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**Mentshn of Mention**



Allie Shepard '19  
[ashepard@mit.edu](mailto:ashepard@mit.edu)

Hi, my name is Allie. I am a Junior in Course 10 and minoring in Energy Studies. I am from Pittsburgh, PA, which is where I have lived most of my life. MIT is certainly never somewhere I thought I'd end up, nor could I have predicted all that I am now involved in. Even the depth with which I've gotten involved in so many aspects of the MIT community is a wonderful surprise.

In high school I did a Jewish Teen Leadership program called Diller Teen Fellows, and after forming such incredible connections within an international Jewish community, I wanted to go to a school with a really big, strong Jewish community. MIT's number of Jews didn't quite put it into the 'big' category for me, but I think I underestimated it, or perhaps made the mistake of lumping size and strength together. At MIT, both through Hillel and chance encounters from which friendships have blossomed, I have found myself surrounded by an amazing and strong Jewish community that I have largely created for myself.

This is one thing I love most about MIT—it is what you make of it. The possibilities are absolutely endless, and ever since I recognized this the very moment I stepped on campus for CPW, I have tried to make the most of it. I've gotten involved and have held and currently hold leadership roles in many clubs and organizations, from Energy Club to the Leadership Training Institute to Peer Ears. I joined Alpha Phi sorority, and am a member of the varsity field hockey team. My most significant involvement, though, is with Friends of Israel, of which

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

- 1) Shoshana Gibbor, Amy Vogel '20, and Zoe Lallas '20 at the Midway/MIT Events Fair
- 2) Oron Propp '18 and Esther Goldberger '19 enjoying the solar eclipse on Kresge Oval
- 3) Katie Fisher '19, Ronit Langer '20, and Marissa Freed at the Midway/MIT Events Fair

**MIT Hillel Update**



I learned two words at the beginning of my sabbatical last January that would become my guiding principles throughout the rest of my semester. The first was *ביטחון-עצמי/bitachon-atzmi*/self-confidence, which I adopted as my outward face as I immersed myself in using conversational Hebrew everywhere I went, regardless of how bad my American accent sounded or how many Biblical or rabbinic words I mistakenly dropped into my speech. As a friend of mine once quipped as she started dating a Brazilian: "I do the best I can with my Portuguese and leave the conjugation up to the natives." The second word was *הרפתקאות/harpatkaot*/adventures. I opened myself to experiences: meeting new people and deepening relationships with long-time friends; conversing with everyone – those like me and those who were very different from me; exploring cultural nuances between Israelis and Americans; wandering through neighborhoods of Tel Aviv, absorbing the distinctive flavors (and sometimes smells and sights) of each; hiking old Biblical paths of the prophets and new sections of the Israel trail; learning and re-examining Jewish texts with teachers who opened

new insights to familiar passages.

Returning to MIT has already been fulfilling and incredible. I have a deep sense of gratitude for my staff and Board of Directors, who ensured that our award-winning, high-level activity for our students continued and developed further. A public thank you to them all, particularly to Marissa Freed, our Assistant Director who was Acting Director in my absence: *Yashar koach*/all the strength to you on a semester very well-accomplished! My return has made me deeply appreciative of our talented Hillel staff, and I am getting to re-experience MIT as if for the first time: I have been reminded how much I love this place and am blessed to get to work here.

This past week I have been watching all the students return, and the freshmen arrive. Like me, they are also excited, renewed, and anticipating all that this year will bring them – perhaps with a little healthy anxiety; this is MIT after all, which can be a daunting place. My wish for them is a bit of both my vocabulary words. May they have *ביטחון-עצמי/bitachon-atzmi*, the self-confidence to know this is their place, that they can grow and thrive here, and that despite the inevitable challenges they will face, they have the strength to accomplish almost anything, and the communities to support them and nurture them. May they also see every day, week, month, and year here as one of *הרפתקאות/harpatkaot*/adventures: that inspiration, innovation, blessings, and gratitude are all before them to experience. I know that my staff and I have planned a wonderful semester worth of experiences to help them with both.

Welcome. Welcome back. To a great new year.

L'shana tova,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97,  
 Executive Director, MIT Hillel  
[rabbif@mit.edu](mailto:rabbif@mit.edu)

**Torah from Tech**

Our Torah this month is taught by Elisabeth Rosen '14 (IX). After graduating from MIT, she worked at technology focused health insurance company, Oscar Health. She is currently a second year medical student at SUNY Stony Brook in NY. She can be reached at [elrosen@alum.mit.edu](mailto:elrosen@alum.mit.edu).



