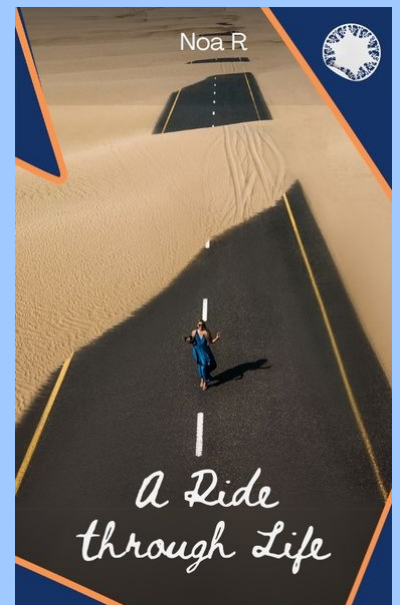




A Ride through Life



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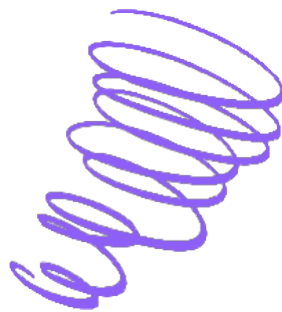
The place I was born.

My parents moved to the Netherlands before I was born from Israel. This meant that I grew up in a Jewish Israeli household, while the outside world was Dutch. It created a language clash in my younger years. Will anyone ever get to understand me? Speaking no language perfectly and growing up in between cultures. This was a fear I felt as a child.

I went to the Jewish elementary school in Amsterdam, spending my time growing up in a tight-knit community. I am really grateful to have grown up here. I made friends for life and a base I can always return to. It allowed me to roam freely in the world while knowing where I can always find my people. I decided that my base was strong enough and it was time to open the doors to the world, after being in such a closed off but super safe space in my childhood years.

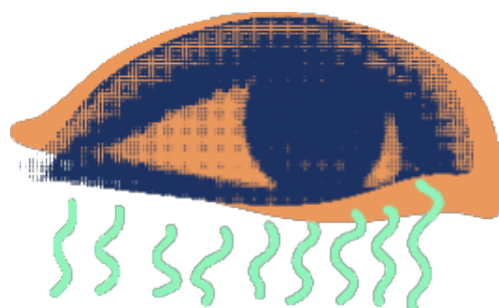
As a teenager I went to a non-Jewish high school. I picked a Dutch school in the south of Amsterdam (Amsterdam-Zuid), that would fulfil my eagerness to learn deeply. I could study Latin and Ancient Greek, meet new people from other backgrounds but I was always connected to my Jewish friends. I even went with two of my Jewish friends from elementary school to this high school. I think it created a really safe gateway in togetherness to our teenage years in a new space. These were formative years were generally I felt embraced as a person and being Jewish was just another part of me as a whole. I made super good friends and memories. It were crazy years full of (impulsive) explorations and emotions, but if there is any place that is great to be a teenager it would be Amsterdam.

My family is spread over the world. From Mexico to the UK to Israel. It created the world as a place to grow up in and not per se so bound to one place. Home could be at multiple places at a time. A piece of creation by a group of people or myself, knowing that we are connected by blood and faith/fate. After having been in Amsterdam until my 18th birthday I felt the need to move on to different places in the world. Inspired by Mexican family, I decided to do a gap year in Sevilla (Spain). During Pesach me and friends at the language school created a Seider picnic. It was a sweet and small way to stay connected to out Judaism in a light way. It is a fond memory in one of the main parts of Sevilla. I would happily go back. During this year I wanted to study outside the Netherlands. I could always come back to Amsterdam so why not go far? My parents did not agree with my mindset and we settled for studying elsewhere in the Netherlands.



I made my way to Maastricht to study my Liberal Arts and Sciences degree. There is two memories that come to mind as I started out here. The first one is with my now best friend, who told me that as an Israeli Jewish person I might have a difficult time at University College Maastricht. I felt a deep defensiveness and this idea that I could protect myself no matter what happened, with a sense of pride and respect for who I am. Of course, she told me this in a sense of precaution from what she had seen in previous years in the studies there. Another memory is the first time I went to the synagogue in Maastricht. It is a lovely place that survived the Second World War as it was used as a storage room by the Nazis. I really enjoyed connecting to the Jewish community there. It was a breath of fresh air connecting to people outside of my studies and from different age groups. There were community leaders connecting youngsters (and even trying to make some couples haha). It was a sweet community I felt understood, loved and warm. There were people that would understand me and I did not have to explain myself much.

