

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER ON SIMCHAT TORAH WITH A YOUNG MAN FROM LATVIA

It was *Simchat Torah* day and I was walking up Wellington Road, when I stopped a passer-by and asked him for the time. A run-of-the-mill occurrence.

After responding to my question, he turned to me with one of his own. "You look like a Rabbi, do you mind if I ask you something?"

He started to relate his background, "I was raised in the Former Soviet Union as a Catholic, however I have some Jewish blood."

Now I was really paying attention.

"My mother was Catholic and her mother was too. But my great grandmother, she was Jewish." Definitely not a run-of-the-mill occurrence, I thought, today is Simchat Torah and here I meet a Jew seemingly by chance. I decided to engage with him. "Well, you know, that from a Jewish perspective, you are a Jew like any other!"

After asking where he was headed, he told me that he was on the way to London Business School for an application seminar and internship interviews. I asked him what sort of job he was looking for, to which he replied that he was interested in investment banking. To the question of the type of bank he was seeking, he said, "A large one, ideally Goldman Sachs."

"We know some senior people in Goldman Sachs and I would be glad to help you get the necessary interviews." I continued, "but today is Simchat Torah, one of the most special days in the Jewish calendar, as a newly-discovered Jew, it would be a great opportunity to come to the synagogue and have a lechaim."

We walked together to St. John's Wood Synagogue where we shared a few lechaims. He told me what he knew about the Jewish side of his family. I, in turn, invited him to the Friday night dinner taking place at the Centre for Jewish Life this Friday night for international students. Before he left, he thanked me, saying, "Thank G-d that you asked me for the time!"

*Warm regards,
Yosef Vogel*