

YOUR FAITH IS AT NIGHT

written by Chaim Kramer
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Night is chaos, confusion. Yet, as King David tells us, “Your faith is at night” (Psalms 92:3), for Night and Darkness are also a concept of faith. How so? As opposed to understanding and knowledge which, as mentioned earlier, Rebbe Nachman connects to Day, faith only applies when there is no Light of understanding and knowledge (cf. Likutey Moharan I, 1; *ibid.* 62). Therefore, just as Night affords us no Light with which to see, so too, faith is what one must have when coming up against the unknown. Who has seen God? Who can understand Him or His ways? Yet, Night is always followed by Day, Darkness is always followed by Light and understanding. Through faith, one can come to understand. And the more one believes in God, the more one comes to an understanding of Him, to see that He exists everywhere, and that we can find Him.

We have good moments in life as well as difficult ones. Sometimes Light fills our Nights, other times Darkness fills our Days. It is up to us to make use of what we have. We can feel overwhelmed by our Dark moments and let ourselves despair over our confusions, or, we can take the Darkness, the Night, the confusion, and turn to God, saying: "I am beset with troubles, with problems and doubts. Help me turn to You. Help me have faith in You. Help me strengthen myself in Your goodness and kindness. Even though at this moment I feel distraught, I shall, nevertheless, strengthen my faith in You. Rebbe Nachman taught us: 'Never give up! Never despair!' Therefore, please, help me to renew my faith in You."

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One of Rebbe Nachman's most famous stories, The Lost Princess, illustrates this idea most graphically:

There was once a king who had six sons and a daughter. The daughter was very precious to him and he loved her very much. He spent a lot of time with her. Once, when they were alone, he became angry at her. He inadvertently said, "May the Evil One take you away!" At night she went to her room. In the morning, no one knew where she was. Her father was very distraught. The viceroy, seeing the king's despair, offered to look for her.

The viceroy searched and searched for the princess for a very long time. He searched through deserts, fields and forests

until, finally, he found her.... She was in a beautiful castle off on a side path, somewhere. "How did you get here?" he asked her. "My father said that the Evil One should take me. This is the place of evil." "How can I get you out of here?" the viceroy asked. She said, "You must choose a place and remain there for an entire year. All that time you must long and desire to get me out. On the last day you must fast and go without sleep for the twenty-four hour period."

The viceroy did as he was told. On the last day of the year, he fasted and did not sleep. Then he got up to go to the castle. On the way, he saw a tree with very beautiful apples. It was very desirable. He ate an apple and immediately fell asleep. He slept for a very long time, for many, many years. When he awoke he asked, "Where in the world am I?"

The viceroy returned to the princess and asked if he could have another chance. She was very upset and lamented, "You have been searching for such a long time. And then, because of one day, you lost everything. But it is too difficult not to eat. Therefore, find a place for another year and long to take me out from here. On the last day you are permitted to eat, but not to sleep. Do not drink any wine on that day, so that you will not fall asleep. The main thing is to avoid sleep."

The viceroy again went and did as he was told. On the last day of the year, he arose to go to the castle. On the way he saw a spring. It was red in color and smelled like wine. "It is a spring and should contain water," he reasoned, "but it has a red color and smells like wine." He took a taste of the spring and immediately fell asleep. He slept for a very long time,

for many, many years. He remained asleep for seventy years. When he awoke, he asked, "Where in the world am I?" And once again he began to search for the princess who, in the meantime, had left him a note that she could no longer be found in the same castle. He was to look for a golden mountain and a pearl castle....

He again searched for her for many, many years. Eventually he came across a giant who tried to discourage him, telling him that no such place exists.... The viceroy wept. He was certain that somewhere there had to be a golden mountain and a pearl castle. The giant, who was the ruler of all the animals in the world, summoned the animals and asked them if they knew of such a place. They all said no. The giant told him, "See! I told you it does not exist!" and again tried to discourage him. But the viceroy insisted, so the giant then sent him to his brother who was in charge of all the birds. "Perhaps they, who fly high in the sky, know of this golden mountain and pearl castle.

