



**ENTREPRENEURSHIP LAB**



## Study Journal on Apprenticeship in Israel

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## Introduction

*“Your big opportunity may be right where you are now.” - Napoleon Hill*

Student life offers many opportunities that gives a chance to learn new things and it contributes to our overall development. This journal is a glimpse of a unique chance I received, explored and experienced as a graduate student at Pace University.

The Entrepreneurship Lab (eLab) received a generous donation from an alumni Mr. Michael Dezer through which 6 students at Pace university would have a chance to directly work with Israeli startups, have a unique exposure to company leadership and strategy; and earn a scholarship worth \$5000 to visit Israel; and apprentice with partner companies.

I was one of the 6 students working under this initiative at the eLab and while working as a technical fellow, I received an opportunity of my life. I was selected for the prestigious Dezer Scholarship. I was very happy to have the lucky chance to visit Israel and be an apprentice at one of the partner companies. I was to begin my apprenticeship with MIT Enterprise Forum, Tel Aviv, Israel.

The apprenticeship was of 4 weeks, it commenced on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2015 and concluded on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2015. It was an amazing experience to work in a foreign country, to have an exposure to a different culture, a very fruitful experience all together. At the eLab, Professor. Bachenheimer suggested me to read the book “Start-up Nation” by Dan Senor and Saul Singer to get to know more about Israel. My curiosity was heightened after reading the book and I was very excited about the visit.

The weather in Tel Aviv was completely different than New York, it was a hot and humid day when I landed. I had rented an apartment in the heart of the city at Frishman and Herman Cohen through Air BnB. I found people in Israel very helpful and warm from the first encounter. On the very first day I noticed that people in Israel use many alternative mobile apps than the traditional one's known in USA. My cab driver was using an app called “Waze” instead of the usual google maps to navigate from airport to my apartment. When I enquired about it, I learnt that “Waze” allows users to input live traffic updates, so it gives accurate traffic estimate and also reports an accident or other issues on road. Another interesting thing I noticed was the app had audio commands in Hebrew which is the native spoken language, the text on the app and audio commands were in Hebrew, and it also has an option to change the language settings to English. It's a kind of an interactive map app. “Waze” was bought by Google for about 1.3 billion dollars. The team of “Waze” now works with the google maps team.

Israel is an arid country. They take special measures to conserve water and they are very well known for their technology of desalination of water. They have desalination plants

where water from the sea is converted to portable drinking water. They are the inventors of drip irrigation which is widely used in farming and saves water. Another example is their toilets, they have two flush knobs, a small one and a big one which helps conserve water. I was very impressed with the thoughtful measure taken to conserve water, it is a part of daily life here. My very first day introduced me to an Israel which was warm, friendly, technology savvy and aware about the environment. I was really looking forward to meet my team and begin working at the MIT Enterprise forum at Tel Aviv University from the next day.



**The Ben gurion airport, Tel Aviv, Israel**



**The Ben gurion airport, Tel Aviv, Israel**



**The Rabin Square, Tel Aviv, Israel**



**The Dizengoff Center, Tel Aviv, Israel**

## Week of the MIT Enterprise Forum Videos

*“Let go of yesterday. Let today be a new beginning and be the best that you can, and you'll get to where God wants you to be.”-Joel Osteen*

I started my apprenticeship on Monday, one of my colleague from the MIT Enterprise Forum, Omri Katz, lived close to my house and guided me on how to commute to the office. He was going to commute on his electric bi-cycle. It was amusing that most of the people in Tel Aviv commuted on a bi-cycle, there were bi-cycle stations located throughout the city at various locations. You can rent the bi-cycle from one station and drop it at another, best way to travel point to point around the city! The rent is some minimum amount, you can rent it for a day, a week or a month. Many people in the city also used an electric operated bi-cycle and scooters. This alternative mode of transport contributes significantly to the reduction of air pollution, as there are separate cycle tracks along the road, it doesn't affect the main vehicle traffic on the roads.

The office was located at Tel Aviv University campus, inside the Recanati building. As it was a very hot day, I decided to keep the bi-cycle ride for later and commuted by bus. The bus numbers here were written in English but the names were in Hebrew. Instructions on the road, all the shop names, the products in the shops everything had text in Hebrew. The road names were written in Hebrew and English, so it helped me understand the commute as it was going to be my everyday route. Everyone around me mainly spoke Hebrew but they also understood and spoke English. One of the students helped me alight at the right bus stop as the names of the bus stops were in Hebrew too. I met Ayla at the campus with Omri who guided me to the bus from my apartment, I must say I was surprised that he reached before me on his bi-cycle. Ayla gave me a warm welcome and introduced me to the team. Our team comprised of Omri, Gil, Elinor, Shira, Yuvaal and Liron. I found everyone very warm, welcoming and helpful.

