

HMI Highlights

August - November 2022

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It's about the journey

Over the last few months, we've had the wonderful opportunity to welcome hundreds of couples into the Jewish new year and into the HMI family! From Israel trips that jumpstart our couples' HMI journeys to 5-year alumni reunions, the HMI community has continued to blossom in many beautiful ways.

HMI in Israel

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

- **438** Couples
- **26** Cohorts
- **18** Cities
- **Countless** memories



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September HMI Trips

Couples from Los Angeles, Chicago, Colorado, Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Philadelphia joined the HMI family in September. Here's what they had to say about their experience!

"Honeymoon Israel was incredible and I'm so thankful that my wife and I were able to enjoy this experience. As an interfaith couple, we went in with expectations that we would discuss important subjects relating to our spirituality that we would carry with us beyond the trip, and that we would connect with couples with similar backgrounds. We got that and so much more! It was truly a once in a lifetime journey." - Larry, HMI Cleveland

"Honeymoon Israel gave us so much more than just a trip. It gave us, as a couple, a new ownership over our family's Jewish identity, and it also gave us a new Jewish community. We are so excited to continue our Jewish life here at home with our new friends, knowing that the Judaism that HMI gave us will enrich our lives for years to come." - Hannah, HMI Chicago

"This program was life changing for my spouse and I. This program helped us to view Judaism through another lens. We left Israel feeling inspired not only for our newfound community but also inspired to incorporate some of the things we learned in our own lives and home. We feel so grateful for the HMI experience." - Ebone, HMI Colorado



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November HMI Trips

Couples from Houston, Washington DC, Chicago, and Cincinnati embarked on their HMI journeys in November. Here's what they had to say when they got home!

"My HMI experience was completely defined by the people on the trip. We now feel that we have family/community in a city and a group of people that have shared a unique experience. This experience will likely be one of the most rewarding/enriching parts of my adult life - I made lasting connections to both other couples and Judaism that surprised me." - Ian, HMI Houston

"Honeymoon Israel was a life changing experience. We met amazing new friends, built connections to each other, and discovered new things about ourselves. The diversity of the trip meant that we felt accepted, and were able to participate as our authentic selves." - Zachary, HMI Cincinnati

"Our Honeymoon Israel experience surpassed our expectations. My husband and I made lifelong memories in an exciting place with new friends. As a non-religious person, I appreciated that HMI offered multiple perspectives and re-affirmed to me that there is no right or wrong way to be Jewish. This trip was just the beginning of a very full life with our new community." - Molly, HMI Washington DC



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HMI Staff and Board Retreat

Second in-person staff retreat this year!

In September, our incredible HMI team, Board, and our One Trip City partners came together in San Diego for our second in-person retreat this year! Spending time together in-person gave us the opportunity to learn, grow, and bond as a team, welcome our newest team members, and make new memories with our wonderful board.

From learning about innovation and discussing different ways to approach new situations to reflecting on the beach and cheering for the San Diego Padres, we came back feeling more empowered than ever to start the Jewish new year on the right foot and continue to make HMI the best it can be!



HMI Rabbi Recruitment and Training

This year, we created two new roles on our Education Team, Director of Jewish Educational Talent and Director of Jewish Journeys and Enrichment, to enhance the Jewish experience at HMI. Our team has revamped how we recruit and train HMI rabbis, and we now have a multi-step selection process to ensure each HMI rabbi is a strong fit for our community.

First-time HMI rabbis are matched with veteran HMI rabbi mentors before their first trips, and we have a new training process to ensure each rabbi is prepared to meet the needs of HMI couples. After implementing this new model, the survey results from affected trips have been fantastic - the rabbis and trip educators were very well received with new rabbis scoring as well as returning rabbis on our Post-Trip Satisfaction Survey.

From our participants:

"Rabbi Adam changed my life and my perspective on what a Rabbi should be like. I always felt Rabbis were unapproachable and intimidating but I am glad I was shown otherwise. I really appreciated how open minded he is, how he got us to connect with ourselves, the group and the divine energy. Rabbi Adam is always open to answer any questions and is doing an amazing job in keeping us engaged after the trip by welcoming us in his home and the Base Miami community. I am so happy to be able to say with pride that I now have a Rabbi, who projects love, acceptance and compassion... I look forward to continuing on my spiritual journey with Rabbi Adam as my guide." - HMI Miami Alum



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National Highlights: High Holidays and Family Camps

HMI Education & Rabbinical Engagement

This year, we invited our alumni to get curious about the High Holidays. HMI rabbis helped couples deepen their High Holiday engagement.



