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"A change in perspective is worth 80 IQ points." Alan Kay, computer scientist

Shana Tova from MIT to our Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Parents and Friends!

MIT Hillel students pictured: Haley Abramson '19, Nathaniel Knopf '19, Zoe Levitt '21, Maya Levy '21, Avital Vainberg '21

Mentshn of Mention



Shoshana Marks '21
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Hi! My name is Shoshana Marks, and I am from Baltimore, Maryland. I'm currently a sophomore studying Course 16, which is Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering. One cool thing that I am doing on campus is Addir, which promotes interfaith conversations on campus. I am very excited to be in this amazing group of people.

I took a long winded route to MIT. After high school, I spent two years in Israel on a gap year program before finally making my way to MIT. Those two years contributed so much to my Judaism and confirmed my involvement in the Jewish Community. If I had gone straight to college, I don't think I would have actively chosen to be a big part of the Jewish community. Those years cemented my lifelong connection to Judaism. Before I actually got to MIT, I was excited to join the strong and vibrant Jewish community. Memories from the Shabbat dinner during my college visit reinforced this idea that I was coming to a lively and close-knit group of people.

MIT Hillel Update



It's Orientation Week! It's Reg Day! It's the first day of classes! It's Rosh Hashanah! "Lights, camera, action!" the movie industry might say. Everything comes in such quick succession this year; the return of students and the return of the Jewish New Year are almost as close as they can fall. I actually find the closeness of these two beginnings auspicious; there is a Hebrew phrase, "Mishaneh makom, mishaneh mazal/Change your place, change your luck." All the coming and going of students, returning from home or summer internships, are physical changes of place that are happening right now. Choosing classes and selecting an academic course (or double major, or a minor, or maybe a second minor) are educational changes of "place" many students are thinking about. And, resetting one's spiritual state and returning to one's best self is what the Jewish calendar emphasizes at this time of year.

Hillel is here to support our students with all of these. We greeted dozens of new freshmen at "Move-in Day" meals and the Orientation Week Midway Activities Fair last week. Our first Shabbat dinner was an equal mix of these first-year students and upperclassmen with early returns to campus. I already heard seniors and juniors giving advice to the first-years on every subject from gym classes to skipping classes (for the High Holidays, not in general...). My staff and I, too, are already starting to build and strengthen relationships with everyone, to be Jewish educators, cheer leaders, role models for our students. I feel such pride watching the Hillel community as it becomes for all of them a Jewish home away from home, a source of deep friendships, and a place to grow and learn. There is such excitement in the air, that one feels that the positive energy might be physically measurable.



Over the next few weeks, we'll build on those relationships and those experiences. From traditional Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services to our more alternative Ctrl-Alt-Del "reset for the New Year" reflective discussion; from our New Year's Eve first night of Rosh Hashanah free extravaganza dinner to Do-It-Yourself holiday meals and breakfasts in smaller dorm and living group settings; from classes, for every level of learner, focusing on meaning-making and Jewish law to shofar blowing around campus, we will make sure that the new physical and spiritual "place" of our students is set up for a good, sweet, meaningful, and mazal-filled year.

May you, too, find yourself in a good and new place this Jewish year of 5779, and may that lead to health, success, and happiness in the 12 months to come.

L'shana tova,

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97
Executive Director, MIT Hillel
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Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Gregory Kravit '15 (Course 16). Following MIT, Greg moved out to Sunny San Diego to escape the snow, and luckily found a vibrant young Jewish professional community to create a new home. Greg works in the aerospace/defense industry as a systems security engineer. He can be reached at gkravit@alum.mit.edu.

Shana Tovah! It is quite extraordinary to look back and see how quickly three (3!) years has flown by since I graduated from the Institute and moved across the country to sunny San Diego. It's always quite interesting to reflect on all that has passed, especially this time of year as we enter the Days of Awe. As I pondered the teachings of the Rosh Hashanah Torah readings, I thought about a chance encounter I had with a gentleman named Dan this past Spring.