We all went out for lunch to celebrate Shira's birthday. While I was in the car Ayla showed me an interesting device called “Mobileye”, which was used to notify if your car is too close from the car in front or behind on the road. As per the rules and current device settings, it would beep if the distance between our car and the car in front (or behind) was less than 2 seconds, also the device beeped if it sensed any person nearby. You can also change the settings as per the driving rules in your country. It was an Israeli invention, I was very enthusiastic to learn about the new devices and apps I was being introduced to, all of them were Israeli inventions and this was just the beginning. As an information systems major I am very fond of different technologies and I was very happy as there was ample variety of technical food for my brain here. Again she used “waze” for navigating to the restaurant. I had nice time during the lunch and enjoyed my time with the team.





from left Shira, Omri, Gil, Liron, Yuvaal, Ayla, Elinor & me

My first project was to study and find all the MIT Enterprise Forum related English videos from the Tel Aviv University (TAU) YouTube channel. The challenge was many of the videos on the channel were in Hebrew, I had to come up with a list of videos in English and study them. During this task, I learnt about all the various events held by the MIT Enterprise Forum (MIT EF). All the events had very good orators talk on different informational topics. Most of them spoke on my favorite one, technology. The videos had owners of many famous Israeli start-up companies talk about their apps and products. One special video that caught my attention had the owner of an app called “Get Taxi” talk about their venture, he spoke about the idea behind the app, its development phase and how they got it going. “Gett” is an app to request for taxi (get a taxi), it helps you find a taxi nearest to your location and request for it. The concept is very similar to “Uber” app. It is a very popular app to request for a taxi.

The next project was to find the companies from India that would be interested in collaborating with Israeli companies. The companies should collaborate with Israeli companies and work together. I was working with Omri on this project, I composed a list of Indian companies which had their offices in Israel and also few which were interested in companies in Israel. The difficulty was very little information was available about such companies online and after a lot of research I was able to compose the list. I submitted my work to Omri. His task was to approach the companies and take further necessary steps. During this research it was interesting to learn that Israel has many agriculture related solutions to offer to one of the largest agriculture based country. Like drip irrigation which was an Israeli invention, many other solutions offered by Israeli companies would help Indian agriculture greatly. Also agriculture is just one of the sectors, many other sectors in India can benefit greatly from this collaboration.

The first week also introduced me to a fact that the working week in Israel begins on a Sunday and ends on a Thursday unlike Monday to Friday in the west. As majority of the people in Israel practice Jewish religion, as per the religion everyone is supposed to take rest or observe “Sabbath” from Friday evening to Saturday evening. Majority of the shops are closed from Friday evening to Saturday evening. Public modes of transport are closed. People usually have family dinners on Friday evenings and visit synagogues on Saturday. Many people also do not light fire during “Sabbath”.



**MIT Enterprise Forum office**



**My desk at the MIT EF office**



**Ayla Matalon at the MIT EF office**



**Gil at the MIT EF office**



**A woman on the cycle in the city**



**Elinor Hardy and me at the MIT EF office**

## Week of the MEPI Project

*"There's always a new challenge to keep you motivated."*-Sean Connery

My week 2 began with a project to research about the organizations around the world which support women entrepreneurs and strengthen them. I created a report listing the details of organizations which encourage women entrepreneurs; provides them with a platform to prosper in business and entrepreneurship. Amidst the task I learnt about the organizations that work actively for women in business and motivate them to stand on their feet. I worked on this assignment with Omri.

During this time, I received a chance to learn about Middle Eastern Partnership Initiative (MEPI) by USA government. MEPI supports organizations and individuals in their efforts to promote political, economic, and social reform in the Middle East and North Africa. In this project an application had to be drafted by the participating organizations outlining, if selected; how they will utilize this chance to help development in their region. It was an enthralling project, I had to read through all the project related documents and create summary documents. The summary documents had a gist of requirements of the project, a list of supporting documents, important deadlines and important links for the application. This project helped me understand about the initiative taken by USA government to promote development in the region. The requirements of the project were very specific and it focused on promoting development here.

