

## Shalom from MIT Hillel to our Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Parents and Friends!

- 1) Hillel Graduate students participating in a Tu B'Shvat seder.
- 2) Dana Rubin '23 holding MIT Hillel's newest staff member Bruin Bailer-Gibbor. Bruin was spreading the joy while "helping" the students pack Purim goodie bags.
- 3) Jeffrey Hoffman giving a talk on "Mars, MOXIE, and MIT" at MIT Hillel's Leading Jewish Minds luncheon.

### MIT Hillel Update



Jews are the “People of the Book”. Historically, this title comes from the Quran, where Jews, Christians, and Sabians are all referred to as such. However, to a much larger degree than these other religions, Judaism has embraced the title *Am haSefer*, people of the Book, as a mark of pride in our love of and embrace of learning. (Please someone correct me if I’m wrong in asserting that the State of Israel is the only country with a national “Book Week” that is not solely or mostly about children’s literature.)

I have spoken in previous months about the depth and breadth of learning opportunities we provide for our students: 10-session Jewish Learning Fellowships on Jewish identity, a full-year ConnectTech peoplehood curriculum for our MIT Hillel and Technion Hillel students, “one off” Torah on Tap graduate student classes, weekly “existential Talmud” and Jewish law classes. The list is long.

We all know on-going Jewish learning is important. The MIT Hillel staff proudly role model on-going Jewish education for our students, complementing the other opportunities we offer them to study, confront, and live out our Jewish texts. We embrace learning for ourselves as both a *l’shma* (“for its own sake”) and a *lo l’shma* (learning with direct applications) endeavor. As in many Jewish organizations, Hillel staff meetings have almost always incorporated Jewish learning. Our content and format has varied in different semesters: a

short *d'var Torah* “word of Torah”, very broadly defined, in a rotating schedule of presenters; or a specific text or book that we studied together, like *Musar*/ethics literature or *Pirke Avot* “The Ethics of the Fathers”; or even the Torah portion of the week. This year, we began a new adventure. We all wanted more in-depth learning than five to ten minutes of staff meeting could afford. Partnering with [ProjectZug](#), we split into pairs, choosing a ten-week curriculum of interest to us both. With topics as diverse as “Bob Dylan: A Jewish Journey Between Home and Exile” and “The Prayerbook: New Interpretive Methods”, our staff took deep dives into Jewish practice, literature, and culture. Staff meetings became a sharing of one or two highlights of each havruta (friend) pair’s learning. We all learned a topic in a deep manner, and shared in the insights of others. This new mode has been inspiring; I have never seen us so excited to make time for study – often up to an hour/week, in the pairs or as a team.

While I type this, one of my staff is off at a week-long “Israel Master Class” course. Another just received her acceptance for this summer’s Brandeis Collegiate Institute, an immersive experience in Jewish learning, arts, culture, and community. A third is halfway through a Hartman Institute Hillel professionals iEngage curriculum. It is expected that such professional development investments will directly impact our work on campus, bringing new ideas and creativity to initiatives and conversations. I offer each and every staffer up to five days a year for professional development opportunities, as a means of ensuring we continue to engage with new outlooks and ideas.

L’shalom,

Rabbi Michelle H. Fisher  
Executive Director  
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## Mentshn of Mention



Most people know me as “Maya from Miami, it’s catchy!” If you’ve spent any time on MIT’s campus in the last three years you might have seen me running across campus, covered in paint, on my way to the lab. I’m a junior here at MIT and I study biological engineering as well as art. I help run the Conservative Minyan at Hillel, build things, paint things, set design for the MIT Shakespeare Ensemble, and have been ‘Headlink’ (Head Medlink) in my dorm for the past two years. So, my days this semester tend to include building a fluorescent microscope for a class, answering emails from admin about how my dorm might be better prepared for a potential medical epidemic, and painting the thirty-foot-long laughing wall I accidentally designed for this semester play. In a chaotic way, I fit into MIT.

