

HMI Highlights

April - July 2022

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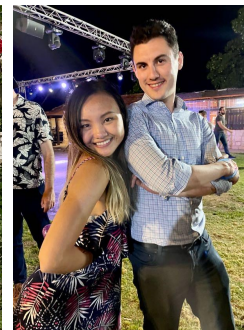
It's about the journey

Since the relaunch of trips in March 2022, we've welcomed 16 new cohorts into the HMI family and launched 16 application cycles around the country. We are so grateful for the continued demand of the HMI experience, and we can't wait to continue helping couples bring Judaism into their homes and families in ways they find meaningful.

HMI in Israel

From March to July of 2022, cohorts from Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, East Bay, Greater MetroWest New Jersey, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Richmond, the SF Bay Area, Seattle, and Washington DC began their HMI journeys in Israel!

- **266** Couples
- **16** Cohorts
- **12** Cities
- **Countless** memories



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HMI Staff Retreat

First in-person staff retreat in 2 years!

In April, the HMI team came together at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, GA for our first in-person retreat in 2 years! There was something special about having everyone finally jump off the Zoom screens and spend time together to learn, grow, and bond as a team.

From learning how to have engaged conversations internally and lead meaningful HMI conversations on trips to playing Wacky Golf and spending time together at a local brewery, we came home feeling more empowered than ever to make HMI the best it can be!



HMI Data: Meaningful HMI Experiences

HMI Post-Trip Satisfaction Surveys

After two years without trips, we're back and better than ever!

We're always striving to make sure our participants have the best experience possible in Israel, and we always learn a great deal from the results of our post-trip satisfaction surveys.

Here are a few highlights from the March and May participants:

- Participants love HMI! On average, they rate the trip very positively (9.3 out of 10), and they are **very likely to recommend the trip to a friend (9.7 out of 10!)**. We love to hear this because our alumni are our greatest assets when it comes to finding future participants!
- Participants develop a love of Shabbat on HMI! For many participants, their HMI trip provides their first Shabbat experience. On average, participants rate Shabbat as 8.9 out of 10!



National Highlights: Experience Boxes

Passover



Passover provided the perfect opportunity for HMI alumni to gather together after two years. Many cohorts organized their own Seders and used HMI-created resources to make Passover meaningful to them.

In Pursuit of Justice - HMI Virtual Passover Experience

HMI Rabbi Joshua Lesser and HMI alum and past team member, Stephanie Goldfarb, led an immersive, mind-expanding Passover experience where we made modern meaning of ancient justice themes, re-imagined rituals, and connected with an array of social justice leaders on topics including Transgender legislation, antisemitism in Ukraine, civil disobedience, and more.

Passover Experience Boxes

This year, we partnered with Days United and #Friendseder™ to bring our alumni two Passover box options. According to the surveys, **78% of participants said receiving the box made them feel more connected to the Jewish community.**

HMI x Days United

This box, best for those celebrating with children, included supplies for Passover-themed crafts and activities, resources for the entire family, and a step-by-step holiday guide to lead you through Passover.



"Being half Jewish, and not growing up celebrating [this] Jewish holiday, this box was a great way for me to feel more comfortable celebrating Passover and teaching my kids about the holiday too and starting our own family traditions." - Morgan and David, HMI SF Bay Area

HMI x #Friendseder™

Inspired by Friendsgiving, Friendseder™ helps young adults gather with friends prior to (or during) the week of Passover to make this holiday your own! It's a resource hub, a haggadah, a digital board game, and an out-of-the-box seder experience designed by young adults, for young adults.

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Welcome Baby Experience Box

For Alumni Who Had a Baby Within the Last Year

In an effort to connect with our alumni who have recently grown their family, we partnered with PJ Library to curate the Welcome Baby Experience Box! This free box included a "Future HMIer" baby romper, a portable bluetooth speaker, a silicone bowl with a baby-safe hummus recipe, a PJ Library book, and more.

This project was very well received and gave us the opportunity to update our database with the names and ages of children of our alumni to ensure we continue to provide programs and resources that are beneficial to young families.

419

Alumni families ordered the
Welcome Baby Experience Box

132

Alumni families signed up
for PJ Library

Alumni Testimonials

"Thanks to the HMI community and donors for helping us welcome our daughter! This is the start of a strong connection to her Jewish community. My toddler son enjoyed opening it as well, even asking about the Hebrew letters and words on the bowl and helping us read the book to the baby." - HMI Alumni

"I love the link to the Jewish themed nursery songs. So sweet!" - Jordanna and Chris, HMI Los Angeles

"Joined PJ books and play their podcasts for my baby because of the book and bib in this box. Love the podcasts. Also learned the 'Shema'" - Mayan and Marianne, HMI Orange County



Click above to watch future HMIer, Mikayla, exploring the items in the Welcome Baby Experience Box!

