

# True Bravery

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Illustrated by Mordechai Zeffren

"Get outta my yard!" shouted the man who lived in the green house. Refoel and Aryeh ran.

"Wait for me!" Aryeh called. Refoel slowed down just a bit. That man was scary. He was so mean to kids, and everyone in the neighborhood was terrified to go anywhere near his house. This time Aryeh's new ball had flown into his yard. It was a really nice ball and Aryeh hated to lose it. He and Refoel had bravely taken two steps onto the lawn. They hadn't gone any further when the man's shouts had sent them scurrying to safety without the ball.

"And don't you ever come back again!" the man continued, waving his fist at them.

Refoel and Aryeh decided to go to the playground. Maybe they would find some friends there and join them in a game. What luck! The Miller brothers were there. They weren't playing ball, but they sure were having fun.

"I dare you to jump from the top of the slide!" Yissochor shouted. "*Double dare. Triple dare!*"

Yeshaya was standing on top of the slide, looking nervous. It was high. *Very high.*

"Scaredy-cat!" Amram called. That did it. Yeshaya didn't like being called scaredy-cat - and he jumped.

"Boy, you're brave!" Refoel praised him.

"That's nothing," said Yeshaya, enjoying the praise. "Yesterday, at the pool, I jumped from even higher. The lifeguard had said no jumping from the ladder 'cause it's dangerous. When he wasn't looking, I did it. It was great!" Refoel and Aryeh looked at Yeshaya in admiration. He was always doing brave things. He did all sorts of tricks on his bike, without wearing a helmet.

Yissochor asked Refoel if he wanted to jump, but he was too scared. Soon after, Refoel and Aryeh headed home, talking about Yeshaya's bravery all the way.

Supper smelled delicious. Refoel and Aryeh went into the kitchen to see what they were having that night. Baila, their older sister, was wearing a smock and helping Mommy with the meal.

"Yum! Meatballs and spaghetti - my favorite!" Aryeh rubbed his stomach.

"What are those little pans for?" Refoel asked. Each pan held one portion of the foods they were having for supper.

"That's for the man in the green house," Baila answered. "He just came home from the hospital, and Mommy and I made him a nice supper. We're going to make him supper every night until he's strong enough to take care of himself."

"Tatty," Refoel turned to his father, who had just come into the kitchen, "you'll never guess what Yeshaya Miller did! He's so brave. He jumped from that very high slide in the playground!"

"And he even jumped from the top of the ladder, into the swimming pool," added Aryeh.

"Tatty, do we have to wear helmets when we ride our bikes?" Refoel wanted to know. "Yeshaya doesn't."

Tatty frowned. "Boys, real bravery is not doing dangerous things even though they're scary. That's just plain foolish, and a boy who does things like that can end up getting hurt."

"Refoel and Aryeh," Mommy called. "Baila helped make supper. Now you boys can have a share in the mitzvah and bring it over to Mr. Moskowitz. You know where he lives, right? In the green house."

The boys knew all too well where Mr. Moskowitz lived.

"Um ... Mommy, could Baila go instead?" Aryeh asked hesitantly.

"I need Baila to help me in the kitchen now."

"Um ... Mommy, he's really scary. Everyone is terrified to go near his house."

"As I was saying, boys," continued Rabbi Goldberg, "real bravery is doing something hard because it's the right thing to do."

Refoel and Aryeh looked at each other. "Let's call Yeshaya to go with us," Aryeh suggested. "He's brave."

"The man in the green house?" Yeshaya repeated when he came to the phone. "Um, I have to ... um, help my mother... help my father... I have to make my bed ... um, well, I'm really scared of him."

Hands filled with warm pans of delicious food, Aryeh and Refoel walked slowly down the block.

"You ring the bell," Refoel said.

"No, you." Refoel bravely pushed the button.

Suddenly, the front door was being pulled open.

"Hello, boys. Thank you so much. Your mother is so nice and you are, too." Refoel's hand was shaking so hard, he thought he'd drop the pans. Instead, because he knew it was the right thing to do, he asked, "Would you like us to come in and put the pans away for you? My mother sent a lot of food and it might be too heavy for you to carry."

Mr. Moskowitz smiled. "Come in, come in. Such good boys. Would you like to see my parrot? He really talks. Sometimes I think he's my only friend," Mr. Moskowitz said sadly.

Refoel and Aryeh put the pans away where Mr. Moskowitz directed and then went to visit the parrot. It repeated every word that they said.

"Um, Mr. Moskowitz," Aryeh said shyly as they were leaving, "is it okay if we go around the side to get a ball that landed on your lawn by mistake?"

"Sure, boys, sure. We're friends now, right?" Mr. Moskowitz looked happy when they both said yes.

"He's really nice," Aryeh said to Rabbi Goldberg as they came in the front door. "He's just lonely. Maybe that's why he yells at everyone."

"You boys were brave. *Really* brave. That's what Jewish bravery is all about: doing something hard because it's the right thing to do." Tatty put his arms around both of his sons.

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"Look at us!" shouted Yeshaya and Yissochor the next day as they did tricks on their bikes without helmets. "Can you do this?"

"No," Refoel answered. "That's foolish and dangerous. We only do really brave things - like bringing supper to the man in the green house. I have a couple of extra helmets. Want to borrow them? We can go riding together, without doing dangerous tricks."

Yissochor and Yeshaya looked ashamed and followed Refoel to get helmets. "Those boys are really brave," Yeshaya whispered to Yissochor.

איזהו גיבור? הכובש את יצרו

