

All Politics Stinks

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

All politics stinks. In London, Mayor Ken Livingstone has been distributing excessively overpaid jobs and freebies to his buddies and placemen. In the USA, politics functions on a national, federal level and is virtually duplicated at state level, so there is added room for monkey business. Wherever it is, the whole system is predicated on “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours,” (and if it’s not the back, it’s some other part of the anatomy), and pork barrel politics whereby if I vote for your pet useless project you’ll vote for mine. The result, of course, is that political life is a constant ebb and flow of little battles to undermine, overcome, and hold onto the goodies.

In New York State, the real power has been held for years by one [Joseph Bruno](#), a Republican state senator. When a Democratic governor, [Eliot Spitzer](#), was elected, a new battle was joined. Bruno was charged with everything from misusing state personnel and funds, to providing [jobs for the boys](#), to getting favors for his union backers, and they in turn placing funds with his investment company, and all sorts of financial shenanigans. It looked bad. [An article in New York Magazine](#) had him on the ropes.

Then, glory hallelujah, someone revealed that [Eliot Spitzer was using prostitutes](#) (and I always thought he was too clever for that; it just goes to show which part of fellow’s anatomy is more powerful). Now Eliot’s on the ropes. This little side show distracts from the bigger battle for president, but there too every day new stories leak this one’s indiscretion with an aide and that one’s corrupt financial practices, and the other’s friendship with crime bosses.

The only saving grace is that it doesn’t matter who gets in, the guys with money, influence, and secret information will pull the strings. This goes for policy towards Israel too. The proof is that regardless of whether there have been opponents of Israel in the White House, like Baker or Brezinski, it hasn’t mattered on the ground.

I wish I, as a religious guy, could say all this is not the case with religion. Sadly, I cannot. Religion can be as dirty and dishonest as politics—and worse when the two are combined, and money and power is at stake. If only religion were free of corruption, I’d be laughing all the way to heaven. Except I suspect that long before I got to those pearly gates some clerics would have made sure I got blocked for daring to suggest they might not deserve to get through.