



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

- 1) Sarah Wertheimer '22 and Amelia Meles '22 at the Registration Day Brunch.
- 2) MIT Hillel's Director of Graduate Student Engagement, Natalie Yosipovitch, with Graduate Student, Skylar Eiskowitz at the MIT Activities Midway.
- 3) MIT Hillel Graduate students having a picnic on the Charles River.

MIT Hillel Update



My Assistant Director was relating the other day how difficult it was to explain to her three-year-old the concept of the “end of summer”. Her daughter understood the scientific date of the fall equinox in late September (clearly she is MIT Class of 2038 material!). But, as evening and morning temperatures cooled a few weeks ago, and she had to wear a sweater to go outside, the refrain “summer’s over” was confusing her – “It’s still August!” Further complicating matters, there’s also the “end of summer” as camp finishes. And then there’s the “end of summer” that co-relates to the beginning of school.

I, too, have many markers for the end of summer. Once MIT’s sports camp ends and elementary school children aren’t the predominant population on Kresge Oval. Once my staff and I truly immerse ourselves in strategic and tactical planning for the new term. Once I start working on High Holy Day sermons and activities.

The “start of the new year” is equally complex. I can measure it by new students arriving for FPOPs (Freshman Pre-Orientation Programs). Or by excited parents schlepping boxes into dorms, trying to hide their emotions of concern and sadness

mixed with joy, at their “child” now having grown up. Or by upperclass students eagerly sizing up future hallmates or potential fraternity brothers. Or by Registration Day angst of having to choose from the firehose of intellectual options MIT offers.



I will admit, I am facing a bit of a three-year-old’s confusion right now. All my indicators for the end of summer and the beginning of a new year are not lining up. It is emotionally and psychologically strange for me this year. Students are back, and yet the High Holy Days are not for another month. How do we start a school year, if not with Rosh Hashana goodie bag deliveries to dorms?

We Jews complain whenever the holidays are “late” or “too early” -- because there is no such thing for us as “on time”. Regardless of how the calendar falls, it seems we are never ready. That being said, I am embracing our Jewish/secular calendars “unalignment” this year as a blessing and opportunity. With a full month holiday-free ahead of us, I am looking forward to the fact that my staff and I will get to know the new undergraduate and graduate students more deeply and personally before we reach out to invite them to Rosh Hashana meals and services. I am excited for us to re-connect with returning students, and having these few slightly-less-crazy weeks of coffee and classes and discussions with them, as well.

To those who are still ending summer, enjoy the last days of relaxation, and to those who have moved on to the fall, (an early) happy new year!

L’shalom,

Rabbi Michelle H. Fisher
Executive Director
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Mentshn of Mention



Hi, I’m Sarah, a sophomore studying computer science and economics and I’m from Brookline, MA (right over the bridge). At MIT I’m involved in the Leadership Training Institute, which is a semester-long program where we mentor local high-schoolers through the process of creating community service projects. I’m also excited to continue teaching; last semester I taught Hebrew to students heading to Israel for the summer, and this semester I’ll be helping out in office hours for a programming class.

One of my main criteria for choosing a college was its Jewish community. After visiting MIT for a shabbaton and for CPW (Campus Preview Weekend), I knew it had a welcoming community. However, I was worried that the Jewish community, specifically the Orthodox one, wasn’t big enough to push me to grow as a religiously committed Jew throughout my college experience. I couldn’t have been more happily surprised, delighted, and thankful to find out how wrong I was.

Having a small Orthodox community has given me both a tight-knit home, and the confidence to branch out. My kosher-keeping dorm suite feels like a family, and having that

home-base has given me the confidence to take part in Addir, an interfaith discussion group, this year. Through Hillel events and classes, I've also gotten to know some amazing, thoughtful Jews who have different ideas than I do about what it means to be Jewish, and they've pushed me to think deeper, and to be a more considerate, kinder person in my day-to-day life.

Another perk of having a smaller community is how involved you can be early on. Second semester of freshman year, with the encouragement of upperclassmen friends, I joined Hillel student board as a vice president of programming. I'm excited to continue in that role this semester, and then to encourage the first years (whom it's been a pleasure to start meeting this past week) to step up next semester.

Sarah Wertheimer '22
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Torah from Tech

Havruta and Healing the Divide

Joe Schuman graduated from MIT in 2016 with a Bachelors of Science in Mechanical Engineering and in Political Science. Joe now works for the Department of Defense in Washington, DC and is a member of the Maryland Air National Guard.



Growing up, I thought that my contrarian nature (or as my family and friends called it, my “annoying” nature) was simply a part of my *personal* identity. However, through text

study at MIT Hillel and GatherDC, I have come to appreciate that discussion, debate, and questioning are actually a part of my *Jewish* identity. This discovery led me to launch Divided We Fall (<https://dividedwefall.com>), a nonprofit dedicated to restoring civil discourse and depolarizing politics.

