



Many countries and one identity



Name: **Joshua P**

Gender: **Male**

Country of residence: **Spain**

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Hello, my name is Joshua Gad Nando, and I am a young 19-year-old Italian Jew who, despite being relatively young, has a long and beautiful story to tell. Before I start talking about my life, I want to begin by introducing my family and my relationship with Jewish environments in different cities where I lived.

I am part of a family of six: two parents and four children. I have an older sister named Nogah, and to me, she is like a twin because there are only 20 months between us, and we are firm points of reference and support for each other. Besides her, I have two twin brothers named Jona and Joel, who are 14 years old. Without them, my life would be less fun and crazy than it is with them by my side.

My father is a rabbi and educator, and he is a role model for me, even though we have our differences regarding life and various topics. Lastly, but not least, is my mother, who, besides being a wonderful Jewish mother who manages to organize, help, and be present in each of her children's lives, is also a magnificent chef and nutrition coach.

Apart from my family, and due to my very active and traveling life, I had the possibility of having many friends (Jewish and non-Jewish) in different places around the world, and I still keep in touch with them today because they are like a second family to me.

Regarding romances... :) In my 19 years of life, I have had several relationships with various Jewish girls from different places. All Jewish, but not always of the same "religious level" (even though I don't like to use levels), because over the years, I learned and understood that it is not something very relevant to me when looking for a partner.

I was born on December 12, 2004, in a beautiful and large city in Italy called Naples, which, despite being one of the most important cities in southern Italy and Italy in general, the Jewish community there has never exceeded 2,000 Jews in its entire history.

Despite that, I was born in a home where daily life was mostly centered around the small but beautiful Jewish community there, as my father was the rabbi of that community. Therefore, my siblings and I, the last young Jews born in Naples, were always active in that community, and we visit them from time to time with great excitement and nostalgia. In fact, the last time the whole family visited the city and the community was to celebrate my two younger brothers' bar mitzvah (which might be the last bar mitzvah in that community).



After my time in Naples, just a few months after my brothers' birth, my father decided that for the future of Judaism for my siblings and me, it would be better if we moved to Jerusalem, so we could live a more comfortable life as Orthodox religious Jews and attend Jewish schools, receiving a Jewish education since there were no Jewish schools in Naples.

In Israel, for obvious reasons, it was not difficult for me to be part of a Jewish community. In fact, I was very active in several, such as:

The Italian Jewish community in Jerusalem, occasionally visiting a community of Jews from Tunisia and Algeria and participating in many Jewish movements like Bnei Akiva, Scouts, and Ariel.

I remember my years in Israel very well; it was easy to live as a Jew and find a community where I felt most comfortable and happy.

I lived in Jerusalem from ages 6 to 13, after which my father found work as the director of Jewish studies at the Jewish school in Madrid, Ibn Gabirol. There, I had an even more innovative and unique experience regarding my relationship with the local community.

By then, I had reached an age where I could not only participate in what are called "community functions" but also had the opportunity to work within it, particularly in the youth sector. That's why I became a madrich (youth leader) in several youth movements in the community of Madrid, such as: Maccabi VeYachad (a Jewish youth movement in Madrid focused on informal education)

BBYO (an American Jewish organization for teens) which has a branch in Madrid, Barcelona, Malaga, Melilla, and other cities in Spain. In this organization, I not only participated but also served as the president of the brotherhood of young Jews throughout Spain in 2022-2023.

I also coordinated winter camps organized by Chabad of Barcelona, called "Gan Israel," which are 10-day camps in December where children from all over Spain participate and have fun doing activities like skiing, horseback riding, paintball, and more.

Having lived both in a small community (Naples) and then in Israel meant that when I moved to Madrid, I was equipped with several communal elements and structures that I didn't have in Naples. This helped me understand and experience first hand the importance of helping and being part of your local community, especially if you live outside of Israel. Therefore, my way of contributing and being active in it was in the youth sector because I felt I was born for that.

Also, thanks to the opportunities available in Madrid my desire to go to Jewish camps or Jewish trips around the world awakened even more. In fact, throughout my life, I have been on various trips such as:

Two international camps called "J-Academy," one in London and one in Alicante, where Jews from all over participated, including from Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Argentina, and more.

Two national Spanish Jewish camps, one as a participant (2019) and one as a madrich (2022).

Three winter camps by Chabad of Barcelona.

I went on Taglit in the summer of 2022-23.

