

Introduction: You're listening to *Opening the Tent: Stories of Jewish Belonging*, an original podcast produced by the NYU Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life. Our guest today is Eitan Dombey, a senior in Stern, studying finance and economics.

Eitan Dombey: All throughout my life, like from preschool to middle school through high school, like up until college, I was in Jewish preschools or Jewish day schools or Jewish Saturday events or like Maccabi and things like that. So basically, the entire world from my point of view was Jewish. So it wasn't anything special about me that I was Jewish. But then when I got to NYU, and like the outside world more broadly, I was more in touch with like, oh, like, I'm Jewish, and like, in some ways that makes me unique. And like, that's something that I can tap into when people are like, oh, like, what's your story? Like, where are you from? Like, I got to college and didn't really know, and then I was like, oh, actually being Jewish is like a major part of who I am. Essentially, the the community that I'm from is like the Latino Jewish community of Miami. And so in Latin America more broadly, like there's not a lot of, aside from like Argentina, there's not a lot of reform or conservatism. So it's pretty much all modern orthodoxy. I thought it was very interesting, when I got to NYU, the like prayer adjustments that like in the actual scripture, that there's like, things that are substituted in and I know that like a lot of the people where I'm from, like, wouldn't like that, but I liked it. Like anything that makes Judaism like more inclusive, for me is like, cool, like, people are gonna like that. So it's good.

I'm actually fully Ashkenazi. And a lot of the people from my community are Ashkenazi. And like, that's another thing that I experienced a lot growing up is like people being like, oh, like, you must be Sephardi because you're Latino. And it's like, very interesting to me, because Ashkenazi Jews, like in the 20th century, did a big move into Latin America, just before the Holocaust and obviously, during and after. So in terms of like entering a mainly Ashkenazi space I was, I'm game like, I'm, I'm there, I'm with it. Like, that's kind of where I feel most comfortable with. But obviously, like, it's always great to see like all the other kinds of practices and like, I love that I love seeing like, all of the different ways that people practice Judaism and how they're all kind of along the same lines, but everybody has their own take on it.

I've never felt not Jewish, like I've never felt outside of Judaism, even when I had my moment of like, agnostic, like realization, where I realized like, I don't really believe in like, the mysticism and the the more religious aspects of things. But I was still pretty clear even then, like, I was on the Wikipedia page for like Jewish atheists. And it's like a category in its own. So it's like, okay, I could do this, or I can do that, but I'm still Jewish. And the thing about the tent, it seems like the tent is very fractured right now. And like, it seems like there's a lot of tents. It's been hard for me these last couple of years, just seeing the broader US political polarization kind of weave its way

into the Jewish community, and all communities pretty broadly. But I feel like I'm in a position being from the community that I'm from, which is like very majority Republican these days and very conservative, so it's been difficult for me as like a very left leaning or liberal Jew, like, it's difficult for me to come back and have conversations with people who I really like love and admire, but at the same time, it's it's been like a space for tolerance with that kind of thing where you remember that, I guess we are in the same tent. And so like, we do have these shared values that like, despite these political kind of tendencies. I think there's multiple tents, and I feel like I'm in the camp, and I'm like roaming around the camp of the tents and like, trying to talk to everyone.

I think for me like the main, like thing from Judaism that I repeat over and over again is, remember that you were once the stranger. I don't know if that's exactly the right quote, but like essentially like don't forget when it was you who was suffering and don't forget when it was you who was not in the position that you are today so that value and like, you know broad more broadly, like tikkun olam like making the world better. For me social justice is like very, very entrenched in Judaism. And all of my conversations about Judaism and about the world like, are through the lens of improving the lives of others and improving like all of our collective lives together and that all comes from like my Jewish education, I think.

Outro: Thanks for listening. This episode was produced by the b|hive story collective at the NYU Bronfman Center. Subscribe on Spotify or Apple Podcasts for new episodes every Monday.