But MIT is stressful. And to me, the most meaningful way to reduce this stress is to take the time to truly enjoy being here. Since my first week, Friday night services have always felt like the perfect opportunity to wind things down, go slower, enjoy people’s company, and reflect upon the hectic week. Weekly services is one of the few things on my calendar that doesn’t budge, because to me it’s so important to stop and reflect. My version of stopping to smell the roses is to show up every Friday to a room filled with people who are singing, cracking jokes, sharing stories, and are similarly somehow both exhausted as well as enthusiastic.

To me, being Jewish at MIT means walking into the Hillel Center and grabbing a slice of leftover kosher pizza while catching up with a friend about psets. It means ordering a hundred hamantaschen and throwing a wild Purim party on a Monday night. It means grabbing coffee with a staff member when I’m having a bad day. And it means knowing I have a community that is there for me.

I’m excited about the future. The next Jewish holiday, the next time I’ll be back in Israel, the next Friday night. It’s a very pleasant thought that there’s something other than work or grades or medical school applications in my future. A lot of people say that the magic of MIT

is the people that you meet and the memories you make with those people. The experiences I've had through Hillel, the people I've had the pleasure of meeting, and a commitment to warm-heartedness will stay with me forever.

Hope everyone is having a wonderful week,

Maya "from Miami" Levy '21  
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## Torah from Tech



*Marc S. Weinberg holds a B.S. and Ph.D. in M.E. from M.I.T., where he was an NSF Fellow and played varsity hockey and lacrosse. At Draper since 1975, Marc co-invented the first useful silicon micromechanical gyro, now employed in many applications. His work on chemical sensors, balance prostheses, photovoltaics, and atomic clocks have led to start ups or commercial applications. An AIAA Associate Fellow and a professional engineer, Marc holds fifty-seven U.S. patents. Married for 49 years and tandem bicyclers, Marc and Judith have two children and four grand children.*

Ten seconds remain. The smooth skating forward picks up the puck behind his own net, whirls past the fore checker, and heads to center ice. He fakes a pass to his left wing, dekes a defender, crosses the blue line, and winds up for the shot....” Matos (my Hebrew name), where are we in the Chumash (book form of the

Torah)?”

Okay, as a boy, I was not committed to Judaism, but not hostile either. Today, we belong to a reform synagogue where we attend services several times per month, keep kosher at home (A Jew should be able to eat in my home), and support Jewish causes such as Hillel. A half dozen times, I have chanted Torah or Haftorah (trained parrot). Although a lifetime is a long journey (I am approaching my MIT 50th), several events sharply contributed to my Jewish identity.

An early remembrance of being Jewish was Passover seders which we usually celebrated with my uncle's family at a long table. The adults “davened” at one end of the table and the children carried on at the other. Occasionally, the adults would admonish us and I would mumble, “Passover is for old men.”

Enrolled in M.I.T. Air Force ROTC (Rabbi Fisher gives extra points for working Tech into the story), I was sent to Gunter AFB, Montgomery, Alabama, for summer training. Growing up in a modest home in Jewish Mattapan, a section of Boston, I had never traveled much. Life with 249 other cadets (of whom, only one besides me was Jewish) was different. A small base, Gunter did not have a Jewish anything but offered a chauffeur to take the two Jewish cadets to a Montgomery shul on Friday evenings. While I was an irregular service participant at home, the opportunity to escape from the military for two hours, once per week, appealed. I was deeply moved and bonded that the ritual and melodies were similar to those of my experiences at Congregation Kehillath Jacob, Mattapan. While I hesitate to call myself observant, I became committed to Judaism and Jewish causes.

Senior year at an M.I.T. mixer in Sala de Puerto Rico, I met and soon married the fabulous Judith Omansky (now Weinberg), Simmons '72, who was committed to Judaism. Like most of life, it works better when you share.

My active duty Air Force years were filled with many memories of the small, hamish (homey) congregation at Wright Patterson AFB. At Passover, instead of “Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua...”, we would go around the table and retell the story from Moses in the reeds to the closing of the Red Sea, while working in the four cups and other blessings. Our family still maintains this tradition.

When my daughter Hannah was nine months old, we were preparing the seder at Judy's mother's home. I was reading the Haggadah to prepare for the service while Hannah was sitting on a blanket on the floor shaking a rattle that looked like a flower. I looked at Hannah and it hit. "Passover is for old men."

