



Vayechi / וַיַּחֲיֶי

The Lion in Walpack

Toras Avigdor

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

Junior

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Yiddy was nervous. His family had just moved to Walpack, New Jersey, where his father had accepted the position of Rosh Kollel at the Walpack Community Kollel. Coming from Boro Park, he wasn't used to living in such a small town and hoped he would be able to make some friends.

Today was Yiddy's first day at Walpack Hebrew Dayschool. He never went to a school where they didn't learn in Yiddish. What would it be like?

When Yiddy got to school he immediately felt like everyone was looking at him. He was the only one with long curly chassidische peyos. Everyone else either had short peyos or they wore them behind their ears. He took a deep breath and opened the door to his new classroom.

Rebbe Goldstein was nice enough and welcomed him very warmly in front of the whole class, but everyone got quiet and stared when he asked if he could borrow a "Chimesh" since his was still packed up in a moving box. It even took Rebbe Goldstein a minute before he realized that Yiddy was asking for a Chumash.

The way Rebbe Goldstein and the boys pronounced words sounded very different from the way they did at Horki Cheider in Boro Park. They



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said things like “Halacha” and “Bracha” instead of “Haloocheh” and “Broocheh”. And when they made brachos they said “Elokeinu” and not “Eloikynee”. It sometimes felt like he was in a different country!

The other boys tried as hard as they could to be nice to Yiddy and to include him in their games, but everything was so different. And he couldn't help but feel that everyone was staring at his peyos and paying attention to the way he pronounced his words.

Yiddy tried for a bit to talk the way that these boys did, but it was hard to change how he spoke. Everyone still looked at him strange when he asked if they got “Toras Avugdor from Rav Muller” in Walpack - wasn't that the way they would pronounce it?

After recess, the boys returned to their classroom, but Yiddy felt like he wanted to cry. He felt so different and he just wanted to go back to Boro Park. He was scared to talk to the other boys because he was embarrassed to say anything that sounded funny. He firmly decided to only say his bruchos quietly and not ask any questions on Chimesh and Mishnayos so that no one had a chance to laugh at him. For a second he looked at the pair of scissors on Rebbe Goldstein's desk and wildly thought about cutting his peyos short and putting them behind his ears.

Just then Rebbe Goldstein walked in and all of the boys quietly and quickly took their seats.

“Boys,” began Rebbe Goldstein. “I wanted to share with you something beautiful that Rebbe Horowitz, the 4th grade rebbe, just told me. Did you ever wonder why, in this week's parsha, Yaakov Avinu compares his sons to different types of animals? But not just any animals. Yehuda is a lion, Binyomin is a wolf, Dan is a poisonous snake, and

Yissocher is a donkey! Wouldn't you think that Yaakov Avinu would choose kosher animals?

“And the answer Rebbe Horowitz told me is that there are special things to learn from being compared davka to these animals. You see, these animals are full of energy! They're bold and brave and act with strength. And those are important qualities for a Yid to have.

“When we serve Hashem, we don't want to be a quiet little sheep or a sleepy cow. No, we want to go after Torah and Mitzvos with energy, with passion, and not be embarrassed of who we are. So as we learn Mishnayos out loud today, we should all keep in mind the energy that we, the Bnei Yisroel, should have with our Avodas Hashem, just like Yaakov Avinu bented his children that they should be like lions, wolves, snakes, and donkeys.”

Rebbe Goldstein turned to open his Mishnayos, when he noticed Yiddy.

“Yiddy, you have a huge smile on your face,” Rebbe Goldstein said. “Was it something I said?”

“Actually yes,” Yiddy forced himself to reply, trying hard not to sound shy. “I felt so uncomfortable today because I'm so different from all of the other boys in the class. But what you said about Yankev Uvini reminded me that my name, Yiddy, is short for Yehideh! And if the poosik says ‘Gir aryey Yehideh’ then I need to be strong and confident like I'm riding on a lion and not be shy and quiet just because I'm a little bit different than everyone else!”

And with that Yiddy turned to his Mishnayos ready to begin learning energetically; out loud, with the rest of the class.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!



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