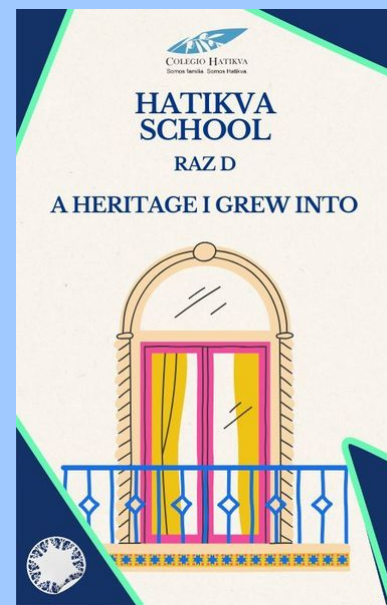




A Heritage I Grew Into



Name: **Raz D**

Gender: **Male**

Country of residence: **Spain**

Writing language: **English**

My name is Raz, a 15-year-old living in Barcelona with Israeli nationality. I have a twin brother, an older sister, and I love football, music, video games, and animals. Growing up between different cultures has shaped a big part of who I am.



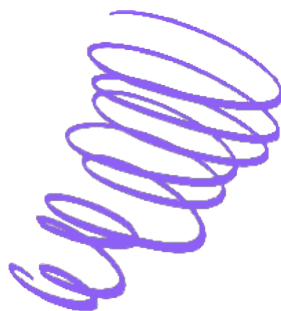
I never truly comprehended what being Jewish truly meant. A simple family dinner some Friday nights every once in a while, or a yearly visit to the synagogue to watch how the rabbi attempted to play the shofar was just something routine. It felt almost forced, instead of something truly meaningful in my life.



My name is Raz. I am a Jewish 15-year-old living in Barcelona, with Israeli nationality. I have one twin brother named Ram and an older sister named Idan, who is 17 years young. My main hobbies are sports, more specifically football, music and video games. I grew up my whole life around pets, having 20+ throughout my whole life, but currently I only have one dog named Snoopy.

Both of my Israeli-born parents immigrated from their home country to Spain for a job opportunity, expecting to return to Israel in a few years. They loved their life in Barcelona, and after the birth of Idan, they decided to stay. In this transition, they seemingly left some of their Jewish culture there. I attended a Jewish school up until I was 6 years old, of which I have little to no memory. Afterwards, my parents enrolled me in an American school to make sure my first language was English, as they thought it would set me up well for the future.

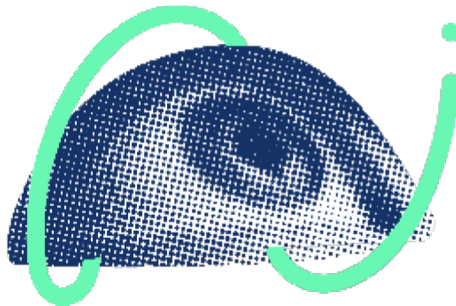
As it was an international school, I grew up around all types of people, from all types of backgrounds and all types of cultures. This taught me that everyone is different in their own unique way, but also it made me think it was normal to be different, and that I wasn't in any way more different than any other kid just because I was not the same as them; they had their traditions, and I had mine.



I grew up a Jew, yes, but had never really felt as though I was different to any other person, no matter religion, as my family did not truly practice the religion themselves. We were never kosher (in fact, I hadn't learned the full extent of kashrut up until a few years ago, I just thought it was not eating pork), we barely celebrated holidays and only at home, never truly doing the prayers to their full extent, and very rarely interacted with the local community.

As I grew older, I would only drift further and further away from my Judaism. It had never really felt like something big in my life, instead a part of me that I inherited at birth which changed the way I was, not physically, but spiritually, so as I grew larger that felt like that part was only getting smaller.

My favourite part of every year was travelling to Israel to visit relatives. For me, it felt like a completely different world. This was especially visible on my 13th birthday, also known as my bar mitzvah trip to Israel. I visited Jerusalem thoroughly, and completed many guides around the many "shuks" and typical tourist destinations. It was very impactful to me walking around the history of my culture, seeing how my people have evolved here for many years, walking down the same roads, visiting the same places. This trip helped me connect with my roots, but at the same time, I still had a lot more to learn about my heritage.



In the middle of 8th grade, I was transferred back to the Jewish school I grew up in, Colegio Hatikva. At first, I rejected this. I loved the relationships I built in the school, and I didn't want to leave. But after a few months of being in the school, interacting not only with the people, but also with the culture, my parents couldn't have made a better decision.

During my experience at this school, I have learned so much about my religion, my roots, my heritage. From the smallest things like reparting challah and singing a few songs in Hebrew, to doing full seders on Pesach. I started interacting the slightest bit more in my community, at times going to activities planned by synagogues or local Jewish teen groups. I learnt Judaism is not just a religion, it is a community, a group that will always have your back.

Now that I have been illuminated by the depth of this religion, if I am honest, it scares me. It is so complex to the point that completely comprehending it is impossible, but that is what makes it so fascinating. Even though it is scary, I couldn't be prouder to say I am Jewish.