The viceroy traveled again for many, many years. He finally encountered the giant's brother and requested his help. This giant also tried to discourage him, saying, "Such a place does not exist." The viceroy wept bitterly and pleaded, "But it does exist! The giant then summoned all the birds and asked if any of them had ever seen a golden mountain and pearl castle. They all replied that they knew of no such place. "Don't you see that there certainly is no place with a golden mountain and a pearl castle?" asked the giant. But the viceroy would still not give in. "But it certainly does exist! Somewhere in the world." The giant said to him, "Further on in the desert you will find my brother who is in charge of all the winds.

They cover the entire world. Go to him and tell him that I sent you. Maybe the winds know of this mountain and castle."

The viceroy again traveled for many, many years. He met the third brother and again requested help. This giant also tried to discourage him, saying, "It certainly does not exist." The viceroy pressed his case, weeping and pleading, "But it does exist!" The giant then summoned the winds and asked if they knew anything about the golden mountain and pearl castle. They all said that they did not. The giant said, "Don't you see that it certainly does not exist? People have told you foolish tales!" The viceroy wept very bitterly, "But I know for certain that it does exist!"

Just then, another wind came and the giant asked angrily, "Why didn't you come together with the other winds when I summoned them?" The wind replied, "I was detained because I had to carry a princess to a golden mountain and pearl castle." The viceroy was overjoyed.

The giant then commanded the wind to carry the viceroy to the golden mountain and gave him other assistance to help him in his quest. In the end, the viceroy redeemed the princess (Rebbe Nachman's Stories #1).

The king in this story is God. The princess in whom He delights is prayer, mitzvot and devotion. The viceroy, who tried very hard to find the King's beloved daughter, is each and every one of us. Like us, the viceroy was always being sidetracked by confusion, distractions and opposition. Some of his obstacles were self-induced, others weren't. He

experienced countless lifetimes of Nights, enough to discourage him many times over. Yet he persisted, he kept searching and searching, so that he not only extricated himself from his difficulties, but also redeemed the princess in the end.

Why was the viceroy successful? He succeeded because he would not relinquish his faith. He remained firm in his belief that he could find the princess – that Day does follow Night. Rather than discouraging him, his faith enabled him to use the Darkness and Night, the uncertainty and confusion, to increase his desire and determination. Even when it seemed that all was lost, that he had tried the last possible resort and was told outright that no golden mountain and pearl castle – no World to Come, no Day, no resolution of life's problems, no goal worth working for -existed, he knew, he just knew, that such a place did exist. But how? He had no knowledge of it. Neither, for that matter, did anyone else. And yet, he still knew. He knew because he had faith. His faith was so strong, it gave him the wisdom and understanding – the Light – to realize the truth. If the princess said that a golden mountain and a pearl castle do exist, then, despite all obstacles and in the face of all “knowledge” to the contrary, he would find them. His faith was so strong, that through it he would attain a clear and perfect knowledge of what previously he could only believe in, but didn't know. And in the end, he did find her. In the end, because of his great and unwavering faith against all odds, he succeeded in his mission.

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Thus, Rebbe Nachman teaches: One should know that in Darkness itself, God can be found. "And the Jews stood from afar. Moshe approached the fog wherein God was found (Exodus 20:18). Moshe Rabeinu excelled, specifically because he approached the fog, the unknown, the uncertainty, the confusion. He knew that he would find God. He knew that even in this Darkness he could find the Light of God that would radiate the way. He never shirked nor shied away from attempting. Therefore, he rose way above the levels of even the very great Tzaddikim (Likutey Moharan I, 115). And in the same way that Moshe was able to find the Light of God in the very Darkness itself, we, in the very darkest moments of life, if we strengthen ourselves with faith, will also find Light – God Himself.