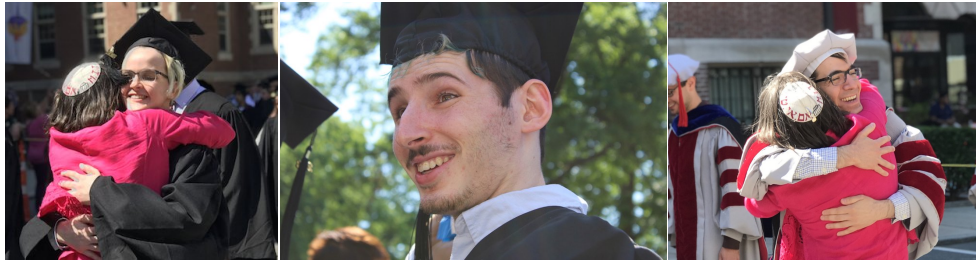


In This Issue

MIT Mentshn of
Mention
Update
Torah from Tech
2018 Annual Fund
Planned Giving
Mazal Tov



MAZAL TOV to our new graduates!

Greetings from MIT

to our Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Parents and Friends!

- 1) Aaron Lytle '18 gets a hug from Rabbi Fisher during the procession to Commencement.
- 2) Jakob Weisblat '18 processes to Commencement.
- 3) Rabbi Fisher gives a hearty mazal tov to Leon Valdes PhD '18 on his way to Commencement. Another mazal tov to Leon and his partner, Naomi Stein '10 MCP '13, on their upcoming wedding in July.

MIT Hillel Update



Dear Friends,

To all our graduates and their families: Mazal Tov! To all our returning alumni: welcome back!

I love Commencement, as a bittersweet moment. Remembering all the students from when they were first-years, and seeing them now years later, having accomplished so much, been through so much, and seeing in their eyes the excitement of so much yet to come – it's heartwarming and inspiring, and a bit sad as they move on, and often away, to other experiences. I hope to see each of you graduates when you return for your own reunions over the years, and to hear how your journeys have progressed.

I bless all of you, with the words Rabbi Naomi Levy writes in A Graduation Blessing:

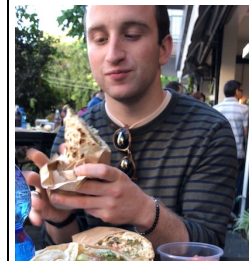
May all your learning lead to wisdom,
May all your labors lead to success,
May all your knowledge lead you to kindness,
May the path before you lead to blessings,
May your studies never cease,
May all your prayers be answered. Amen.

Leading up to this week, I was also inspired in a different way. With Marissa Freed, Hillel's Assistant Director, on maternity leave (mazal tov! – see below), I led our annual ConnectTech delegation of MIT Hillel Fellows to Haifa. Our eight Fellows met their Technion Hillel counterparts, while exploring aspects of hi-tech and start-up life, university life, Jewish life, and everyday life for different populations in Haifa (including Ethiopians, economically disadvantaged parents, refugees, high school students heading into elite scientific and intelligence IDF forces). Most inspiring for me was watching the immediate bonding between our MIT Fellows and the Technion Fellows. They had already begun to get to know a few of their peers by video conference, and to see them engage in passionate conversations from the first meal of the first evening was

amazing. That moment expanded into deeper sharing and further identity and values conversations over the week. Our MIT students reflected to me on the last day how different and more important this *mitgash*/meeting was than any other Israel trips or Israeli experiences they had had: they felt they now knew Israelis who were like them, as real people. They had new friends, who shared their passions, and yet lived a very different (and yet, surprisingly, often very similar) life to their own. You can check out some of [their blog posts](#) to read more. (The picture on the left is of the students bonding over an Israeli favorite: *poyke*, a one-pot stew cooked over a bonfire on the beach. You can also see how [true engineers open wine bottles](#) when they forget a corkscrew... The picture to the right is of the salads the students created out of discarded, salvaged produce, at an "Iron Chef" style dinner at [Robin Food](#) in Haifa.)