Rabbi Nora Feinstein invited her HMI DC July 2022 cohort to participate in Rosh Hashanah services at sixth & I. Many first timers were in attendance!



Rabbi Kyle Savitch hosted his March 2022 HMI NYC alumni for Hops and Huts in his sukkah in celebration of Sukkot.

HMI alumni were empowered to make the holidays their own and use HMI's alumni grants to bring their communities together to celebrate.



HMI Chicago celebrated Sukkot together.



HMI Colorado alumni hosted a Yom Kippur Break Fast.

HMI National High Holiday Program

A Journey Through the Jewish Calendar: In Conversation with Abigail Pogrebin

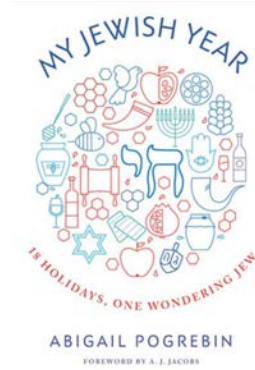
In celebration of the High Holidays and to inspire our alumni to find new meaning in the Jewish calendar, we hosted a virtual, spirited discussion with author Abigail Pogrebin, facilitated by alumna and Chicago's new Director of Community Engagement, Emily Achler. We discussed Abigail's book, "My Jewish Year," a funny and profound exploration around Jewish rituals and the entire Jewish calendar. During the discussion, we also encouraged those who were interested to start local book clubs in their community and continue to discuss this book and others! Over # alumni attended the program.

Alumni who registered for this program received a free copy of Abigail's book, and anyone interested in starting a book club in their community also received an HMI toolkit and local support in getting things off the ground.

Participant Testimonials

"This was such an incredible experience. Thank you so much for bringing us together, HMI. Abby, thank you so much for your time and the important message you shared with us tonight: the "why" behind our holidays can be fun and engaging - I cannot wait to read your book! And [the HMI Book Club is] such a great way to connect to Judaism through discussion in a way that's outside the confines of a synagogue."

"The Jewish holiday calendar is daunting with so many traditions and customs. It was so empowering to hear Abigail say "do what is right for you" because that's not something you hear from religious leaders. HMI continues to provide my wife and I with tools to bring Jewish life into our home in a way that suits us, on our terms."



HMI Family Camps

HMI New York City and HMI Chicago hosted Family Camp weekends for alumni families with young children.

These families came together for an unforgettable weekend of fun camp activities like crafts and nature walks, Shabbat celebrations, a Havdalah bonfire, and HMI-style conversations with old and new friends!

15 families from NYC, Philadelphia, and New Jersey visited Camp Zeke in Wayne County, PA. 10 families from Chicago came together at Camp OSRUI in Oconomowoc, WI. We provided subsidies to make the weekend accessible to all!



Participant Testimonials

"Highlights included seeing our child experience the joy of Shabbat, the Shabbat music and dancing, and adult reflections and discussions."

"It was great to spend time with other HMI families and just be outdoors for a few days."

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City Highlights: High Holiday Programs



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/East Bay
- Washington DC

Atlanta

High Holiday Cocktail Making Class

This fall, the HMI Atlanta community came alive with cohort gatherings, holiday celebrations, and community partnerships that have lead us into the new year with renewed energy and inspiration. Alumni couples came together for a new baby's bris, joined each other's bridal parties for upcoming weddings, and marched in the Atlanta Pride parade!

During the week of Sukkot, five couples from four separate cohorts gathered at a new local venue, The Distillery of Modern Art, to learn how to infuse traditional High Holiday flavor profiles into unique, festive cocktails that can be replicated the next time they host their cohort for any occasion!

As the first cross-cohort program since the pandemic, we were thrilled to welcome two couples from 2018, one couple from 2019, a couple from 2020, and a couple from Atlanta's most recent trip in March 2022. Participants were excited to share their own HMI experiences with one another and meet new alumni couples.