Judith and I uphold Jewish values, culture, and traditions. Added reinforcements included: a fellowship to Norway (set up by an M.I.T. colleague despite my modest credentials) where we bonded with members of the free world's northernmost congregation, which had suffered losses during WWII; with our synagogue friends and rabbi, a Jewish remembrance trip to Eastern Europe, extermination camps, and the original home of our temple's Holocaust Torah; four trips to Israel including a "bucket list" trip with my daughter and grandchildren; and children's and grandchildren's B'nai Mitzvah, which included the l'dor v'dor ceremony, generation to generation transferring of the Torah. Judaism is not just for old men and that is very good.

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## MIT Hillel's 2020 Annual Fund

**Add to Jewish life @ MIT!**

### People Grow Into Their Philanthropy



Nobody can get here...



Without starting here...



It takes the whole pack to make it a meaningful event.

and building strength and endurance over time...



To Our Current and Future Supporters,

MIT's 4<sup>th</sup> annual 24-hour Challenge is fast approaching, one week from today on Thursday, March 12. Not Pi Day this year, perhaps disappointingly, and also not Shabbat, happily for [MIT Hillel](#), allowing us to participate again.

The picture above is a slide from our "Philanthropy 101" class for graduating seniors. We teach that philanthropy is an iterative exercise, a learning process, and a communal endeavor. No donor starts at a million dollars, but they do start by supporting what is personally important to them. Many top donors to Hillel – and to MIT more generally - have been giving for decades, and started at much, much lower levels before growing in their philanthropy.

On Giving Day, Hillel's main objective is to inspire our young alumni to begin or renew their support. In addition to that, every year we learn of alumni who we never knew were Hillel constituents. Finally, our budget process is improved when longstanding donors move from

end-of-June to mid-March to make their annual gift.

We are grateful to four alumni who together are providing our largest incentive yet, for helping us to inspire our community to meet an aggressive participation goal of 154. Giving Day is like the marathon – there will be a few elite runners who lead the pack, but mostly there will be thousands of people who participate and strive for a personal best.

This quote (thank you Google) perfectly articulates the best reason to participate in MIT 24: **“There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work toward the same goals.”** — Idowu Koyenikan, Nigerian author and organizational consultant

Marla Choslovsky SM '88  
MIT Hillel Director of Development  
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[Add your name](#) to MIT Hillel's 2020 Donor Roll! Scroll down to MIT Hillel to give.

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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!

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### 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.

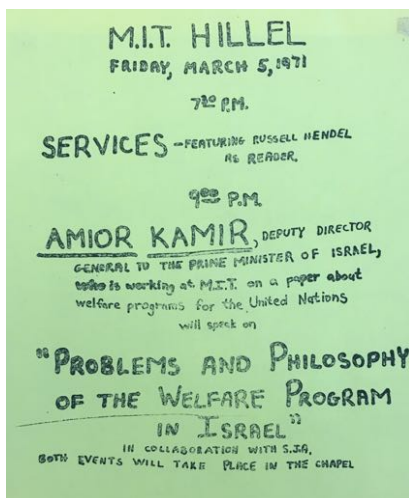
MIT and MIT Hillel are eager to help you meet your objectives. For more information, please contact MIT Hillel Director of Development, Marla Choslovsky, [marla360@mit.edu](mailto:marla360@mit.edu). To inform us that you have already planned such a gift, please contact us directly.

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### From the Archives!

For this month's "From the Archives!" we found a poster from exactly 49 years ago (to the day!) advertising Friday night services and a presentation from Amior Kamir, who spoke on the welfare program in Israel.

Note that this was hand-written, not even typed up!



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### On the Calendar

Mark your calendars for MIT Hillel's Leading Jewish Minds seminars this semester:

- [Friday, March 13, 2020: Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT featuring David Autor](#)
  - [Friday, May 15, 2020: Leading Jewish Minds @ MIT featuring Rainer Weiss](#)
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*If you have life-cycle events to share with the MIT Hillel community, please [let us know](#).*

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