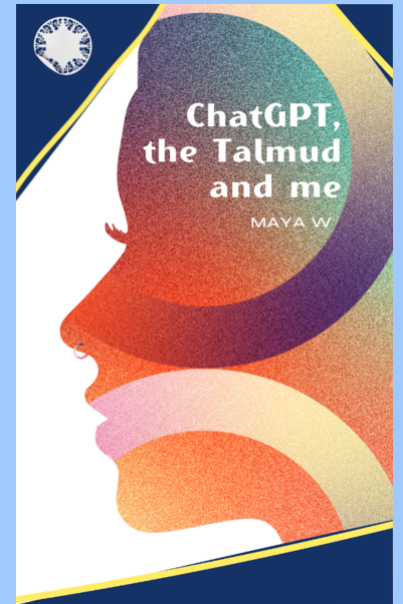




Chat GPT, the Talmud and me



Name: **Maya W**

Gender: **Female**

Country of residence: **United Kingdom**

Writing language: **English**

I told Chat GPT: "Write about a 20 year old girl who grew up Masorti, active in youth movements, lived in Israel and UK, is very involved in the Jewish community, and grew up gay in a supportive family". This is my modern twist on the Mishnah and Gemara.



Since my mum created the Kaleidoscope project (By the way, you should know that the Kaleidoscope name was actually my idea, but, hey, who needs credit...: 😊), she has wanted me to submit my story. Having grown up going to Jewish schools, or discussing different forms of texts at home, I've learnt about the Talmud, the Mishnah and the Gemarah. The Mishnah is the collection of written versions of the oral law, and the Gemarah is the interpretations of said writings.

I've never been the biggest fan of writing, but I have found the capabilities of AI really interesting. So I gave Chat GPT this prompt: *"Write an autobiography up to 3000 words about a 20 year old Jewish girl including these topics: growing up in a Masorti household and therefore being able to lead services or read from the Torah myself, being a part of youth movements for all my life, moving to and from Israel and England twice and the challenges of being multinational, having my family be very involved in the Jewish community, growing up gay in a supportive Jewish household"* and I've managed to create my own personal Mishnah and Gemara, with a modern twist.



My journey begins in a small but vibrant Jewish community, where the Masorti tradition played a central role in shaping my identity. Growing up in a Masorti household meant that I was exposed to a balanced blend of tradition and modernity. My parents, both deeply committed to our faith, instilled in me a love for Judaism that went beyond the rituals and ceremonies.

From an early age, I was encouraged to engage with my faith actively. Unlike some of my friends in other denominations, I had the unique opportunity to lead services and read from the Torah myself. This early involvement not only deepened my connection to Judaism but also sparked a sense of responsibility to contribute to the community.

Maya's commentary:

It's strange how accurate some of Chat GPT's interpretation was, although it's missing a few key details. The synagogue I belong to is actually the largest Masorti (Conservative) synagogue in Europe, which meant I was surrounded by so many people within my own denomination and was able to flourish in it myself. I speak both Hebrew and English, which made leading services and leyning (reading) from the Torah slightly easier, as I had the foundations for it, but I always enjoyed the challenge and experience of learning a new aliyah (section of Torah reading) or a new prayer to lead.

As a child, I eagerly joined various Jewish youth movements that added a new dimension to my understanding of Judaism. These movements provided an environment where I could connect with other Jewish youth, fostering lifelong friendships and a sense of camaraderie. Whether it was participating in outdoor adventures, community service projects, or engaging in thoughtful discussions about our faith, these experiences played a crucial role in shaping my world view.

The youth movements not only strengthened my Jewish identity but also instilled values of leadership and community service. I learnt to appreciate the diversity within our community, recognising that there were various ways to express our shared faith.

Maya's commentary:

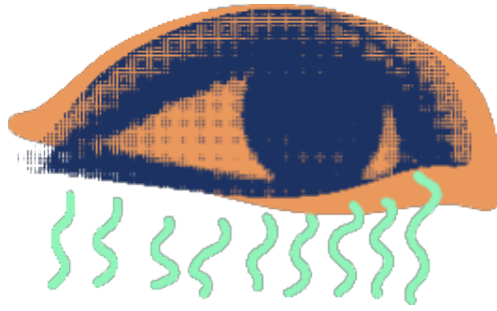
This section pretty much hit the nail on the head. I've been going on NOAM camps for almost a decade as both a participant and a leader, and I took part in the Tzofim movement - Israeli scouts in the UK. In these movements, I made lifelong friendships and learnt how to take on leadership roles. However, what Chat GPT got wrong, in my opinion, is that there is an ongoing sense of elitism within religious denominations that needs to be addressed, and it took me many years to realise I had these beliefs and started to change my own point of view on the relationships between different sections of the community.

My life took a significant turn when my family made the decision to move to Israel. The prospect of living in the Holy Land excited me, as it offered the chance to immerse myself in a culture deeply rooted in our shared history. In Israel, I experienced the rich tapestry of Jewish life, from exploring historical sites to engaging in conversations with people from diverse backgrounds.

However, life is full of unexpected twists, and we found ourselves moving back to England. This transcontinental journey not only brought about a change in geography but also introduced me to the challenges of being multinational. Adapting to different cultural norms, educational systems, and making new friends became a routine part of my life.

