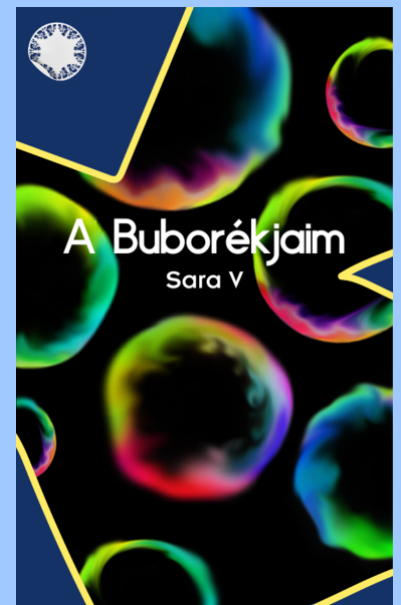




My bubbles



Name: **Sara V**

Gender: **Female**

Country of residence: **Hungary**

Writing language: **Hungarian**

Many times, people associate Eastern Europe with the Holocaust, and they don't know about the fun life we have here. I have been a camper since I was 7 meeting the same friends every summer. I even had a group Bat Mitzvah in Szarvas which was much more fun than having it in a synagogue.



I was born into a very Jewish family. My great grandparents were all Shoah survivors and restarted their lives after the Holocaust in Hungary. Most of their relatives were killed or left to the US so we don't have a big family in Budapest. Both of my parents took active part in the revival of the Jewish life in Budapest in the 1990s. I've heard many stories from these times from them and I always feel like they experienced historical moments. They actually met then when they were both teenagers. They were madrichim in the Szarvas camp when they opened it and now I'm a madricha in this camp. They told me stories about how it was to visit Israel for the first time after Communism was over and how elevating it was to rebuild the Jewish life. Today my Mom is the regional Director of BBYO Hungary and writes Jewish children's books. My Father is the rabbi of the Frankel Synagogue.

As you can conclude being an active member of the Jewish community was not a question for me. But still, I've always had the chance to decide in which parts I want to be engaged: if I want to go to synagogue or observe holidays. It was never forced on me and I'm happy about it.



Since I learnt English, international environment always attracted me. I think one of the best part of being Jewish is the opportunity to be part of this extremely colourful Jewish world. But Hungarian Jews have a unique situation when it comes to Jewish international network. We speak a language that is not similar to any other languages so the Hungarian delegation never really belongs to any of the regions of Europe. We are Neolog Jews, a stream which only exists in Hungary so it's also something that separates us from the other Jews. But at the same time whenever I say I'm from Hungary somebody will response that their family came from Hungary. And then they say a name of a city I've never heard of 📍📍 And they are all crazy about the famous Hungarian gulyas soup (goulash) that I don't like but never tell them. Many times people associate to the Holocaust with Eastern Europe and they don't know about the fun life we have here.



I learnt in the Lauder Javne Jewish Community School from age 6 to 20. I've just graduated a month ago. It's strange to learn Judaism as a subject but for many of the classmates Lauder school was the primary source of Jewish life. It was a safe environment to spend my school years in. It's also nice to celebrate and have school breaks on Jewish holidays.

My school gave me tons of different type of experiences to choose from but I can think of two that I feel like are more special than the others. The first one is the Sachar program where basically the high schoolers can go to the primary school classes once-twice a week to teach them about Judaism in a way that they have fun with us and we have fun with them. Besides having my own little fan club by the sweetest kids I am thankful to my school for this opportunity because during these weekly lessons I've learnt how to stand and talk in front of a class or any bigger group of people even without preparation sometimes. Being around them during holidays or a simple Havdalah was very strange for me first because I did not know what traditions they are familiar with but after a while I realise that this is exactly why it is so fun and challenging. This was a great opportunity for me to use and pass on all the fun parts of being Jewish that I've learnt at home.

