



30 Heshvan 5779  
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## In This Issue

MIT Mentshn of Mention  
Update  
Torah from Tech  
2019 Annual Fund  
Planned Giving  
Mazal Tov



## Shalom from MIT Hillel

### to our Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Parents and Friends!

- 1) Technion Hillel students visit MIT as part of the MIT-Technion Hillels' ConnecTech Fellowship. MIT Challah for Hunger President, Kimmy Katz '19, teaches them how to bake.
- 2) Rabbi Michelle Fisher addresses alumni and parents at Hillel's annual Leading Jewish Minds event in NYC. Thank you to Martin '51 and Madge Miller for helping us bring our MIT NYC alumni together.
- 3) Students engaging in Jewish culture with The Paint Bar.

## MIT Hillel Update



The past few weeks have been an intense time for American Jews. I happened to be in Israel when the shooting in Pittsburgh occurred, and the outpouring of condolences I received from Israelis was heartwarming.

Not being here at MIT when so many were struggling was heartbreaking. Being so far away, having to rely upon my staff, our student leaders, and the MIT administration to hold and support the Jewish community was a leadership lesson for all of us. I was able to hand off to my team, particularly to Rabbi Gavriel Goldfeder, Hillel's Senior Jewish Educator, and trust them to be fully present as students expressed grief and pain. I thank everyone on my staff, the full range of our student leaders, and MIT for all they did.

Ronit Langer '20, our Hillel student president, reflected after the fact that she learned that when crisis occurs, everything else gets dropped. In the midst of that crisis, as she herself was processing her own emotions, she created a "shiva space" for the Jewish community in Lobby 10 on the Infinite Corridor; she and the Hillel board, with help from Hillel staff, made a space on the Monday after the shooting for all students to stop by and mourn; give condolences; express their fears, hopes, and feelings; grab a drink or snack; and to be nourished by community.

Ronit, Rabbi Goldfeder, and Sloan Jewish Student Organization co-president Jonathan Baravir then shared their thoughts and stories at the Vigil for Hope in the Face of Hate that MIT's Office of Religious, Spiritual, and Ethical Life organized for the entire MIT community on the Student Center Steps. (*We streamed the Vigil.*) The outpouring of love and care across campus was beautiful – particularly noteworthy was the letter the Muslim Student Association student board sent our Hillel students, which expressed sympathy, warmth, and courage.

May we all find resilience and comfort, and may we know the day when evil deeds vanish from the earth and, because there are no longer sins, the wicked will be no more (Psalms 104:35, as interpreted by Rabbi Meir's wife Beruriah in Talmud Brachot 10a).

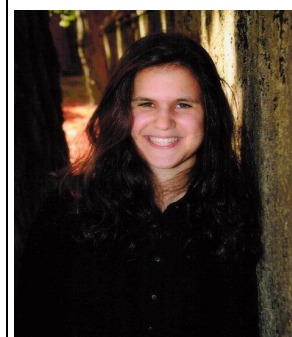
Before and after the pain Hillel was also filled with joy. The pictures above reflect the fun, learning, and impact MIT Hillel has on so many – from Cambridge to NYC to Haifa. Our initiatives, events, and human interactions bolster Jewish identity, Jewish education, and Jewish values. Our two Jewish Learning Initiative classes continue to expose students to traditional and modern Jewish texts that relate to broad life questions, and our students' questions about the complexity of moral and political life. Our Kindle Your Judaism book club introduces students to Jewish literature and non-fiction. Shabbat dinners forge community and friendship. Each day and week at Hillel is filled with examples of the positive aspects of Judaism and Jewish connection. We celebrate Jewish life even more than we mourn.

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97

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## Torah from Tech

## Mentshn of Mention



Keren Starobinski '18

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Hello everyone! My name is Keren Starobinski, and I am a student from Newton, Massachusetts. I recently finished my undergrad studies at MIT with degrees in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science (Course 6-2) as well as Mathematical Economics (Course 14-2)—and am currently pursuing a master's degree in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science (6P MEng).