Ayla invited me to the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Tel Aviv Rowing Club, the attraction of the event was a group of rowers all above the age of 80! Before the actual event two rowing competition were held among 4 teams, 2 teams in each set, this was the first time I experienced an actual rowing competition. At the main event, it was thrilling to see all the rowers above 80 row with such a zeal, I have never rowed but it looked like a demanding sport and I was amazed to see the "Young" rowers rowing with such an ease. At the finish line a huge crowd cheered up the group and two members of the band blew the trumpets as a mark of their victory. This team of "Young" rowers was an example for all of us to pursue our passion at all ages and to enjoy the life to the fullest. I visited the main club and heard about the history of the club. It was a moment of pride for the oldest running club of its kind in the country. The club was established in the pre-independence era. It was great to see all the members of the club so active and passionate about rowing. We enjoyed a nice lunch later during the event and an all-woman band played fantastic jazz music. We danced and sang, it was a very nice celebration.

Tel Aviv University every year hosts a student day, during this event all the big artists across the country perform with their band at the campus. There are food stalls and places to sit and relax for the students. Many fun games are held at different locations in the



campus. There is also a big flea market at the corner of the festival. The student day was in this week and I enjoyed my time at the festival. I enjoyed the music by “Mosh Ben Ari” and shopped for some souvenirs from the flea market.



**Me and Ayla at the club**



**The “Young” rowers at the event**



**A rowing group during the competition**



**All-woman band playing jazz music**



**Ayla and me at the student festival.**



**Enjoying my time during the student festival in the campus.**

## Week of the Entrepreneurship at the Bar

*“Each day offers new beginnings, opportunities and lessons to learn. Every day we receive a deposit of 86400 seconds and we have to determine how we spend it.”*

I must say my every day deposit was being well spent in Israel. Every day offered new lessons, new experiences, I was very much liking it here.

Gil, one of my colleague here, worked on organizing the events for Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) in Israel. I was to assist him in writing the press releases in my next task. GEN organizes various competitions throughout the world, we were working on the press release of the “Clean tech” competition held by them in Israel.

This year the “Clean Tech” competition was to take place along two tracks, the 1<sup>st</sup> track would allow start-ups raising upto \$1 million in funds to participate and the 2<sup>nd</sup> track was for the start-ups raising funds worth \$3 million to \$4 million. The winners of the 2<sup>nd</sup> track would get an opportunity to visit the “Silicon Valley” in California and network with the companies there. This assignment helped me learn about Clean Technology, I was aware of the term but I understood it in depth during this task. Clean technology supports the solutions that are built to support cleaner environment, like apps which monitor temperature or the toxic levels in the air are some examples. GEN organizes largest “Clean tech open” competition in Israel, they widely promote clean technology and their competition gives a platform to the start-ups to showcase their ideas in this field.

While helping with the press releases, I studied about the previous year winner of the competition, they built an app called “Breezometer”. This app monitors the toxic levels in the air. It can tell you about the pollution levels in the “air” around you depending on the location using maps. It can help you know which part of the city is healthy to exercise and which area has very bad levels of pollution. Their app uses the data from the sensors that government has installed to monitor the toxic levels in the air around the city. This app uses the map and gives you specific data related to an area. It’s a very innovative idea, this app can help people decide about which localities in the city are good to live depending on the pollution in that vicinity. Their app is very popular here and last year they had a chance to visit the White House and meet with the USA President, Mr. Barack Obama. I was thrilled to learn how passionate people here are about technology, there were so many creative apps and solutions I encountered in a short span of time. It’s a perfect place for curious brain, each day you learn about a new invention in the pipeline or already doing the rounds in the field of technology, many things go beyond imagination.

“Entrepreneurship at the bar”, the name has it all. It is another innovative concept I had a chance to experience here. It’s an entrepreneurship event that takes place in a bar, it’s



like a usual presentation but only; this takes place in a bar. A presenter presents his idea or demonstrates his product to the group of people, everyone is welcome at the event. A formal setup with projector and laptop is arranged in the bar. It's a presentation and networking event, having it in the bar puts everyone at ease. It is such an out of the box concept, "kudos" to the inventor. I participated in one such event organized by GEN. The audience comprised of the owners of startups, students, technology enthusiasts all sitting in the same bar. This event also gave me new perspective about work culture here, people here dress casually for the networking events unlike the "Dress up" culture in New York. Also networking event here do not imply only formal conference rooms or offices. Ideas can be discussed anywhere and everywhere.



**Me at the event "Entrepreneurship at the bar"**



**Shira and me with other participants at the event**



**Ayla and me at the event**



**Shira, Ayla and me during the event**

## Week of the Indian Lunch and Farewell

*“Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore, so do our minutes, hasten to their end.” - William Shakespeare*

This was the last week of my apprenticeship and I was so engaged in all the activities that I hardly realized the time pass by so quickly.

