



KALEIDOSCOPE

Finally Mine: Turning My Light On



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During a trip to Boston, I completed an Affirmation Immersion, received my Jewish name, Liora, and stepped into a moment of deep personal clarity. After a lifetime of being questioned and rejected as a patrilineal Jew, I didn't become "someone else" — I finally became fully myself. This journey was about claiming belonging without fear and turning my own light on.

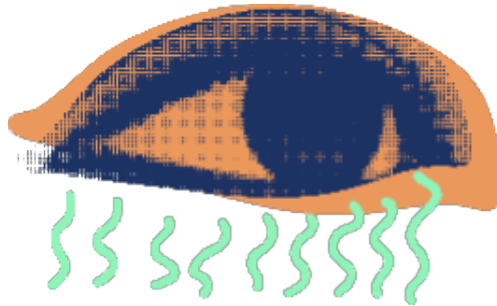


I want to share some big news with you. One of the most important things in my life happened during my trip to Boston.

I got my Jewish name — Liora.

I did an Affirmation Immersion at a beautiful place called Mayyim Hayyim.

I met three rabbis. We talked. They gave me a blessing, and I went to the mikvah.



When I came back, I told one of my colleagues my big news, and she said:

“Wow, you’re finally ours, completely!”

I know she was sincerely happy for me. But those words hurt me a little, because I was yours — 100% — from the very, very beginning. Always.

And that is true.

After the immersion, I didn’t become “yours.” I finally became mine.

I have identified as Jewish since I was born. I always introduced myself as a Jew wherever I went (which was absolutely terrifying for my dad, who grew up in the Soviet Union and experienced antisemitism firsthand).

I remember how my non-Jewish grandma took me to the local Jewish community for Hanukkah, where I got a toy pony. She always gave me matzah on Pesach. My non-Jewish grandma preserved those tiny pieces of tradition for me, because my grandfather couldn’t. He passed away when I was five.

When we moved to Odessa, my parents wanted to send me to a Jewish school — but they didn’t accept me. Patrilineal Jew.

I wasn’t legitimate for any Jewish programs.

I didn’t really have Jewish life until my student years.



Then I saw a Hillel Odessa advertisement — they were promoting a board game night. I wanted to go. But when I started filling out the form, I stopped at the question about Jewish roots. I thought I would be rejected once again.

So I didn't go.

A few months later, I saw a Taglit ad. A free 10-day trip to Israel.

I decided to try again, because I had nothing to lose — and the thing I love most in life is exploring the world.

And this time, surprisingly, I was legitimate. They accepted me.

That was the moment my Jewish journey truly began.



When I arrived in Germany, I wanted to do Jewish emigration. According to the law, I was eligible. But I received a non-official rejection.

Because of my roots — third generation, patrilineal — “it won't work.”

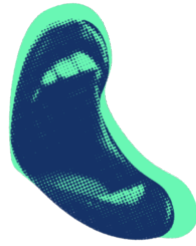
They didn't want people like me here.

I was broken. At that point, I had been extremely active in the Jewish community for more than four years, and I had done more for the Jewish community than 90% of the halachic Jews around me.

And still — rejected once again.

I felt like I didn't belong. Again.

This feeling — that I'm not 100% legitimate — haunted me my whole life. I spoke quietly. I was afraid to talk to politicians or other important people, because I was scared to hear that I wasn't Jewish enough to speak about these things.



When my CEO (and one of my biggest leadership inspirations and role models) Rebecca Blady told me there was an option to do an Affirmation Immersion in Boston, I couldn't believe it.

All I knew about the giur process was that it's complicated, challenging, exhausting — and I never heard anything positive about it. I was afraid to take this path in Germany, because I was afraid of being rejected one more time.

So I decided to take this chance in Boston — even though the fear of rejection was still there.

I felt guilty that I wouldn't go through the same exhausting process my friends did. I felt like I would be judged. I felt like maybe it still wouldn't be enough.

And then the LEGO workshop at the Visionssummit 2025 happened.

We explored Parashat Vayishlach, where Jacob becomes Israel after wrestling with an angel through the night.

I had a call with Rabbi Jeremy while preparing the workshop. We were running this workshop together. He explained the story to me.

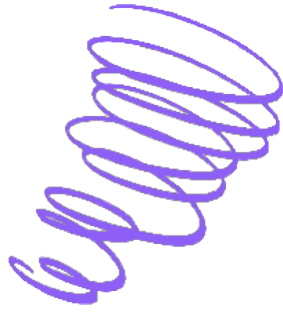
I didn't get it.

I read the text more than ten times, in different languages.

I still didn't get it.

I came to that workshop in a very hard emotional place. But I had to run it. Show must go on, you know :)

After Jeremy's explanation once again, and after the questions from the audience, I started to understand.



And then one of the participants asked a question (the tone of voice sounded a little bit annoyed and judgmental, at least to me):

“Why does Jacob get everything after just one night? It doesn’t sound fair.”

And for the first time in my life, I didn’t stay silent.

I said

“Everyone deserves a chance for transformation. A chance to become better. And you don’t know how long that night of wrestling really was.”

And at that moment, I stopped feeling guilty.

Maybe I didn’t go through the exhausting conversion process in Germany. (Good PR btw, congregations in Germany)

But I wrestled enough.

All my life.

For the right to call myself Jewish — without fear of not being enough, of being rejected, or of feeling guilty.

I faced far more than three rejections on my Jewish journey. But I didn’t give up. Surprisingly.

And I think it’s a miracle that I had such a strong Jewish identity since childhood, despite everything and everyone.



After my immersion, I realized that all this time there was someone else on “Team Lina” — someone who guided me, challenged me, and probably has some very interesting plans for me.

I finally felt that G-d is part of “Team Lina.”

And in that moment, my fear disappeared. I felt how strong I really am.

I felt that I am enough — right now, exactly as I am.

I turned my light on.

On my way back, I understood that I really, really wanted to light my own hanukkiah. I wanted a special one.

I started searching and discovered the Liora Project — and I knew it was a sign.

They didn’t have a hanukkiah on their website, so I messaged them on Instagram. They replied that they had one special piece — and its name was Elicia. I think she was waiting for me.

And a quiet miracle happened when I came to pick her up. I asked if, by any chance, they had Hanukkah candles, because I didn’t have any at home — I had just come back from the USA.

And there was one set of Hanukkah candles left. I think someone really wanted to see the light from my window that night.

That evening, I lit it.