From our participants:

"Meeting up with couples from other HMI cohorts at the Distillery of Modern Art was such a fun experience. It was great to swap trip stories and learn a bit about other members of our Jewish and HMI community. My husband and I didn't get to celebrate Sukkot this year so learning from [the bartender] how to make a fantastic cocktail with corn whiskey, apple, honey, and cinnamon was our own mini celebration." - Taryn, HMI Atlanta



Boston

Sukkot in the Berkshires

Considering Sukkot is all about being outdoors and celebrating the harvest, HMI Boston alumni from the May 2022 cohort decided it was the perfect excuse to bring everyone together. In celebration of Sukkot, 10 couples spent the weekend in the Berkshires and had a blast visiting a local farm, going on beautiful hikes, making s'mores, and sleeping outdoors in a big camp commune. The couples who attended said that the weekend was a sensational smash hit and blew their expectations out of the water!



From our participants:

"We had an amazing time hosting our friends out in the Berkshires during peak leaf-peeping season to enjoy the outdoors and celebrate nature's harvest during Sukkot. Hosting 20 people is extremely difficult and a lot of work, so the generosity of HMIs lovely donors allowed us to stress about one less thing and have all the food for the weekend catered! We had an amazing time hiking in the woods, sleeping outdoors, and catching up around the campfire over s'mores and wine. We're hoping to make this an annual tradition!" - HMI Boston 2022 Alum



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Chicago

Chicago Area Family Camp

Chicago area families headed to Oconomowoc, WI from September 30 - October 2. With kids in tow ranging from 13 months to 4 years old, HMI alumni families got a chance to get away for the weekend. Hosted by Camp OSRUI in spectacular fashion, families were treated to a relaxing and fun weekend away where all the details were thoughtfully handled for them - accommodations, food, logistics, staffing, babysitters, and more were all provided so kids and parents could focus on memorable times with the family, fun and age appropriate Jewish programming, and making new friends.

September Cohort Celebrated Sukkot

The HMI Chicago September 2022 cohort returned from their trip and jumped into High Holiday celebrations. It was great seeing the couples celebrating Sukkot and continuing to make memories together.

From our participants:

"Since [HMI] Family Camp, I have run into fellow campers in my neighborhood. We have made plans to get together for Shabbat. We had not known these families before camp. This camp has provided an opportunity for new, potentially deep, friendships with Jewish families in my neighborhood, which is something my family wants to cultivate."



Los Angeles

High Holidays Across Los Angeles

HMI LA alumni came together as a community for a beautiful beach Tashlich ceremony and picnic. Alumni from three cohorts and their families met at the beach and had a chance to hear the shofar and reflect on the past year together. We then went down to the water to observe the ritual by placing items we found out the beach in the water, rather than traditional bread crumbs.

Several cohorts used alumni grants to organize gatherings, which included Rosh Hashanah dinners, Yom Kippur Break Fasts, and Sukkot gatherings. The September 2022 cohort returned from their Israel trip in time to celebrate the holidays together. Their Jewish educator, Rabbi Rebecca Schatz, ensured that they all received free temple membership at her congregation for a year, and many couples attended services together (and were even pleasantly surprised to hear Rabbi Schatz's sermon about HMI). For some, this was their first time attending High Holiday services. After attending services, the cohort also used an alumni grant for a Rosh Hashanah dinner to ring in the new year together.

From our participants:

"As someone who has never celebrated the High Holidays before, it was comforting to be around a community that was welcoming, understanding, and patient with all my questions! I loved experience this with my Jewish partner, and I look forward to continuing these traditions in our home." - Jenny, HMI LA



New York

High Holidays

- Challah Baking with Gefilteria
 - HMI NYC alumni learned how to bake challah together! We also invited future HMI couples who are traveling with us this winter.
- Hops & Huts in Harlem
 - Couples from the March 2022 cohort gathered at Rabbi Kyle's house in Harlem to celebrate Sukkot and hear from local craft beer shop, Harlem Hops.
- Rosh Hashanah Lunch & Schmooze
 - Couples from our May 2022 cohort gathered on Rosh Hashanah for lunch and tashlich on the East River.
- Rosh Hashanah Dinner
 - Couples from the March 2022 cohort enjoyed dinner at an Israeli restaurant in celebration of Rosh Hashanah.

