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**birthright experience**

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To: רוי לפין &lt;roylapin10@gmail.com&gt;

Cc: Phillip Silberberg &lt;phillip.silberberg@gmail.com&gt;

Hi Roy

Todah Rabah. We really appreciate your taking the time. This means so much to Rabbi Sue and me and I am sure to all the students on the trip.

It was so wonderful getting to meet you and to see the tremendous relationships that you had with so many of the students. They really respected and also had such a tremendous time. You were a very central part of so many of the student's Birthright experiences.

I will never forgot the discussion we had while swimming in the sea in Netanya. It was so interesting to discuss both the differences and the similarities between the American students and the Israeli soldiers who are similar in age, yet in some ways have lived such different lives but in others have so much in common. Many of the students' parents came from similar places in Eastern Europe to some of the soldiers, will embark on similar careers like medicine and law, enjoy similar music, movies and enjoy the same food. Yet the American students all quickly learned how different they are with respect to maturity, responsibility and the critical role that the soldiers have in protecting the future of the Jewish people.

It was really interesting talking to you about the reasons why Israel is such a leader in the world of Start Up companies. You mentioned so many of the reasons described in the book "Start up Nation" by Dan Senor and the role of the experiences of the Israeli soldiers in the IDF. I felt so wise when I told you about the book, which as I said is such an easy read and that I could recommend something to you I thought you would find incredibly interesting. Here is a link ( <https://youtu.be/9VS7EQ6ttQo> ) describing the book for you which I think you will find really interesting if you have not yet had a chance to read it.

It was great having you share your viewpoint from our discussion in the Mediterranean on Business and Israel when I led a discussion with the group during a Hillel conversation. I think it was a great catalyst to a very interesting discussion. Having the students hear it from you was so helpful in addition to the short video clip together with the contributions that I made.

I also found it so interesting to discuss the role of famous Israeli heroes like Uri Cohen who have made such an incredible difference to the security and viability of Israel. It was also so interesting to discuss the visit that the **IU Hillel Summer Birthright Bus in**

**2015 to the Navy Base in Ashdod**, especially since you as a soldier in the headquarters of the Israeli navy who used to be on the missile ships in a combat role and now work at the navy HQ. It was so interesting to discuss our visit to the base, what we saw in the movie, control room and on one of the small patrol /missile ships that the Navy commanders showed the group. It was also so interesting to talk to Dor, one of our other soldiers, about his unit in the IDF, that the 2016 IU Hillel summer birthright canine unit visited.

I have so much respect for all the Israeli soldiers that I have met over the past 4 birthright trips for so many reasons. One of the many reasons is how you all know exactly when you are allowed to share your experiences and when something is "not for public knowledge".

I agree with you very strongly that having the privilege of being a **BICEP bus** and having the soldiers from the moment the group arrives till the day they depart. Meeting at the airport was so valuable to building relationships. Saying goodbye as a group ten days later on the last day just before the students boarded also was very powerful. **The 10 days versus 5**, enabled soldiers to room and sit together with more students and get to know all the students on the trip.

Our visit to Save a Child's Heart and the speaker about COGAT were also benefits of being a BICEP bus and also made a great impact on our trip.

Roy, it was such a pleasure and honor to get to know you and to see the impact you had on the success of the overall Birthright trip. Please know that you are ALWAYS welcome to stay in our home in Bloomington as a guest for as long as you choose, although I know that we will have to fight with the students who will be offering the homes to you.

Best regards  
Phil and Rabbi Sue

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