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L'shana tova from MIT Hillel to Alumni, Parents, and Friends in Cambridge and Beyond...

Executive Director's Update



L'shana tova! A good new year. G'mar hatima tova! May we all be sealed for a year of sweetness, health, meaning, and growth.

Hillel's goal of meeting students "where they are at" allows us to create multiple ways to mark and celebrate the Jewish New Year. As the Jewish year of 5775 began, we took care of our students' minds, bodies, and souls. We built stronger community, gave space for personal reflection, and provided food for thought and food for sustenance.

The lead-up to the holidays had upperclassmen stuffing freshmen care packages with sweets and greetings. The feedback from the new students as they received these bags from Hillel leaders was exceptional. They really appreciated the unexpected thoughtfulness, good wishes, and multi-flavored honey sticks delivered to their dorm rooms.

Our New Year's Eve Party on Rosh Hashana eve highlighted the dropping of a stuffed apple (not into honey) as we counted down to dinner – attended by almost 100 students. Shofar blasts were heard in services, and all day long in the Hillel Center, as students stopped by between classes for a blast and a bite (of apple and honey).

On Rosh Hashana afternoon, new depth was added to the ritual of *tashlich*. Before tossing bread into the Charles River to symbolize tossing away one's transgressions and bad attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors, a Ctrl-Alt-Del discussion gave students the opportunity to "reboot" for the new year. The intimate, even intense, conversations allowed students to contemplate and share with each other what they yet could become if they strove to be their best selves.



As Yom Kippur approaches, students are also planning more ways to engage with their Judaism. Multiple break-fasts are being planned around campus. A number of small groups of students also used this week to reflect on what it means to be Jewish, and to bring meaningful Jewish activity to their friends and dorms and fraternities. One group, "Jewish Enough," was attracted to the question: Is there such a thing as a "bad Jew"? Those involved were left with ideas percolating on how to create further judgment-free spaces for exploring their current Jewish identity and allowing it to further grow.

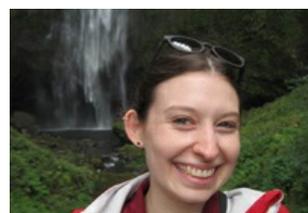
All in all, students are relating that they had a good, sweet start to this year!

A meaningful Yom Kippur.

L'shana tova/Happy New Year,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM'97
rabbif@mit.edu



Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by alumna [Naomi Stein](#). Naomi graduated from MIT civil engineering in 2010, and received a dual masters in transportation and planning in 2013. She now works as a planning and policy analyst in Boston, studying the relationships between mobility and the economy. In her spare time she likes to explore city spaces, draw, and try to catch up on all that TV she missed while being a good student.

I haven't been feeling well for a while now. Not bad, just not great. It's hard to figure our quite when and how it started. I think to myself: Was it

Mentshn of Mention



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My family is from Mexico City. I was born in Tijuana and lived most of my life in San Diego, CA before coming to MIT. I have always had a passion for applying quantitative methods to business and Sloan's Business Analytics and Operations Research program helped me combine my interests in optimization and management.

Coming from a very tight-knit community of Mexican Jews in San Diego, I was drawn to Hillel as a channel through which I could continue to practice Judaism while at the same time building meaningful relationships and expanding my circle of Jewish friends.

Since doing MIT's Birthright trip last summer, I have grown more involved in Hillel, and I am now an active member of one of Hillel's Engagement Internship teams. In this role, I have organized social events in which I have brought together my Jewish friends from different networks across campus and connected them more to Hillel and to each other, in order to strengthen the sense of community among Jews at MIT. Working with other great Jewish leaders on campus, we have also expanded our networks. From throwing a huge Passover seder last spring at the Delts fraternity, to hanging out over coffee and talking about our Bar Mitzvah experiences, I have had a fantastic time bonding with Jewish friends on campus and helping us all bring aspects of our Jewish life into our MIT experiences.

MIT is great for the diverse interests and talents of its students and Hillel is no different. It is truly amazing to see how so many of us, all from different backgrounds



that time I got sick? But then I got better. Didn't I? I feel ok now...What did I feel like before? What *should* I feel like?

Humans are the victims of moving averages. Things shift ever so slightly over time, and we adapt. It is a strength: It allows us to keep our heads in the game, to focus on the now. But it's also a weakness.

One day I woke up and realized: this is not the new normal I want. I'm not even sure what's "wrong," really. I certainly don't feel fully qualified to explain it to a doctor. And no, I don't know how he or she can fix it. Yet, somehow my normal has been shifting, creeping, to some place I don't fully like.

It is similar to how I see the high holidays. Many of us look at that long list of wrongdoings—gradually imprinted on our brains because we say it so many times—and think: well, this is awkward. I didn't kill anyone this year. My actions weren't earth shattering. They don't fall into neat little categories. So how am I supposed to feel?

That is exactly the challenge of self-reflection. Our lives are routines. There are blips of excitement, there are gradual progressions, but most of the time, we are *our* normal. And normal is hard to assess.

Judaism understands this. It is constructed of rituals, of cycles, cordoning off time for reflection and carving out space for ideas through the repetition of words. Judaism seeks to routine-ize both the normal and the extraordinary. Shabbat is the definition of routine, and yet it is also the window for greatness, each and every week. Similarly, we are given a chance every year to pause and investigate our normal. We are granted space and time to focus on our routine, precisely through the act of breaking it.

So this new year, whether you believe you are having a two sided conversation, or whether you envision yourself simply standing before the holiest of white boards in the history of brainstorming, the Chagim are about asking: What is my normal? Has it changed? What do I want it to be?

You don't have to know the answer. You may have to ask the same question, to restate the problem, a bunch of different ways before you get anywhere. And you may not know what to aim for, yet. But you do have to trust that you, and the doctor, can figure things out.

What will your normal be? And can it, like Judaism, be both routine and extraordinary?

MIT Hillel's 2015 Annual Fund

Add to Jewish life @ MIT!

The generosity and annual support of alumni, parents, faculty, and friends contributes to a depth of Jewish life, experiences, and growth for MIT's Jewish community.

Do you like what you read and hear about Jewish life at MIT? Please help us create vibrant Jewish life at MIT, and lasting commitments to Judaism.

Thank you to [our 2014 Donors!](#)

[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2015 Donor Roll!

Tamid Initiative - Planned Giving @ MIT Hillel

Endowment and planned gifts truly sustain and build an organization. MIT Hillel is excited to help you create your personal Jewish legacy at MIT.

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.

To inform us that you plan such a gift, download and send us a [pledge form](#).

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.

On the Calendar

Friday night, October 3-Saturday, Oct 4: Yom Kippur

Wed night, October 8-Friday, October 17: Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah

Friday, October 24-Sunday, October 26: MIT Family Weekend

Will you be on campus for Family Weekend? Please come to Hillel's Friday Leading Jewish Minds luncheon, Shabbat dinner, and/or services. [Contact us](#) for details!

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT Fall line-up

- **Friday, October 24:** Danny Weitzner, Director of the MIT CSAIL Decentralized Information Group
- **Friday, November 21:** Andrew Viterbi '56, SM '57
- **Friday, December 12:** Evan Ziporyn, Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor

More details to follow...



and with different academic and professional goals, can come together and connect as deeply as we do by being part of the Jewish community of MIT. The bonds I have formed with my Jewish friends here have made me feel at home in Boston and have allowed me to explore and succeed in an immense variety of activities on campus which I would have not had access to without my Hillel friends.

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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