

א ביסל תורה!

December 19, 2025

THE PARSHA NEWSLETTER
OF MAIMONIDES SCHOOL

כ"ט בכסלו תשפ"ז · מקץ/חנוכה

Why Did יוסף Hide His Identity?

By Noah Levy '29

This week's פרשה מקץ, פרשה מז, is a very interesting filled with a lot of dramatic scenes. One confusing aspect of the פרשה is the process יוסף uses to reveal himself to his brothers. Why did יוסף hide his identity and make the brothers bring בניין to him, and eventually frame בניין for stealing his golden cup instead of just revealing himself?

רב חנן, in his book *מעט מן האור*, teaches us that יוסף hid his identity from his brothers because he was concerned that the truth of him being alive would break the family apart. He was worried that if he told his brothers who he was, then יעקב would find out he was not dead and that his brothers had sold him into slavery. יוסף was scared that his father, who was also the son of יוסף's mother, רחל, would become furious with his brothers and kick them out of the family.

Another explanation is that it is also likely that יוסף was still angry with his brothers for selling him. יוסף seems to have a mixture of emotions: "וירא יוסף ויברם ויתנבר אליהם וידבר אפם קשות ויאמר אלהם אתחזיו ויברם ויתנבר אליהם וידבר אפם קשות ויאמר אלהם מאן באתם ויאמרו מארץ פנעם לשבר-אכל" "When saw his brothers, he recognized them; but he acted like a stranger toward them and spoke harshly to them. He asked them, 'Where do you come from?' And they said, 'From the land of Canaan, to procure food'" (בראשית, כב:ז).

At first, יוסף feels angry at his brothers for selling him, speaking harshly towards them and interrogating them. He had the self awareness to realize that he was not ready to forgive his brothers. יוסף wanted and needed to be there to help everyone forgive one another, including his father, and that is why he had to use the long dragged out process of revealing his identity to his brothers.

A third explanation of why יוסף did not immediately reveal his identity to his brothers is that he was testing them. The *אור החיים* writes that hid his identity from his brothers because he wanted to see if they had learned their lesson and done תשובה for selling him years earlier. יוסף wanted to test his brothers and see if they would protect, who was also the son of his mother, רחל. If they could demonstrate compassion and protect then, then would be able to see that they have repented and he could properly forgive them and reunite with his family.

This story of יוסף and his brothers serve as a model of creating opportunities for repentance and forgiveness. יוסף's challenge was to determine how to reunite his family back together. He had to create a situation that would bond the brothers both physically and spiritually. Through this elaborate scheme, יוסף gives his brothers the opportunity to prove to themselves that they have done תשובה with understanding and compassion.

This month's issue is not sponsored! If you would like to sponsor a future month of A Bisl Torah please visit our website

To read past issues or
sponsor future visit
ABISLTORAH.ORG

חנוכה and יוסף: Hashem is With Us

By Amiel Jotkowitz '28

In this week's פרשנה, we learn about יוסף. יוסף is still young when his life suddenly falls apart. His brothers are jealous of him and end up selling him as a slave. יוסף is taken far away from his father and his home and brought down to מצרים. At that point, everything in his life seems dark. He's alone, he has no control, and nothing seems fair. What is special about יוסף is that even in his situation, he doesn't give up on his Judaism. The תורה says: "וַיֹּהֶי הַתּוֹרָה" (בראשית לטב) "אֶת-יַעֲקֹב" "and Hashem was with יוסף" the whole time. יוסף kept trying to do the right thing, even when no one was watching and even when it was hard. Because of that, Hashem helped him succeed.

This connects well to חנוכה. חנוכה was also a dark time for the Jewish people. The Greeks tried to stop Jews from keeping the תורה and מצוות. The ביה המקדש was defiled, and it looked like Judaism might not survive. But the Jews did not give up. They stayed strong in what they believed.

כ"ג There is a famous פסוק that explains this idea: “**מִצּוֹה וְתֹרֶה אָורֶת**” “because a candle is like a candle, and **תֹרֶה וְכָלָה** is light” (משלי י:בג). Even one candle can light up a dark room. That is why on חנוכה we add another candle every night - to show that light grows, even when things start off small.

Another important idea of חנוכה is that the Jews did not win because they were strong. They won because Hashem was with them. The נביא says: **לא בחריל ולא בניה** “בבבון כי אם ברוחך אמר ה” “not with soldiers and not with

strength rather with my spirit, says G-d" (בריה דג). This means that success does not come from power or numbers, but from Hashem. That is true for the Maccabees, and it is also true for יוסף. He did not become successful because he was powerful - he became successful because he stayed loyal to Hashem.

We see this again in the miracle of the oil by the חנוכה story. There was only enough oil for one day, but it lasted eight days. It shows us that even something small can turn into something big when Hashem is involved.

¶יְהוָה's life worked the same way. Things start off really bad, but because he keeps his faith, his whole story changes. He goes from being a slave to being one of the most important people in Egypt.

The lesson for us is clear. We all have times when things are hard - school, friends, family, or just feeling stressed. **חנוכה** and **פרשת מקץ** remind us that even when life feels dark, Hashem is still there. Lighting the **חנוכה** candles is not just about remembering a miracle from the past. It is a reminder that we can always bring more light into our own lives by doing the right thing, even when it's hard. One should be like **חסיד**, like the Maccabees. One should not give up, rather keep one's faith, and remember that even a little bit of light can make a big difference.



Receive A BISL TORAH
on WhatsApp

A BISL TORAH

is published weekly
at Maimonides School,
Brookline, Massachusetts

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Eitan Orkaby '27
Theo Fraenkel '28

EDITORS

Anna Szalat '28
Noah Levy '29
Joshua Jaffe '29

FACULTY ADVISOR

Rabbi Yaakov Jaffe

FOUNDERS

Binyamin Orkaby '24
Ephraim Fischer '24