As I pondered topics in this week's parsha, a bright scientist dear to me asked why bother drawing a connection between two things that are so fundamentally different? Religion, a dogma, and science, the evidence based pursuit of knowledge.

"The more I learn, the more I realize I don't know", widely attributed to Einstein, is just as relevant to Judaism as it is to science. Although some may disagree, the most beautiful aspect of both science and Judaism is the constant quest for knowledge, along with the recognition that one can never know everything. "Judaism is rooted in learning". Even Feynman, though not a fan of organized religion, recognized and appreciated Judaism's tremendous respect for learning. Judaism recognizes the need for constant reevaluation. Rabbis are constantly drawing sociological lessons from Jewish laws and stories, why not try to understand how certain seemingly archaic customs could be rooted in science.

Circling back to this week's parsha, Ki-Teitzei, I'd like to dive into an antiquated Jewish law. Among the many laws found in our Torah reading are a number dealing with suspicious or unhappy husbands. This reminded me of the ordeal of bitter water, the process of dealing with a Sota, which we read about over the summer in the portion Naso. The Sota process is disturbing, perplexing at best. A Sota is a woman suspected of adultery. When a woman was suspected of adultery, she was given a concoction of water and dust. If she was not "guilty" of adultery, she would end up more fertile. However, if she was guilty, "her belly swells first and then her thigh ruptures and she dies". Although there are various interpretations, I am partial to the interpretation that her uterus swells, and any existing placenta or embryo ruptures, thus killing any embryo that was conceived with a man other than her husband.

As a student in the medical sciences, this is a reminder that a chemical or medication that may be completely safe for a grown woman is not safe for a fetus or embryo. A teratogen is the medical term for an agent that can disturb the development of an embryo or fetus. Although modern day science recognizes the intricacies of teratogenic drugs in far more depth, it is neat to speculate that our ancestors may have been aware of a "poison" that could cross the placental barrier early in pregnancy, and disrupt embryo development.

Another interesting analogy to the bitter water is the contrast dye used for HSG (hysterosalpingogram). The contrast dye, introduced into the body for an imaging exam, can make some feel sick. Yet, recent evidence suggests that some women are more likely to conceive after HSG with contrast dye. It seems the dye might flush blocked fallopian tubes, thus enabling women to conceive. Sota can be a reminder that the same "poison" can have very different effects on two different individuals. Just as the bitter waters, it may make some sick, while making others more fertile.

From a sociological perspective, putting the issue of gender inequality of that time aside, Sota demonstrates that good can often emerge from terrible situations. If a woman is wrongfully accused of adultery, that woman would likely want nothing to do with her husband afterwards. However, after the process of consuming the bitter water, she is blessed with fertility. It is possible this is referring not to her medical ability to conceive, but the likelihood of her and her husband conceiving. After overcoming such a hurdle in their relationship, their relationship becomes that much stronger both physically and emotionally. With a happy marriage, they are more likely to try to conceive, and thus she may appear more fertile.

**MIT Hillel's 2018 Annual Fund  
Add to Jewish life @ MIT!**



To our current and future supporters,

This summer my car died. My 14-year old minivan predated technology like built-in navigation as a standard feature and plugging my phone into the console. In it I had logged 135,000 miles mostly of city driving and schlepping kids around. As MIT readers, you'll appreciate that for the first five years I had the minivan, my driving routine was so consistent that knowing the date I bought the car and the mileage on the odometer, I could tell you today's date within two days.

Now it needed \$5,000 worth of repairs just to pass inspection, and my sticker was about to expire. With specific 300-mile road trips already on the summer calendar, and the car in a questionable state to even get me home from the service center, the decision was swift.

As you have probably experienced, buying a car results in all kinds of communication from the dealer. Two weeks after I took possession of a new vehicle, I received an email with the subject line "What else comes with your Honda?" And inside, "Discover your latest Honda feature: community." Obviously from my work at Hillel - and for those of you who know me also how I choose to live personally - I believe strongly in building and being part of various communities. But do I really need to be welcomed to the Honda Community (yes, Community was capitalized), or connect with "fellow Honda owners"? Not so much.

