



Vayechi / וַיַּעֲחִי

Strong Like a Lion

Toras Avigdor

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

Junior

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"Ruvi, you've been on the swing for a while," said Bentzy. "Can I go on it now?"

"Sure," Ruvi said with a smile, hopping off of the swing to allow his friend to have a turn.

"I don't think so," said a gruff voice.

The two boys looked up to see a tough-looking boy walking towards them.

"This is my swing," the boy said. "Now get off!"

Bentzy continued sitting on the swing and stared nervously at the boy.

"It's not your swing," said Ruvi defiantly. "This is a public park."

"Oh yeah?" the boy said, shaking his fist menacingly. "Want to see me prove it?"

Bentzy reluctantly got off of the swing to avoid having his face introduced to the boy's big fist.

"It's not your park," Ruvi said, as Bentzy backed away nervously.

The bully picked up a rock off of the ground.

"Now you're going to get it," he said, preparing to throw it.

Ruvi and Bentzy decided this was probably a good time to get away from the bully, running as fast as they could, while the rock whizzed by their heads.

Angry that his rock missed, the bully picked up yet another rock and threw it at a cat.

"WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT???" he screamed angrily at a girl and her brother who were watching, causing them both to cry.

Just then an elderly Yid approached the bully.

"Hello, what is your name?" he asked gently.



“Go away, this is my park,” replied the bully.

“I see,” said the man. “Well my name is Menachem Bernstein. I hope you don’t mind that I walk through your park on my way home.”

The bully stared at Rabbi Bernstein, a bit flustered. He flexed his muscles in an attempt to look bigger and stronger.

“You must be a very successful boy to own a park at such a young age,” Rabbi Bernstein continued. “I would love to hear about how you came to acquire it. It must be a fascinating story.”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” the bully responded.

“Oh I’m sure it was a very complicated business deal. I probably would not understand the intricate details, being that I’m not a businessman.”

The bully gave half a smile, unsure of how to respond to this.

“So what’s your name?” repeated Rabbi Bernstein.

“Aryeh,” the bully repeated.

“Aryeh, now that’s a beautiful name,” Rabbi Bernstein said. “Your parents must have named you that so you would grow to be big and strong like a lion.”

“I am strong,” said Aryeh.

“Are you?” asked Rabbi Bernstein. “Because you didn’t seem too strong a minute ago.”

“What do you mean? I got them to give me the swing and run away without even hitting them. That’s how strong I am.”

“Strong? That sounds weak to me.”

Aryeh looked at Rabbi Bernstein, confused.

“Aryeh, have you ever heard of Yehuda, the son of Yaakov Avinu?”

“I’ve heard of Yaakov Avinu and that he had twelve sons, but I don’t remember their names,” said Aryeh.

“Well when Yaakov Avinu gave his sons brachos he called Yehuda a lion. He called Binyomin a wolf, Dan a snake, and Yisachar a donkey. Now why would he refer to his children as dangerous wild animals?”

“Because he wanted them to be strong?” Aryeh guessed.

“That’s correct! But Yaakov Avinu was a very holy man. Why do you think he wanted them to be strong?”

Aryeh thought about this. Yaakov Avinu probably didn’t mean that his sons should steal the park swing from other children, but what else could it mean?

“It is not always easy to do what Hashem wants,” said Rabbi Bernstein. “Sometimes people will laugh at you for doing *mitzvos*. Or maybe sometimes your *yetzer hora* will make you want to do the wrong thing really badly. It takes real strength to do the right thing. All the physical strength in the world won’t help you when it comes to fighting to do what’s right. That takes real strength.”

Rabbi Bernstein tapped his head with his finger. “And that strength comes from right here.”

“But how do I become strong in my mind?” asked Aryeh. “I don’t even know about many *mitzvos*, except stuff like giving presents on Chanukah or dressing up on Purim.”

“I’ll tell you what,” said Rabbi Bernstein. “I walk through this park every day on my way home from *kollel*. Why don’t you join me and I’ll teach you more about what Hashem wants from you and how you can learn to really be strong like a lion?”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Let’s Review:

- Who in this story is really strong?
- Why did Yaakov Avinu name his children after animals?



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