

MIT Hillel Update



Greetings from MIT Hillel to Alumni, Parents, and Friends in Cambridge and Beyond...

Welcome and Welcome Back to all MIT Students!

1. Elana Ben-Akiva '15 and Morris Adler '16 taste-test new kosher menu items from MIT Dining and Bon Appetit catering.
2. Ethan Sokol G, Kristine Fong G, and Brenda Stern '17 recruit new students for Challah for Hunger at the Orientation Midway Activities Fair.
3. Tyler Lerner '18, Inbar Yamin '15, and Oron Propp '18 make their own pizzas at Hillel's Orientation Week Freshman welcome event.

Executive Director's Update



Welcome to the Class of 2018!

Welcome to all new students, faculty, and staff!

Welcome back to all returning students!

After three months of relative campus summer quiet, we have seen the return of energy, activity, and excitement to MIT.

Over the past week of Orientation events, I have been revitalized by the enthusiasm of first-year students anticipating the start of a new life chapter. I have been inspired by the kindness of upperclassmen eagerly welcoming and greeting their wide-eyed younger classmates. I already see the foundations

of friendship development and Jewish community growth. Over sixty students attended our Shabbat dinner last Friday night – despite an overlapping freshman trip to the Aquarium and most upperclassmen not yet arrived on campus. We are expecting exponential growth in communal connections as we initiate all new menus and free Shabbat dinners every Friday night at Hillel! Spread the word.

Equally exciting, students have been dropping by Hillel, just to say hello and to share travels from the summer. Each MISTI-Israel participant has been reflecting on his or her time in Israel during Operation Protective Edge, dealing with rocket



fire or maintaining normalcy through a very non-normative summer. Another student shared his family vacation travels around Europe, somehow leaving each city just as an anti-Semitic incident broke out in their wake. All of these report how important they felt their experiences were to their identity, growth, and Jewish consciousness. Others reflect on slightly less trying summer months, like internships across the US. Some of these have already shared creating Jewish moments with friends or visiting a new Jewish community in a new city for the first time. I am absorbing all of these stories, told with passion and with wonder. I am proud of the growth and self-ownership each reflects. As a staff, we are creating initiatives to build on these experiences.

As a new school year begins, I feel hope. I am encouraged. And, I anticipate a great new year. L'shana tova as the Jewish New Year also approaches. May 5775 be a year of health, happiness, peace, and meaning for us all.

L'shana tova/Happy New Year,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM'97
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P.S. Also new this summer is Hillel's website. Check it out! hillel.mit.edu

Mentshn of Mention



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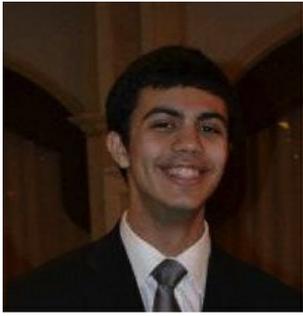
I was first attracted to MIT by the non-competitive atmosphere championed by the students and the opportunity to be surrounded by such inspiring and motivated young adults. Everyone is involved in something, interested in something, working toward something – and it drives those around to maybe do something, too.

During my first year at MIT, I was involved in a wide-range of activities, including goalkeeping for the Varsity Women's Soccer Team, tutoring elementary school children in reading and writing, interning with the David Project (a pro-Israel organization), leading campus tours, and baking for Challah for Hunger (an organization that raises money for humanitarian aid by baking and selling challah).

As I grew up in a Jewish family and attended a Jewish day school through eighth grade, my Jewish identity has always been an integral part of my life. Until I came to college, my Jewish identity wasn't really something that I needed to work or look for; it was always there – provided and supported by my parents, my family, my friends, and my teachers. The first time I ever really had to find a Jewish community of my own was when I came to MIT. I have to admit that it took me a little while, and I still have some work to do, but I found my Jewish community through the David Project and Birthright.

