



4 Iyyar 5779
May 9, 2019



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

- 1) Avital Vainberg '21, Jesse Michel '19, and Tamar Grey '19 posing with their matzah pizzas during Passover.
- 2) The 2019 Hillel Student Board volunteering at the Boston Food Bank.
- 3) Nathaniel Knopf '19, Gila Schein '22, Tamar Grey '19, and MIT Hillel's Assistant Director, Marissa Feinman Freed, eating cotton candy at the annual Yom HaAtzmaut carnival.

MIT Hillel Update

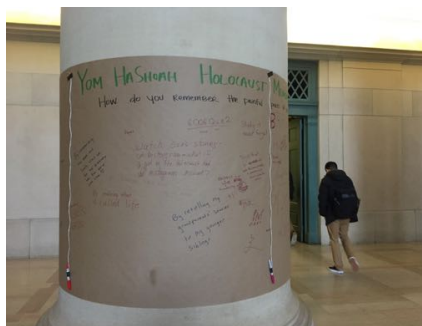


Our ancient Rabbis debate whether the fall month of Tishrei, with Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, or the spring month of Nissan, in which Passover falls, is the first month of the year. They compromise in the end, saying Tishrei is the new year of the years, and Nissan is the first month of the year. I can definitely understand why there might have been a debate just from our Hillel calendar. I'd be hard pressed to choose whether September/October or April/May are the busier time at Hillel.

Just since our last newsletter, we hosted two communal Hillel seders with over 25 participants each, as well as supported twelve "Do-it-Yourself" student-hosted undergraduate and graduate seders. To make during-the-week meals more fun, we showed the "A Rugrats Passover" episode; despite its initial air time of 1995, some students were familiar with it, and others fully enjoyed the new entertainment.

This time of year is also the time of the "Yom's": Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikharon, Yom HaAtzmaut. For Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, Hillel invited Boston University Professor Marcel Uwineza, a Jesuit priest from Rwanda and survivor of the Rwandan Genocide to lead a discussion on the relationship between the Rwandan Genocide and the Shoah: "How do we relate to other genocides? How do targets of other genocides learn from the Holocaust?"

We also used the Lobby 7 pillars at the Massachusetts Ave entrance to campus to set up a display that invited students to answer some probing questions: "How do you remember the painful parts of your history?" and "How do you stand up against hate/injustice?" Many thoughtful and poignant responses were shared by the MIT community.



Today is Yom HaAtzmaut. Happy 71st birthday, Israel! As we send this off, we are celebrating Israel's Independence Day with our annual outdoor carnival. This year the students branded it an I-Party. And it is: with blue and white balloons, educational booths, bouncy-bounce houses, falafel, Israeli music, large crowds are partying – and trying out a student-designed, interactive-learning "RavKav Israeli cities bus pass challenge", modeled off the Israeli intra- and inter-city transportation cards. As seen in this picture, Yom HaAtzmaut Carnival chairs Amy Vogel '20 and Meital Hoffman '20 also dressed as RavKav for Purim this year...

Speaking of Israel, our Sloan students' Bet Bet, *b'nei bayit* "members of the household" program, just finished its third year. This initiative pairs MIT Sloan Israeli students and their spouses/families with local Jewish hosts, who adopt them for the year at holidays, Shabbat meals, and social outings. The feedback from students is that they have learned so much about American Jewish culture through the eyes of their loving hosts.

We go from busy into busy... students are seeing the end of classes on the horizon, and the projects and exams that accompany the end of term. It's hard to believe that yet another class of students is heading into Commencement and off to the real world. I am proud that Hillel has influenced the lives and thinking of so many, and is now helping them transition to their next stage of life.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Michelle H. Fisher
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Mentshn of Mention



I am a first year PhD student, studying Medical Engineering & Medical Physics, at the Harvard-MIT division of Health Sciences and Technology. Though I'm still in search of a thesis project, I generally work on the application of machine learning, and other mathematical tools, to clinical medicine.

My path to graduate school took me from an idyllic childhood in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to undergraduate studies at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. From there, I came directly to MIT to start my PhD.

