



Submission from: Amy L.

Beyond The World I Know

I live in a bubble.
Transparent enough to peer outside,
But too much so and it pops.
As I walk the hallways
Of the school I've always known-
Everyone celebrates the same holidays,
Everyone recites the same prayers.

It's warm and comfortable here.

But occasionally,
A cold wind wisps
And suddenly,
My bubble mists

Something shifts
Something frightening
And then I wonder

What it would be like-
Outside this circular rainbow dome
Where the sharp grass lies
And nothing blocks the wind
Where the children no longer play
Under the shadow of war

I miss my bubble-
My safety,
My home.
The only world I've ever known.

But then I realize
I'm not alone
Because even where the wind blows
The community around me
Continues to hold.

Growing up, I've lived what many would call, "the classic Jewish life". I have attended the same Jewish day school and grown up in the same close-knit Jewish community. For a long time, I did not pay much attention to the world around me. Until October 7th. That was the day my bubble popped. Suddenly, I noticed things I had not paid attention to before. I started to observe antisemitic incidents and controversial conversations. For the first time, I realized the dangers of being a Jew in the 21st century. But through that realization, I discovered that the Jewish community refuses to live under constant apprehension. The Jewish people live on unity and solidarity. Being there for each other when it matters most.

Through the weeks after October 7th, I witnessed the true definition of being Jewish. I remember attending a pro-Israel rally in Washington D.C. Seeing the seas of blue and white changed me. Listening to parents, hurting for their children in captivity. Hearing songs of yearning and heartbreak for those murdered. People handing out pins and necklaces. It was at that moment that I felt the support and hope of the community around me. Observing how Jews all around the world were able to come and rely on each other during one of the toughest times since the Holocaust altered my mindset. I became aware of the connection and responsibility it meant to be Jewish. To show up.

I wrote this poem to represent how I felt post-October 7th. The uncertainty in the world was strong but so was the community I was able to count on. Looking outside my "Jewish bubble" was something new and daunting, leaving me feeling alone to wrestle my fear and confusion. I was scared, but I also began to see the resilience of the Jewish people. To this day, I am able to appreciate the way my people can join and support each other through difficult times while continuing to cultivate hope and unity. That is what being Jewish means to me.