

Dvar Torah for Parshat Vayetze

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Based on *Chayei Moharan* (Tzaddik) #349

“...[Yaakov] took stones from the place and placed them at his head and lay down...” (Genesis 28:11). Rashi comments: He arranged them around his head, like a bunker, because he was afraid of wild animals. The stones started to argue with one another, each one saying, “The tzaddik should rest his head upon me.” Immediately the Blessed Holy One merged them into one.

Rebbe Nachman once praised his *Likutey Moharan*, saying that studying it properly could make one a thorough *baal teshuvah* (returnee, to Judaism)...He said that one who studies his works with an open mind and honestly, not for the sake of argument, would have his heart’s obstinacy rent asunder...He said that every should try to buy the *Likutey Moharan*. One who can’t afford it should sell even the pillow under his head to buy it....

In *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #49, Rebbe Nachman likens evil thoughts—you know, the ones that attack our minds and lead us to wrong-thinking—to wild animals. Even Yaakov Avinu (our Patriarch), even after he spent 14 solid years in yeshiva, even when he was at the future site of the *Beit HaMikdash* (Holy Temple), was concerned that he might be attacked by “wild animals” such as these. As one of my teachers, Reb Tzvi Cheshin, has pointed out, if Yaakov Avinu were afraid of a physical attack, what good was a bunker around his head going to do?

Each of us is constantly under threat of attack by “wild animals.” Some threats are obvious, some are stealthy; some

are swift, some are slow-and-steady, patiently stalking to sink their fangs into us. What can we do? We can learn Rebbe Nachman's works, in particular *Likutey Moharan*. Reb Noson writes that many chassidic works are titled *likutim*, collections because they are collections of "exiled sparks," souls that have fallen from faith and the teachings to bring them back.

Yaakov Avinu's collecting the stones represents this. Every Jewish soul is a piece of God on High. The verse says that Yaakov Avinu "took the stones of *hamakom*, the place." The word HaMakom is also one of God's names—the Omnipresent. Yaakov Avinu was gathering souls. And each soul said, "Let the tzaddik rest his head upon me"—let him think about me, my mission, in his teachings, to bring my world, and the entire world, to its *tikkun*.

Studying *Likutey Moharan* is not just an intellectual challenge. It is a challenge to our will, to our desire to be bigger and better Jews. If you can "afford" a *Likutey Moharan*, to study it and strive to live up to the ideals it presents, *mah tov*, that's wonderful. But if you can't "afford" it, sell your "pillow," those comfort-zone ideas and ways of thinking that make it easy for you to sleep your life away, leaving the mission of your soul unattended, and the world in disrepair.

May God grant that the tzaddik rest his head upon us, that we correctly absorb his ideas and fulfill our role in *tikkun haolam* (repairing the world). Amen.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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Bonus story: Rebbe Nachman once gave Reb Noson a *berakhah* (blessing), that each night, as soon as his head hit the pillow, he should fall asleep. And so it was.