I participated in a trip with Olami Argentina visiting the Olami Uruguay community.

I just returned from a trip organized by Chabad of Barcelona in Mexico to learn not only about its national history but also its Jewish history.

These trips still hold an indescribable importance as, in each one, my perspective on Judaism and Jews around the world deepens. But if I had to choose one that changed me more than the others, it would be the national Spanish camp where I was a madrich.

This camp, despite being hard and challenging work-wise, was where I truly understood the importance of being part of and seeing future generations of Jewish boys and girls enjoying activities and games together and thus creating their place in the Spanish Jewish community. I will never forget the day a 14-year-old boy approached me and confessed that thanks to that camp, he decided to join the course to become a madrich for the youth of Madrid next year.

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For this very reason, in the summer of 2023, after graduating from the International Baccalaureate (IB) at the Jewish school in Madrid, I decided to dedicate a year of my life to a community center called Menora in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Menora is a Jewish community/organization with various branches and functions:

It is a Syrian synagogue that has daily prayers and bar and bat mitzvah courses. Therefore, it is a normal synagogue that welcomes people of all ages.

It has a movement called "Menorah House," which focuses on activities and lessons for young Jews (regardless of whether they are Ashkenazi or Sephardic, religious or not, Orthodox or not) to bring them closer to the center or motivate them not to lose connection with any community in Buenos Aires (which has around 80 communities and 244,000 Jews in the capital alone).

It also has an Olami Palermo branch. Olami is a global organization that organizes activities, trips, and meetings with young people from 18 to 30 years old. Currently, Olami has a presence in over 320 cities in 28 countries.

It also had a Beit Midrash for boys and girls from 12 years old to adults.

Lastly, what made this center so special, in my opinion, is that it focuses not only on providing spiritual or identity services to the Jewish people of Buenos Aires but also material services like restaurants and cafes. In fact, one of the most exclusive and loved restaurants among young Argentinians was Menora's, called BIBIS, which was a sort of American fast food serving some of the best kosher burgers in the city.

Luckily, during my year there, thanks to my close relationship with the chief rabbi of this community and generally of the Sephardic side of Buenos Aires, Rabbi Isaac Sacca, I had the opportunity to experience and be part of several of these branches mentioned above. In that year, I found myself working or helping in Menorah House, Olami Palermo, and Villa Crespo (two neighborhoods heavily populated by Jews), and I even worked for a month at BIBIS restaurant. In short, in that year (2023-2024), I dedicated 24 hours a day to this community and Judaism there.

As we can see, for me, having a relationship with local communities in the different cities where I lived was an almost obvious and very important factor. As a Jew born in the diaspora, lived in Israel, and returned to the diaspora, having a connection and being active in the Jewish community you have is the most important thing there is.



Today, I have finished my time in Argentina and am currently back living in Madrid until September, as my family still lives here.

The truth is that while living in Buenos Aires, I never felt or realized what was happening in the world after October 7. Information and videos about what happened that day and the war spreading did reach us, but living in a city with such a large and deep Jewish presence, to give you an idea, I lived in a neighborhood with three synagogues and around 5,000 Jews, I didn't see any antisemitic or pro-Palestinian acts throughout that year.

However, upon returning to Madrid, a city with a Jewish presence but not as historical and marked, I started to notice a lot more pro-Palestinian and antisemitic posters around me, and for the first time in my life, I started to fear going out with my kippah on.

But actually, the moment everything changed was during the month of June. In this month, I was fulfilling one of my most desired dreams, walking the Camino de Finisterre.

For those who don't know, the Camino de Finisterre is a pilgrimage route that extends from Santiago de Compostela to Cabo de Finisterre in Galicia, Spain. In short, I was walking 20-30 km a day from town to town with only a backpack, sleeping in Galician villages of about 500-1,000 inhabitants (more or less). It was an incredible experience, and the more days passed, the more I wanted to reach Finisterre.

However, upon arriving in that beautiful town, home to around 1,000-2,000 inhabitants, I found a poster on a wall two streets from my lodging that read: "Zionists Out." I can't describe the disappointment and sadness I felt at that moment... seeing this poster in such a small and remote city in the Galician region.

It made me feel and understand that there is no safe place for Jews except Israel, and that's why I decided (although I am still waiting for a response) to try to join the army next year. Thanks to this year, I understood the indescribable importance of Israel and the crucial role it plays, and that's why I would love to be part of its army and defend its land next year.

