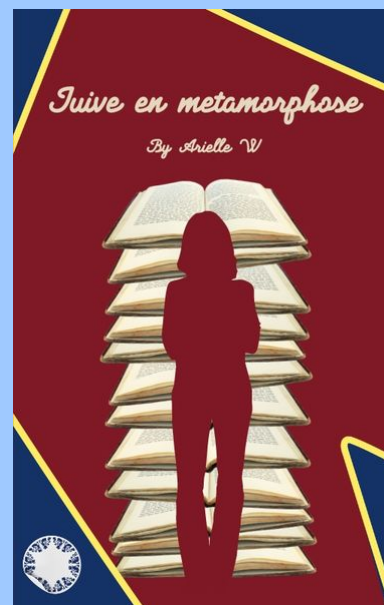




KALEIDOSCOPE

The Jewish woman I'm becoming



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I was born into a practising Jewish family, steeped in an Ashkenazi heritage marked by the Shoah. My parents, who became religious together when I was three and my older brother was preparing for his bar mitzvah, initiated our family into a slow and profound spiritual transformation. My eldest brother, Eytan, who was searching for meaning at the time, catalysed this return to religious practice despite my father's initial opposition. My brother's persistence paved the way for all of us to follow, the famous path that perhaps marked the beginning of an ongoing evolution in our faith.

I am the only sister to my three brothers: Eytan, who is now the father of two adorable boys, Aharon and Joseph. Elon, and Itsik, the youngest. We grew up following our parents on their spiritual journey, approaching each stage with patience and pragmatism. For example, at the beginning of their religious journey, they still used the car to go to synagogue but without listening to the radio, to turn the journey into a simple utility and not a pleasure.

The Jewish education I received was always marked by constant evolution, without pressure, but with a profound respect for individual choices. My parents enrolled us in a Jewish school from a very early age, where academic standards were combined with religious learning. At secondary school age, I joined the Ner Hatorah school, which offered a rigorous religious and secular education. Although I found immense satisfaction in the intense study of the Torah and the sacred texts, I soon came up against a closed, communitarian social environment which, I now realise, was in stark contrast to the open-mindedness I had experienced at home.

This dissonance fuelled my feminist awareness. I rebelled against the traditional roles assigned to women, and I wanted to refuse to be confined to domestic tasks or reduced to an invisible support for the Jewish home that I was being led to build. My aspiration was to be active, to participate fully and visibly in community and intellectual life.

Then came the double life: I smoked cigarettes after school, hiding for fear of being caught and judged. Yet in my heart I remained *froum* (religious). I kept the Shabbat and lived in a Jewish world, but I felt something missing. I wanted to discover another world, to meet people who were different from my usual environment. More than anything, I dreamed of finding people who shared my love of the Jewish religion and the study of Torah, while at the same time aspiring to reconcile this way of life with a modernity that was mindful of contemporary issues.



At the end of secondary school, while my friends were enrolling in religious seminaries, mainly in Israel, I decided to continue my studies. My passion for teaching led me to go to journalism school. I passed the entrance exam, but the questions and doubts of those around me were not long in coming: 'Will you be happy in this job? Won't it take precedence over your personal life? Isn't a career like this incompatible with the path of the Torah?' Despite the unknown, I was convinced that this choice, even if it wasn't the right one, would lead me to the path that suited me. So I followed my heart and set off.

The beginning was a shock. I discovered people who were very different from me, with different lifestyles. I was the little innocent girl leaving secondary school without knowing much about life. But I loved this discovery of diversity. Gradually, I began to work in the Jewish world as a journalist, making a name for myself little by little. I met some wonderful people who welcomed me warmly into this active world of French Judaism. I started with an internship at a Jewish radio station, which opened several doors for me later on. As I gained more experience, I realised that I wanted to work as a journalist on social networks, making information accessible to everyone through short, easy-to-understand formats.