Mentshn of Mention



Daniel Yahalomi '18
yahalomi@mit.edu

My name is Daniel Yahalomi and I am a graduating (or I guess graduated at this point) senior at MIT. While here, I majored in physics with minors in computer science and comparative media studies. I was born in the suburbs of Philadelphia, and I moved to New York City in high school. While at MIT, I played water polo for four years and served as captain this past year. I have had the privilege of working in several UROPs (Undergraduate Research Opportunities) in the physics department, focused in astrophysics, and in comparative media studies. Besides that, I have served on several committees at MIT focused on improving student life and well-being and worked as a David Project intern and board member of Friends of Israel club. I have also been a member of Theta Tau fraternity for the past two years.

I have been interested in physics and astronomy for as long as I can remember, and so I immediately knew that I wanted to come to MIT, once I was admitted. In addition to the incredible faculty in physics at MIT, I remember being so impressed with the clear sense of community and collaboration at MIT when I visited in high school. Being at MIT has been an honor and a privilege. I have met and interacted with the most amazing, intelligent, kind,



Summer may begin a quieter season for those of us on campus, but Hillel is never silent. Our Birthright bus is just finishing their Israel experience (see left for them on the Jordan River). Grad Hillel is still planning Shabbat dinners and activities for the summer. And, if the past is any predictor, undergraduates on our summer email list will find ways to socialize and celebrate.

May you all have a wonderful few months until I greet you -- and our incoming students -- in the fall. A yashar koach/ growth in strength, mazal tov, and b'hatzlacha/good luck to everyone moving ahead in life's journeys!

Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97
Executive Director, MIT Hillel
rabbif@mit.edu

Torah from Tech



Our Torah this month is taught by Dr. Orlee Panitch '88 (Course 7), who was a very happy resident of Burton 4. Following MIT, Orlee went to UPenn for medical school. As an emergency physician, she helps manage US Acute Care Solutions, the nation's largest physician owned emergency services company. She loves dogs, Israel and very much misses the camaraderie of MIT. She can be reached at orleepanitch@alum.mit.edu.

commencement

noun ceremony marking the beginning of stage

That never made any sense to me. When I graduated from MIT 30 years ago, it felt so much more like an end than a beginning. But, of course, when one stage ends, another must begin, and so, isn't every graduation also a commencement?

So, too, is Shavuot, which we celebrated a few weeks ago, just as MIT seniors were sitting down for their last final exams as MIT undergrads. Shavuot is an end and a beginning. We 'graduate' from the counting of the omer, that somber period of time between Pesach and Shavuot where Modern Jews semi mourn/commemorate the many tragedies of Jewish past, and work to elevate ourselves spiritually to 'accept the Torah' during Shavuot. This journey closely mirrors the journey of the Israelites as they prepared themselves at Har Sinai to accept the Torah. Thirty years after my graduation from MIT, I can easily look back and find the similarities to my own personal journey.

As a member of my new tribe, the class of '88, certainly feeling a 'chosen' person, I entered MIT. This, perhaps was with more bravado than B'nai Israel had leaving Egypt. BUT, it is not long before that enthusiasm soured. My new surroundings lacked the comforts from whence I came. I could no longer breeze through exams. Problem sets took hours to do. I looked back and reminisced at how wonderful it was when everyone around you just wasn't so much smarter than me. When homework took only minutes. I longed for the comforts of my past, not at all unlike B'nai Israel longing for the 'comforts' of Egypt. I lost confidence, not unlike the spies, who returned from Canaan with fear and apprehension. Everyone **around me seemed** to be 'getting it', and I wondered, why am I not?

I wandered. Like B'nai Israel. (Fortunately not for 40 years. And, eventually, as with most things, level-setting happens, and the new reality emerges. My personal desert began to bloom.) But, how much easier would it have been if I had only known about the power of counting the omer.

The counting of the omer is full of minhagim and halakhot—the very act of counting being ritualized and controlled. There are Kabbalistic customs linking the Sefira to different middot (characteristics): chesed (kindness), gevurah (might), tipheret (beauty), netzach (victory), hod (acknowledgement), yesod (foundation), and malchut (kingdom). This deeply spiritual and personal journey is downright therapeutic.

