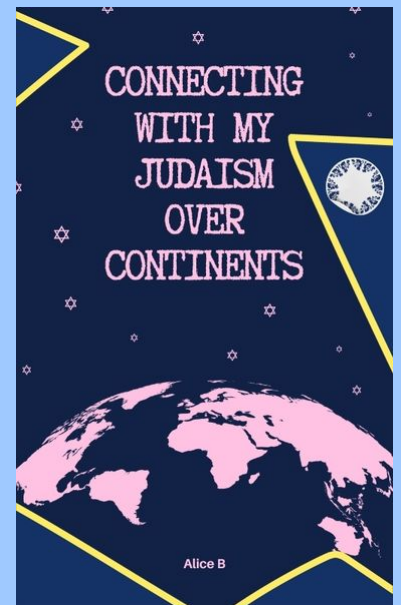




KALEIDOSCOPE

Connecting with my Judaism over continents



Name: **Alice B**

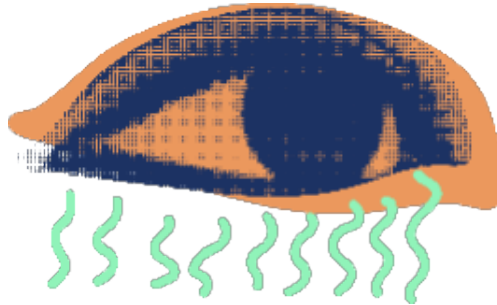
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As I grew older, I remember being surprised that a religious family would choose to live in a country like China, a place that seemed so unlike the environments I imagined for Jewish life. It was a stark contrast to the communities I had read about or envisioned, but it taught me an important lesson: Jewish life and community can thrive anywhere in the world.



Growing up as a young Jewish person has given me a unique perspective on community, tradition, and identity. My journey began in England, where I was born into a Jewish family deeply connected to our faith and cultural heritage. When I was five, my life took an unexpected turn as my family relocated to China due to my dad's work. He had been travelling there every month, but the demands of his job eventually required us to move as a family. This transition marked the beginning of a formative chapter in my life.



In China, we joined a synagogue with a vibrant and welcoming community. Attending Sunday school there became a cornerstone of my early Jewish education. The synagogue served as a cultural and religious anchor, connecting us to our traditions even in a place so far removed from the familiar Jewish hubs of England. As I grew older, I remember being surprised that a religious family, like the Rabbi and Rebetzen of our synagogue would choose to live in a country like China, a place that seemed so unlike the environments I imagined for Jewish life. It was a stark contrast to the communities I had read about or envisioned, but it taught me an important lesson: Jewish life and community can thrive anywhere in the world.

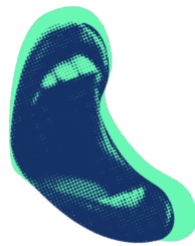
At the age of nine, my family returned to England, and I joined a Jewish primary school in Year 5. While I already knew many of the songs and prayers from my time in Sunday school, I was struck by the sense of connection and community that permeated Jewish life in my new school. For the first time, I truly understood the depth of the Jewish concept of community—wherever you go in the world, there is always a network of people ready to support and welcome you. This realisation left a lasting impression on me and solidified my pride in being part of the Jewish people.



When I was 14, I joined JLGB (Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade), a Jewish youth organisation that would become a cornerstone of my life. At the time, I was struggling to make friends at school and often felt out of place. JLGB provided a completely different experience. I found a group of supportive and like-minded friends, and I thrived in an environment where Jewish traditions were seamlessly integrated into fun and engaging activities. I especially enjoyed the Jewish aspects of the camps, which deepened my connection to my faith and heritage.

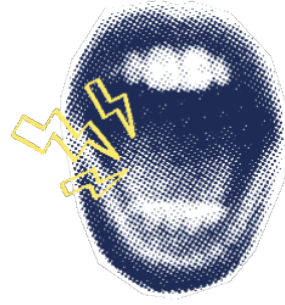
Later, when I went to university, I chose my course and city based on my personal interests rather than the presence of a Jewish community, as many of my friends did. This decision led to a period of disconnection from Jewish life in Sheffield. However, my ties to JLGB remained strong. I continued to volunteer at camps, and this became my primary way of staying connected to the Jewish community. In many ways, JLGB felt like the only Jewish community I needed, as it provided a sense of belonging and purpose that was unmatched.

During my time at university, I was offered the opportunity to do a year in industry, and I knew immediately that I wanted to give back to JLGB. I reached out to the organisation and asked if I could work with their communications and marketing team. To my delight, they agreed, and I was given the chance to learn everything from scratch. This role allowed me to combine my passion for JLGB with the practical skills I was gaining, and it marked the beginning of an incredibly rewarding chapter in my life.



While working at JLGB, I also volunteered at a local group in my area, helping to train young people to become leaders. It was incredibly fulfilling to see them grow in confidence and ability, and it reminded me of my own journey within the organisation. This past summer, I achieved something I never could have imagined—I ran the entire programming for a camp with 700 young participants. It was a daunting task, but also a profoundly rewarding one. Alongside this, I was promoted to communications and marketing manager, a role that allowed me to contribute even more to the organisation that had shaped so much of my life.

Today, all of my closest friends are people I met through JLGB. Together, we attend Aish events, which have helped me reconnect with my Judaism and meet new people. These experiences have reinforced my belief in the power of community and the importance of staying connected to one's roots.



Looking back, I feel incredibly fortunate to have had such diverse experiences growing up as a Jewish person. From my early years in China to my time in England and beyond, I have learnt that Jewish life is incredibly resilient and adaptable. No matter where you are in the world, there will always be a community ready to welcome you with open arms. For me, that sense of belonging has been a source of strength and inspiration, guiding me through every stage of my life.

