



Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

Sefer Bereishis sponsored by:



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Opening Statements

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Opening Statements

Agudas Yisroel of St. Louis

Rabbi Greenblatt sat down at the head of the table where several people were already seated, waiting for him to start his new weekly tefillah shiur.

“Okay,” Rabbi Greenblatt said. “Today we’re going to start with the first brocha of Shmoneh Esrei. Last Shabbos my grandson asked me about this brocha. He said ‘Zaidy, there are so many things I want to daven for - why do we have brachos at the beginning which don’t have anything to do with what I want from Hashem?’”

Everyone chuckled at the cuteness of the question, but quickly stopped as a sudden commotion erupted near the entrance to the shul. All eyes shifted to the doorway where a whole crowd of people were entering the shul, carrying laptops, phones, and other equipment. At the front of the crowd was none other than the mayor of University City, Mayor PJ McGillicuddy!

“Okay, Fred, you sit over there at that table. And Madmanny, you sit here next to me. Let’s set up our projection screen over there and we’ll just lift up the carpet to run the microphone and speaker cables underneath. The rest of you, just find yourselves a seat and we’ll run power cables for you.”

Everyone stared, dumbfounded, as Mayor McGillicuddy started taking over the shul. Technicians started running wires, setting up screens, and plugging everything in. Mr. Arnold Perel, one of the shiur participants, quickly jumped out of his seat and walked over to the mayor, bowing deeply.

“Mr. Mayor,” Arnold said, bowing deeply with respect. “What an unexpected surprise to see you here.”

“Oh yes, Mr. uh...” Mayor McGillicuddy quickly turned to his aide, who whispered in his ear. “Yes, Mr. Parnell. It is indeed my pleasure. You see, I was hosting a mayor’s conference at City Hall, but the power went out when everyone plugged in their laptops at the same time. And I thought, hmmm who loves me more than my Jewish voters? I knew you people wouldn’t have any issue with us coming and having our conference in your synagogue. So here we are!”



“Mr. Mayor,” Arnold said. “We are absolutely honored that you chose us. As mayor, you control everything that goes on in this city. You are the most powerful government official many of us have ever met. Yet you give so much attention



and show much affection to the Jewish community, especially during election season. As you know, we are deeply grateful for this and so much more.”

Mayor McGillicuddy beamed as Arnold spoke.

“Now Mr. Mayor,” Arnold continued. “You might want to consider the fact that our synagogue is not only used for prayers once a week, like the many churches in the neighborhood. We pray here three times daily and have classes and study sessions throughout the day. Perhaps I can help you think of another place to hold your mayor’s conference - somewhere where the noise of the studying and lectures might not disturb you?”

Mayor McGillicuddy paused, frowning for a moment, before breaking out in a smile. “You Jews!” he said jovially. “You are so smart! Of course, I wouldn’t want to be disturbed by you, what with election season coming up! And the crocodiles just escaped from the University City Zoo - we can hold our conference in the giant crocodile enclosure, since it’s empty. We’ll have plenty of time because I haven’t yet instructed animal control to find the escaped crocodiles. Thank you, Mr. Purdle!”

As the group of mayors exited the shul, Rabbi Greenblatt resumed his shiur. “Thank you Arnold,” he said. “You handled the mayor perfectly. Just like Yehuda in this week’s parsha.

“Yehuda began speaking to Yosef by saying *כִּי כַּמּוֹד כְּפָרְעֹה* - you are just like Paraoth’. When speaking to government officials or other people in positions of power, it is always smart to start by acknowledging that person’s power instead of attacking the policies we want to change.

“And that is why we start Shmoneh Esrei with three brachos praising Hashem. Hashem doesn’t need us to tell Him how powerful He is. But when we want to ask Him to change His decrees against us, we do so, not by attacking his decrees, but by acknowledging how great He is.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

let’s review:

- Why did Yehuda tell Yosef that he was just like Paraoth’?
- Why do we start Shmoneh Esrei by praising Hashem?

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