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 Nancy Pace. Nancy is a graduate student at NYU Silver and a Student Life Administrator at the Bronfman Center. She spoke with us about her early realization that there is more that binds us together than separates us.

Nancy: I think for me the first time I was cognizant of my Jewishness was probably, I want to say, in like second or third grade. My best friend since like the beginning of time was raised Christian and her dad was Lebanese so that contrast of that both kind of well, I'm not Middle Eastern, but the Jewish history is from the same area and telling her about Hebrew school and then hearing about CCD, and then I actually went to church with her a couple times and just sort of sharing how different everything is and also very similar like the songs and the 'let's all rise' and things like that. So, yeah, I think that was the first time I was kind of like 'oh religions are different and we do different things', but they're all kind of the same in a way. I think like a lot of people, in school, Jewish culture was only really recognized through Hanukkah, and just growing up thinking that was king of the biggest Jewish holiday, just because it was near Christmas, but it was acknowledged which was really nice, so I could feel like, I mean I grew up celebrating both, but so I could feel fully recognized in that way. We did Passover growing up and holidays like that but it sort of fizzled out as I got older and my brother and I were bar and bat mitzvahed and then we stopped going to temple. So, we also grew up celebrating easter as well, so not only the Christman/Hanukkah thing but the Easter/Passover thing and the only cousins I really had growing up close by were on my mom’s side who were raised Episcopalian, so we would do Christmas and easter with them. And, I remember wondering why they wouldn’t come to Hanukkah or why they wouldn’t come to Passover and my mom having to explain that we didn’t do things the way we did. But then especially as I got older feeling not Jewish enough because I was interfaith and trying really hard to connect more with being Jewish even though I was. We had never went to church as a family so I was definitely raised Jewish, but I didn't go to camp or anything like that so I always felt a little bit less Jewish than everyone else. It was always kind of a balancing act and kind of still is.
**interviewer:** Nancy reflected on the experiences that turned her off from Jewish community and how all of that has changed this past year.

**Nancy:** When I was bat mitzvahed, I am in hindsight so glad that I worked so hard at it and it was such a great thing in my life, and I loved that the party was about me, was all about me, but after that, I was like really fed up with Hebrew school because I didn’t connect with it religiously at all. So, in college, I tried reconnecting with my Jewishness by going on Birthright, but it was through the Hillel at my small school so it, there were deficits in those ways. So, after that, I was kind of like ‘I think that maybe this is the end of the road for my Jewishness’ because I had never felt connected in the way that I want to. And this year is like the most Jewish I’ve been since then, because I work here and my internship through school is a Jewish agency, so very much being thrown into the High Holidays in a way I haven't since I was a kid and just remembering all the things about being Jewish that I loved. And my grandma, my Jewish grandma passed in May so just thinking how happy she’d be that I’m sort of back in it, and calling my grandpa on Yom Kippur to wish him, well on Rosh Hashanah, to wish him a happy new year, but just, you know, talking to him about Jewish things that I haven’t done in probably ever with them, so being able to use that as a connection within my whole family. I mean the root of my thinking I wasn’t Jewish enough was because other people literally told me I wasn’t Jewish enough, but, again, the thing I love about the Bronfman Center is that literally everyone is welcome here and I’ve never been exposed, for example, learning about Jews of Color or queer Jews or any of the things that are so openly discussed here, that I so lacked growing up. And I really hope that we’re able to spread that, because I really hated thinking that I wasn’t Jewish enough, and I don’t think anyone should feel that way.

**closing:** Thanks for listening. This episode was produced by the **b|hive story collective** at the NYU Bronfman Center. Follow us on Spotify and Apple Podcasts for new episodes every Monday.