

What Jewish History Means to Me

By Sophia

I am Jewish. That's why I was educated here, literally in this building since preschool. I learned about all the holidays; Passover, Purim, Hannukkah. These were all parts of the history of the Jewish people. Yet, somehow I couldn't really connect with these holidays and the history behind them. This year, however, my learnings about many different issues and events, specifically relating to our current time, were much more intriguing. For starters, there's this year's main topic, which was the Holocaust. Through my learning at Talmud Torah, it inspired many more dinner time conversations where I learned a lot about my family's situation during the war. Apparently, pretty much of my grandfather's family died in the former Soviet Union during this time. I wouldn't have known that if it wasn't for my questions and all of the discussions and activities we did on the Holocaust.

Last summer at camp, we had three Israelis in our cabin. Maya, Tanya, and Ziv. Over my time at camp, I had built such a strong connection with them. I wondered what life was like for them in Israel. It was interesting to think of it from a historical point of view when we were talking about the establishment of Israel and what led to Israel being the country it is today. Over spring break, I traveled to Israel. I could see some of the connection I saw from my Talmud Torah learnings. It was interesting to see how all of my learning was very helpful in getting me acquainted with the home of the Jewish people.

One other topic we touched on this year was the LGBTQ+ community. In the past 6 months, one of my close friends from school came out, and I made friends with another member of the LGBTQ+ community. That one day that we spent learning about the LGBTQ+ community, I learned so much about how members of the community identified themselves and how they felt. Even some of the things learned through my Judaism have influenced other aspects of my life.

Talmud Torah was an experience for me not to just make friends, but also look back at the history of my ancestors and understand how it related to my life, along with looking at current issues with a Jewish point of view. Thank you.