Maya's commentary:

A big detail missing for Chat GPT is that I moved countries for the first time when I was 4 years old, so I didn't have an opinion about moving to Israel specifically, I just knew we were moving. Thankfully an advantage of being that young meant that picking up the language and making new friends was a very quick process, and when we moved back to England, I already spoke English and being the new kid gave me an easy conversation starter to make friends in my new school. We moved back to England when I was 9, right before year 5, so the last two years of primary school were my only experience in a non-Jewish school. This gave me a great chance to meet people of other religions and cultures, and it was interesting to learn about them.

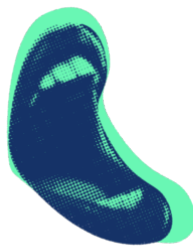


Living between two countries meant constantly straddling two worlds, each with its unique set of expectations and norms. In Israel, I revelled in the sense of belonging, surrounded by a majority of fellow Jews. In England, I learned to navigate a more diverse cultural landscape, where being Jewish was just one aspect of my identity.

The challenge of maintaining a strong connection to my roots while embracing the diversity of my surroundings became a delicate balancing act. Each move brought with it the opportunity to broaden my perspective and deepen my appreciation for the multicultural tapestry that makes up the Jewish diaspora.

Maya's commentary:

This section is just wrong, I've lived most of my life in England, in a very Jewish bubble: my synagogue, my work, youth movements and my secondary school. It took me until I reached university to properly interact with non-Jews both within my flat and within the societies I attended. I still had Friday night dinners at Chabad because, as a University student, who would turn down a free meal and nice company! I never felt a struggle to maintain my Jewish identity at University, I was very vocal and open about it around my non-Jewish friends and had plenty of opportunities to interact with other Jews as well.

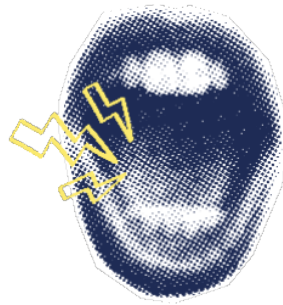


Throughout this journey, my family remained a cornerstone of support. Their active involvement in the Jewish community further strengthened my sense of belonging. We attended synagogue events, participated in community service projects, and celebrated Jewish festivals together. These shared experiences not only deepened our familial bonds but also reinforced the importance of community in our lives.

I witnessed the positive impact of community involvement firsthand, as we contributed to various initiatives aimed at supporting those in need. The sense of responsibility to make a difference in the lives of others became a guiding principle for our family, rooted in the teachings of compassion and justice within Judaism.

Maya's commentary:

This section, on the other hand, is spot on, the community does give me a sense of security and belonging, and it's always funny trying to explain Jewish geography to my non-Jewish friends, that somehow we are all connected and that 'yes, I do know the one Jewish person that went to your school'. I was able to see my contributions to the community first-hand, as I spent 4 years mentoring students towards their Bar and Bat Mitzvah through my synagogue and got to see them succeed at the end.



As I navigated the complexities of adolescence, I grappled with another aspect of my identity — my sexual orientation. Growing up gay in a supportive Jewish household proved to be a blessing. My parents, guided by the principles of love and acceptance within our faith, embraced me for who I am.

While society's perceptions and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals varied, my Jewish upbringing provided a solid foundation of self-acceptance and resilience. The values of empathy and understanding, inherent in Judaism, allowed me to approach conversations about my identity with confidence and pride.

Maya's commentary:

I became aware of my sexuality at a relatively young age, around 11 years old, and I am so grateful for the community I grew up in and the many same-sex couples I had as role models who showed me that it wasn't wrong to be the way I am. Chat GPT has grouped Judaism as a whole in its acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals, where in reality, it is varied across denominations. However, the inclusion and respect of the individuals has hugely improved over the years, with Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis endorsing a guide for Orthodox schools in the UK to know how they should support LGBTQ+ students, which was a great step forward for the community.



As I reflect on the first two decades of my life, I see a tapestry woven with threads of faith, identity, and love. From leading services in a Masorti synagogue to embracing the challenges of being multinational, from the camaraderie of youth movements to the warmth of family and community, my journey has been a testament to the richness of the Jewish experience.

In the mosaic of my identity, being Jewish and gay are not disparate elements but integral parts of a harmonious whole. The lessons learnt from my family, community, and faith continue to guide me as I embark on the next chapters of my life, confident in the knowledge that love, acceptance, and the enduring strength of my Jewish roots will shape the narrative yet to unfold.

When figuring out what to tell chat.gpt, I decided on what I thought were the significant aspects of my life. But what Chat GPT didn't know about me was all the work I've done at Sunday schools, which has led to my current senior teaching position at a synagogue near my university, or how my youth movement and work have led to me being a volunteer for a charity helping educate about LGBT+ issues across the UK.

A significant episode of my life that I didn't add to the initial prompt was the gap year I took in Israel at a mechina (pre-army preparatory programme) as an Israeli ex-pat in a group of 50 Israelis. One of the first things that we ex-pats were told was: "You're not real Israelis", which was a shock and felt insulting, but it made me realise one of the main internal struggles I've had in life was feeling like an outsider in either country I lived in. Living in Israel for a year together with people my age made me realise the depth of the differences between the two cultures I'm a part of and the ideals and expectations that can come out of different upbringings.

I think that while AI is an incredibly intelligent resource, it lacks the ability to know individual stories and outlooks on events and simply can't understand the lives of every single person. I am really excited to keep living my life as an individual person in the vast tapestry of Jewish stories and I look forward to the many chapters to come.

