

# A Decade of Impact

## 2024-2025 Impact Report



**Dear Friends,**

As we reflect on this past year, I'm filled with gratitude for the strength, compassion, and generosity of our Honeymoon Israel community. **Thanks to your support, we've continued to welcome thousands of young couples seeking meaning, belonging, and a deeper connection to Jewish life.** Even in a year of great challenge, the heart of our mission has never been stronger.

The war in Israel deeply touched our community, but amid uncertainty, **we witnessed remarkable resilience.** Our team adapted programming, created space for honest conversations, and offered opportunities for couples to find hope together. It was a reminder that **HMI is more than a trip; it's a lifelong community rooted in empathy and connection.**

Now we're looking ahead to an exciting new chapter. Beginning next year, **Honeymoon Israel and Togethering will join as one organization, expanding our reach and impact.** With aligned missions and complementary strengths, this integration will allow us to serve couples at a formative stage of life, offering both immersive travel to Israel and meaningful domestic experiences that help them explore Jewish life on their own terms.

Together, we're shaping the future of Jewish connection — one couple, one conversation, one journey at a time. **Thank you for believing in this work and for standing with us as we continue to share the beauty of Jewish life across North America.**

With gratitude,



**Avi Rubel**  
CEO, Honeymoon Israel





**Dear Friends,**

As we celebrate a decade of Honeymoon Israel, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary journey we've shared and the many people who have made it possible. What began as a bold idea to radically welcome young couples into Jewish life has become a movement that continues to transform communities across North America.

**Over the past ten years, nearly 3,000 couples have traveled to Israel with HMI,** discovering the beauty and complexity of the Jewish homeland and the power of belonging to each other, to community, and to Jewish life in all its forms. The ripple effects of those experiences are profound: alumni carrying forward a vision of Jewish life that is open, joyful, and enduring.

**None of this would be possible without you – our generous donors, partners, and friends – who have believed in this mission from the start.** You've helped make Jewish life more accessible, welcoming, and meaningful for a generation of young couples who might not otherwise have found their place.

As we look to the future, including our new partnership with Togethering, we do so with deep appreciation and clear purpose. The needs of young couples are evolving, and so are we, guided by the same belief that began this journey: **that when people feel truly welcomed, they build lasting connections to Jewish life and to one another.** Thank you for being part of this story and for continuing to help us write its next chapter.

With appreciation,

**Alisa Levin**

Chair, Board of Directors  
Honeymoon Israel

## Ten years ago, Honeymoon Israel set out with a bold vision: to help young couples build meaningful connections to Jewish life.

What began as a single trip has grown into a movement that has touched thousands of couples, reshaped how communities welcome them, and influenced the very ways Jewish leaders think about belonging. As we celebrate this milestone, we also look ahead. The lessons of the past decade are our foundation for the next — continuing to welcome diverse couples to shape a Jewish family and future that is meaningful to them.



160+ trips  
from 23 cities



12,000+  
applications



3,300+ couples  
served



60% first-time  
visitors to Israel

**70% of couples are interfaith, 30% interracial, and 10% LGBTQIA+**



**We are raising Jewish kids in a Jewish home because of the experience we had with HMI. It opened doors for meaningful conversation and learning around religion in a way that I don't think would have occurred otherwise. Thank you!**

- HMI alum, 2018, *Source: Anonymous survey via Stanford SPARQ*

## Impact Five Years Post-Trip

Independent research confirms what we've seen for a decade: Honeymoon Israel has a lasting impact. Couples not only identify as a Jewish family, but they deepen their connection to Jewish life in the years after their trip, building enduring relationships with their peers and communities.

- 110% increase in Jewish activity
- 30% increase in connection to Jewish community
- 40% increase in couples who identify as a Jewish family
- 80% are still close with their cohort

## Impact in the Community

Empowered by their HMI experience, our participants and our trip rabbis are creating a Jewish future that fits the unique identity of their communities.

### Rabbi Aaron Weininger

HMI Minneapolis Rabbi Aaron Weininger guided his congregation in becoming the first Conservative synagogue to allow clergy to officiate interfaith weddings. Through his blessings, teachings, and music, Rabbi Weininger welcomes interfaith couples while honoring Jewish tradition.



**“The more Jewish communities choose to embrace folks who are Jewish and Jewish adjacent, the more we embrace a story, a vision of abundance, for Judaism to thrive,”** he says.

### Alyssa and Nicholas Brescia

When Alyssa and Nicholas Brescia met through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, faith and service were central to their connection. As they began raising a family, they weren't sure how to honor both their Jewish and Catholic traditions — or if it was even possible.

Joining Honeymoon Israel's first Chicago cohort in 2017 helped them see they didn't have to choose one faith over the other. The experience deepened their understanding of Judaism and sparked a lasting community with other interfaith families that they now maintain through HMI micro-grants.



**“Through HMI, we realized we could honor both traditions and build something uniquely ours,”** Alyssa says. **“Judaism is so community-based, and HMI helped us find that community.”**



## Couple Spotlight: Jamie Haft and Abby Ogden

When Jamie and Abby lit Shabbat candles for the first time together in their Berkeley home after their HMI trip, they weren't just kindling flames, they were igniting something much more profound. Surrounded by fellow HMI couples and their children, they are creating the kind of Jewish community that many young adults struggle to find in today's world.