What happens at MIT Hillel is the difference between being associated with something because you happen to share a label (Honda owner, Jewish student) and being connected to something synergistic.

MIT Hillel offers our students a space to explore who they are, to dig deeper into ethics and how to apply their own values to their work at MIT, to balance their workload with a Shabbat observance and/or a Shabbat-inspired pause, to develop leadership skills, and most importantly to connect with a circle of others seeking the same. MIT Hillel is something you both contribute to and gain from, and that is truly community.

As we begin a new year, I'll take this opportunity to thank all who made last year possible, and to welcome newcomers to the MIT Jewish Community.

In closing, I'll give my Honda dealership a little credit, for they clearly understand that "community" is a desirable goal.

L'Shalom,

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

[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2018 Donor Roll!

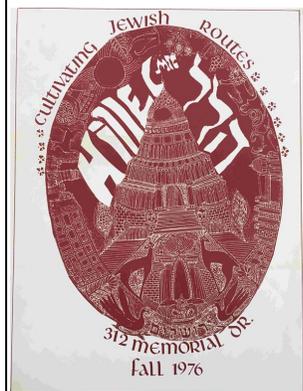
I am currently the President. With Friends of Israel I've been an ambassador, a leader, a planner, an educator, and more. My involvement in Israel-related activities, like Friends of Israel and the Israeli Independence Day Carnival, got my foot in the door to the broader Jewish community of MIT and all that comes with it.

Within the Jewish community I have done just about all of it - Shabbat dinners, Hillel events, Rabbi Goldfeder's many classes and learning fellowships, Birthright, the MIT Birthright Extension, and MISTI-Israel just this past summer. With each part of the Jewish community that I have delved into, I've met more and more friends and formed amazing relationships that I can't imagine MIT without. Both at MIT and everywhere in the world, I have found the Jewish community to be an invaluable source of love, acceptance, challenges, resources, and more. The way the Jewish community has impacted me in inspiring me to be a leader and a better person, challenging my views and opinions, and stimulating my interests has made me want to be an ambassador and a resource for others to find where they, too, belong within this community. Going into this year, I'm really excited to be a part of Hillel's ICET (Innovative Community Engagement Teams) and to get to provide unique opportunities for Jewish students to engage and experience the Jewish community at MIT both within and beyond Hillel. I'm really thankful I've been able to be so involved with Hillel and related programs. I absolutely love all of the staff, and thus am really excited to be able to extend their reach to the parts of the MIT community that haven't yet discovered all of this, and hopefully make more meaningful connections along the way.

**From the Archives!**

MIT Hillel has a rich history of programs and events told through student made flyers, pamphlets, and and great pictures!

The collection of MIT Hillel "artifacts" are now held in the Institute Archive and Special Collections for proper care and preservation!



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 or [let us know in writing](#).

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On the Calendar

- November 3, LJM @ MIT featuring Robert Pindyck, Professor of Economics and Finance at MIT Sloan
- November 14, LJM in NYC featuring Jeff Karp, Faculty at Harvard-MIT Health Sciences and Technology
- December 1, LJM @ MIT featuring Osvaldo Golijov, composer

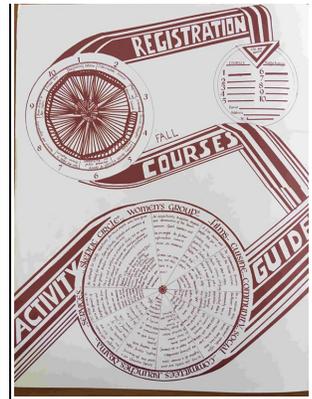
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Mazal Tov!

- The wedding of Dina Betser '11, MNG '12 and Avi Levitan!
- The wedding of Evan Crane '17 and Talia Weisberg!
- The engagement of Max Plaut '14 and Inbar Yamin '15!
- The engagement of Joshua Lipman MBA '17 and Elana Glasser!

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

Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal  
Center for Jewish Life at MIT  
40 Massachusetts Ave, Building W11  
Cambridge, MA 02139



The 1976 MIT Hillel Registration week welcome bulletin--this included a list of events and also various activities and class options for the semester from MIT Hillel!

**Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!**

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

Tel: 617.253.2982  
[hillel.mit.edu](http://hillel.mit.edu)  
Email: [hillel@mit.edu](mailto:hillel@mit.edu)