

Avodah with Animals

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

Sunday afternoon, U. City Shul

As soon as Moishy finished saying Aleinu, Totty whispered into his ear. “You remember what you learned in this week’s parsha about Avraham Avinu? Hashem is giving you a great opportunity. You see that man sitting in the back of the Shul? That’s Mr. Abrams. He just moved into the neighborhood this week. Why don’t you go over and give him a nice ‘shalom aleichem’? Isn’t that what Avraham Avinu would do?”

Moishy felt funny going over to a stranger but his Totty was right. It was an opportunity to do a mitzvah — and Totty was right there in Shul with him.

He walked over to the man and said “Sholom aleichem!” with a smile and outstretched hand. “My name is Moishy Freedman.”

The man smiled. “Aleichem sholom!” he answered. “I’m Shimon Moshe Abrams”.

“I hear you just moved here, welcome to St. Louis!” Moishy said graciously, as he thought of how he could possibly imitate Avraham and make a guest feel comfortable. “I can show you the best place to stand during an *aufruf* so you catch the most candy.” He blurted out.

“Why thank you!” replied Shimon Moshe. “I’ll be sure to keep that in mind.”



“My pleasure,” said Moishy. “By the way, may I ask what you do?”

“Boruch Hashem, I am zoche to learn Torah and serve Hashem all day,” Shimon Moshe said with a smile.

Monday afternoon, after school

“Hi Totty!” exclaimed Moishy as he burst into the door. “Remember you said we could go on a trip to Mayor McGillicuddy’s new zoo once they had cages for the animals? Well today they got the cages! Mayor McGillicuddy himself rode around town on a zebra today announcing it on a bullhorn! So can we go? It’s just a few blocks away, right where the girls’ school used to be - please???”

Boruch Hashem Totty agreed to drive everyone to the new zoo for an hour.

The zoo was interesting, to say the least. Most of the dangerous animals were already in their cages, but there was a camel walking around, and a group of penguins waddled by the concession stand looking lost.

The Freedmans walked around and stopped by a cage with a sign that said “Nile Crocodile”.

“I don’t see the crocodile,” said Dovid.

“Look! There he is!” exclaimed Moishy, pointing outside of the cage.

The family looked around, and sure enough, there was a crocodile wearing a dog leash, being led by a zookeeper towards the cage. The Freedmans watched excitedly as the zookeeper removed the leash from the crocodile and started wrestling it into the cage. Wow, that looked dangerous!

As the crocodile’s huge body was forced into the cage, its massive tail still swinging wildly out the door, the zookeeper’s head turned towards the Freedmans and Moishy saw that it was none other than the man he had just met yesterday in Shul! “What was he doing working in the zoo?” Moishy wondered. Didn’t he learn all day in Kollel?

With the crocodile finally securely locked in his new cage, Rabbi Abrams stood outside the cage, catching his breath and mopping the sweat off of his face with a towel.

“Hi Moishy!” he said, looking up and seeing the Freedman family standing there. “How are you doing?”

“I-I’m doing great,” Moishy stammered. “But can I ask you a question? Yesterday you told me you learn in Kollel all day, but now it looks like you’re a zookeeper. Are you just volunteering here to help the mayor?”

“No,” smiled Rabbi Abrams. “I didn’t say that I learn in Kollel. You asked me what I do and I answered that I learn Torah and serve Hashem all day.”

“But why didn’t you tell me that you’re a zookeeper?” asked Moishy, confused.

“Let me ask you a question,” said Rabbi Abrams. “What did Avraham Avinu do?”

“Well he was the Gadol Hador and one of the Avos Hakedoshim!” answered Moishy. “He built the foundations of Klal Yisroel!”

“Ah,” Rabbi Abrams interjected. “But he had a lot of cattle and sheep. He was busy all day taking care of his animals and managing his shepherds. Even when the Malochim came, he **himself** shechted three cows and prepared the meat for them. But you never hear anyone saying that Avraham Avinu was a farmer, do you? Because the main thing in his life was serving Hashem.

“Think about it this way. If someone asks what you do, you wouldn’t answer them ‘I eat cereal and milk, tie my shoes, and I play tag at recess.’ You would say ‘I go to cheder and learn Torah every day’, right?”

“So, I happen to work as a zookeeper to support my family, but that’s just what I do while I’m serving Hashem all day. What I’m doing with my hands isn’t nearly as important as what I’m doing with my mind - that’s what defines who a Yid really is!”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

Let’s Review:

- What does Rabbi Abrams do all day?
- What did Avraham Avinu do all day?



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