At Johns Hopkins, I had encountered a unique, warm Jewish community at Hillel, where I made what I'm sure are lifelong friends. Going to Hillel for Shabbat, holidays, and cultural events brought balance to my busy academic life. Before coming to MIT, I felt apprehensive

about finding the right Jewish space for me, knowing almost nothing about MIT Hillel or the Jewish community in Cambridge.

Any nervousness was immediately banished by my first Grad Hillel Shabbat dinner. There I discovered just what I had hoped for – a welcoming Jewish community and wonderful new friends. One “coffee date” with a Hillel staff member later, I was hooked. MIT Hillel, and the Grad Hillel community in particular, gave me a community of students at different stages in their academic career, but with a common bond of Jewish identity. I have made great friends and been inspired to take on a leadership role in the community.

These first few months at MIT have been wildly overwhelming and deeply exciting, and I can't wait to really dig in to my work. The food, friendship, and Jewish life at Hillel keeps me grounded and happy. I'm excited to get more involved in MIT Hillel and give back to a community that has already given me so much.

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Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by David Kazdan, MD, PhD (SB VI-1, SB XXI (music) '81), is an assistant professor of anesthesiology and adjunct assistant professor of electrical engineering and computer science at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the faculty advisor of the Case Amateur Radio Club W8EDU. He and his wife, Laura Gooch, (SB I, SB XXI '82) know each other from Burton 1. They live in Cleveland Heights, Ohio and belong to Congregation Beth El, The Heights Synagogue there.

Kedoshim describes extraordinary mitzvot that we of Tech may tend after for everyone in the world. These are the commandments of weights, measures, and scales - the mitzvot of metrology. All Ye of MIT, the 613 don't get closer to home than these!

After detailing mitzvot positive and negative, Kedoshim states “do not commit a perversion of justice measures, weights, or liquid measures.” It then specifies two: Keep accurate scales; and keep accurate volume measures of the *hin*, for liquids such as wine or oil or water, and the *ephah*, for dry goods. Then exclamation: “I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall observe all My statutes and all My ordinances and fulfill them. I am the Lord.” Metrology may be obscure and its mitzvah may seem here misplaced, but it's marked as important and as a part of ethical behavior.

Deuteronomy 25:13 later specifies: “Thou shalt not have in thy bag diverse weights, a great and a small. 14: Thou shalt not have in thy house diverse measures, a great and a small. 15: A perfect and just weight shalt thou have; a perfect and just measure shalt thou have; that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” Kedoshim's scale requires a standard mass, and this *parasha* compels its ownership and use (and presumably fabrication) without defining it. The promised reward for having and using these perfect weights may sound familiar from the Commandments, “Honor your father and your mother, *in order that your days be lengthened on the land that the Lord, your God, is giving you.*” Maintain an accurate scale and accurate - *perfect!* - weights, then live long in your home country. Why the emphasis? And what *is* a perfect weight?

Is the issue daily commerce? Are we “a nation of shopkeepers?” No, that's the Brits. *We* are a nation of priests. Ideas of metrology must be ancient, since before tribes and nations can communicate thoughts and ideas verbally, they must meet. At first meeting, they will trade goods - food and land, gold and rubies - through measurement. Commerce, made trustworthy with physically verifiable measurements, represents the very first step peoples can make

toward having relations other than war and its thefts. Measurement and trade replace acquisition by force. Accurate scales with known and reproducible standards, the cores of science and engineering, arguably make peace possible and complement structures of ethical behavior.

Mishnah of course lists mitzvot performed without quantity (gleanable corners, study, acts of kindness), but other *mitzvot* require actual, physical measure. Sacrifices of flour and wine and the seder's four cups - these involve dry and liquid metrology. Land measurement is taught in Deuteronomy 19:14, which requires that "thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old time have set, in thine inheritance which thou shalt inherit, in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it." Bava Metzia 107b expands on this, reminding the surveyor that at least some types of land surveying must be done with minute attention to detail (and that some need not be). Neighbors' and other nations' land must be distinguished carefully from one's own. Techniques and standards of land surveying are understood, accepted, and taught. What are the standards? The question is asked, too, in modern times.