The other opportunity I got from my school were the exchange student programs. I've joined many different trips but my very first and last trips had the biggest effect on me. My first trip was in my 8th grade to Israel. I was so nervous to travel alone and stay at strangers' house. I remember we had many misunderstandings and different expectations not just with the exchange students but with my teachers and friends too. The last night we stayed in Tel Aviv in a youth hostel. It was heavily raining and everyone was very tired and we decided to go outside and dance and sing in the rain. There are those moments in life that we can't really explain why but are just unforgettable - and this was one of them for me. My last exchange student program was in my 13th grade when we travelled very far from Budapest. We flew to Los Angeles, my dream destination. I have never been that far away from home alone especially not for more than two weeks. I was just as nervous as I was before the Israel trip but I realised then that during those years and exchange trips I have learnt a lot about the world and myself like being independent, solving my own problems, deal with friendship issues, being resilient, not to be shy to speak English, and being hosted by families I've never met before. And I got professional in packing practically.

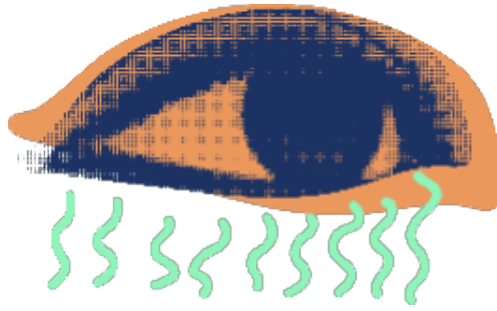
Its kind of funny that I haven't talked about my actual studies about my school so I feel like I should also mention it. Done 🧐🧐



Camp Szarvas has played a really significant role in my life. I have had many different type of experiences in the camp. I have been a camper since I was 7 and went back every year with the same friend group every summer. I even had my Bat Mitzvah in Szarvas with a group of friends which was much more fun than having it in a synagogue. My parents organised it and since then it became a tradition. After some years in the camp all of a sudden I wanted to try something new and get to know new people so I choose to participate in the international group of the camp, where anyone can apply from different countries with good English and open-minded attitude. I've met some amazing people from Germany, Israel, Spain, United States, Poland, France. I'm still in contact with some of them. I've enjoyed that experience so much that I applied to the same group the next year too. During 2019 I've started the Hungarian madrich training of Szarvas. That was the first time I felt like I'm actually giving something to my community. I have had my first group (16-17 year old teens) this summer. I have always imagined being a madricha is just walking around with the kids and hyping them up, but turns out it is so much more! You are the one who is helping them make unforgettable memories. You are the one they turn to when they are happy, hurt, disappointed, joyful, angry, lonely and in love. And I loved to learn how to handle all of these emotions and being the one they turned to! I feel responsible to give them the best time but I also faced some challenges. Sometimes I could not do what I thought would be the best for them because irrational camp rules blocked me and I took it very hardly. I was in charge but without power. During Covid the camp has been renovated which is a great thing but I miss the old vibes of the place. I sound like a grandma telling about good old times...



Amongst all my bubbles BBYO is the one that I impact on shaping it. I was there since the very beginning when BBYO was launched in Budapest (September 2015). In the sense of belonging to a community BBYO has different levels. We have our Budapest chapter where I was a teen and now I'm in an advisor role. I'm part of the team that runs the weekly meetings, camps, celebrating all the Jewish holidays and participate on international programs. I support the teens (age 10-17) in all the ways I can so they feel comfortable in the BBYO community. It's hard to imagine that I was their age (12 years old) when I started BBYO. In 2018 I participated on the BBYO International Convention (IC) in Florida with some (2500) other Jewish teens of my age. A new world has opened up for me on this incredible event. I felt like the organisers know what I need more than I do. It was huge, it was fun, it was Jewish and it was really about and for the teens. I also learnt a lot about cultural differences with my peers. For example I still remember how surprised I was when American girls told me "I love you" and "I will miss you so much" and hugged me after knowing each other for few hours. Since then I learnt that these words have different meanings in their vocabulary than in ours. It was the first time I could choose from 15 different style of Kabbalat Shabbat and I participated on one that was like a concert. Last November I was staffing the European BBYO convention in Warsaw. This was another new perspective for me taking responsibility for a small group alone. I would definitely would be a different person without spending 8 years in the BBYO environment.



I start to study in a university in September. This will be my first non-Jewish environment. I'm very excited about it. I've never been in a situation where I had to "reveal" my Jewishness. It was always obvious inside the Jewish bubbles. What will I do if I have an important exam on Yom Kippur? How I will react in case of antisemitic comments? Do people see that I'm Jewish? Well... I will find out soon.