Through my David Project Internship, I was able to explore my feelings about Israel and what

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by alumnus Maxwell Plaut, a new graduate of Course 3 who is working at MIT Lincoln Laboratory. He is from New York and enjoys most stereotypical Jewish foods, except herring and white fish as they are "inherently gross." He can be reached at mplaut@alum.mit.edu

Next week's Parsha, Ki Tavo, contains the commandment of Bikkurim/First Fruits. The commandment requires that each person in Israel gives some of their produce to the Kohanim/priests. Rashi, the Medieval Torah commentator, comments that this teaches that Bnai Yisrael/the children of Israel were not bound by the mitzvah of Bikkurim until they finished actually conquering the land and dividing it up. Even the Torah, with all its demands, has a degree of understanding about new beginnings. It takes time to settle a new land, there are many things to do and many more things that a person needs to get used to. "Kol Hatchalot Kashot", the Rabbis tell us: "All beginnings are difficult."

Especially now, as many my fellow recent graduates are starting their next stage of life after MIT, an important question to ask is, "How does one weather the storm of adjustment to new situations?"

Later in the Parsha, Moshe blesses the Jews by saying "God will place you as the head, not the tail." Some Jews also make this blessing on Rosh HaShanah over a fish, which seems especially odd since the head and tail end up in the same place (if you eat the fish...). Rav Pinkus explains that the head is the one who made the decision where to go. The head has the power to envision a goal and accomplish it. The head steers the rest of the animal in the proper direction. The tail is just dragged along.

There are two types of people in this world. There are leaders and followers, heads and tails. Leaders are not necessarily leaders of large groups, but they are people who decide to live their lives with goals and accomplish those goals. They are people who live with an unwavering drive of vision and convictions. They are people who live by their decisions. Followers are people who do things just because everyone else is doing it. They are being schlepped along by life, getting pushed every which way and not holding to a set of values and principles. This can be in any arena: in the workplace, in the home, in school. Those who live by their convictions are leaders, even if they have no followers.

As many of my fellow new graduates of the Institute are no doubt learning quickly, all new beginnings are difficult. There are new people to meet, a new lifestyle to shape, and new systems to learn. However, a leader is able to maintain a clear vision of his or her core values and a new situation simply requires new application of those values.

As we all head toward the beginning of a new year, or for many of us, head towards an entirely new life outside MIT, we should get in touch with our core values and convictions in order to build the year and our life in the most positive way we can envision. (Full disclaimer: I'm not technically leaving the Institute – I'll be working at Lincoln Lab).

Everyone should have a wonderful, happy and healthy year.

(Adapted from a drash by Rabbi Ephy Greene)

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.

[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

Wednesday night, September 24-Friday, Sept 26: Rosh HaShanah

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

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..

the country means to me, and then I was able to share my love of it with others on campus. On Birthright, in spite of the fact that it was my fifth trip to Israel, I was able to see the "same old" holy sites and tourist attractions in a new light. My MIT group asked questions that peers on my other trips had never thought to ask before. Those on my bus wanted to stay and understand the background and the possible futures before simply moving on to something next. My Birthright trip, led by the amazing MIT Hillel staffer Shoshana Gibbor, forced me and everyone else on it to look for something more. I think that is my favorite part about MIT, and the Jewish community here in particular – they push you to look and to ask for more.

I thought it nearly impossible to think something new of my Judaism, and yet my internship with the David Project forced me to both ask and answer some really tough questions. In one of my last meetings with students on campus, I sat in front of five seniors involved in a Catholic organization on campus and tried to explain to them what Israel meant to me. They all had different preconceived notions of the country, the people, and the culture. None knew it as I did. I explained why it's special to me and why I think no other place on earth like it really exists. Though I know that I did not change their opinions entirely, and only five people heard me versus the entire campus, I think that I brought a different opinion and anecdote to what they will now associate with Israel and Judaism. Being Jewish at MIT and ultimately taking control of that part of my identity is what finally brought my involvement and happiness on this campus full circle.

Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

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



MIT Hillel wishes a hearty "Mazal Tov" to:

Ben Niewood '15 on his recent engagement to Aliza Shapiro. A mazal tov to parents Eliahu Niewood '87 SM'89 ScD'93 and Joanne Kamens, MIT Hillel Board of Directors Clerk and Vice-President.

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

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