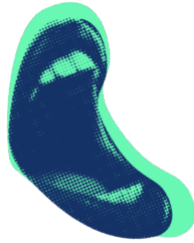
I also discovered a passion for preserving the heritage of the Jewish people through its history and the individuals who make it up. I began by hosting a column called 'Nashim', in which I drew up portraits of important female figures in Jewish history: the matriarchs, the heroines of the creation of the State of Israel, the prophetesses of the Torah, and those whose names are rarely mentioned.

One day I was asked to conduct my first radio interview with Myriam Ackermann Sommer, a French woman rabbi. The idea of a woman rabbi seemed incongruous to me, despite my willingness to be open-minded. How could a woman be a rabbi? I set out to understand her discourse and her 'Ayeka' community, a pioneer of modern orthodoxy in France, which seemed to match my expectations perfectly. I conducted the interview and found this woman to be brilliant, driven by a wonderful initiative. I was thirsty to find out more. But deep down, I also needed approval, without knowing exactly from whom or what. As I had always been taught, I felt the need to ask someone wiser for advice. By this stage, however, I almost didn't trust anyone.

A week later, I went to Israel to visit my elder brother. As chance would have it, a friend invited me to visit her at the seminary where she worked. The seminary's rabbi, whom I admired for his open-mindedness and wisdom, was very attentive to my request.

I'll always remember his answer when I asked him about it: he advised me to check that their religious practice was not just a protest movement, or a way of being contrary, but that it was really '*leshem shamaim*', literally 'for the name of God'. In other words, in a genuine spiritual process of rapprochement with the Divine. This answer both annoyed me and seemed relevant. Perhaps that's what I needed to hear at that precise moment.

Back in France, I signed up for the Kol-Elles study programme run by Myriam Ackermann and Tali Trèves Fitoussi. I was recruited as a scholarship holder. For three months, I studied intensively with other women like myself, looking for the keys to studying religious texts. I discovered a wonderful community of women, all different but united by their love of study and their desire to emancipate themselves from the dictates of traditional Jewish society. That's when the adventure really began.



At the beginning, I didn't feel worthy to study or to claim anything. Little by little, I discovered that I had the power to think for myself. I found in modern orthodoxy a world where people, despite their *frumkeit* (a way of life that respects traditional religious precepts), asked questions and were attentive to current issues. I met people who shared my passions, who loved to sing, laugh, ask questions, study and live their Judaism with *simha* (joy), without judgement or rigid constraints.

Today, I identify much more with Modern Orthodoxy, which fits in perfectly with my vision of Judaism. I practise a thoughtful form of religion, aligned with my values. Thanks to the help of community leaders, I have become more involved in this world. I joined the board of the Ayeka community and co-created with Rabbis Ackermann the first modern orthodox Talmud Torah (Sunday school) in France. I continue my 'Nashim' column on Radio J, featuring portraits of influential Jewish women. I've also become an active member and events manager at Kol-Elles.

I'm finishing my journalism studies this year with a final six-month stint at the Mémorial de la Shoah, where I worked as a journalist in the communications department, editing digital content to make it a medium for transmitting the history of the Shoah.



I'm also delighted to have been involved in the Kaleidoscope project from the very beginning, which is why I'm writing to you today. I often describe Kaleidoscope as primarily a project to document European Jewish life. But it is also, and above all, a way of contributing to the evolving story of Jewish life in Europe. I am lucky enough to coordinate the project in France, giving other young people the chance to take part in this wonderful mission.

Two months ago, I was honored to receive the Torat Chaïm prize, thanks to the recommendation of the Ackermann rabbis. This prize, awarded to young leaders in the Jewish community worldwide by the Uri L'tzedek community in the United States, gave me a real boost. It showed me that what I do on a daily basis is not ignored, and that it has a real impact on others. This recognition is a huge encouragement to me for the future!

Today, I see myself as someone who is passionate about passing on knowledge and innovation. I have many projects in mind and I love developing them. My career has been marked by an unceasing quest for meaning, a desire to reconcile tradition and modernity, and a deep commitment to preserving and passing on our rich Jewish heritage.