Over the study years at UCM I did feel tensions surrounding my Jewish and Israeli identity. There were people not agreeing with this and would flat out be disrespectful. It had put me in incredibly and uncomfortable positions. At the end of my studies there was a student protest for the FP movement at my graduation ceremony. I was heartbroken as my grandparents had flown over from Israel and my best friend from Spain had done the incredible effort to come visit me for this beautiful closing moment in my life. It just had turned incredibly bitter and full of anger. The university had made no public announcement of condemnation of these vile acts by students. I think it is also important to know that it was so hurtful because my studies were so small that we all knew each other. So, the students having done this protest were well aware of who was in the crowd and what kind of harm they would inflict on the guests and fellow students that wanted to have a celebratory time. It was simply an act of selfishness to 'prove' their own moral righteousness's (that had not been proven to anyone) while hurting the people and community around them by disrupting a once in a life time event. It was obnoxious. Maastricht University also handled it horribly and only apologized behind closed doors. This event and many other antisemitic/discriminatory events I had faced really showed me how deep the dehumanization of Jewish people goes and how ferocious the denial of it is. It is never in the big acts or words that dehumanization springs. It is from deep rooted beliefs about Jewish people, for example as not worthy of trust, and it starts with a strange look after saying where you are from. Or the sudden tension in the air when you talk about your heritage or the denial of where you are from because "Israel does not exist" as so I have been told. It is the accumulation of micro-aggression and the denial of it that opens the gateways to letting blatant antisemitism pass because it fits in the narratives about Jewish people and Israeli people that went around for ages. I learned this in university from experience, mind you, not from the books. Maastricht University is living in an absolute dehumanization paralysis of Jewish students and does nothing about. Oh, except for giving you a pat-pat on your shoulder behind closed doors when you try to talk to the authorities about it.



On a lighter note, for my exchange I got accepted to UC Berkeley and I had a blast here. I loved to connect to the Jewish student community Hillel. It was a place I knew I could easily be with people, study, do shabbat or other holidays. It was a special place for me to connect with people that understand me for my Jewish and Israeli identity. This was important for me so far from home. During this time at UC Berkeley, I also got to enrich my academic interests of Psychology and Dance. I pursued a dance course in Gaga and Modern Dance Techniques which made me further develop my passion for dancing. I could take it more seriously and understand that is a core pillar in my life. I have many fond memories of this place. Sunny, bright and lovely. Sometimes a bit hard, but overall, it was a really great place study, live and experience in and I am so incredibly grateful I got to be there.



As my chaotic, blurry and enriching study time came to an end, I needed to decide what is next. I had to decide quite fast, as I had a really hard time understanding what I wanted to do in my future when I was still knees deep in getting through the current studies. Spring came around with summer nearing, it was time to make decisions. I felt burn out by my studies and could not imagine myself doing a master after Summer. I felt the need to create distance from the academic world and truly feel me. It was time to stop living in my head and it was time to live what I desire to do every day the most for a long time. Life pointed me towards a dance school in Barcelona where there is a professional contemporary dance formation program being ran. I auditioned in a rush close to the deadline, with the help of a dear friend who I am so eternally grateful for. I got accepted.

After a tumultuous summer of processing, feeling and closing off many difficult chapters, in late September I made my move to Barcelona. I am dancing 5 hours every day and slowly developing a different understanding of the world. One that is based from the connectivity of the body-mind-soul. I needed to center myself and focus on my being, instead of being so connected to everything that was not in need of so much space in my life. It was time to just be, while doing dance as my method of being, creativity and (self-)exploration. In a very different way, I had to sit with myself as a Jewish person. It was the first time in my life I did not seek a Jewish community. I didn't feel the need for it. I just really was focusing on myself. I think for a while I had even, without giving it too much thought, distanced myself a bit from being Jewish. So much had happened in my life just because I am Jewish that I felt the need to decentralize it and just continue in my being as a being beyond labels of identity. Through dancing and opening my body I got to explore many parts of my being, including emotional pain I carried around Judaism. With the help of the dancer community and the healers around it, I got to let that go and be able to be Jewish from my own sense of being. From my choice, without much regard to the noise in the world. I am here to be, and being Jewish is part of it.

And so, life opened many doors and closed many too, slowly revealing the path I am on step by step.