**“HMI has been such a gift in my life,”** Jamie reflects. **“I fell in love with Abby and then I got to watch her fall in love with my culture. It has made me more proud to be Jewish.”**

Her partner Abby adds, **“HMI gave us more than we ever could have hoped for. The trip truly changed the course of our lives. We signed up looking for friends, but we got so much more.”**

Their transformation runs so deep that they've become annual donors themselves.

**“We really believe in the mission and model,”** Jamie explains. **“The subsidized trip was an on-ramp to Jewish culture and community. We want other couples to be able to go on the journey.”**

## The past two years have challenged Israel travel in unprecedented ways.

Yet even as many couples remain hesitant to visit, our commitment to connection hasn't wavered. We've expanded our reach through alternative experiences, including international cohorts and weekend retreats for postponed couples, creating meaningful Jewish experiences while ensuring that the HMI journey never pauses.

In February 2025, we launched four alternative trips to Argentina, a powerful opportunity for couples to connect with the global Jewish community, build enduring bonds with each other, and strengthen their sense of Jewish peoplehood.

Through this adaptive approach, we're reaching young, diverse couples at a formative stage in their lives. As interest in Israel travel recovers, we're confident that no matter where a couple chooses to begin their HMI journey, they'll find the inspiration to build their Jewish life together, strengthen community, and nurture a lifelong relationship with Israel.

## In the first three months since returning home from Argentina:

**96%** agree that they have friends they can celebrate Jewish holidays with

**86%** agree that they can participate in the Jewish community on their own terms

**33%** had 4 or more Shabbat dinners as a couple or with friends

**78%** agree that Judaism is an important part of their identity

**91%** agree that they better understand what role they want Judaism to play in their family life



# ARGENTINA

Against the vibrant backdrop of Buenos Aires, 20 couples began their HMI journeys in a different place, but with the same purpose.

Each trip followed HMI's proven best practices, led by Israeli tour educators, HMI staff, and trip rabbis, and preserved the essence of the HMI experience: connection, reflection, and community. Participants explored Argentine Jewish history, culture, and its ties to Israel; engaged with the local Jewish community; celebrated Shabbat; reflected together in signature HMI conversations; and took part in service projects, including one supporting Holocaust survivors.

The Argentina experience created a meaningful gateway into Jewish life for couples not yet ready for Israel travel, while preserving the depth and transformational quality of the experience. Upon returning home, alumni received the same robust support as Israel participants and quickly became part of their local HMI communities. Engagement was immediate and organically strong, with alumni-led initiatives flourishing across the network.



**"This trip significantly altered our perception of what it means to be Jewish and to be in Jewish community with others."**

- Daren Proebstel, Argentina participant

## Weekend Experiences

When Jeremy Weitz and his husband learned their Honeymoon Israel trip was postponed this past June, disappointment was the first feeling that set in. The couple from Washington, D.C., had been preparing to join 20 other couples for what Jeremy described as a “deeply personal step forward” in his journey of understanding Judaism.

**But what could have been an ending became an unexpected beginning.**

In the weeks following the postponement, Jeremy’s group began connecting online, sharing stories, checking in on one another, and building the kind of community that has always been at the heart of HMI.

**Jeremy’s experience reflects a larger truth about this moment for HMI: when travel was paused, connection wasn’t.**



In response to October 7, the continued war in Israel, and the growing needs of our couples, HMI created a new programmatic strategy designed to meet participants where they are.



We launched immersive weekend retreats in cities across the country, welcoming more than 140 postponed participants into meaningful, local experiences rooted in Jewish learning, identity, and community.

From Shabbat rituals and Havdalah services to Israel education and late-night conversations around the fire pit, **these gatherings became a living expression of HMI’s mission: to help couples build lasting Jewish connection, wherever they are.**

In the first three months since returning home:

19%

increase in connection to Jewish community

24%

increase in having Shabbat dinner

32%

increase in knowing a Rabbi they can relate to or turn to as a resource

15%

increase in identifying as a Jewish family



**“Even though our travel plans [were originally] put on hold, the sense of community we’ve built already is something that can’t be disrupted. Our WhatsApp group has been a constant source of support, filled with uplifting messages, excitement for the future, and shared anticipation.”**

Jeremy Weitz, 2025 participant traveling to Israel this month



**Thank you for being a part of Honeymoon Israel and helping strengthen Jewish community now and into the future.**

Your support, and the support of donors like you, has made meaningful journeys possible for thousands of couples over the past 10 years, reaching them at a pivotal moment in their lives as they build families and make lasting choices about Jewish connection. This is precisely why it's so important to continue engaging these couples now, even as travel to Israel remains limited, ensuring their momentum and commitment to Jewish life continue to grow.

This past year, despite challenges in traveling to Israel, HMI's transformative work has not paused. We've continued to empower couples to build meaningful experiences with one another, deepen their engagement in Jewish life, and create inclusive, lasting communities right here at home. Your partnership ensures that this vital work endures, and that the impact of the past decade continues to grow for generations to come.

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10th anniversary