In our lives, we are, indeed, often at a crossroad. We are always at an ending, and simultaneously at a beginning. Every challenge in life **offers** a new chapter, a new journey. How should we prepare ourselves for that journey? Of course—count an omer. Lean into the failures and disappointments of your past. (Semi-)Mourn the tragedies and the mistakes. These will make you stronger. Think. Introspect. Develop. In counting the omer, our Torah is teaching us about life and about leadership. When we lean into our Torah and learn, we get inspiration. We learn from Moshe, our greatest leader, who was imbued with moral courage. He did the right thing, even when no one **was** looking. He defended the oppressed, even at risk being ostracized. We need to always pull from our traditions to help us on the roads we take.

Mazel tov to those commencing.

MIT Hillel's 2018 Annual Fund Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To our Current and Future Supporters:

"Sandwich Generation", which defines the time of life when you are responsible both for raising children and caring for aging parents, applies to me. The past two weeks included the high of seeing a child graduate, and the low of burying a parent-in-law. Each of these milestones comes with a responsibility for me to provide thoughtful input about dignified next step - for young adult embarking on nascent career and for surviving spouse who has not been alone in sixty-one years. As I reflect on these events, and the day-to-day tasks involved, I realize that philanthropists, like the Sandwich Generation, are pulled in different directions and face many of the same questions:

Who is asking for my help?

Where does my support have the biggest impact?

What are the goals? How can I bolster the chances of success?

Why am I being asked? Who else is helping me meet this need?

and helpful people – I feel truly lucky for my four years here.

Being raised in a Jewish home, and with an Israeli father, Judaism and Israel has always been extremely important to me. I remember coming to the Hillel welcome breakfast during Freshman Orientation and getting to meet some of the staff and students involved in Hillel at MIT. I have always been impressed with the openness of Hillel at MIT. Throughout my time at MIT and with the help and guidance of Hillel, I have been able to bring my older brother and some friends from childhood with me on the MIT Birthright trip, lead several DIY Shabbat dinners at my fraternity, host events as a part of the Friends of Israel Board, and have interesting discussions about Israel with various students as a David Project intern. Having these experiences at MIT allowed me to maintain my connection to the culture and religion that has been such an important part of my childhood and my family's history. Through the DIY Shabbat program, I was able to share Shabbat with my Jewish and non-Jewish friends at MIT – allowing me to share this tradition with my MIT family. I am so thankful for the relationships I have developed with Hillel staff at MIT and the support that I knew was always there for me.

Next year I plan to be doing research at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics on the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission. TESS is a NASA satellite that will search for exoplanets (planets orbiting stars that aren't the sun). I will be preparing applications for physics and astronomy graduate school and am excited to move forward with all the amazing experiences I have had here, at MIT.

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.

When do I need to act?

As we near the end of our fiscal year, we ask for everyone's support. Since MIT alumni giving has a long history of coming around reunions and end-of-fiscal year, we are only 70% toward our total fundraising goal... and I'm counting the days until June 30, as well as the dollars and most importantly the donors to make sure that we balance our budget. More than 200 (about a quarter) of last year's donors have not yet renewed your support. I ask you to please do so! Renewing your past gift provides stability for our program; new donors help us grow - we need both types of support.

I will also take this opportunity to thank everyone for a great year. From "Leading Jewish Minds" at home and on the road, to meeting individual alumni, to working a bit with our graduating seniors, to collaborating with my development colleagues across campus – it is an honor to work with and for the Jewish slice of MIT. [Our students attest to the impact we have](#). It is not always easy to build community over geography and over multiple generations, and yet you all find a way to stay connected. Thank you!

Marla Choslovsky SM '88,

MIT Hillel Director of Development
marla360@mit.edu

P.S. I'll be out of the office for the next two weeks – please contact Rabbi Fisher directly if you have any general or end-of-year development questions.

[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 (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.

Mazal Tov!

- Mazal Tov to MIT Hillel Assistant Director Marissa Freed, her husband Jason, and her elder daughter Lily on the expansion of their family. Welcome to Aviva Grace, born on May 3!
- Mazal Tov to MIT Hillel Board of Directors VP Stu Schmill '86 on receiving MIT's [Gordon Y Billard Award](#) for "special service of outstanding merit performed for the Institute"!

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

Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal
Center for Jewish Life at MIT
40 Massachusetts Ave, Building W11
Cambridge, MA 02139



Hard to read, and still clear that in May 1984 there was a lot going on at Hillel!

**Thank you for
supporting
MIT Hillel!**

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

Tel: 617.253.2982
hillel.mit.edu
Email: hillel@mit.edu