George Washington was a licensed land surveyor; such certification is an engineer's *smicha*. The work certainly gave him an appreciation of measurement as part of the structure of a nation. The ideas are in turn embedded in the US constitution's, weights and measures clause, which begat the National Bureau of Standards and then the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Israel has its own national physics laboratory, which does not specify Torah compliance as part of its mission. Ah, it might! Still, silently, it facilitates observance of the metrology mitzvot. The United Nations assists international communications through defining Morse code, and the International Standards Organization permits musicians confidence in ensemble performance (ISO 16: A₄ is 440 Hz ± 0.5 Hz).

NIST moved us from following local sun time to universal cesium clocks. UTC is solar-adjusted and facilitates our regulating life through Friday evening sun position. So that we may know UTC, the United States runs the world's longest continuously operating radio station, WWV. Visit W1MX in Walker Memorial to hear the station play its dance of the SI seconds.

The standard kilogram was until just last year proudly quaint. Until the Kibble balance mass standard was adopted, scientists of the world met in Paris to verify mass standards, to be accepted as science visitors, and to talk. Without that collegiality, the apparatus of civilization will fail: Radio and television and communications satellites, power systems and your cellphone will simply stop working. The United States will divorce itself from the connected industrial world, and it will happen in real time. Such is the power of this mitzvah.

WWV and other US measurement functions are proposed for decommissioning. Engineers! Do not permit the NIST, our public fulfillment of these mitzvot, to be threatened as are the National Chemical Safety Board, the EPA, and other science outposts of the US government. These functions are public goods and cannot be privatized.

Honor your mother and your father; keep only one accurate set of weights. Remember your origins and study physics; be honest in commerce and be diplomatic with neighboring nations. **Live long and prosper.** What better could one's religion ask, or offer in reward?

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MIT Hillel's 2019 Annual Fund

Add to Jewish life @ MIT!

To Our Current and Future Supporters:

"I want to give my money where it will have impact... my gift doesn't make a difference at MIT."

The quote above is not likely to be a surprise to you, it may even be a familiar reflection of thoughts you've had. But what is a surprise to



me is that I have heard the exact same sentiment expressed by graduating seniors being asked for a \$5 contribution to their class gift, five-and six-figure donors, and even

someone considering a multi-million-dollar gift to MIT who puts that large a gift in context of MIT's endowment and also now \$6 billion campaign. In other words, regardless of one's ability to be philanthropic, we all want our gifts to matter and to be appreciated.

ALL gifts make a difference, at a large place like MIT, and certainly at a small place like MIT Hillel. We may all want to be the heart or the brain; it takes all cells to make our bodies work. Only by being linked together is there life, even the heart cannot stand alone. On a university campus, a named building is like a detached heart unless there are connections to lab equipment, chaired professorships, fellowships for grad students, financial aid for undergrads, student life and services to support the health and wellbeing of all, maintenance, and all the other buildings around it filled with the same. It is exactly being a part of something larger than ourselves that makes our life meaningful. In philanthropy, it is being part of a community of other donors of all levels that makes each gift truly impactful.

Whatever the size of your gift, please know that MIT Hillel could not function without the support of all 800+ of our donors. YOUR gift helps us to build, to sustain, and to dream of what is next. We ask for your help again this year, by June 30.

If you will be at Commencement – as a degree recipient, family celebrant, faculty member, or reunion attendee – please do drop by the [Hillel reception](#) afterwards. We'll be here to say "Mazel Tov", to share a "shehechyanu", to reminisce, to provide a bagel, to say thank you in person.

Marla Choslovsky SM '88
MIT Hillel Director of Development
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[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2019 Donor Roll! Scroll down to MIT Hillel to give.

[Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!](#)

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

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.

From the Archives!

For this month's "From the Archives!" we

found a calendar of events happening at Hillel from May 1984!

Some of these events included a dinner for graduating seniors and a cruise on Boston Harbor.

Let us know if you want us to send you a full-size version of this calendar.



On the Calendar

On Campus: Our next Leading Jewish Minds seminar will take place tomorrow, May 10, featuring Professor [Ezra Zuckerman Sivan](#).

On Campus: Join us on June 7, immediately after Commencement ceremonies, for our annual [Tech Reunion Brunch](#) as we celebrate the class of 2019.

Mazal Tov

Mazal Tov to MIT Hillel alumna Hannah Denton SM '12 and her husband Richard on the birth of a baby boy, named Eitan Ori, born on Monday, April 29.

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

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