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City Highlights: Cohort Gatherings and Reunions



HMI Multi-Trip Cities

Multi-trip cities have at least two trips to Israel per year. These cities have at least one dedicated local and full-time HMI staff member to serve the community.

HMI multi-trip cities:

- Atlanta
- Boston
- Chicago
- Los Angeles
- New York
- San Francisco Bay Area
- Washington DC

Atlanta

Atlanta Community Mikvah and Saying *Lhitra'ot* ("See you later!") to Rabbi Sam

Atlanta's 11th cohort (March 2022) returned home after their transformative trip and couldn't stay away from each other long! The group coordinates frequent social outings including concerts, sports events, Shabbat dinners, Passover seders, art festivals, and happy hours.

Most recently, several couples gathered at a local spot to celebrate Rabbi Sam, who co-led their trip, and wish him well as he and his family relocate to Toronto.

"Having a beer with the rabbi- that's pretty cool!" - HMI Atlanta Alum

Many couples also gathered at MaCOM, Atlanta's Community Mikvah (a bath used for the purpose of ritual immersion in Judaism), to learn about the ritual of immersion and enjoy dinner together. The Executive Director of MaCOM greeted the cohort and led them on a tour of the facility and explained all of the various uses of the mikvah. Since this event, at least one alum has chosen to immerse themselves in the mikvah.



HMI Atlanta alumni saying *Lhitra'ot* to Rabbi Sam Kaye, his wife Taylor, and daughter Selah at a local brewery.



HMI Atlanta alumni enjoying an outdoor concert.

Boston

Tot Shavuot Meet Up

Many of our alumni couples have expressed interest in getting to know other alumni families with young children, and many have requested access to local opportunities for families.

In partnership with Temple Shalom of Newton and Modern Jewish Couples, we offered a Shavuot sing-along and meet up for all alumni families at Temple Shalom's outdoor preschool space! Shavuot is a celebration of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, as well as the grain harvest for the summer. We provided cold beverages and an ice cream truck to keep cool and to honor the tradition of eating dairy on Shavuot.

We hosted 12 families from 7 different cohorts! Here's what they had to say:

"It is so wonderful to come together with other families in the community. You can't go wrong with beer and ice cream, PLUS entertainment for the little one? Win, win, win."

- Samantha and Matthew, HMI Boston

"Shavuot is one of my favorite holidays and this was such a fun way to introduce it to the little ones in our family. The kids had a great time and it was really nice to connect with some new families in the area about resources for raising little kids."

- Martha and Jonathan, HMI Boston



Chicago



HMI Chicago Alumni

Cohort gatherings, big and small!

Alumni from Chicago have been spending a great deal of time together to continue strengthening their HMI bonds. Whether their trip was a few months ago or a few year ago, Chicago alumni love coming together whenever they can!

These incredible couples have hosted Shabbat dinners, taken neighborhood walks with their families, babies, and dogs, and gathered together for Memorial Day. The most recent Chicago cohort had a blast at their reunion dinner following their trip, and one couple is setting up double dates for the couples to continue getting to know each other in more intimate groups. There are many more outings on the books including a concert in July!

“From the HMI experience, the couples came home with genuine friendships they were so excited to continue” - Tani Prell, 18Doors Community Partner

Los Angeles

March 2022 Post-Trip Havdalah

LA's most recent trip in March 2022 was led by Rabbi Matt Shapiro of Temple Beth Am. Rabbi Matt invited HMIers to join him at the temple for a *havdalah* service (ceremony that marks the symbolic end of Shabbat). When the cohort arrived, they saw that another service was about to begin inside the sanctuary and, to Rabbi Matt's surprise, they asked if they could join. The cohort loved the service and were thrilled to be included!

For years, HMI Los Angeles alumni have found it difficult to connect to local congregations and have expressed interest in finding bridges to engage with them; on that Saturday night, Rabbi Matt made the cohort feel included. One member of the cohort had never been inside a Jewish house of worship and expressed great joy in being allowed to have that first experience as a result of HMI.

Farmers Market Meet-and-Greet

HMI LA alumni have also been excited to connect with their new Director of Community Engagement in Los Angeles, Melissa Oppen O'Donnell. Melissa is an HMI alumna from the November 2018 trip. In honor of Shavuot, Melissa hosted a meet-and-greet at a popular local Farmers Market where HMI families from different cohorts were able to connect and enjoy the local harvest. Everyone was thrilled to be meeting new people in a different area of town and celebrating the harvest holiday.