An Evening with Avraham Infeld

- An evening gathering of HMI alumni, rabbis, board members, and HMI staff to hear from HMI board member Avraham Infeld about the impact of HMI.



San Francisco Bay Area

The Apple Full Circle: East Bay Boozy Apple Adventure

Hosted at an Oakland alumni-owned bar, The Golden Squirrel, couples tasted local ciders and apple brandy! The drinks were paired with fresh apples to bring out the unique sweetness of the new year.

The attendees included new participants from the upcoming East Bay February 2023 trip along with alumni from our most recent East Bay and SF Bay Area cohorts. They loved having the opportunity to connect with other couples from the HMI community. The event was made inclusive to all by providing non-alcoholic options planned into the program, not as an extra or afterthought. It was a unique experience and a fun way to celebrate the Jewish New Year!

From our participants:

"[This event] was very thoughtful and creative. Alumni warmly welcomed us into the community, shared about their lives, and invited us to ask them any questions about the trip. My partner enjoyed learning about the holiday's apple theme through the local ciders... It was clear that Randi [HMI East Bay's Assistant Director of Community Engagement] put so much care into creating this event, from the personalized invitations she sent to the toast she made describing the holiday. My partner and I are grateful for the experience and look forward to more fun ahead." - HMI East Bay Alum



Washington DC

High Holidays in DC

- Apple Picking
 - Over 15 people joined us at Homestead Farm in Maryland to pick apples in celebration of Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot.
- High Holidays at Sixth & I
 - Over 30 people attended High Holiday Services at Sixth & I. On Rosh Hashanah, we had bagels before services to discuss what to expect as many alumni were joining services for the first time.

Alumni Gatherings

- Interfaith Dinner with Rabbi Nora from Sixth & I
 - We welcomed interfaith couples for a dinner and conversation.
- Jewish Food Festival
 - In partnership with the Jewish Capital Museum, over 30 couples attended the food festival and had a great time trying new foods and making new memories with their HMI family!

From our participants:

"Having the support of HMI in hosting these events is invaluable. The fact that HMI is so committed to continuing the community-building at home makes us feel like we did not just go to Israel with this group, but have come home with an entire community and friend group that we did not have before. I feel this every time I see our group: 'I have found 'my people'' Thank you, HMI!"

- HMI 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

Philadelphia

Alumni Rosh Hashanah Seder

HMI Philadelphia alum, Jennifer Gola Bagwell, applied for an alumni grant to host her first Rosh Hashanah Seder, a typically Sephardic tradition. She shared with us that she and her husband were taking over the family tradition this year since her father passed away who always ran it in previous years.

When her dad led the Seder, the readings and prayers were all in Hebrew. This year, they decided to build new traditions and learn more about how to conduct a Rosh Hashanah Seder by including others from their HMI cohort.

From our participants:

"Thank you so much for supporting our event. It was very special to us to be able to host some of our new HMI friends and create new Jewish holiday traditions. Since my dad passed away, the job of creating Jewish holidays has been on my husband and I, very new to this, and it was so special to be able to include HMI friends in our new traditions. I felt close with my friends as we discussed questions related to each blessing and am starting the year with good intentions from the good, deep conversations we had about the upcoming year. I felt so loved and thankful to have my small family and wonderful new friends join us. Finally, I feel more comfortable preparing for a big Rosh Hashanah Seder!" - Jennifer Gola Bagwell



Seattle

Alumni Gatherings

Over the last few months, alumni from different HMI Seattle cohorts have planned family playdates in the park, at breweries, and more. One cohort bought wine, baked challah, and used their HMI candlesticks and celebrated Shabbat together in the park!

"It was so wonderful seeing everyone back in Seattle at the HMI reunion! We enjoyed catching up with everyone, celebrating Shabbat, and getting to meet people's families back home. We've all been keeping in touch since getting back from Israel but seeing everyone again helped re-energize some of the friendships made and led to so many more organized and unorganized hangouts with our Seattle HMI family." - HMI Seattle alum



Thank you