In this week my project was to identify Search Engine Optimization (SEO) words for the videos I had studied during the first week. I had to go through all the videos again and carefully identify the words that would help optimize the search of the videos better on the TAU channel. SEO keywords help categorize the videos, also they are a key factor to improve the ranking of a video or a webpage on a search engine. I composed a document listing the keywords related to each video.

Another app I used widely during my stay here was “Moovit”, Ayla told me about it in the first week. This app helps to find the right bus or train to commute from point to point. I used this app to travel around the city, it helped me to know which bus to take from my current location to the desired destination. It also guided me to the nearest bus stop using the map. One of the best features of this app is that it gives live details about the next arriving bus and also notifies if there is a delay. I found it very handy to plan my commute around the city. This app is also an Israeli invention, currently it is available in Israel and USA.

On my last day of apprenticeship all the team gathered for lunch. I cooked an Indian lunch for the team, as a token of my gratitude. All of them gave me a beautiful card with personal messages and a candle stand that represents Jerusalem. In all the 4 weeks I became a part of the MIT EF family, they helped me learn so many new things. The projects and assignments I participated in during the apprenticeship added greatly to my knowledge and experience. It gave me a chance to learn about many new technologies and a new perspectives of things as a student.





**The lunch I made for the team**



**The team during my farewell lunch**

## Israel as a Tourist

*"Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world."* -Gustave Flaubert

Israel is a very beautiful country to visit as a tourist, its tiny dimensions help you travel the lengths and breadth of the country in less time but the diversity it offers is astonishing. It has tall Golan Heights in the north, deserts of Negev in the south, the Dead Sea in the east and beautiful beaches of Tel Aviv on the west.

I travelled to the major attractions during my stay, I lived very near to the Tel Aviv beach. Tel Aviv is a city full of life and youngsters. It has so many bars, food joints and an equal no of museums, theatres and coffee shops. I travelled most of the time on foot as I think that's the best way to see a city. I visited the Rabin square, London minister mall, shuk a caramel, Tel Aviv Beach and many amazing bars in the city.

I also enjoyed a walk along the Tel Aviv beach boardwalk that ends at Jaffa port, it's a very old port situated at the southern tip of Tel Aviv. It has buildings built in stone and the old city has the beautiful yellow stone roads. It has a very good flea market, perfect place to buy souvenirs of all kinds. You see many shops and restaurants here built in the old buildings, these buildings have a unique architecture, they usually have thick walls and high ceilings. They are built in stone. This architecture helps the houses remain cold in summer and warm in winter.

Visiting Jerusalem and Dead Sea was a treat to the eyes. The roads en-route Jerusalem were laden with trees, it's a 45 minute drive from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and I booked a guided tour. Apparently the complete area was a desert few years back, but people planted trees on these mountains and the government of Israel initiated special efforts to create and maintain the forests thus maintaining the balance of nature. I was amazed to learn yet another example of nature loving Israel. Amidst the tour of Jerusalem I learnt how important the city was to 3 major religions of the world; Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The tour enlightened me with the history of Jerusalem. Dead Sea is located further east of Jerusalem at about 45 minutes' drive. It is amazing to notice how landscape changes from forest laden Jerusalem to a dead desert to Dead Sea. I saw many Bedouins settlements in the desert. Dead Sea is the lowest point on the earth, it's the biggest natural salt water lake in the world. I also experienced floating in the "Dead Sea", you can sit on the water literally, read a book floating, altogether a fantastic adventure.

Elinor from the team showed me Haifa, Caesera and En-karem, Jerusalem on a weekend. We travelled to En-Karem near Jerusalem, it's a small, quiet town located in the mountains. We visited a beautiful church in En-karem and took a walk around the place. Haifa is a city located to the north of Tel Aviv city, it is famous for the holy shrine of Bahaai faith. It has very beautiful gardens called Bahaai gardens, and the view from the top is spectacular. I also visited Caesera, it's a roman era port built in stone. We reached at the

time of the sunset, it was beautiful to watch horizon change colors on the backdrop of crystal blue waters.



**Beautiful sunset at the Tel Aviv Beach**



**At Jaffa port**



**Visiting Jerusalem**



**Visiting Haifa**



**At Caesera Port**

## Food and Culture in Israel

*"There is no sincerer love than the love of food."*- George Bernard Shaw

If you believe in the same, Israel is the right place for you. The variety of food available here is a treat to every foodie, from delicious staple food of hummus, falafel, pita bread, Mediterranean salad, tahini, grilled/baked cauliflower to south American empanada, Italian pastas and pizza everything is mouthwatering.

