

Good Shabbos Everyone and Happy Chanukah Everyone. Chanukah, which starts on Sunday night, celebrates the victory of Orthodox Judaism over Greek culture, over 2000 years ago. The Greeks sought to obliterate Judaism by banning its practice and by introducing foreign philosophies and ideas into the Jewish nation.

It is therefore ironic that Chanukah is the most widely celebrated Jewish holiday, especially by those most assimilated Jews. The Holy commentator the Ma'or Eynayim explain this apparent contraction. The Sages tell us that the Shechinah - Hashem's holy presence, does not dwell within 10 handbreadths of the ground. Yet, ideally, the Chanukah menorah should be lit and placed within 10 handbreadths of the ground. Also, the wicks and oils which are generally disqualified for use with Shabbos lights, are permitted for use with Chanukah lights. We see from here that Chanukah has a special power which no other mitzvah has. The following inspiring true story illustrates the power of the mitzvah of Chanukah.

Young U.S. Army Private Winneger was with the American Army as it marched through Europe at the end of World War II. His unit was assigned to a European village with the orders to secure the town, search for any hiding Nazis and to help the villagers in any way they could.

Private Winneger was on patrol one night when he saw a figure running through a field just outside the village. He shouted: "Halt or I will shoot. The figure ducked behind a tree. Winneger waited and eventually the person came out. Figuring that Winneger was no longer nearby, the mysterious person went to a spot near a large tree and started to dig.

Winneger waited to make his move until the figure had finished digging and began to walk again. Then the American soldier stepped out and again shouted:

"Halt or I will shoot!" The figure ran. Winneger decided not to shoot, but instead he tried to catch the running person. He shortly caught up with the figure and tackled it to the ground.

To his surprise he found he had captured a young boy. A fancy menorah had fallen from the hands of the boy as the result of the scuffle. Winneger picked up the menorah. The boy tried to grab it back shouting in a foreign tongue, "Give it to me. It is mine!" Winneger assured the boy that he was among friends and he returned the menorah to the boy. To try to calm the boy, the soldier told the boy that he himself was Jewish.

The boy who had just survived several years of the Holocaust and had been in a concentration camp was mistrustful of all men in uniforms. He had been forced to watch the death of his father. He had no idea of what had become of his mother. In the weeks that followed, Winneger took under his wing the young boy Dovid.

Winneger felt bad for the boy who had seen his world destroyed. He offered Dovid the opportunity to come back to New York with him. Dovid accepted and Winneger went through all the necessary paperwork to officially adopt Dovid.

Winneger was active in the New York Jewish community. Some time after being in America, an acquaintance of Winneger, who was a curator of a Jewish museum in Manhattan, saw the menorah. The man from the museum told Dovid that the menorah was a very valuable historic European menorah and should be shared with the entire Jewish Community. He offered Dovid several thousand dollars for the menorah. But Dovid refused the generous offer which was a fortune in those days, saying that the menorah had been in his family for over 200 years and that no amount of money could ever make him sell it.

When Chanukah came, Dovid and his adoptive father Winneger lit the menorah in the window of their home in New York City. Dovid went upstairs to his room to study and Winneger stayed downstairs in the room with the menorah.

There was a knock on the door and Winneger went to answer. He found a woman with a strong European accent who said that she was walking down the street when she saw the menorah in the window. She said that she had once had a menorah just like it in her family and had never seen any other like it. Could she come in and take a closer look?

Winneger invited her in and said that the menorah belonged to his son who could perhaps tell her more about it. Winneger went upstairs and called Dovid down to talk to the woman. And that is how young Dovid was reunited with his mother! The mother saw the flame of mitzvahs burning in the window of the house. That light turned out to be her long lost son.

The Kedushas Levi teaches us that the more we put our hearts into lighting the Chanukah lights, the more we will feel the tremendous power of the special days of this most holy festival. **Good Shabbos Everyone and Happy Chanukah Everyone.**