The tradition of questioning in Judaism goes as far back as Abraham. Abraham famously questions God over the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, asking: “Will You even destroy the righteous with the wicked? ... Will the Judge of the entire earth not perform justice?” Through an extended debate, Abraham eventually convinces God to forgive the people of Sodom and Gomorrah if he finds just ten righteous men in the cities. This tradition remains alive and well today: the Jewish practice of havruta (group study), for example, is built on debate and disagreement; the name “Israel” translates into “to struggle with God”; and—as Rabbi Gavriel Goldfeder’s email signature, when I was a student, noted—The Maharal stated: “If sincere questions are silenced, this is indicative that the religion is weak.”

There is power in the rich history of questioning and debate in the Jewish faith. It was with this sense of the past and responsibility to the future that I decided to launch Divided We Fall on July 4th, 2018. In the past year, we have published debates between “Political Pen Pals” of differing ideological persuasions; “spirited” interviews (named for the liveliness of the conversations as well as the beverages consumed during their production); and contrarian op-eds. Our content exposes readers to a diverse array of political viewpoints

while demonstrating productive disagreement.

Recently, the intersection of my Judaism and politics became explicit with the publication of a debate (<https://dividedwefall.com/2019/08/14/the-great-rabbi-debate/>) between my MIT Rabbi, Gavriel Goldfeder, and my DC Rabbi, Aaron Potek. They discussed the relationship between religion and the individual and disagreed about whether religion should be focused on self-actualization or self-transcendence. Though slightly afield from Divided We Fall's regular political content, I note in the beginning of the article that politics and philosophy are inseparable. More often than not, political differences are underwritten by philosophical (including religious) differences. Thus, we must work to understand differences of opinion in both fields.

In this polarized time in the United State of America, I think Judaism has much to say about how we should conduct ourselves and our politics. There is a lot of work to be done to heal the divides in our country. But I am hopeful. And I believe that Jewish wisdom and ethics can lead us in the direction of a more perfect Union.

If you are interested in finding out more about the project or how you can get involved, email me at joe@dividedwefall.com.

Joseph Schuman '16

MIT Hillel's 2020 Annual Fund

Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To Our Current and Future Supporters:

I just love that [philanthropic questions are fodder](#) for sit-com audiences, and the “Curb Your Enthusiasm” episode about fake anonymity in giving cracks me up both personally as a donor and professionally as your MIT Hillel development contact.

On the other hand, I don't love current news events that highlight how one misguided philanthropist (rotten apple, definitely not dipped in honey) can do more harm than good.

From my perspective, the best way to protect against such potential problems is for organizations not to be overly dependent on any one donor, which is best accomplished by building as broad a donor base as possible. This happens to also fit nicely with one of my personal objectives this year, which is to increase our rate of renewed gifts. We've slowly built from 75% to nearly 80% of annual gift renewals, but it's like a calculus problem and in the limit we haven't actually reached – or surpassed – that 80% mark.

If you gave a gift last year, renewing your gift this year will strengthen our community of support. When first-time donors ask me how much they should give, I offer them some general advice before suggesting a dollar amount. I teach that whether it is MIT Hillel, or some other small non-profit, or even a large organization like MIT, giving one-fifth of x every year for five consecutive years strengthens more than giving x every fifth year. **The reliability of a gift is a gift in itself.**

At this time of year, we all seek renewal – to be inscribed for a good year at Rosh Hashanah, to have a productive academic year, to achieve a balanced budget in the new fiscal year. On all levels, I wish you the best and thank you for your part in helping MIT Hillel do our best for our students. L'Shana Tova!

Marla Choslovsky SM '88
MIT Hillel Director of Development
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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.

[Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!](#)

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

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. To inform us that you have already planned such a gift, please contact us directly.

From the Archives!

For this month's "From the Archives!" we look back at registration and orientation week activities from 1978!

A coffee house event or even an ice cream bash are two things that you could find Hillel students participating in today. Although, a cocktail party for undergrads wouldn't really fly in 2019...

Feel free to reach out if you want us to send you the full-size picture!



On the Calendar

On Campus: Leading Jewish Minds

- Our first Leading Jewish Minds seminar of the semester will take place on September 13, 2019, featuring [Professor Sara Seager](#), "Exoplanets and the Search for Habitable Worlds"

Mark your calendars for 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!

Mazal Tov!

Mazal tov to MIT alumnus Sam Cannon '15 and Rachel Chanen on their recent engagement!

Mazal tov to MIT alumnus Steven Fine '15, MNG '17 and Amanda Cove on their recent engagement!

Mazal tov to MIT alumni Rochel Levy '20 and Ari Green '17 MNG '18 on their recent engagement!

Welcome to [Natalie Yosipovitch](#), MIT Hillel's newest (and first!) Director of Graduate Student Engagement!

Welcome to [Rabbi Ariel Burger](#), MIT Hillel's newest Orthodox Rabbi!

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

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