



If the sky was blue today



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I am not proud of belonging to one identity, but of the bonds that identity creates. I am proud when my traditions become a language of sharing, curiosity, and encounter. It is there, in connection, that my Judaism feels most alive.





My name is Aïlen Briatico. Aïlen is a Mapuche first name, originating from South America. Briatico is both an Italian family name and a town in Calabria, in southern Italy. So I decided to add my mother's family name: Golberg — which probably lost its D in the Atlantic Ocean.

I am a cellist, a student in Geneva. When I am introduced before stepping on stage, I am therefore Aïlen Briatico-Golberg. That way, I at least have the impression that “everything” is present on stage.

I often have to write autobiographies as part of my career. Often centered on my cello practice, they focus, depending on the recipients, on my academic path, competitions, concerts, festivals, or “side” projects. Here, it will therefore focus on my Jewishness: you will thus have a part of me — but this time, beyond a simple accumulation of facts and common nouns. If I am allowed to speak without a format, I will linger on what I enjoy. And I dare hope that, because I am speaking about myself, I will also be able to bring others onto the bima.

Most of the important moments of the year follow the line of my Jewish heritage.

It is the day when I cannot go back to France for the family Rosh Hashanah seder. But also the one when I make sure to attend Yaël and Olivier's Yom Kippur service.

It is the one where I shed a tear for the bnei mitzvah of those who grew up with me, and those I saw grow up: Yoni, Meïtal, Ilan, Zoëlle.

And also the other day, when I no longer knew whom to talk to, and thanks to Elias, I found young people with whom to travel and discuss, within Darkei Noam.

It is also my tastes and my colors. My world, where Éric and Michele are my favorite singers, where kneidelech soup is the best thing for a week, and where blue and white always wander somewhere in my room.

And it is a world that people open themselves to — or not. And so they remain at the doorstep.

But it is a part of me that cannot be ignored.

It is not a world that everyone knows: it is a world that must be questioned.

Luckily, questioning is an inherent part of Judaism.



When I discovered the theory of evolution, while I was singing the kaddish every Friday, my dismay led me to my rabbi's office rather than to my father's, the physicist.

Sitting in his office with my mother — director of the Talmud Torah — his answer, later reported to my father, convinced the teacher, the child, and the atheist.

So I have always been open to questions, but one must never expect a definitive answer from me. Despite speeches whose words are dissected with a fine-tooth comb, my paragraphs most often end with: "well, I think." Dated answers, because they are linked to experience, to exchange, to what has been lived. Obsolete or re-evaluated from one year to the next, this is ultimately what rituals offer me: an opportunity, through repetition, to review my thoughts, to make my Judaism evolve.

Recently, I have spoken a lot about empathy with students in France, Germany, and Switzerland. I sometimes had the impression that my peers took my feelings, my worries, and dropped them immediately. I did not understand why others' sorrows were valid, while mine were not even a subject. So I understand the anger of my community.

But for my part, I asserted myself throughout my adolescence — from the day I read my drasha, up to the march for Gisèle Halimi. And I received more resentment and incomprehension than recognition, in the face of indifference. Always the same people at the marches: Jews, and self-interested politicians.

When I felt that I could speak only to my own, because the rest of the world was muted, I remembered that this was the opposite of everything I advocated, and of all the talks my rabbi, Rivon, shared about openness to others. But I did not want to be angry, nor to have to debate. So I sincerely engage in something for which I have no name: a mobile speech, which calls for others' empathy without ever asking for an opinion.

I do not want to hear talk of opinion or position-taking, but simply of a profound hope for everyone, or of an approach of unity and assistance that serves peace and understanding.

People often mention the pride of belonging — ethnic, religious, political...

Having few opinions on the subject, and too many identities to be proud of everything, I prefer to say that today, I am proud of connections. Connections that open themselves in such a particular way thanks to this identity. I am proud when Éléonore came for the first time to see a service at the synagogue.

When I teach Juliette to say “רדסב לוכה, מולש?” to surprise a colleague.

When my boyfriend sits in a corner to listen to the Passover seder on Zoom, out of curiosity.

And when I integrate the melody of my favorite psalm into a piece I wrote, and everyone finds it as moving as I do.

It is when my traditions and my knowledge are in the service of sharing that I am proud.

I have often said that music was the reason I woke up in the morning.

But it is my traditions that give rhythm to my life.

