

It's Really Just All Bark

written by Yehudis Golshevsky
February 13, 2022



Hold On!

Meshivat Nefesh #6 – *Guards at the Gate*

When I was young, my sister's friend had a Weimaraner—a big, athletic and energetic dog with a serious bark. Her name was Woofer (of course), and the family lived in the upper story of a two-family house. Whenever we'd ring the bell to the main entry, we could already hear the dog barking upstairs, sounding like the Hound of the Baskervilles.

I still remember the first time I went to their house. I always liked dogs, but when I heard the dog barking furiously upstairs, even I got nervous. They buzzed us into the entry, and then our friend opened their door upstairs so that we could come up into the house. Of course, what looked and sounded like a mad dog came racing down the stairs before we

could even get on the first step, making straight for me.

Woofers landed on me before I even had time to call up for help, nearly knocked me over...and proceeded to lick my face with the greatest enthusiasm. Sometimes the bark isn't only worse than the bite, it's really just all bark.

Rebbe Nachman taught that as we grow spiritually—as we head up the stairs to the next level—we can feel suddenly attacked by old behaviors and states that we thought were already non-issues. He tells us to hold on and set aside our fear; the barking dog of an old habit only waits at the door as a test. It's guarding my way into the next level, and I can't allow myself to get scared and run. That barking dog is going to turn out to be a friend, because it forces me to confront my past and my fears of unworthiness which are necessary to my continued growth and change. Just because it's barking doesn't mean that it's going to bite me.

(Based on *Likutei Moharan* I:22)