I love food and during my stay here I tried different cuisines which is incredible considering the tiny dimensions. The best food I found here was the staple Hummus and falafel, we ate at a famous Arab joint in Jaffa and that was the best hummus I have had so far. I also tasted a dish called "Shakshouka", a local breakfast favorite. I explored major joints in the city of Tel Aviv. A tourist must try few unique joints like a famous "Ayal Shani" outlet which offers a variety of fillings in a pita bread, this joint is a very lively and fun, I tried grilled cauliflower here for the first time, it was very tasty. One unique dish I ate here was called "Laffa", it's a giant bread that people of "Kurd" community make and sell, and you eat the "Laffa" with sour cream (Lebane) or a salad. One interesting item you will find on your table at most of the places is, olives! Each joint will offer fresh olives as side dish here.

On Friday evenings, as I mentioned before, people generally have "Sabbath" dinners. I had the privilege to attend 3 "Sabbath" dinners during my stay here. Ayla's friend Tom invited me to my first ever "Sabbath" dinner, it was wonderful to meet Tom and his family at the dinner. I was very happy to know that all family members gather on Friday evening dinners. It's a family ritual and a part of Israeli culture. The food was delicious and I had wonderful time with the family. I became good friends with Tom's children, Michael and Adva, they are twins about 20 years old. I also had the pleasure of visiting Ayla on a "Sabbath" dinner at her house. She and her family gave me a warm welcome and I was introduced to her few other family friends at the dinner. I was very glad to meet everyone, during our talks at the dinner table I learnt that one of her friends was working in High tech industry by the day; and actively pursued the hobby of cheese making during his free time. It is really important to follow the heart and pursue our hobbies. Her 2<sup>nd</sup> son Oren plays double base and youngest son Nitai, at the age of 15 is an amazing chef. He helped Ayla in preparing the dinner and later he shared all his recipes with me. I was amazed at their talent at such a young age. The tradition of "Sabbath" dinner, shows the family oriented nature of the Israeli culture, it's an amazing experience and a great privilege to be invited for a "Sabbath" dinner in Israel.

Watching theater plays can be fun and I had a chance to see two plays during my time here. Ayla's friend Michael treated me with the first Israeli play, it had a renowned Israeli theatre actor Avi Khusner playing key role in it. It was in Hebrew but had sub titles in English which came to an aid of non-Hebrew speaking audience. It was a comedy play and a perfect treat for the audience. Ayla invited me to the second play, it is the only



theatre and only show of its kind in the world. We went to a theatre called “Na-lagaat” in Jaffa, here all the performers in the play were blind and deaf. The concept of the play was very unique, it was called “Baking the bread”, at the end of the play as the story unfolded they actually baked the bread and in the end invited all the audience to the stage to taste the bread and interact with the actors. This play makes you realize the importance of living each moment to the fullest and not to take anything in life for granted. To count your blessings and not complain about your problems constantly. Everyone has unique capabilities and everyone is special in their own way.



**The complete cast of the Avi Khushner play**



**Michael and me at the theatre**



**The Nalagaat theatre at Jaffa**



**Volunteer explaining the signs at the Nalagaat theatre**

I made few local friends during my stay and I was very awestruck to learn about the military recruitment from them. I had an idea of it while reading the book “Start-Up Nation”, but was able to hear live experiences from my friends. In Israel, every young boy and girl have to do a compulsory military service, after high school. Boys have to serve for minimum 3 years and girls for minimum 2 years. Also selected few serve the elite unit 8200, which is the intelligence unit of the military. Selected candidates serve for 4 years in this unit, it’s a very competitive and demanding process. Only few best candidate make it to this unit. There is famous local story here that most successful startups in Israel have their founders coming from unit 8200, which I guess is surely true. The military service is an excellent instance of the patriotic spirit of Israeli people. Majority of the people travel to India or a South American country after serving in military. It gives them an opportunity to take a break and decide about the later course of their life.

## Looking Back

People in Israel are very warm, welcoming and hard working. Amidst continuous war they have very well maintained the harmony within. The main cities and the daily routine is hardly affected by the bombings we hear about in the news. They have a very systematic approach towards things and irrespective of the tough conditions I found all Israelis celebrate life to the fullest. They highly value their heritage, traditions and culture, conserve nature and welcome guests with open arms. It is a very safe country to travel and an experience of a lifetime.

It was a very rewarding experience to visit and work as an apprentice in Israel. I am very thankful to Pace University, the Entrepreneurship Lab and Mr. Michael Dezer for this unique opportunity. This experience has significantly contributed to my knowledge and experience. I would recommend everyone that given a chance please visit Israel, it's a life changing experience!