

Ascent wishes **LEO KRYSS** long life on the *yahrzeit* of his mother **DINA FRIMET** a"h
May her soul have an elevation above and be a faithful advocate for the whole family

The Magical and Anti-Magical Chanukah Lights

A.

A certain *Rosh Yeshiva* ('Head of the Academy') relates that in addition to his responsibilities with the students of his *yeshiva*, he was also involved in "*peiros ha'nosharim*" - "fallen fruit" - children that have fallen off the correct path, in order to return them to their true path of Torah study and *mitzvah* observance.

One particular boy had very much deteriorated. He even had attached himself to a sorcerer of sorts, whom he followed and was becoming more and more involved with. On one of the days of Chanukah, as the boy was on the phone with the sorcerer, he absently looked out his window and noticed Chanukah lights in one of the neighboring houses.

At that same moment the sorcerer suddenly interrupted himself and demanded, "Where are you standing now?" The boy replied that he had not moved; he is still standing in the same part of the same room where he was when he began the conversation. But the sorcerer said that this was not possible, since he felt that he was losing his connection with the boy.

He demanded that the boy tell him exactly what he was seeing at that moment. The boy innocently responded that he was looking out his window and seeing candles burning opposite him.

Immediately the sorcerer yelled at him and commanded him to look at something else, because the lights were causing the bond between them to break!

At that moment, the boy saw with his own eyes the greatness of the days of Chanukah, and realizing the negativity of what had happened to him, promptly broke the connection between him and the sorcerer. Thus he was saved from falling further away from his true being in the merit of seeing the holiness of the Chanukah lights!

[From the translation from *Be'er HaChaim* in an email of *Torah U'Tefilah* -- compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg, as included in *Shabbos Stories for the Parsha* (Vayigash 5775 - keren18@juno.com).]

B.

I (*Rabbi Yoseph Vigler*) was graciously invited by one of our outstanding Brooklyn councilmen to light the *menorah* at their event yesterday. At first I thought to decline the request because it was a hectic evening: We would be having a Chanukah party for our 300 "My Extended Family" kids from single-parent families, a late night *kumzits* (sit-together) with Yitzchok Fuchs at our "Mayan Yisroel Chasidic Center" in the Mill Basin section of Brooklyn, and also I had to drive to Monsey for a *simcha* (joyous celebration) in the middle of it all.

But when they explained that it would only be for 10-15 minutes, to light the *menorah* at 4:15 P.M and say a few words, I acquiesced. After all, how can you say no to an opportunity for "*pirsumei nisa*" (a publicizing of the holiday miracle) on Chanukah!

When I arrived there was a nice crowd, primarily of young local public school kids, but I could not detect anything close to a *minyan*, as required for major *pirsumei nisa* and to be allowed to recite a blessing on the lighting.

I approached a fellow who introduced himself as Chris. I asked if he was Jewish. He said no. I said, "O.K., great seeing you here".

Turns out he was the Parks Department's representative. I don't know why, but spontaneously I said, "You know, you look Jewish."

He said, "Yeah, I have some Jewish blood. My maternal grandmother was Jewish and converted out of the faith. I myself am Christian."

I jumped at the opportunity - I had uncovered a *Yid*! I told him he is a Jew just like I am and nobody can ever change that. I handed him our 'MitzvahShare' Chanukah *menorah* kit to light at home, which he agreed to do. He then put on the *yarmulka* I handed him onto his head and did the lighting (I did not have him say a blessing). The effort was worth it for this one Jew, who never knew he was fully Jewish!



I spoke to the crowd about how the goal of Chanukah is to defeat the darkness. When you light one candle it is no longer dark. And we specifically light the candles as it turns dark because that is when it matters most. Our task is to light up our inner souls and by extension illuminate the world. I was hoping Chris would get the message along with all the public school kids.

After our *menorah* lighting, the local priest got up to light the tree. I was in the back, ready to leave, when somehow a conversation began between me and a photographer of the event.

Guess what? This guy's mother's mother was also Jewish. So I gave him a *menorah* too, though I didn't have a chance to understand fully his situation when he said something about his grandmother having converted to Judaism.

I wondered if that was a *halachic* (according to Jewish Law) conversion. Nevertheless, I gave him a *menorah*, but I couldn't chat with him further because I the priest had already begun talking to me. He turned out to be a really nice man.

He told me how in his church they always lights a *menorah* on the altar every year on the Sunday of Chanukah with the requisite amount of candles for that day. He uses crystal that came from *Kristalnacht* and reminds the parishioners how never again should we allow the slaughter that took place in the holocaust. I thought that was beautiful.

He had not heard the conversation with Chris nor with the photographer. These were three separate conversations. Yet, he winds up telling me that he has Jewish blood -- his mother's mother was Jewish but she converted to Christianity

Nu, I welcomed a third Jew into the fold. I gave him a Chanukah *menorah* kit and asked him to light it at home. "Make your home a Jewish place," I told him. (I took some great photos, but I will not post them so as to protect their privacy.)

Sitting in the warm *kumzits* later that night for hours into the night, I couldn't help but remark to the group how fortunate we are to experience the warmth of Judaism while singing appropriate songs around the *menorah*. If G-d gave us the ability to be connected to His Torah and *Mitzvahs*, then we have a duty to light up the night.

Our sages urged us to light up the street until we reach the point that all the rebels – in our times, corresponding to those Jews who know nothing about their religion, mostly through no fault of their own -- reach a state of yearning for G-d. Every Jew has a *neshama* soul that thirsts for G-d no matter where circumstances have led them. It is our job to light up our own lives and to illuminate the souls of all out there.

Truth is, I don't know the end of the story yet. G-d willing, each of them will be coming for a Shabbos meal at our home sometime soon!

[From an emailing of *Rabbi Yoseph Vigler*, as included in ***Shabbos Stories for the Parsha*** (Vayigash 5775 -- keren18@juno.com).]

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*Additional source note:*

Both stories were edited/adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles.