

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

- 1) GradHillel students attending a Boston Red Sox game.
- 2) Students Anna Rose Osofsky '21, Talia Blum '21, Ethan Sussman G, Lior Hirschfeld '21, and Zoe Levitt '21 posing for MIT Hillel's high holiday greeting card. The blackboard shows the Inscribed Angle Theorem. May everyone be inscribed for a good year!
- 3) Amy Vogel '20 and Technion alum Omer celebrating 5780 at Hillel's annual New Year's Eve party.

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### MIT Hillel Update



It's immaterial that the start of the MIT academic year and the start of 5780 were separated by almost a month this year. The flurry of activity and check lists and logistical preparations in the lead up to Rosh Hashana are always hectic and crazy. Last week, my sermons were written, our student "New Year's Eve" celebrations and holiday programming were planned, our introspective discussions around holiday themes were organized and advertised. I still had the feeling that something was missing and incomplete.

My late colleague Rabbi Alan Lew's book sums up my emotional state: *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*. I fully realize that his title is talking about the process of teshuva and the sense of awe and change and renewal that are the deeper part of this season – I'll get to those, soon. Really. Once I ensure our students are taken care of and their needs prepared for...

Actually, I know our students were prepared for these holidays. Their September, with the longer-than-usual lead up to the High Holy Days, was spectacular. Returning student leaders planned a myriad of events – including, for example, a GradHillel Shabbat dinner with over 70 attendees, and a

“Des(s)ert Study Break” involving making an air plant for one’s dorm room. New freshmen and graduate students were coffee-d by Hillel staff as we got to know them and their stories. Mezuzah covers were designed and painted, and the mezuzot affixed to dorm room doors. Classes from “Existential Torah,” to our 10-week Jewish Learning Fellowship



on Jewish identity, to “Famous, Not so Famous and Infamous Talmudic Rabbis” all kicked off with strong student participation. There was a month of building and strengthening relationships, and four weeks of Jewish thinking and learning.

Our students are prepared. I will be, too. Every year pre-Kol Nidre, as I give a final walk-through of the spaces where we will hold Yom Kippur services, I stop in the empty rooms to stand before the Ark or at my lectern. I take some deep breaths and reflect for a few moments. I breathe out thoughts of the year passed, its highs and lows. I breathe in the air of the new year, its potentials and possibilities. Wherever I am at that point, I am ready.

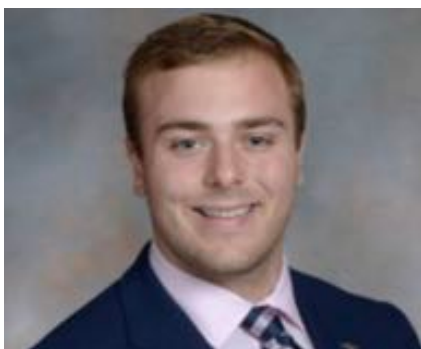
May we all find ourselves, and bring ourselves to the places, where we are ready for a new year. May it be one of returning, changing, renewal. May we all be sealed for a good year.

L'shana tova,

Rabbi Michelle H. Fisher  
Executive Director  
[rabbif@mit.edu](mailto:rabbif@mit.edu)

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## Mentshn of Mention



Hello everyone! My name is Sam Gantman, and I’m a junior studying mechanical engineering. St. Paul, Minnesota is where I call home, but after living on campus for two years, I would definitely call MIT my home away from home. Here, I’ve gotten the chance to play on the varsity football team as a defensive linebacker, take part in Greek life by serving as my fraternity’s Vice President, and of course, enjoy the company of the Jewish community!

In all honesty, MIT had never been on my radar as a viable option until a few months into my senior year of high school. When a coach on the football team reached out to me and asked me to consider applying, I immediately knew I had to seize the opportunity. I completed the application and interview within a week of receiving this message, and a few months later, I was accepted into the best school in the world!

I’ve become more and more involved with the Jewish community as my time at MIT progresses. My freshmen year, I attended Hillel and Chabad events. My sophomore year, I decided to run for the Hillel Student Board’s Programming Vice President position because I wanted to help to create fun events that Jews at MIT from all backgrounds could enjoy. Most recently, I lived in Israel for two and a half months, participating in both the Birthright program as well as MIT’s MISTI program. My decision to stay involved with Jewish life on campus has helped me to meet friends I otherwise wouldn’t have met and stay connected

with an important aspect of my life from home. I'm very thankful for the friends I've made in the MIT Jewish community, and I hope I can help other people feel the same way!

Sam Gantman '21  
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## Torah from Tech

*Natalie Yosipovitch is the new Director of Graduate Student Engagement at MIT Hillel and works with Jewish graduate students at MIT through engagement, programming, and supporting the GradHillel student board. She also supports ConnecTech (peer-to-peer year long fellowship between Technion and MIT) and Benenu, which partners Israeli graduate students at MIT with Jewish American host families in Boston.*



Starting graduate school and celebrating the high holidays have a lot in common. Both share experiences that include reflection, setting intentions, and building a new home.

At the start of graduate school, students begin a new program and are surrounded by new peers, professors and advisors. Often times graduate students find themselves moving to a new place, and are forced to create a new community for themselves. These new beginnings give students an opportunity to reflect on their previous experiences and set intentions for the upcoming year. The high holiday period similarly provides us with the time to reflect on our actions of the previous year and set intentions for who we want to be in the year to come.

The start of graduate school also forces students to examine their plans for the future as they start and choose lab advisors, research projects and/or internship placements. Through these choices, they also often become cognizant of the limited time they will have at MIT -- how overpowering "drinking from the MIT fire hose" can be. Similarly, during the high holidays we are reminded of our limited time with the idea of being "inscribed in the Book of Life". This metaphor encourages us not to take our time on earth for granted and to examine what our purpose in life is. At MIT Hillel, we foster opportunities to reflect and help students find their place in the world through a variety of weekly Torah study options, Jewish identity explorations (such as through our Jewish Learning Fellowship), reflective discussions (such as Ctrl-Alt-Delete during the High Holidays), and opportunities for ritual practices and prayers.

In my new role working with the Jewish graduate student community at MIT, I have already had the opportunity to meet with many graduate students who seek out Jewish involvement in this new chapter of their life. Many have shared similar stories of reflecting on their undergrad experience and wishing they had been more involved in Jewish life at that time. As one of a handful of full time professionals across the Hillel world working with graduate students, I have the unique privilege to create meaningful experiences that are catered to this community's specific needs.

GradHillel also provides graduate students at MIT with a home. A home, beyond being a physical structure to reside in, is a place where people are surrounded by their community and can feel comfortable. GradHillel at MIT provides a safe "home" for students to explore their Judaism and celebrate their Jewish identity alongside a community of peers. The sukkah -- the main symbol and mitzvah of the upcoming holiday of Sukkot -- reminds us of the foundational elements of a home. It is a shelter that allows us to eat and spend time with

the community, the “family” we create for ourselves, without the distractions of the modern world.

The high holidays also has a theme that is not shared with those *starting* graduate school, but may be more understood by those who have been here for some time. On the high holidays we acknowledge our imperfections. An “older” grad student knows from failed experiments and unsuccessful job interviews that there is continual room for growth. The spirit of the holidays highlights that humans are imperfect, and that it is okay to make mistakes. We can choose to learn and grow from those experiences (and continue to do so in the years to come).

I wish for all of you to have a meaningful high holiday season, that provides you time to reflect, set intentions for the year to come, and spend time with your respective communities, just as my incoming graduate students are having the chance to do this new school year.

Shana tova u'metukah,

Natalie Yosipovitch  
Director of Graduate Student Engagement  
[nyosipo@mit.edu](mailto:nyosipo@mit.edu)

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## MIT Hillel's 2020 Annual Fund

### Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To Our Current and Future Supporters:

After years of deliberation, my family changed shuls last year after 25 years at one place. On a daily and weekly basis, the shift was minor – we have lots of friends at both the old and new synagogues, the travel time from home is about the same, our occasional minyan participation to say kaddish is comfortable in both places, and our Shabbat experience is greatly improved while still being familiar. However, we approached our first year of High Holidays at the new place

with some trepidation... Just how much would we miss our old place on these special days? Should we have bought tickets, “gone home”, for these few days?

As it turned out, we did miss specific people and specific melodies. At the same time, we very much enjoyed what we experienced, noticing the differences and embracing the new place as our own. This resonated with me because I have a younger son at college in NY, and an older son who just started grad school in NC, and of course I think about our students here at MIT. All of them are experiencing something different from “home” as well, and figuring out what to make “their own”.

In comparing and contrasting the two synagogues, I was intrigued about human nature and the importance of shared values, struck by how even slight differences in leadership styles and abilities shape a community, and reminded how it takes the contributions of many to build a strong community. We choose where we affiliate, which leaders we follow, and what groups we support. These holidays are a good time to inventory those ties as well as our personal relationships.

At this time of reflection and gratitude, please know how deeply we appreciate your support of MIT Hillel. Your gift enables us to build and shape Jewish life on campus, and to support our students on their Jewish growth through their academic years at MIT.

G'mar tov – may you be sealed for a year of good health and many joys.

Marla Choslovsky SM '88  
MIT Hillel Director of Development  
[marla360@mit.edu](mailto:marla360@mit.edu)

**New Yorkers:** Mark your calendar for our Hillel luncheon on Thursday, November 7, at The Harmonie Club. This year's speaker will be CSAIL Professor Daniel Jackson, who will speak about his "Portraits of Resilience" project at MIT. His talk will be a wonderful mix of art, the process of making art, MIT culture, mental health, and Jewish values.

[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2020 Donor Roll! Scroll down to MIT Hillel to give.

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### [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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### 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.

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### From the Archives!

The Hillel Center turns 25 this month! For this month's "From the Archives!" we found a poster advertising the dedication of the Hillel Center in W11.

Since its opening in October 1994, the Hillel Center has become a common space for Jewish students to do their homework or take a study break and hangout with friends.



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### On the Calendar

**Mark your calendars for two more Leading Jewish Minds seminars this semester:**

- Friday, November 15, 2019 - Professor Susan Silbey
- Friday, December 13, 2019 - Professor Laura Schulz

### **New York:**

- Thursday, November 7, 2019 - Our annual "Leading Jewish Minds... On The Road" luncheon will be held at The Harmonie Club. Hosted again by Martin '51 and Madge Miller. Featured speaker will be [Professor Daniel Jackson](#), "Portraits of Resilience".
- Thursday, November 7, 2019 - There will be an event in the evening for young alumni in the

NYC area - stay tuned for details!

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## **Mazal Tov!**

Mazal tov to MIT alumni Noa Ghersin '14 and David Wyrobnik '15, MNG '16 on their recent engagement!

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

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