in each faith.

A third example lies in the very different ways Jews and Christians read the books of the prophets. Jews place the messages of each prophet in the historical context of his lifetime. The prophets speaking for God tell the Israelites the errors of their ways and the consequences to come. The words of the prophets also tell how God expects us to live an ethical life, and by doing so become a holy people coming closer to God. Christians use the words of the prophets to foretell the coming of Jesus, and in so doing miss the ethics so very important in their message. Whereas the prophets come in the middle of the Tanakh before the writings, Christians place them last in their Bible which they call the Old Testament so they lead directly into the New Testament and the story of Jesus.

By studying scripture in an interfaith setting we can learn so much about our neighbors' faiths and enhance our own. By appreciating the variety of interpretations, the Bible's importance to billions of very different people, cultures, and religions becomes more understandable.

Perhaps there is a connection between the importance I place in interfaith relations and my growing up as a Jew in a small town near the buckle of the Bible Belt. That experience certainly had its effect as I learned to appreciate good people and beware of the others. It is remarkable to see the changes in interfaith relations over my lifetime. Seventy five years ago there was no dialog between religious leaders; most rabbis would not enter Christian churches nor were they welcomed, and priests and ministers rarely connected with the Jewish world...of course Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. were totally outside the American Christian world. Our interfaith panels were beyond the possible, even beyond imagination at that time as had been the case for two thousand years. We have come a long way, and the world is a better place for it.

MIT Hillel's 2018 Annual Fund
Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To Our Current and Future Supporters,

Just when I think I am completely out of ideas for what I hope will be an inspirational message, life happens and hands me great material.

First, this week I went to the kick-off meeting for participants in MIT's 24-Hour Challenge 2018. Based on overwhelming initial success this past March 14, this initiative is likely to be an annual event, and certainly will be repeated this year. I was surprised to learn that there was negative feedback to MIT on the thanking, specifically that there was too much of it! People did not want to be thanked because they were happy to participate. Huh?

Later that same day I received a note from one of our donors who is also a friend, informing me that she had suffered a house fire. Here again I was surprised, at how her description of what happened and the aftermath included multiple expressions of gratitude, being fortunate, and appreciation. Things could have been a lot worse had circumstances been even the slightest bit different. Despite what she was going through, she had made her annual gift to MIT Hillel. Huh?

Thinking about these two things together made me realize that even though we are thanked for our philanthropic gifts, it is quite often that philanthropy itself is an expression of gratitude. Anyone in a position to make a gift, by definition, has a lot to be thankful for.

What a timely thought for November; and as you take note of the many gifts in your life, please know that we appreciate not only your support of MIT Hillel and/or MIT, but also all that you do for your Jewish community and the world.

L'Shalom,

Marla Choslovsky SM '88,
MIT Hillel Director of Development
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that, maybe, had been taken for granted. On the other side, I saw Americans come to appreciate the opportunity to express their Judaism as they see fit and also to evaluate their role in Israeli politics, being a part of the Jewish Diaspora, but not a citizen of the Jewish State. Ultimately though, in order for relationships between Israeli and Diaspora Jews to be strengthened, relationships need to be created, and ConnectTech does that. I am leaving with ten more friends, ten more couches to crash on when I visit Israel, and ten more perspectives on being Israeli and being Jewish.

ConnectTech has given me insight about what it is like to be Jewish in Israel, and it was enlightening, but honestly a little unnerving. As an identifying Conservative Jew, and more importantly a Conservative Jewish woman, who would like to make *aliyah* (move to Israel one day), ConnectTech has made me consider what it will mean for me to continue to practice my Judaism as such if and when I do move. However, it also reinforced how important it is for me to live in Israel. As I continue to interact with Israelis and visit Israel, I learn more about the complexities of what is not a perfect country, or even necessarily the land of milk and honey. Instead of being dissuaded to live there, it inspires me to want to make a change there and establish a way for other Conservative Jews and Conservative Jewish women to be Conservative in Israel; I cannot do that by being a Conservative Jew in America.

ConnectTech is one of many programs that Hillel has offered me that has allowed me to explore my relationship with Israel and how that might affect how I practice Judaism. Hillel never ceases to provide me with the necessary tools to feel confident proceeding as a Conservative Jewish woman, both in Israel and elsewhere. It has given me everything from a support system/community and a non-academic outlet that I feel passionate about to a literal space in which I can spend time between classes comfortably. Hillel has truly become a second home to me, especially since my previous dorm on campus was disbanded. I am forever grateful for the opportunities that Hillel provides me, the community and friends that I have made there, and the endless inspiration and insight from their faculty members.

From the Archives!

MIT Hillel has a rich history of programs and events told through student-made flyers, pamphlets, and great pictures!

The collection of MIT Hillel "artifacts" are now held in the Institute Archive and Special Collections for proper care and preservation.



This photo is from NEW! magazine September 1989 advertising the MIT Hillel Rosh Hashanah

Tamid Initiative - Planned Giving @ MIT Hillel

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.

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. To inform us that you have already planned such a gift, please contact us directly.

On the Calendar

Boston:

- [November 3, LJM @ MIT featuring Robert Pindyck, Professor of Economics and Finance at MIT Sloan](#)
- [December 1, LJM @ MIT featuring Osvaldo Golijov, composer](#)

New York:

Are you in or near NYC? We are pleased to invite you to our Leading Jewish Minds... On The Road. [Tuesday, November 14, luncheon at The Harmonie Club](#). Hosted again by Martin '51 and Madge Miller. Featured speaker will be **Jeff Karp, a top young innovator and a world leader** in the fields of drug delivery and other medical applications, with four companies to bring his ideas to the marketplace. There are lots of ways we could neglect to invite you, mostly various ways we might not know you are in NYC:

- You are a new-ish alum whose home address is still your childhood home in the MIT database
- You work in Manhattan but we only have your home address in another state.
- You have no address information showing in the MIT database.
- You've recently moved.
- Other anomaly in the pull criteria

Bottom line: if you'd like to join us and you receive neither a paper nor email invitation in the next two weeks, please call the MIT Hillel office at 617-253-2982.

Mazal Tov!

If you have life-cycle events to share with the MIT Hillel community, please [let us know](#).

Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal
Center for Jewish Life at MIT
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card. The image from the card has been used many times since with special thanks to [Bill Aron](#)

"The Mac was just a shell (supplied by Rabbi Dan Shevitz for the project), over which my assistant poured honey while I photographed. The apple and honey on the screen is a print I made from, again, having my assistant pour honey over a suspended apple."

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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

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