I met Dan at a local craft fair where we both happened to sit at the same table to eat a meal from the food trucks. As it turned out, he had retired from my company almost 20 years before as an Aerospace/Defense Vice President and had acquired a large family, MBA, and Engineering PhD along the way. But what was most striking about Dan was what he was most excited about: he was going to start studying Computer Science at a community college at 83! Dan at 83, seemed to have not lost that thirst for learning and indeed found a new purpose, to be a CS major.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we start by reading about nonagenarian (90!) Sarah, "And God remembered Sarah as He had said, and God did to Sarah as He had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bore a son." Much like the octogenarian Dan, Sarah (and Abraham!) had a newfound purpose, that of being a parent. As we learn from these passages, the renewal of one's purpose is itself an act of God, much like the creation of the world that Rosh Hashanah commemorates. Thus it seems the holiday itself beckons us to consider who we are, where we came from, and where we want to go.

During Rosh Hashanah and closing with Yom Kippur, we reflect, we repent and we refocus. This year, I've been thinking a lot about my own journey and purpose. As I said, I left the Institute over 3 years ago and like many, I have struggled to figure out my purpose and towards where I direct my energies. At the Institute, we had problem sets, projects, and the myriad of social activities to keep us focused. Away from the Charles River, juggling career, relationships and (eventually) family can be a more vexing problem than any exam question.

What remains true through the confusion and stress? Well, there are three moments in the Rosh Hashanah Torah reading that maybe we can draw from.

1. Don't be blind in following a path that may no longer be true.

Abraham may have proved himself "a God-fearing man" when attempting to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, but most of us will not be lucky to have an angel step in to ward us from an irreversible misstep. It may be prudent and necessary to reassess periodically our current situation and realign as needed. It is all right to remind ourselves we make mistakes, even if we do it for the right reasons. It is much more preferable than to stay on the path that leads to ruin.

2. When building the future, don't forget those who provided assistance in the past.

There is a telling passage shortly after the birth of Isaac where Sarah tells Abraham to send off Hagar and the son she bore for Abraham. It is quite striking to see Sarah try to cast off those that remind of her past struggles so quickly after the miracle of her own son. But here, too, we are taught that while Sarah wants to excise her own unpleasant feelings, God does not forget Hagar's contributions and promises to take care of her son and all the generations to follow. Thus we may learn to display similar benevolence.

3. Mark milestones to show progress and to connect with others.

There are many benefits that can arise from marking the key moments on our journeys. Abraham marked the signing of a covenant with a fellow general by building a well and placing seven lambs there. Not only did the act endear Abraham to his new ally, but provided further evidence to Abraham that he was following the right path.

So this Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, may we all take a few moments to refocus and rediscover purpose in our lives. May we be a little like Sarah and Abraham (and Dan!), as it's never too late to embark on a new endeavor to make the impact on those around us that we seek.

Shana Tova and G'mar Chatima Tova. Happy New Year and may we be sealed for a good year.

MIT Hillel's 2019 Annual Fund

Add to Jewish life @ MIT!

The High Holy Days approach and we contemplate our mortality... the obituary column seems like a timely topic.

The 2016 documentary "Obit" is about the New York Times writers who cover this "beat" and the process of deciding which recently deceased persons are print worthy today even if their famous accomplishments were decades ago. I saw it at a special screening at one of the local artsy theatres, and afterward the film's director and one of the writers featured in the movie were present to take questions. One exchange made me first laugh, then think.... The question was "Who do the writers try to avoid?". The answer was that the obit writers dread writing about mathematicians. (My MIT self laughed at this.) Physicists and philosophers were also mentioned. Complex ideas, even ones that change the world, are difficult to write about, to link directly to a life path, or to use as a lesson that inspires the readers.

Deeds are easier on all these dimensions. Most of us know that the Nobel Prize was created after Alfred Nobel got a glimpse of how his obituary would characterize his life as a force of destruction from his invention of dynamite. Jarred

When I got to MIT, I was comforted by the fact that I already had a community that I could easily join. By second semester of my freshman year, I had joined Hillel Board as treasurer, allowing myself to contribute more to the Jewish community. I was also heavily involved in the Orthodox community which lead to me being Gabbai for the Orthodox minyan this coming year. The small community has forced me to take a more active role, which I might not have done if I went to a bigger school.

