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

1) Students on the MIT Birthright Extension visit the Technion’s Formula 1 Lab in Haifa

2) Evan Fields (Grad Student) with Alan Wagner ’14 at the Nirim Elementary School in Haifa, connecting with both the high risk students and their rehabilitated “wild” animals, that the pupils use to learn life skills. Part of our Boston-Haifa Connection activities on Birthright.

3) AEPI is well represented on MIT’s Birthright bus in December. AEPI Brothers (L->R): Tyler Pleasant ’19, Kyle Swanson ’18, Jonathan Hurowitz ’18, Rogers Epstein ’19, Jacob Swiezy ’19

4) Eating and relaxing in a Bedouin tent on Birthright.

MIT Hillel Update

It’s amazing how quickly time flies! It was already two months ago when I walked onto a darkened stage facing 1,000 of my professional peers at Hillel International’s Global Assembly to give a TED-style talk as part of the conference’s closing plenary. MIT Hillel had already been honored at the opening awards ceremony with the Philip H. and Susan Rudd Cohen Outstanding Campus Award as one of the two top Hillels in the movement, and this was one of my chances to teach what was behind our excellence. (This 3-minute video that I shared last month briefly highlights our successes, through student and staff stories.)

My talk was about self-care, and particularly about how Hillel professionals need to care for themselves and their teams in order to allow us all to be fully present for and fully take care of our students. Apparently the talk hit a theme that others, too, find important. The video has received over 4,400 views on Facebook, including being shared by Advancing Jewish Women Professionals in the Jewish Community.

I agreed to give this talk for many reasons. One was as a statement of gratitude to my staff for helping create such a supportive team and great place to work, and I publicly thank all of them, again, for their hard work, dedication, and willingness to step forward – and back – to help our students grow and thrive as Jews and human beings. All of this is shared by Advancing Jewish Women Professionals in the Jewish Community.

Our first priority at MIT Hillel is to provide our own students with deep and meaningful Jewish opportunities. Our second priority is to be a model and support to the wider MIT community. Our third circle of influence is the Hillel world. All of my staff taught sessions at the Hillel conference in December. Each of us have, officially or unofficially, mentored peers in the field. MIT Hillel, which was not on the map of the Hillel world eight years ago, is now a leader in the movement, and this was one of my chances to teach what was behind our excellence. (This 3-minute video that I shared last month briefly highlights our successes, through student and staff stories.)

As we move into the spring semester, we won’t sit on our laurels. We have incredible classes, Shabbat dinners, social events, Israel activities, and community building fun all in the works. I look forward to sharing it all with you in the coming months.

L’shalom,
Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM ’97
Executive Director, MIT Hillel
rabbif@mit.edu

Torah from Tech

Our Torah this month is taught by Latif Jilji ’52 (Course 2). He received an MS in Mechanical Engineering from Carnegie-Mellon University, and an MS in Aeronautics and PhD in ME from the University of Michigan. He began his teaching career at the University of Toledo in 1954 before moving to NYC and then to CCNY in 1964. He retired in 1998, having served as a professor and as the dean of the school of engineering.

His first book was, I think, “The Second Law of Thermodynamics,” published in 1957. He wrote it in response to a question he had been frequently asked, “What is the second law of thermodynamics?” That was a disconcerting question for him, because he had not known how to answer it when he had been asked it. When he took the question up, he learned that the second law of thermodynamics is a statement about the direction of time, that the entropy of an isolated system is never decreasing. He wrote that the second law of thermodynamics is the proposition that the world always runs downhill, and that this is a reason for the success of Man as an animal.

John Deely ’19
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Hi, I’m John, and I am a Course 10 Junior from Bethlehem, PA. I am a member of the football team and a member of the Chi Phi fraternity. MIT to me is one of the most special places in the world. Every person has his or her own specific passions and background, each of which melds and fuses into a campus where I am constantly meeting new people. I love hearing peoples’ stories, motivations, and experiences. Being at MIT allows me to make connections with outstanding people and be impacted by them.

Judaism has had a unique role in my life. My Jewish identity has changed a lot in my time at MIT, and I am sure will change even more in my life. My siblings and I were raised Catholic, but growing up Judaism was still a part of our lives. My mother’s family is Jewish, and as a family we would partake in holidays such as Passover and Hanukah. Towards the end of my time in high school, I had become quite analytical about the role of religion in my life. I had always been drawn towards Judaism, and I was familiar with it from my family. Much of my inclination towards Judaism comes from the emphasis on family and community. I think of the most important roles Judaism has in my life is this community and without a doubt this belief has been
4/23/2018

In 1923 my parents, thinking that occupied Iraq would be part of Great Britain, named their new son Fouad Mordechai. By the time I was born in 1927 they realized their mistake, changed his name to Fouad Mordechai and named me Latif. Rather than sending me to the Jewish Alliance School they enrolled me in the public school. I missed out on learning Hebrew and Torah. Acquiring Jewish values and traditions fell on home schooling which was driven primarily by Jewish festivals. My favorites were Purim, for the bushels of cookies our mother baked, and Passover for the Seder rituals and the wine we drank. When I was 10 my father decided to make wine for our weekly Kiddush and Passover blessings.

