



## Hashem is With Us and חנוכה: יוסף

By Amiel Jotkowitz '28

In this week's פרשה מקץ, פרשת חנוכה, 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: "וַיְהִי ה' אִתּוֹ" (בראשית לט:ב) "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 בית 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.

There is a famous פסוק that explains this idea: "כִּי נֵר" "because a מצוה is like a candle, and תורה is light" (משלי ו:כג). 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: "לֹא בְחַיִל וְלֹא" "not with soldiers and not with

strength rather with my spirit, says G-d" (זכריה ד:ו). 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.

יוסף'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. פרשת חנוכה and חנוכה 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 יוסף, 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.



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