



Courageous Like a Lion

Yehuda ben Teimai said: “be bold like a leopard, light like an eagle, swift like a deer, strong (*gibor*) like a lion to do the will of your father in heaven.” He would say: “someone who is brazen-faced for *Gehinom*, and one who is shamefaced for *Gan Eden*.”

The *Bartenura* explains this *Mishnah* in the context of *mitzvot*. One should not be ashamed to ask questions, swift to review their learning, run to perform *mitzvot* and be brave overcoming the *yetzer harah* that attempts to turn one from *mitzvot*. Indeed, we have learnt that *Ben Zoma* taught, “Who is strong (*gibor*)? One who subdues his *yetzer*.”

The *Tifferet Yisrael* however understands the *Mishnah* as referring to the four areas of personal. Firstly, one’s involvement in the world is divided into what one should engage in and what one should avoid. They can also be broken down into two domains – the external and internal. When it comes to positive actions, it is not a time for humility or self doubt. The *Tur* explains that confidence is necessary to perform *mitzvot* in the face of those that ridicule their observance. Moving to the internal, regarding the study of *Torah* where the depth can be overwhelming, one need not give up hope and rather raise himself up and “fly toward the sun”. Avoiding bad spiritual threats, one needs to swiftly flee, like a deer escaping a hunter, and not simply rely on his intellect to avoid the challenge. Finally, facing physical threats and being enticed by the *yetzer*, requires great strength to subdue its hold.

The *Tur*, in the beginning of his *sefer*, however understands that that all these traits are defences against threats to keeping *mitzvot*. We mentioned that one needs to be bold in the face of ridicule. Flight helps one turn their eyes from evil. Courage is needed when the threat is in the heart and Speed is necessary to physically move

away from it. Note that the *Tur* switched the order, placing the lion before the deer unlike it appears in our *Mishnah*. The *Beit Yosef* explains that the order in the *Tur* is the order of sin. The eyes see, the heart desires, then the body executes. The *Beit Yosef* explains that *Yehuda ben Teima*’s order reflects a proactive approach: if one can control what they are exposed to, it becomes easier to pursue *mitzvot*. If not, then the eagerness will be tempered by the desire that has been created in the heart.

Interestingly, the *Shulchan Aruch* opens with only a reference to being strong like a lion and specifically related to getting up early in the morning to serve *Hashem*. The *Mishnah Berurah* explains that getting up early in the morning can be particularly challenging and takes strength to counter the *yetzer* trying to convince one to do the opposite. Indeed, the *Midrash* notes that *Bilaam* referred to our nation as “a nation that rises like a lion” and explains that we are unique in that we rise early to eagerly “snatch” *mitzvot* – *tallit*, *shema* and *tefillin*.

The *Lev Avot* (R’ Haber) notes that the *Gemara* comments that were it not for the *Torah*, one could learn positive character traits from all the creatures. He cites the *Gra* who explains that *Adam* was the final creation and embodied the qualities of all the creatures. The *Lev Avot* explains that one can therefore learn from nature the extent of his power – his unrealised potential.

We can take this idea one step further. As we near the end of *Pirkei Avot*, its demands specifically and the world of *mitzvot* in general may appear a overwhelming. The *Mishnah* is asserting that while it may indeed be challenging, *Hashem* did not set us up for failure. All the means have been instilled in us to succeed. When all those internal powers are in order and realised, then we can enjoy success.

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Revision Questions

אבות ה' כ' – ו' י'

- Complete the following statement of *Yehuda ben Teima*: (ה' כ')
 "הוי עז _____ קל _____
 _____ וגיבור _____
 לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים"
- According to *Yehuda ben Teima* a person with which character trait is "to Gehinom"?
 Is "to Gan Eden"? (ה' כ')
- What is expected at, or characterises the following ages: 5, 10, 13, 15, 18, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100? (ה' כ"א)
- Complete the statement of *ben Bag Bag*: (ה' כ"ב)
 "הפך בה והפך בה _____
 _____ ובה _____, ובה _____, ובה _____
 שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה"
- Who stated the following: "לפום צרה אגרא"? (ה' כ"ג)
- According to *R' Meir*, regarding one that engages in *Torah*: (ה' א')
 - What does he merit?
 - What does it "cloth" him in?
 - What four things does it enable him to be?
 - What four things do people benefit from him?
 - What three things are given to him?
 - What is revealed to him?
 - In comparison to things in nature, what does he become?
 - What three traits characterise him?
- According to *R' Yehoshua ben Levi*: (ה' ב')
 - What does the heavenly voice announce on a daily basis and from where does it originate?
 - Who is truly free?
 - What happens to one that is constantly engaged in *Torah*?
- From where does the *Tana* learn that even if one learns one letter of *Torah* from another does he need to treat him with *kavod*? (ה' ג')
- What is "the way of *Torah*"? (ה' ד')
- What should be in excess of one's learning? (ה' ד')
- What two reasons are given for why one should not desire the "table of Kings"? (ה' ד')
- Through how many qualities is Kingship acquired? (ה' ה')
- Through how many qualities is *Torah* acquired? (Can you list them?) (ה' ה')
- What is an effect if one says something in the name of the person who originally said it? (ה' ו')
- What reason is give for why *Torah* is "great"? (ה' ו')
- According to *R' Shimon ben Menasya* what seven things are fitting for *tzadikim* and who had all seven? (ה' ז')
- What was *R' Yosi ben Kisma*'s response when he was offered a large some of money to relocate? (ה' ז')
- What are the five *kinyanim* that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has the world? (ה' ז')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
6 July י' תמוז	7 July י"א תמוז	8 July י"ב תמוז	9 July י"ג תמוז	10 July י"ד תמוז	11 July ט"ו תמוז	12 July ט"ז תמוז
Avot 6:11 - Horayot 1:1	Horayot 1:2-3	Horayot 1:4-5	Horayot 2:1-2	Horayot 2:3-4	Horayot 2:5-6	Horayot 2:7-3:1

