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Mentshn of Mention



Suri Bandler '17

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

1) Rabbi Goldfeder congratulating Adam Slakter '17 during commencement

2) Morrissa Brenner '13, SM '17, Elizabeth Setren PhD '17, Robin Ganek MBA '15, Jones PhD '17, Moriel Levy '17, and Isaac Oderberg PhD '17

Nathaniel

3) Max Haubstock '17 and Rotem Hemo '17 on the way to commencement ceremonies

Rabbi Fisher is on Sabbatical for the Spring, 2017 semester. In her stead the MIT Hillel Staff will be providing updates and insights focused on their roles and activities.

MIT Hillel Update



As commencement looms large for the class of 2017 I'm reflecting on my own professional path. I can't believe it's been a decade since I graduated from UC Santa Barbara and took a job doing engagement work at Rutgers Hillel (Sorry mom! It seems I have gotten myself stuck on the east coast). At my first staff conference, I sat with a cohort of my newly-minted-to-work-life peers and listened to a member of the BBYO Human Resources team tell us about the amazing Professional Development Institute they were beginning. My friends and I thought it was strange at the time for one Jewish organization to be poaching from another, and seemingly being encouraged to do so. Of course we were incredibly shortsighted at the time, not realizing the benefits of training, experience, and opportunities that would mold us into life-long Jewish communal professionals, ultimately bettering the whole sector. By the way, Hillel International recently formalized that approach by creating the Talent Alliance with BBYO and Moishe House.

Fast-forward four years and I'm graduating with an MBA, a certificate in informal Jewish education, and several years of hard-won professional insight from my high school youth-group-turned-career. My mentor through the program suggested I could learn a lot from Rabbi Michelle Fisher, and that I consider applying for the Director of Jewish Student Life position that had opened up at MIT Hillel. Boy was she right!

In the past five years at MIT Hillel, I've had immense opportunity for professional growth. In addition to the work I do with student leadership and our award winning ConnecTech program, I took on supervision of the program staff, created strategy for our team, revamped our goal setting and accountability to a team based, metrics driven model, and have been heavily involved in the talent searches we've conducted. Rabbi Fisher promoted me to Assistant Director three years ago and has encouraged me to participate in courses to hone my skills including a supervision course with Hillel International, a management course with MIT, and the Weinberg Accelerate program to cultivate future Hillel Executive Directors. She understands what it means to empower her staff and nothing proved that more than her willingness to leave Jewish life at MIT in our hands this semester. It's a testament to her planning and guidance that we've accomplished so much in her absence (and we tried really, really hard not to interrupt her sabbatical!) While I managed as Acting Director without her, I am certainly looking forward to her return this summer.

As the seniors begin their professional journeys, I'll share a lesson that's been reinforced for me this year: of course you should be interested in whatever jobs you take along the way, but *do not* underestimate the importance of working for and with good colleagues. These people are your partners, with whom you often spend the most time, and can help you to grow in ways you may never have imagined.

My blessing for the seniors, and for all of us, comes from the first line of T'filat HaDerech, the traveler's prayer. *May it*

As I leave class, I remember that I have a meeting scheduled for 1:30pm. Class went long, it's 1:11pm, and so I don't have much time to start on any work. Seeing as I've already had two cups of coffee by this point, it's probably best I not push it with a third. I gather my things and pull out my phone to read the latest article in the Times of Israel as I leave the lecture hall. Looking up as I finish the article, I notice that I'm opening the door to the Hillel Center. How did I even get here? I must have been walking entirely on autopilot. Opening the door, I'm excited to see that a few friends – both close friends and people that I interact with sporadically – are there too, killing time between class, typing away on an overdue p-set, or asleep.

In many ways this story gives a lot of insight into my relationship with Hillel. After four years of MIT – it's automatic, in the best way possible. Whether it be killing some time between class and a meeting, looking for a friendly face, making Shabbat plans, or not wanting to carry my bag around as I run to the Student Center to grab a quick coffee – Hillel is my "go to."

To give you some background: My name is Suri Bandler, and I'm a senior double majoring in Math (18-General) and Computer Science (6-3) and minoring in literature (21L). I grew up in Fairfield, CT and currently live in Scarsdale, NY. Before coming to MIT, I did Sherut Leumi in Rishon LeZion,

be Your will, Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, guide our footsteps toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace.

L'Shalom

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Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Joel Moses PhD '67 (XVIII). He is an Institute Professor as well as Professor of Computer Science and Engineering and Professor of Engineering Systems. He has been provost, dean of engineering, head of the EECS Department, and associate head of the department in the past 25 years. He can be reached at moses@mit.edu

"Without bread there is no Torah"

Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 3:21

Over the past thirty years I have helped create several lunches and dinners at MIT. These begin with food (the flour or bread in the quote from Pirke Avot) and end with a lecture and related discussion (the Torah in the quote). Most of the lunches and dinners are intended for a subset of the MIT faculty. The goal is to increase collegiality and thus make it easier to have interdisciplinary teaching and research at MIT. The lunch seminar that has potentially the broadest audience is the one sponsored by MIT Hillel. It is called "Leading Jewish Minds @MIT." LJM is intended for faculty, staff, alumni and friends. It takes place in various sites on campus. Speakers need not be Jewish since there are many Jewish minds in the audience ready and willing to be led by the speaker. Rabbi Fisher has taken LJM on the road to various homes of alumni in the Boston area as well as homes in New York City, Florida and California. An LJM lunch discussion begins with a Dvar Torah by Rabbi Fisher. Although there is insufficient room to have Hillel students at an LJM lunch, Rabbi Fisher invites a student to discuss his or her MIT experience, especially as it relates to MIT Hillel. This is then followed by the featured speaker.