LA 13 Alumni at Temple Beth Am



Farmers Market Meet-and-Greet

New York

March 2022 Passover Seder

After returning from their trip, the March 2022 cohort expressed interest in gathering for Passover. Seven couples gathered for an interactive Passover Seder in NYC. Complete with dinner, music, parody songs, and plague masks, it was a night to remember! We partnered with Friendseder™, a company that created Passover boxes for HMI alumni. We decided to order boxes for each couple in attendance. We used the Friendseder™ haggadah in the box to help us in leading the seder. This seder occurred towards the end of Passover, allowing those that had other Passover plan to still attend. There were a number of non-Jewish partners for whom this was their first Passover seder ever!



NYC March '22 Seder

An Evening with Avraham Infeld

NYC Alumni, HMI senior staff, and the Board of Directors welcomed master educator, Avraham Infeld, to NYC. The evening was held at UJA Federation and included a cocktail hour followed by hearing from the Community Engagement Director in NYC, Julie Smelansky, an alum from the recent NYC March trip, from our Co-CEOs Avi Rubel and Mike Wise, and a key note from Avraham Infeld. The night ended with drinks with alumni and friends at a local bar.



NYC Event with Avraham Infeld

San Francisco Bay Area

HMI Cohort Trip Reunions

We brought TWO SFBA buses, SF13A and SF13B, to Israel in May, and the couples couldn't have been more excited to see each other at their trip reunions!

SF13A had their trip reunion at the JCCSF in partnership with and hosted by the Koret Foundation. Over Israeli food, the group reminisced about their trip, connected with their rabbi, shared stories, and started planning their monthly meetups! They can't wait for Shabbat dinners, holiday celebrations, hikes, doggy beach meetups, and so much more.

SF13B had their trip reunion at their trip rabbi's home over PRIDE weekend - rainbow, glitter, sequins and all (as well as delicious food prepared by Rabbi Jon's wife, Erin, who is a professional chef!)



SFBA Cohort 13B reunion

Washington DC

HMI Passover Open Conversations

HMI Washington DC did a collection of open seders for Passover. This gave couples who have not seen each other since COVID a fun and exciting way to come together! The events were either in-person or online. Many cohorts went with the online option, but still loved any chance to come together.

Our goal is to engage our alumni for years and years after their trips. Many of the cohorts who came together for Passover were on some of HMI's earliest trips!



Alumni Testimonial:

"First let us say thank you from a place of deep gratitude. Without your support, we would not have been able to gather such a large group, get them all fed, watered and wined, and made time for the important ceremony of the day.

Could we have held a small, quiet seder with dim candles and hushed tones in the corner of the dining room? Yes. But instead we gathered a veritable horde of HMI alums and their energetic children to all but tear down the walls in celebration of the day and leave little in their wake untouched by crumbs or spilled drinks. It was fantastic. It was just what everyone wanted. To give you a sense of the chaos, I found part of a matzo ball on the lawn, and the dessert table was literally covered with chocolate fingerprints. Either the afikomen was never found, or never hidden; we don't know, such was the madness." - HMI Washington DC Alum



HMI One-Trip Cities

One-trip cities have one trip to Israel per year. These cities typically have external professionals who are staff of local partner organizations and have HMI as part of their dedicated work portfolio.

HMI one-trip cities:

- Cincinnati
- Cleveland
- Denver/Boulder
- Greater MetroWest New Jersey
- Houston
- Miami
- Montreal
- Philadelphia
- Pittsburgh
- Richmond
- San Diego
- Seattle

One Trip Cities

HMI Colorado Cross-Cohort Alumni Happy Hour

Alumni from various HMI Denver/Boulder cohorts joined HMI national staff to chat about the future of Honeymoon Israel in Colorado and celebrate the relaunching of trips after almost 4 years!



HMI San Diego BreadFest

HMI San Diego, in partnership with the Jewish Federation of San Diego County hosted BreadFest to celebrate the end of Passover in April! This family friendly event was held near the airport and included pizza, beer, bounce houses, and front row seats to watch planes take off over the Pacific Ocean.

The alumni and their families decided to gather at the end of the holiday because many have plans with family during Passover. This event gave more people the opportunity to come together in honor of this holiday!

More trips coming soon!

September 2022

- Chicago
- Cleveland
- Colorado
- Los Angeles
- Minneapolis
- Philadelphia

November 2022

- Chicago
- Cincinnati
- Houston - FIRST TRIP!
- Washington DC

December 2022

- Atlanta
- Boston
- East Bay
- Montreal
- San Diego
- SF Bay Area



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Thank you