Before I enrolled at MIT, I attended Maimonides School, a Modern Orthodox Jewish day school in Brookline, Massachusetts. I grew up in a household that performed the *Mitzvot*, kept Kosher, and observed the Sabbath—so when I got to MIT, I went to Hillel to look for a community that held the same values I did. Throughout my four years I not only got to meet many students with similar upbringings to mine, but also learn from and create lasting friendships with students from various Jewish backgrounds.

During my undergrad years, I was an active member of the Orthodox Jewish community. I was also fortunate enough to participate in several programs run by Hillel, such as Birthright and ConnecTech. ConnecTech is a program that aims to connect Hillel students from the Technion and MIT, foster dialogue about Jewish life in America and Israel, and create lasting bonds between the





*Our Torah this month is taught by Jeremy Katz '09, who received a degree in Aeronautical Engineering. Jeremy works in the Product Development, Low Speed Aerodynamics group at Boeing Commercial Airplanes, working with all new and derivative models and focusing on data analysis and visualization tools for the takeoff and landing portions of a flight. He has worked on airplanes including the 737 MAX, 787-9, 787-10, 777X, as well as some other programs that ended in the study phase or are still in development. Jeremy comes from an MIT family, including father Howard (V, '78), mother Marion (tuition payer '06, '09), and brother Josh (V, '06). He lives in Seattle and holds an FAA Commercial Pilot Certificate with Instrument Rating. He can be reached at [jbkatz@alum.mit.edu](mailto:jbkatz@alum.mit.edu).*

The main story within Parshat Toldot—the introduction of Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau, and Esau's sale of his birthright—is well known, and at first glance, it appears quite simple. Esau comes in from the field, exhausted, and sees Jacob cooking a lentil stew. Esau tells Jacob to pour him some stew, and Jacob does so in exchange for Esau's birthright. From the time Rebecca was pregnant with her twins, Hashem made it known that Jacob and Esau were destined to lead different nations, and that "the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob)" (25:23). Thus, the sale of the birthright seems to follow Hashem's plan. As is often true, analyzing the text can produce lessons and meaning beyond the simple reading of the words.

This birthright is not a simple inheritance. The Medieval commentator Rambam explains that Hashem's blessing to Abraham would pass the Torah on to only one of Isaac's sons, not both. Another Medieval commentator Rashi notes that it was the firstborn who would perform the sacrificial services. Jacob wanted the birthright to ensure it was acquired by someone who would respect it, not by his wicked brother. At the same time, Esau stated, "Look, I am going to die, so of what use to me is a birthright?" (25:32, ArtScroll translation). Among the various reasons provided for Esau's rejection of the birthright, Rashi notes that Esau was aware of various mistakes he could make in carrying out the sacrificial services, which were punishable by death. Esau wanted to get rid of the birthright lest it lead him to an early death.

Later in the parsha, as Isaac nears the end of his life, Jacob receives the firstborn's blessing, to which he was entitled through his acquisition of the birthright (that obtaining this blessing involved some trickery is not relevant here, but it's a good story with interesting commentary—see chapter 27). When Esau discovers what has happened, he cries out, distraught, realizing that he has lost his chance at greatness. Jacob has received Isaac's superior blessing, and Esau will be subservient to his brother.

There is a correlation between the story of Jacob and Esau and much of the responsibility we have working in science and engineering fields and beyond. Opportunities abound to take shortcuts to simplify a task or gain prestige, from fudging a number here or there to grossly falsifying results. The ramifications of such actions can range from lost time and money to lost lives if a vehicle or structure suffers a catastrophic failure. When he sold the birthright, Esau saw two paths ahead of him: a difficult one where he had to work hard to follow the rules, and an easy one where he could set the rules aside and have a good meal. Taking the shortsighted approach, he was pained when the ramifications of his actions eventually played out and he realized what he lost. In our professions, we are entrusted by the users of our creations to make safe, effective products. Just as Jacob savored the responsibility and hard work that came with the birthright and established him as a forefather of Israel, so too should we appreciate the responsibilities with which we are tasked and take pride in the results of honest, hard work.

