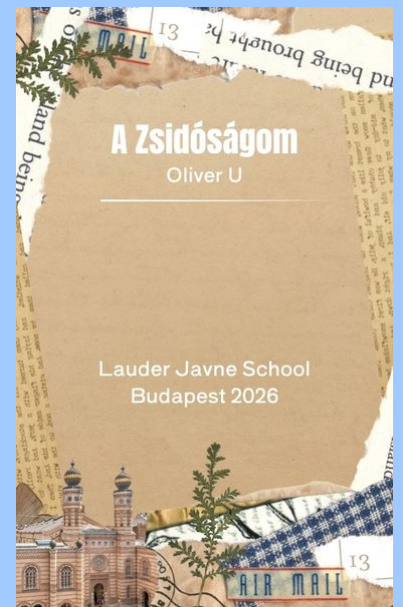




My Jewish identity



Name: **Oliver U**

Country of residence: **Hungary**

I am a 15-year-old Lauder student, and I believe that my Jewish identity is shaped primarily by my mother's Jewishness, which comes from a Hungarian Jewish family background where religious practice was interrupted after the trauma of World War II, yet Jewish identity was passed on culturally.

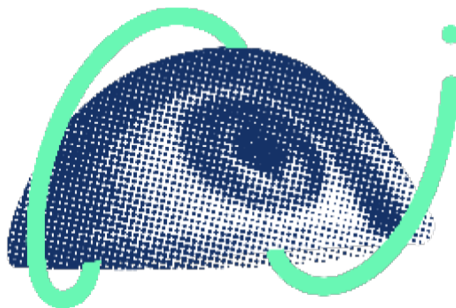
I am a 15-year-old student at Lauder, and I think my Jewish identity mostly comes from my mother's Jewishness. This means that I come from a Hungarian Jewish family where my grandparents (my mother's parents), after the horrors they experienced during World War II, no longer practiced religion after 1945—even though my great-grandparents came from religious, kosher-observant families. Both of my great-grandparents suffered enormous losses during the war. I know all of this from my mother's stories, because she still knew them.

My mother also told me that my grandmother, who was born in 1946, engaged deeply with her Jewish identity. She did not become religious, but instead consumed Holocaust stories—if I may use that expression. My mother inherited her library, and that is why we have so many books about the Holocaust at home. Interestingly, my mother inherited this habit too: she reads many such books and wants my sibling and me to read them as well. This sometimes causes arguments, because I don't always want to read about these topics.

Because my father is a historian and this period is his field of expertise, I hear much more about World War II on a daily basis than most people my age. I am familiar with far more documents, books, and historical objects than my peers.

In my father's home collection, there are items such as passports with swastikas, calendars, and many photographs of Hitler and the Nazis. I understand what these objects represent, what their context is, and why they are historically significant. I am glad that my father talks a lot about these topics. My mother also talks about them often, although she sometimes jokes about it.

My father is not Jewish, and whenever people ask whether he is Jewish, my mother replies, "No, but we're working on it." I find this funny too, but probably not as funny as my parents do.



Returning to our roots, my mother was 18 at the time of the political transition in Hungary, so she experienced firsthand what it was like when socialism ended and people were finally able to practice religion freely. This didn't make everyone religious, but my mother attended the Rabbinical Seminary on József Boulevard, where she made many connections. I know this because she often jokes about running into people she knows there in the most unexpected places.

According to Jewish law, I am fully Jewish, since my mother's mother was 100% Jewish. I knew something about Judaism before I was accepted to Lauder, but we didn't really observe the holidays. I like that we now celebrate more Jewish holidays at home, and I enjoy that friends always come over for these occasions. I also like going to Szarvas, although sometimes I feel there are too many Jewish-related programs there and that the topic is a bit overdone. Still, I enjoy going—interestingly, my sibling does not want to.



I believe that being Jewish means understanding that belonging to any minority is difficult. It also means that as Jews, we cannot allow ourselves to hold prejudices against others. Sometimes it even surprises me when I hear a Jew make a negative remark—for example, about Roma people.

In conclusion, if I have to summarize what my Jewish identity is like, I agree with my mother: we are mostly connected to Judaism culturally and gastronomically—which, in my opinion, is also part of culture. We have many Jewish cookbooks, and my mother likes to cook “in a Jewish way.” She makes excellent Jewish egg dishes, but I don’t like matzah balls.