Going on IU Hillel’s birthright trip was without a doubt the best trip of my life. I had never been to Israel before and to go with a few of my best friends and my sister was incredible. I had always wanted to visit the home and birthplace of my religion and I wouldn’t have wanted to change any part of my amazing ten days in Israel. At the end of the trip, I felt such a bigger connection to my religion and faith than I had before I got there. Not only did I gain an incredible amount of historic knowledge about Israel’s beginning and all of the significant events that took place throughout the last 60 days but I gained a powerful connection that made me a proud Jew.

Without a doubt, I think the biggest reason my trip in Israel were so special was because I had the opportunity to have actual Israeli soldiers with my group the ENTIRE time. From the minute we landed in Israel we were greeted by our soldiers and were able to develop a relationship with each one. As opposed to other birthright groups, my group was able to have our soldiers the entire 10 days. The valuable information about their home and history made me feel so much more connected because I was able to ask them questions every place we went and didn’t have to say goodbye until had to head home.

Toward the end of my trip, my group went to an Army base where two of our soldiers currently served at. I learned how the army base operated and because the soldiers were with us I got to hear stories and information from our soldiers that I wouldn’t have heard from the other soldiers at the base because our soldiers were already my friends. One of the soldiers in our group, Roy, was my roommate in one of the hotels we stayed at. I was pleasantly surprised how close in age we are. I’m turning 20 and he’s only a year older. Before the trip, I expected to have a relationship with our soldiers similar to a student and professor at my university because of all the knowledge they had and I was very eager to learn. However, the relationship with Roy and many of the other soldiers I had were almost like family. At first it seemed like it would be a teacher/student relationship but after Roy and I were roommates it turned into a relationship that brothers would have. I don’t think we would have developed the close relationship if the soldiers were only with our group for 5 days as opposed to 10. Therefore, I am a firm believer that all birthright groups should have their Israeli soldiers for the entire length of their trip.

Sincerely,
Jake Milwit