## MIT Hillel's 2019 Annual Fund

### Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To Our Current and Future Supporters:

Disaster relief funds for the most recent flood, earthquake, or fire. Crowdfunding to help a sick friend pay exorbitant medical bills. Gifts to HIAS after the recent Pittsburgh shooting.

From a development standpoint, terrible events and crises do expand the scope of awareness of different causes, do succeed in cultivating new donors, and do raise significant dollars for both targeted and unrestricted uses. Jolts to our sense of well-being cause us to stop and consider what is important to us, what positive impact we can have, and our need to feel useful. Leveraging ourselves through our philanthropy meets all of those goals.

While it is important that we maintain the capacity – both emotional and financial – to respond to unexpected and dire needs, many gifts, like those to MIT Hillel, fall into a very different category. One of my objectives here at MIT Hillel is to grow our circle of support based on the positive, and further, to inspire our supporters to sustain their giving over time. In that way, when those bad moments happen, we all have the sense that what we are building together is precisely what gives us strength to get through and hope for the future. If investing in the education and ethics of the next generation doesn't meet those criteria, I don't know what does.

Marla Choslovsky SM '88

MIT Hillel Director of Development  
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[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2019 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, [marla360@mit.edu](mailto:marla360@mit.edu). To inform us that you have already planned such a gift, please contact us directly.

students at both institutions. As part of the program, I flew with several MIT classmates to meet the Technion students in Haifa in May of 2018.

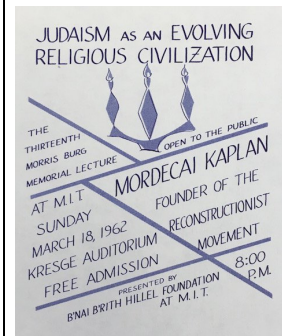
I have been on various trips to Israel throughout my life, but on the ConnecTech trip, I had the unique opportunity to visit various sites in Israel while also interacting with Israeli students who are passionate about science and technology—just like me. I enjoyed listening to Israelis forming start-ups, hearing high-schoolers motivated to get accepted into the Shmoneh-Matayim (intelligence) unit in the army, and visiting Matam—an international technology center that contains research and development facilities for companies like Amazon, Intel, Apple, Microsoft and Google. Although at MIT we are over 5,000 miles away from the Technion students in Haifa, we share many common interests and are both passionate about using technology to make the world a better place.

I would like to thank Hillel for giving me the opportunity to participate in this meaningful program, and for all the lasting friendships and bonds I have created throughout my four years at MIT. Thank you!

## 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.



Lectures happen every day, here at MIT! Back in '62 the Morris Burg Memorial Lecture took place at Kresge Auditorium, with speaker, Mordecai Kaplan.

Let us know if you remember this lecture!

## Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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

## On the Calendar

**On Campus:** Our Leading Jewish Minds seminar continues for a tenth year!

- Friday, November 9 - Professor Yossi Sheffi, Director of the Center for Transportation & Logistics, author of several best-selling and award-winning books.
- Friday, December 14 - Joseph F. Coughlin, founder and Director of the AgeLab at MIT.

## Mazal Tov!

- Mazal tov to MIT alumna Yael (Schein) Anhalt '13 and her husband, Kenny Anhalt, on the birth of their daughter Emma Elizabeth, born on November 19, 2017!
- Mazal tov to Vivian PhD '16 and Aaron Hecht on the birth of their baby girl on Tuesday, November 6!
- Mazal tov to MIT Hillel's Birthright & Israel Engagement Director, Shoshana Gibbor, and Andy Bailer on their recent engagement!



Andy Bailer proposing to Shoshana Gibbor, with help from students Meghan Cum '19 and Allie Shepard '19.

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

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