



4 Sivan 5779
June 7, 2019



Mazal Tov, Graduates! Welcome Back, Alumni!

- 1) Lee Mozes '69, Rabbi Fisher, and Josette Capriles Goldish '69... at Hillel's 2019 Tech Reunion Brunch.
- 2) Mae Dotan and Rabbi Fisher embracing in a hug before commencement.
- 3) Marissa Freed, Kimmy Katz, and Rabbi Fisher posing for a picture while in line for graduation.

MIT Hillel Update



“Sunrise, sunset, quickly flow the years...” Last week, I returned to my undergraduate alma mater for my 25th reunion (note: I don’t feel that old). For a full weekend I hung out with friends – friends I had met freshman week and friends I had collected over my four college years, as well as more-recently-made friends whom I had met while returning for other milestone reunions. The gathering of so many generations of alumni brought forth memories and was an opportunity to reflect upon where I had come from and what I, and we all, had done in the intervening years.

Today at our Reunions Reception, time also seemed to compress. I welcomed back generations of alumni, some of whom were my first students 10 years ago as I began as Executive Director at MIT Hillel. It is very hard to believe that a decade has passed. We used our post-Commencement Hillel gathering in a new way this year. In order to consciously create connection between graduation classes, we asked alumni to write reflections, blessings, gratitudes to each other on large Post-It sheets. The results were beautiful to behold. It



demonstrated that the MIT Jewish community is not only about the years spent on

campus, it is about the larger community of MIT Jews of all generations who share multiple levels of connection. It about being a part of something bigger and greater than oneself.



Hillel staff teach our students to own their personal Jewish journeys. We inspire them to seek out Jewish community for celebrations, support, networking. We help them link religiously, intellectually, and culturally to millennia of Jewish ideas, practices, and thoughts. We help them recognize the bonds they share with Jews of the past and present, and the ability they have to add their chapters to our people's story and to positively impact the experiences of others. And then they go forth from the MIT and MIT Hillel bubbles.

Commencement is bittersweet. I anticipate our students' successes and wonder how they will change and be changed by the world. I am touched to have been part of this important moment in their lives. And, I am already starting to miss their presence here.

I wish all returning alumni a warm welcome and mazal tov on your Reunions. I wish all graduating students and their families a hearty yashar koach ("increased strength"), on an MIT degree well earned, with continued strength and greater heights yet to come.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Michelle H. Fisher
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Mentshn of Mention



My name is Sarah Curtis, and I'm a recent graduated senior in Chemical Engineering. I grew up in south Florida, so the Boston weather was a huge surprise! At MIT, I'm very involved with the energy and sustainability community; I was the President of the MIT Energy Club, and I helped start an Energy Hackathon to bring students and companies together to solve the world's business and technical energy challenges. Additionally, I'm a sister in Kappa Alpha Theta, which has been a very important living group and support system. Finally, I've had the opportunity to participate in teaching abroad opportunities, both through GTL Germany this past IAP and

last IAP, partnering with a nonprofit during IAP in China to teach teamwork and leadership skills to Chinese high school students.

The idea of having a Jewish community of my peers was new to me when I arrived at MIT. I was never involved in a Jewish youth group, and I felt like I never "fit in" with students I went to Hebrew school with. I also didn't have many Jewish friends in high school, so I was never part of a young, Jewish community. I was initially drawn to Hillel because I didn't know anyone from home at MIT. It seemed like the best place to start was with other Jewish students.

Boston seemed like a really different environment from south Florida – people came from different backgrounds, I was in a major city, and I felt a little bit lost and unprepared.

However, I was surprised at how welcoming and accepting the community was. It was okay that I didn't go to someone's Jewish summer camp; we are all here at MIT to learn together. I can't give enough thanks to the upperclassmen that helped me become part of the MIT community during my first year.

I feel that I achieved many Jewish firsts at MIT. The Birthright trip during my sophomore year was my first time in Israel, and my first time abroad alone. Junior year was my first time planning, leading, and really thinking about a Shabbat dinner and a Passover Seder. And my senior year is the first time that I'm thinking about Judaism as a catalyst and a driver of identity. One of the most meaningful things I've been able to do because of Hillel is start a Shabbat lunch series with a few friends, where every meeting brings a different topic of Jewish conversation. We've talked about everything from kashrut, to women's roles in religion, to religion in the workplace. Thanks to Rabbi Goldfeder and my amazing, thoughtful friends, I've started to think about more parts of my life from a Jewish perspective. And that's really different and powerful.

I'll be staying in Boston after graduation, and I'm glad that I won't be too far from the MIT community. I'm looking forward to the next chapter in my professional, social and Jewish life!

