



# Toras Avigdor

## Junior

Adapted from the teachings  
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

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פְּרִשְׁת יִתְרוֹ

## Living With Policemen

לעילוי נשמת

מזרינו הרב נפתלי בן הרב הגאון הצדיק ר' אהרן צבי מטשעקע  
בן המהר"ם בריסק

נדבת

מרדכי דוד בריסק ומשפחתו

## Living With Policemen

“That’s it,” thought Menashe. “I’m done! I’m finished! I can’t take it anymore! Everywhere I go, people criticize me!”

Menashe’s mother had just called him in from outside where he was playing with his best friend Yitzchok. “And for what? Just because I left my dirty plate on the table after lunch? And then my mother said that I forgot to bentch and that I should be more careful about leaving the table without thanking Hashem for the food.” She said, “If you want to eat His food, you should be prepared to thank Him for it.”

And Menashe’s mother wasn’t the only one who was on his back all the time. Just yesterday, in shul, his father gave him a five-hour speech (okay, maybe not five hours but it was for sure at least a full minute) about how he should be more careful about coming to shul on time.

And then on the way out of shul, the old man Mr. Kupferstein asked Menashe to stop leaving dirty tissues on the table. He said, “Garbage cans were created for a reason!”

“Like I didn’t know that!” thought Menashe. “Why can’t people just mind their own business! I don’t need someone criticizing me wherever I go!”

“Oh yeah, and then there’s my neighbor, Mr. Brussman — everything I do gets on his nerves. He’s a really nervous guy! This morning he yelled at me not to lock up my bike on his railing because it makes scratches, and it costs a lot of money to paint the fence every year.

“Well,” thought Menashe, “at least I have Uncle Naftuli to rely on. He’s like my big brother, he never yells at me and always has time to schmooze. He used to daven in Rav Avigdor Miller’s shul when Rav Miller was still alive, so whenever I talk to him about my problems, he always gives me good advice from “the Rav”.

## At Uncle Naftuli's Apartment

“Hi, Menashe!” said Uncle Naftuli. “You look a little bit down today. Is everything okay?”

“Boruch Hashem,” said Menashe. “But not so great. Everybody is making me crazy. Nothing I do is good enough. You know Mr. Kupferstein and Mr. Brussman? They have eyes like hawks — they criticize everything I do! Why can’t they just mind their own business?! And that’s besides for Mommy and Totty who are on my back about every little thing. It’s like I have policemen following me wherever I go. I can’t live like this!”

“I know exactly how you feel, Menashe,” said Uncle Naftuli. “What do you think? It’s only you? But let me tell you something that might make you look at your problem a little differently.”

“Do you know which was the greatest generation in our history? It was the Jews who lived in the Midbar. They were called the Dor Dei’ah — The Generation of Those Who Know Hashem, because nobody in our history was as close to Hashem as they were. Imagine a whole generation of Jews who were greater



than Rav Moshe Feinstein! Greater than the Satmar Rebbe! Greater than Rav Shach!

Now, how did they become so great? Tzaddikim don't just grow on trees like apples. A tzaddik becomes a tzaddik because of a lot of hard work. And one of the most important things that made the Dor Dei'ah so great was that each of them had other people who were standing over them — “on their backs,” as you would say — and criticizing them.

In Parshas Yisro we learn that for all forty years in the Midbar there were sarei asarah, officers of tens. That means that every nine people had an officer in charge of them whose job was to supervise their behavior. Can you imagine? It was impossible to do anything wrong or say anything wrong without it being reported to your officer — the policeman who was in charge of you.

If you didn't clean up after yourself, besides for your mother bothering you, your officer would show up at your tent to criticize you. If you left dirty tissues on the table, same thing — your officer wouldn't let you get away with it. You couldn't come to davening late or miss bentching either — you were constantly being criticized! And the policemen had sharper eyes than Mr. Kupferstein and Mr. Brussman.

You know what else? Rav Miller called it an “intolerable arrangement.” In kids' language that means it was really hard for everybody! It wasn't fun! But you know what? It was still appreciated because that's what made them great, that's how they became the Dor Dei'ah!

The only way to become better is to hear about the things you're doing wrong. Nobody is perfect and we all make mistakes — I know that I make plenty of them. But the smart person learns from his mistakes. And the best way for that to happen is by accepting criticism and becoming better. It might hurt, it might even sting sometimes, but remember that by accepting the criticism, you're following in the footsteps of the greatest people who ever lived. The generation in the Midbar became the greatest ever just because of that!

**Have a wonderful Shabbos!**

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