

Forge On!

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Reb Noson explains that Chanukah is a time when the spiritually ill – really, all of us – have a chance to recover. When the king hears that his trusted servant is sick, he goes to visit his faithful aide. Seeing the monarch at his bedside, the sick man wants desperately to get up to serve his king, yet the king demurs. “I came here only to encourage you. I don’t want you to get up. Just enjoy my attention and make sure to rest so you can recover.”

Similarly, the menorah shines God’s light into our homes during the depths of winter and our spiritual slumber, helping us gather the strength we need to emerge from our challenges.

The Maccabees faced impossible odds when fighting the Assyrian Greeks. We, too, sometimes feel overwhelmed. Like those ancient heroes, we need a lot of encouragement to remember

that God can help us prevail against any odds.

Breslover Chassidim would recount the powerful parable of the Baal Shem Tov, as Rebbe Nachman told it:

Once there was a king who wished to see how determined his subjects were. He placed a great treasure in a particular place and, using the power of illusion, enclosed it within many walls.

When people attempted to reach the treasure, they encountered what appeared to be solid walls. They understood how difficult it would be to penetrate such formidable barriers and some gave up. Others managed to surmount one wall, only to encounter another obstacle right behind it. They, too, didn't get very far before giving up. But when the king's son attempted to reach the treasure, he encouraged himself, "I know that all of these obstacles are merely optical illusions. In truth, there are no walls at all!"

The prince forged ahead with confidence until he reached the treasure.

Rebbe Nachman added an important explanation: "A discerning person understands from this that all obstacles and enticements that diminish one's vital connection to God have no genuine reality. This connection to God is the treasure we can all reach. If we truly know that all barriers to this goal are insubstantial, we can easily overcome them.

"The barrier may be the lack of money or other some other material obstacle. It may be other people trying to influence us to leave the path of truth. All one requires to surmount these difficulties is a strong heart. This is true even in physical warfare. One who strides into battle with confidence is usually victorious. Enthusiasm and boldness enable one to prevail against any obstacle!"

Based on Likutey Moharan II,