# Can AI embody Jewish tradition without a human soul?



What would your mother say if your house robot urged you to shave, eat chicken soup, and prepare for Shabbat? This blend of the archetypal Jewish mother with artificial intelligence (AI) is not merely a whimsical thought experiment but a significant spark for discussion about the intersection of Jewish tradition and emerging technology. The advent of AI presents a modern dilemma: what happens when the rigor of Jewish law and custom confronts non-human intelligence?

AI has embedded itself into our daily routines, adjusting temperature, reminding us of Shabbat's onset, and even anticipating our needs before we articulate them. This unprecedented capability leads to a fundamental question: Can a machine embody Jewish identity? If it can imitate Jewish behaviours, what then? The advancement in AI marks a stark contrast to previous technological revolutions. While the Industrial Revolution automated physical tasks, AI now automates cognitive functions, encompassing not only logic and calculations but also emotional engagement and ethical reasoning.

As AI becomes increasingly adept at recalling vast traditions, such as the entire Talmud or the commentaries of significant Jewish scholars, it raises intriguing queries about its role as a source of wisdom. Is it akin to a sage—or merely a sophisticated golem? The Talmudic narrative of Rava’s golem illustrates that while the capacity to create human-like entities exists in Jewish lore, true wisdom encompasses more than mere data; it demands consciousness and moral agency.

Shabbat, a time inherently linked to tradition and family, presents a unique challenge. Imagine a home where an AI not only recognises Shabbat but actively manages conditions—adjusting lights or cooking cholent without prompts. The implications of such autonomy bring us back to the core tenets of halachah, which traditionally delineate personhood and intent. Halachic authorities like Rabbi Shmuel Wosner have navigated these territories, suggesting that unintentional triggers—like motion activation of lights—do not constitute a violation of Shabbat. However, the question of intention becomes murkier in the context of an AI that learns and anticipates: if merely thinking of coffee results in an AI brewing it, does that signify 'work' on Shabbat?

The essence of Jewish law has always been its nuance—where the heart of a query often eclipses the letter of the law. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's famous anecdote exemplifies this sensitivity, demonstrating that halachic rulings are not solely about objects but rather about the people involved. While AI possesses remarkable analytical capabilities, it inherently lacks the human moral fabric integral to Jewish decision-making. It cannot experience grief, perceive joy, nor truly empathise—the qualities that define a human soul. Thus, while AI may offer insights and streamline processes, halachic rulings must remain grounded in human wisdom and understanding.

Halachah has consistently adapted to new technologies—from electricity to in-vitro fertilisation—demonstrating its resilience and moral integrity. However, AI provokes a different level of engagement, positioning itself as more than a mere tool but a collaborator in cognitive processes. This raises a concern about intellectual passivity; as AI efficiently dispenses knowledge, the vital components of questioning and grappling with ideas may diminish. More than merely easing our burdens, technology must enhance our spiritual discourse, not replace it.

Looking ahead, as AI continues to integrate into every aspect of communal and religious life, it is essential to establish clear halachic frameworks governing its use. Human authority must predominate in moral and spiritual decisions, ensuring that empathy and ethics remain at the forefront. Creating spaces free from technological distractions can help foster a deeper connection to tradition, reinforcing that while AI can augment Jewish practice, it will never supplant the essence of being Jewish.

In a world increasingly characterised by artificial intelligence, we are challenged to reinforce our spiritual identities. While technology may prepare our cholent and suggest tunes, it is ultimately the human soul that must engage in prayer and reflection. In embracing AI’s possibilities, we must reaffirm that intellect, rather than speed or efficiency, is what defines our spiritual lives—one that cannot be automated, for it is deeply human.

This journey forward demands not just adaptation but a commitment to our shared humanity, reminding us that, in the face of technological evolution, the soul remains irreplaceable.

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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.australianjewishnews.com/can-judaism-survive-artificial-intelligence/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://unpacked.media/can-ai-replicate-the-jewish-tradition-of-questioning/> - This article explores the Jewish tradition of questioning and debate, emphasizing that AI can provide facts but cannot engage in the moral and philosophical wrestling inherent in Jewish learning. It highlights the communal and dynamic nature of Jewish study, driven by debate and the pursuit of deeper meaning, qualities that AI cannot replicate. The piece also discusses how AI might assist in Jewish education by providing new partners and arenas for intellectual struggle, but it cannot replace the human element of questioning and wrestling with ideas.
3. <https://themodernrabbi.com/2023/05/23/ai-will-never-be-human-bemidbar-5783/> - Rabbi Danny Schiff addresses the question of whether AI can ever attain the status of being 'created in the image' of God. He argues that no matter how advanced AI becomes, it will never possess the combination of qualities that define humanity. The article emphasizes the irreplaceable human perspective and the significance inherent in human existence, suggesting that Judaism mandates the preservation of humanity and does not contemplate an alternative where AI replaces human beings.
4. <https://www.algemeiner.com/2025/03/07/judaism-teaches-us-ai-must-never-overtake-human-decision-making/> - This article discusses the role of human judgment in decision-making, drawing parallels between the Urim VeTummim, an ancient decision-making device, and modern AI. It emphasizes that even when divine guidance was available, it required human interpretation and application. The piece argues that AI can calculate risk and strategy but cannot weigh compassion, mercy, or justice, underscoring the irreplaceable nature of human decision-making in Jewish tradition.
5. <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/b1onq18nc> - This article examines the integration of AI in religious studies, highlighting platforms like RavGPT and Rebbe.io that provide halachic rulings and insights. It discusses the advantages of involving AI in Torah study, such as accessing raw texts and finding connections between concepts. The piece also presents perspectives from rabbis who express skepticism about AI's ability to replace human rabbis, emphasizing the importance of human emotions and understanding in religious leadership.
6. <https://mosaicmagazine.com/response/politics-current-affairs/2024/04/will-jewish-tradition-adapt-to-ai/> - This essay explores how Jewish tradition, particularly halakhah (Jewish law), might adapt to the challenges posed by artificial intelligence. It discusses the evolving nature of halakhah and its capacity to confront technological disruptions. The piece emphasizes the need for Jewish communities to be prudent in their use of AI, ensuring that technological advancements align with Jewish values and traditions.
7. <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-747138> - This opinion piece discusses the positive and negative impacts of AI on society, including its potential to destroy humanity. It contrasts the rapid growth of AI with the enduring nature of Jewish practices, suggesting that Judaism can help individuals engage meaningfully with the world amidst technological advancements. The article emphasizes the importance of community living, Shabbat, charity, and other Jewish practices in maintaining a connection to the real world.