Sarah Curtis '19
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Torah from Tech

It seems fitting that MIT commencement will take place during this particular week on the Jewish calendar. The themes of our weekly parsha, as well as the lead-up to Shavuot, function as a mirror and a guide to this time when students are graduating and entering their next phase of life. In this period of endings and beginnings our texts and traditions have much to offer.

The book of Vayikra/Leviticus, which we completed last Shabbat in the annual Torah reading cycle, is a book of rules. Verse after verse spells out the elaborate process of offering sacrifices. We learn how much meal

is offered on the altar, how old a lamb has to be in order to be a sacrifice, and how its blood should be sprinkled on the altar. Interspersed are some pretty big important ideas, like "You should be holy, because I the Lord your God am holy (19:2)," and "Love your neighbor as yourself, (19:18)" and "When a stranger resides with you in your land you should not wrong him. (19:33)"

This is not unlike the experience of being a student. Much of the experience of education is about learning to master the concrete steps that will lead to success: how to study effectively, write persuasively, formulate a sound argument, and support hypotheses with evidence. Interspersed are some big ideas and questions: Who am I? What am I good at? What does the world need from me? As is often in reading Vayikra, these bigger questions can sometimes yield to the more immediate demands in front of us: in the case of Vayikra, making sure our sacrifices are correctly offered and in school studying, working, and future-planning.

As the book of Bamidbar/Numbers begins, the ground literally shifts. Bamidbar, which means, "in the wilderness," chronicles the Israelites' long journey through uncharted territory. The Israelites travel a circuitous path for 40 years, with few rules to guide them. They have a leader, Moses, but they do not always trust him. They have a destination, the Land of Israel, but that, too, seems far off. What they have is themselves, some traditions, and a lot of open space.



This seems fitting as a successful frame for entering this next phase of life, from student to graduate. It was for me, and I think many others, a time of going for the first time from a structured environment - where the rules for success are clear - to an open one - where the next steps for your life are not clear.

For myself, this transition was difficult. I still remember an anxiety that I felt in my arms from senior year of college and for most of my 20s on whether I would ever find meaningful work. Particularly as someone who was good at school - which by definition is all MIT students or we wouldn't have had the opportunity to study in Cambridge - it was the first time there wasn't a clear path ahead. Ultimately, however, it was this uncertainty and freedom that led me to create a satisfying life - of work, friends and family.

Each person's path will be unique, so my only advice is to keep your north star in mind - do you want to contribute to the broader world? How would you ideally be spending your time many years from now? - and to try to take small steps closer to that goal. For me it was a trip to Cambodia which led to starting a social enterprise that has been my life work, and I hope for you it will be some other moment that will point you in the right direction.

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MIT Hillel's 2019 Annual Fund

Add to Jewish life @ MIT!



To Our Current and Future Supporters:

One of the most joyful aspects of this work for me is meeting MIT alumni from all different eras. My job differs from all the other development professionals on campus in that I represent a sliver of campus life across the complete giving spectrum, from graduating seniors who are contributing \$5 to their class gift up through people who have given tens of millions to the Institute. It's kind of like counting people for a minyan; the person who can barely say the prayers counts the same as the most learned Rabbi. All are important and needed to make things happen, to achieve a goal.

Our recent alumni are giving back in gratitude for the excellent experience they had at MIT Hillel, a sharp contrast from much more senior alumni who tell us that they never went to Hillel in their day (or didn't know it existed) but are supporting us because of what they feel is important today. We are bound together by both our MIT connection and our Jewish heritage. Together we ensure the strength of Jewish student life on this very special campus.

You will be reading this after our Commencement reception, and I am writing it in anticipation of that event. I can see RSVP's from alumni in classes of 1959, '64, '69, '79, '89, and '09 and many '19 degree recipients and their families. Not bad for a mainly walk-in event, and I'm sure we will see many more classes represented, and of course many red jackets. This event is the height of having our generations come together. The milestone of receiving your degree or counting the years and gathering in reunion is worthy of a *shehechyanu* –

wherever you are reading this, please pause and acknowledge your accomplishments, others who helped you achieve, how you got to where you literally and figuratively are today.

As June 30 fast approaches, on behalf of MIT Hillel and the students we serve, I **ask** you to make your annual gift in support of our work on campus. MIT can ask all alumni and friends to support scholarships; I can only ask Jewish alumni and friends to support Hillel. I hope you will do both -- please be counted.

Marla Choslovsky SM '88
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[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2019 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 travel all the way back to 2015.

In this picture, you can see the seniors from the Class of 2015 posing on The Hexagons sculpture. We hope to see them and all the 0 and 5 alumni on this day next year!



On the Calendar

On Campus: Our next Leading Jewish Minds seminar will take place on September 13, 2019, featuring Professor Sara Seager!

Mazal Tov

Mazal Tov to the class of 2019!

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

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