The Random Faculty Dinner has been in existence the longest of these lunches and dinners. Randomly chosen groups of faculty sit around tables, six per table, and eat and talk for an hour or so. After that point Professor Jay Keyser would get up and ask "What is on your mind?" Often the discussion that follows deals with teaching issues across the Institute. Jay would take notes regarding the discussion without including the names of the faculty members making the comments. He would later send a report to the senior administration of MIT. In recent years the role of Jay Keyser has been taken by the Chair of the MIT Faculty. The senior administration appreciates being informed about issues that are on the minds of the MIT faculty.

This week's Parasha has the Jews in the desert complaining about the lack of food. They are then presented with manna from heaven. Jewish families throughout the world act as if they have read the quote from Pirke Avot. The variety, quantity and quality of the food is arguably better than in the desert. After thousands of years the discussion is arguably better too.

MIT Hillel's 2017 Annual Fund Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To our current and future supporters,

I recently saw the documentary movie "Citizen Jane: Battle for the City", about Jane Jacobs, the writer and urban activist who successfully fought city hall to prevent a highway through Manhattan. Specific to her vision was that top-down urban planning doesn't work well, that the best starting place is with the people on the ground.

In community organizing, one voice may not make a difference... but united with others it is extremely powerful. Decades later, citizens were proud to have been a part of Jane's vision, and felt they had played an important role in preserving neighborhoods. Their participation made a huge difference, sent a message, and strengthened their community. To me, that sounds a lot like philanthropy.

As we head into the final weeks of our fiscal year, I ask you to participate in MIT Hillel's annual campaign. If you are a past supporter, renewing your gift each year provides stability for our programming. If you are contemplating a first gift, your gift helps us grow.

Thank you for all you do for MIT Hillel, for MIT, for your local Jewish community, and for your other causes in the world. Together we make a huge difference.

L'Shalom,

Marla Choslovsky SM '88,
MIT Hillel Director of Development
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[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2017 Donor Roll!

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, maria360@mit.edu. To inform us that you have already planned such a

Israel. This coming year I will be staying at MIT, doing a Masters of Engineering in Computer Science with a concentration in Artificial Intelligence, and I will be living with two other MIT Hillel affiliates in Cambridge. I originally decided on MIT because I could tell that MIT was filled with curious, smart, (light) spirited, and *fun* people who could take and make a joke, who would challenge me intellectually and who would encourage me to pursue both what I think is important and what I enjoy.

Having decided on MIT, there was never any question leaving high school: of course I would incorporate Judaism into my life in college -- well, as much as a defining feature is "incorporated" into anything. I had never before, however, had to "define my own community," it was always handed to me, at home, in school, at camp. And so, as I thought about how I would go about finding this community, Hillel seemed like the "obvious choice" in many regards. While the "obviousness" of Hillel is what originally drew me to attend, there have been so many "unobvious" factors that have made me return every time since.

I used to think that I "cheated" by having this built-in community waiting for me at MIT. As freshman and even upperclassman stumbled to find a community, I was practically handed one as I walked in the door. Over my four years, I've been able to scope out a Jewish community with Hillel through Shabbat Dinners, Shiurim, Friday night Onegs, Israel events, study breaks, and by living on the kosher floor in the Burton Conner dorm. Looking back, however, I realize that what Hillel did was provide scaffolding for community and interaction and it's the effort and time that I put into the community that prevented it from feeling artificial, pre-defined, or hollow.

My Hillel experience cannot be defined by some list. Instead, it was defined by every little moment in between: discussion with friends late into the night, waking up for shul and walking in late to Kiddush, giving a dvar torah or yelling "yashar koach" as a friend delivered theirs, challenging Rabbi Goldfeder on a point in a Shiur, and being challenged in return about ideas that go way beyond the Shiur itself. And of course, spending those 19 minutes between class and a meeting hanging out in the Hillel center.

I am not exaggerating when I say that my MIT experience was defined by my Jewish involvement. Jewish involvement was the answer to so many questions throughout MIT: how to spend my weekend, where I am going to live, what am I going to eat, who am I going to hang out with? What excited me most about being at MIT was learning together with such incredible people that balanced difficult coursework with a fun, quirky attitude. And while there are many such people at MIT, the deep quality of my friendships would not have come close without Judaism and Hillel as a lens and supporting framework.

gift, please contact us directly or [let us know in writing](#).

On the Calendar

- Our Leading Jewish Minds speaker series will return in the fall. Stay tuned for on-campus, Boston-area, and NYC topics, dates, and locations.

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

- Mazel Tov to reunion alumni, especially from Classes of 1967 (50th), 1977 (40th), 1992 (25th), and 2007 (10th).
- Mazel Tov to Professor Daniel N Jackson, Immediate Past President of MIT Hillel, for receiving the Arthur C. Smith Award. This prize is presented annually to a member of the MIT faculty for meaningful contributions and devotion to undergraduate student life and learning at MIT. Daniel received the award for his teaching, for his community involvement, and for his recent photography work which has added significantly to the ongoing conversation at MIT about mental illness. MIT Press will be publishing a volume of his "Portraits of Resilience".
- Mazel Tov to Professor Jeff Hoffman on being inducted into Jewish-American Hall of Fame. Jeff took various Jewish ritual objects on board, and enjoyed the juxtaposition of one of humanity's oldest traditions with manned space flight. To paraphrase his remarks at the ceremony, "You can't make the Torah more special by taking it into space, as it's already holy; rather, bringing the Torah on the journey made space more special."

Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal
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As I move on to graduate school, I'm excited to see how Judaism continues to shape and facilitate old and new relationships and the experiences that await.

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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