He filled a huge wooden barrel with red grapes and closed it with a loose cover. The barrel was in the corridor next to the kitchen. It didn’t take long before I smelled wine as I passed by. From time to time I would open it to get a good sniff and taste. Several months later he bottled the wine. Soon drinking wine was extended beyond Kiddush rituals.

In 1977, inspired by my childhood familiarity with wine and wine making, I planted a small grape vine twig in the backyard of our Manhattan townhouse. By 1984 it yielded enough grapes to follow my father’s adventure and make wine myself. Being a Tech person I consulted our neighborhood library and ordered pamphlet about growing vines and making wine from Cornell Cooperative Extension. I meticulously followed instructions, purchased a wine press, hydrometer, refractometer, PH meter, balance, glass jars, air locks, metabisulfate, tannin, pectic enzyme, yeast, etc. None of these my father had when he made wine. Clearly he didn’t attend MIT. He had violated all the rules I learned about wine making. He paid no attention to sterilizing equipment or using air locks. By all accounts he should have ended up with vinegar. He never did.

I needed a name for my winery. My wife suggested Chateau Latif. By 2009 the vine had climbed 50 feet along the back wall of our house and covered a 40 foot trellis on the roof. That record year it produced 712 pounds of grapes and yielded 200 bottles of wine. This arrangement contradicts how grape vines were grown by the Hebrews, Romans, Arabs and others. None one has challenged the unique status of Chateau Latif as the only winery in Manhattan. It has been written up in New York Magazine, The New Yorker, The Washington Post, The Forward, Eat the City and Ripley’s Believe it or Not. It was also featured in articles and videos in Israel, Brazil, England, Italy, Germany, Japan, Reuters and Al Arabia.

Yes, I am a famous bootlegger, but I wish I were an obscure Talmud scholar.

MIT Hillel’s 2018 Annual Fund

Add to Jewish life @ MIT!

To Our Current and Future Supporters,

Thank you to everyone who responded to our December mail appeal. I know how my own email box and email inbox looked, and I am grateful to all who found MIT Hillel’s message from our board President, Linda Rabieh, resonant among the many philanthropic requests at that time. I used to tell my kids that the bar mitzvah isn’t truly over until the last thank-you note is mailed, and as a development professional that idea similarly describes December. (Fortunately MIT takes care of your official tax receipt which needs to be timely.)

Those of you who’ve ever exchanged email with me have seen this quote beneath my signature:

The results of philanthropy are always beyond calculation.

- Mary Ritter Beard, Historian and Suffragist 1876-1958

Michelle’s column at the top of this newsletter illustrates this sentiment beautifully. On the one hand, the impact of your gift to MIT Hillel is exactly what you intend and expect: sustaining Jewish student life at MIT with creative and thought-provoking programming and meaningful experiences. At the same time, when our staff shares our ideas and successes with other campuses, your support of our program has ripple effects and greater impact in the Jewish and collegiate worlds.

Our thank-you note addresses only the first aspect of your gift; let this reflection be a sufficient expression of our gratitude for the positive externalities of your generosity that we can’t really measure.

Marla Choslovsky SM ’88, MIT Hillel Director of Development marla360@mit.edu

Add your name to MIT Hillel’s 2018 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 (KDS) 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

reinforced during my time at MIT.

When I came to MIT, I wanted to explore Judaism more and learn more about role it could have on my life. I thought the Jewish community at MIT was phenomenal. My best experience thus far with MIT’s Jewish community was on my Birthright trip this past winter. I had heard many, many good things about MIT’s Birthright trip prior to the trip, and I was already confident that I would have a great time. However, I was not truly ready for the impact it had on me. My biggest take away from my Birthright experience has been this overwhelming feeling of family and community. There is a common bond between all Jews, and there is a connection to the land of Israel. Going to Israel and being welcomed with such open arms was incredible. It really did give me a sense of coming home to family. One thing I really enjoyed was the approach and philosophies that guided the trip. The leaders, including MIT Hillel’s staffer Shoshana Gibbor, wanted you to leave Israel with more questions than answers. When I signed up, I thought the trip would be largely one-sided with pro-Israeli philosophies, but the leaders of the trip did an excellent job keeping topics unbiased and asking more of the participants to challenge conventional thoughts and beliefs. This was a practice that also reflects a tenet of Judaism I highly value: learning and questioning. I want to keep learning about Judaism, and it makes me really excited to know MIT is here to help through Hillel and Chabad (where I am on the executive board). Both student groups offer classes and have amazing events in addition to study breaks and Shabbat dinners. I think this Birthright trip was an important step on my path for my Jewish identity, but I really can’t wait for this identity to continue to change and grow.

I certainly now take much more pride in my Jewish background and identity. Judaism carries more weight for me than it did when I was a freshman. I encourage freshmen to get involved in Jewish student groups. The community is amazing and there is much opportunity to learn and grow and honestly have fun with fantastic people!

From the Archives!
Boston:

- March 23 — Beth Klerman: "Does early to bed and early to rise make college students healthy, (wealthy), and wise?"
- April 27 — Peter Temin

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.

A glance at what was going on for Purim at MIT Hillel, we think in the 1970s!

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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help@alum.mit.edu | To unsubscribe click here