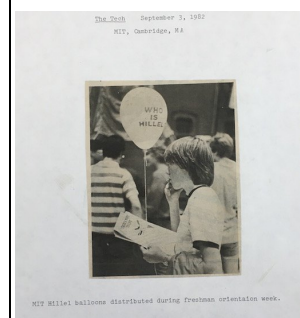
I think that being an active member of the Jewish community has greatly enhanced my time at MIT. For one, it has encouraged me to meet many different Jews of all flavors. I have learned a lot from all sorts of people about how they are Jewish. Also, these people range over all the class years and are involved with all sorts of activities on campus. Knowing upperclassmen has given me guidance towards making important decisions regarding classes, extracurriculars, and so many other things. Their vast experience has helped me figure out which clubs and other communities I want to be a part of.

I am so happy that I belong to a community that cares for us. The support that Hillel gives is so beneficial to being at MIT. Whether it is the Hillel room where I know I can always go to relax or meet people, or the ways that I can take leadership opportunities, or the many classes or events each week that connect me to my Judaism. All of these resources at Hillel help me navigate the fast moving world of MIT and gives me the support I need to succeed.

From the Archives!

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

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



Orientation week just ended, so we thought it'd be fitting to include a picture from orientation week in 1982!



by the erroneous report of his death, Nobel sought a different legacy. In 1989 Stephen Covey included "Begin with the end in mind" among "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", and suddenly how one's obituary might read became a mantra in the self-improvement industry. In my role, I notice that the idea is often used to motivate people to be philanthropic during their lifetimes, and we seek to learn from both titans of industry and regular citizens.

When I read the obituary of billionaire H.F. Lenfest last month in The Wall Street Journal, what caught my interest was the description that he "relied on his instincts about people in making gifts. His wife was more deliberative. She kept a note on the refrigerator reminding him to remember two words when people asked for money: 'no' and 'why'." I would say they are both right. Trust in an organization's leadership as well as agreeing that the purpose is in line with your own priorities are both necessary conditions, and each is insufficient without the other.

As you consider your commitments in the coming year, please know that both Rabbi Fisher and I will always make time to answer your questions and answer the 'why' MIT Hillel both needs and is worthy of your support.

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for 5779, and may both your ideas and your deeds inspire those around you. Shana Tova!

Marla Choslovsky SM '88,

MIT Hillel Director of Development
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[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2019 Donor Roll!

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.

On the Calendar

NYC:

- Thursday, October 18 - 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 Arnold Barnett, the George Eastman Professor of Management Science and a Professor of Statistics at the MIT Sloan School of Management.

On Campus: Our Leading Jewish Minds seminar continues for a tenth year!

- Friday, November 9 - Professor Yossi Sheffi, Director of the Center for Transportation & Logistics, author of several best-selling and award-winning books.
- Friday, December 14 - Joseph F. Coughlin, founder and Director of the AgeLab at MIT.

Mazal Tov!

- Mazal tov to MIT alumni Keren Greenbaum '14 and Adin Schmahmann '13 MNG '14 on their recent engagement!
- Mazal tov to MIT alumni Suri Bandler '17 and Jason Fischman '17 on their recent engagement!
- Mazal tov to MIT alumni Leon Valdes PhD'17 and Naomi Stein '10, MCP '13 on their recent marriage on July 29!
- Mazal tov to Hillel Student President Ronit Langer '20 for being an invited speaker at the Palais des Nations in Geneva this week, sharing her experiences as an [iGEM delegate](#), as part of discussions on how to move forward the UN Secretary-General's May 2018 agenda for disarmament ([Securing our Common Future](#))!
- Welcome to [Leah Kaplan](#), MIT Hillel's newest Administrative/Development Assistant!
- Welcome to [Mikhael Reuven](#), MIT Hillel's newest Director of Graduate Student Engagement!

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

Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal
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Do you know who is pictured here? Let us know!

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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