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

Images from two of the thirteen seders MIT Hillel supported over the Passover holiday!

Each star in the middle image represents one location.

Executive Director’s Update

“Over 245 seders served!” Perhaps not quite rivaling McDonald’s former marketing (“Over 9 billions served” until it became “Billions and billions served” in 1994), but definitely a campus record. MIT Hillel proudly hosted, supported, organized, trained student seder leaders for, and/or helped provide a seder experience at 13 campus locations, feeding over 245 seder meals this Passover. Especially considering the number of students we also knew who went home — and brought friends home — for the seder weekend, our reach was amazingly broad and deep. A hearty yashar koach to all our seder leaders, table captains, and my terrific staff who worked on every detail “down to the rules of the afikoman”. It is an honor to make such Jewish experiences for our students. A thank you as well to Ira Jaffe ’61 and Ruth Zarren who made significant donations in memory of Bennett ’61 and Ellen Zarren to underwrite these engaging celebrations.

The message of Pesach is going from slavery to freedom, and to see oneself as if you personally went forth from Egypt. In every generation, Jews interpret these words and experiences to understand their responsibility to make a change for the good in the world. To help our seniors with this mitzvah, Marla Choslovsky, our Development Director, and Marissa Freed, our Assistant Director, ran a class on philanthropy. As our students approach graduation — and many of them begin jobs and learn about earning a salary, we asked them to think about how/where they want to give and give back, how they want to make an impact in the world.

Sitting in the room watching and listening, I was inspired. Hopefully we are giving a gift of future philanthropists to the Jewish and MIT communities.

Today is Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. We all know that the number of Holocaust survivors decreases daily. This afternoon we invited Rita Goldberg, author of Motherland: Growing Up with the Holocaust to speak with students. Rita is not a survivor, but she is the child of a survivor, and we spoke about being the generation that hears the stories from primary sources, and how we will be responsible for making sure the next generation hears those stories as well.

With just a couple weeks left to the semester until students scatter after finals, we still have Yom HaAtzmaut/Israel’s Independence Day to celebrate… with camels (yes, really, on Kresge Oval for the second year!) and our annual Hummus Experience and Taste-Off. The semester’s not over until it’s over!

Happy month of May,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM ’97
rabbi@mit.edu

P.S. If you are coming back for reunions this year, Hillel’s annual Alumni Reception in honor of our newest alumni, our graduates, will be in the Hillel Center (the Religious Activities Center, Building W11) immediately after Commencement from 1-3:30. Shabbat dinner will also be available that evening. Watch for a separate email announcement, or let us know you want to come!

Torah from Tech

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Torah from Tech
As always, it is an honor to join with you in maintaining and building a strong Jewish presence at MIT. I thank you for your support of Hillel’s mission and Rabbi Fisher’s leadership.

A few quick notes:

- Are you already on campus or arriving soon for MIT’s big celebration of 100 years since crossing from Boston to Cambridge, and its capital campaign launch? Thank you to all of the Hillel alumni and constituents who are participating. If you are wandering campus during the day on Friday, feel free to stop by W11 and say hi.

The immune system—of everything from bacteria to humans—grapples with memory all the time. For instance, upon encountering an infection for the first time, the immune system selects for cells producing antibodies with a tight fitting complementary image, as it were, of the foreign attacker. The cells producing that antibody remain long-lived in the bone marrow so that if the complementary “image” of the microbe were to return, it would be neutralized quickly and the memory reinforced.

A second model can be found in defense against leishmaniasis. In that case, a small reservoir of microbe is kept at bay within the host so that it can constantly “tickle” the immune system’s memory. Wiping it out altogether can render the host susceptible again. Bacteria use this model as well—DNA from invading viruses are stored within the bacteria’s own genome, and coupled with a molecular scissors, so that if the virus returns, the complementation of the viral DNA stored in the bacteria would trigger a precise cut of the invading viral DNA, preventing infection. This process is called CRISPR, a technique which is now the basis for gene editing in humans on a level never thought possible before.

Immune memory is not confined to invading microbes. Our body has a way of educating T-cells in the thymus by showing actual self proteins to developing T-cells, and, if they are reactive to self, eliminating them. If you remove the gene that forces the expression of these pieces of protein you get a genetic syndrome of autoimmunity called APECED.

The immune system, therefore, spends time actively and passively being reminded what self is, and what foreign is. While the active method would appear at first glance to be more powerful, there is potential danger in keeping everything within. Some organisms can evade being kept at bay and cause serious infections. And what if the incorporated viral DNA sequences were to become pathogenic to the bacteria or if the proteins expressed in the thymus actually worked—turning the thymus into an uncontrolled producer of excess hormones?

It is perhaps for this reason that the dual language is used with respect to Amalek. “Obliterate the memory” and “Do not forget”. We need to use that active memory so that we don’t forget—keeping the positive and the negative within us, but we must be careful to what extent we let that memory affect us, and we hope for the day when it can be obliterated out without fear of it returning in any form.

MIT Hillel’s 2016 Annual Fund
Add to Jewish life @ MIT!

To our current and future supporters,

I had a sort-of-funny, sort-of-awkward conversation recently at a shiva house, while schmoozing with two friends from my shul. I see Debbie regularly, but I hadn’t had a meaningful conversation with Sue for a few years. Debbie was updating us with the news that her college-age daughter will pursue a career in advertising, to which Sue replied, “Could be worse, could be in development.” Debbie, knowing that I had transitioned into that very field two years ago, was mortified that Sue had just insulted me, and she tried to smooth things over. But I wasn’t offended, merely surprised that Sue—who works at one of the many local private universities (not MIT!)—would have such a negative view of the role, especially since her own livelihood depends on it.

I think there are a lot of misconceptions about development, that it is like another marketing pitch coming at a consumer, only with no product in hand at the end. Who among us isn’t inundated with requests? But that’s not how I view it at all. A good development person will help you leverage yourself to accomplish more on this earth, and will communicate the need for and impact of your gift in a way that helps you decide which of the many messages resonates most with you. In my own giving, I’ve appreciated the people who’ve helped me do more, much the way I’ve benefitted from the friend who motivated me to increase my leverage yourself to accomplish more on this earth, and will communicate the need for and impact of your gift in a way that helps you decide which of the many messages resonates most with you. In my own giving, I’ve appreciated the people who’ve helped me do more, much the way I’ve benefitted from the friend who motivated me to increase my

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Thank you for supporting MIT Hillel!

Your generous support allows us to help keep Jewish life vibrant on the MIT campus!
• Mazel Tov on the milestone if it’s your reunion year. If you come to campus, please do stop by the Hillel reception on the afternoon of Friday, June 3. If you already are planning on doing so, please help Ben ensure we order enough lox. hillelrvsp@mit.edu. Please contact me directly if you plan to include MIT Hillel in your reunion gift.

Thank you,
Marla Choslovsky SM'88,
MIT Hillel Director of Development
marla360@mit.edu

Add your name to MIT Hillel's 2016 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 or let us know in writing.

On the Calendar

Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT

• May 13, Eran Ben-Joseph, Head, Department of Urban Studies and Planning: "ReThinking a Lot: The Design and Culture of Parking"

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Marla Choslovsky SM'88,
MIT Hillel Director of Development
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