

# Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Vayishlach - Rabbi Aaron Rokach

## Dollars and Sense

"Yaakov remained alone and a man fought with him until sunrise." *Bereishis* 32:25. *Ya'akov* was alone because he traveled back to retrieve some small pots that had been left behind (*Chullin* 91). The *Gemorah* teaches us that this incident illustrates the tremendous importance that the righteous ascribe to their monetary possessions.

*Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon* points out that at first glance this *Gemorah* is somewhat puzzling. We are accustomed to thinking of righteous people as those who value spiritual, rather than monetary goals. Why does the *Gemorah* consider fondness of monetary possessions to be an attribute of the righteous?

*Rabbi Solomon* explains that the *Gemorah* does not mean that *Yaakov Avinu* loved his money. Rather, he appreciated the importance of utilizing money for its proper purpose. Righteous people realize that the money they earn is really a direct gift from *Hashem*. It is entrusted to them to use for purposes that forward their *Avodas Hashem*. Therefore, they are careful not to waste it or use it for improper purposes. Even though *Ya'akov Avinu* was very wealthy, he understood that everything *Hashem* had given him was for a purpose. For this reason he didn't want to let anything, even a few inexpensive pots, go to waste.

This important perspective is also illustrated by

*Ya'akov Avinu's* comments later on in this week's *Parsha*. When *Ya'akov* offered *Eisav* some of his livestock as a gift, *Eisav* responded, "I have enormous wealth my brother, keep what is yours." (*Bereishis* 33:9). *Ya'akov* replied, "Please accept my gift for *Hashem* has blessed me and I have everything" (*Bereishis* 33:11). *Rashi* notes the difference between the expressions used by *Eisav* and *Ya'akov*. *Eisav* said "I have enormous wealth" – more than I can even use; *Ya'akov* said "I have everything" – all that I need. The *Kli Yakar* points out another difference. *Eisav* said "I have enormous wealth" – but I still haven't reached my limit. *Ya'akov* said "I have everything" – I consider what I have to be exactly the amount that I need.

These statements highlight the different perception that *Ya'akov* and *Eisav* had of their money. *Eisav* saw his money as a means of fulfilling his own desires. He had more than he knew what to do with, but still wasn't satisfied. *Ya'akov*, on the other hand, saw his money as a gift from *Hashem* that was entrusted to him for a specific purpose. He knew that everything he had was given to him for a reason and felt no need for more than that.

Rabbi Rokach learns at the Kollel during night seder.

# Halacha Encounters

## **Machanecha Kadosh, part 1**

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

The Torah tells us in parashas Ki Seitzei that "your camp shall be holy so that He (Hakadosh Baruch Hu) will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you" (Devarim 23:15). Chazal derive from this pasuk that when one is engaged in *devarim shebikdusha* (holy matters), whether it's reciting brachos or studying Torah (even thinking words of Torah), one must be careful that the area is free of any human waste. One who is not careful about this is considered to be disgracing the word of G-d. One who is scrupulous in this matter will merit long life (Biur Halacha 79:7).

The Halacha is that it is forbidden to engage in *devarim shebikdusha* (davening, reciting brachos or krias shema, thinking or speaking words of Torah, etc.) while one is within four amos (seven feet), of human waste. If the waste is in front of a person, within his range of vision, even if it's more than seven feet away, he may not recite any *devarim shebikdusha*. This is all true even if the waste does not emit any odor. If the waste does emit an odor, then one must be sure to be at least seven feet away from the place where the odor ends. If the waste is placed in a bag and no odor emanates from the bag, one can recite *devarim shebikdusha* while standing right next to it.

Even if there's a foul odor that does not emanate from waste (e.g. flatulence), one may not recite krias shema, brachos, or tefillos. However, unlike an odor with substance, he does not have to move seven feet from the place that the odor ends. With regard to Torah study, chazal are lenient by foul odors that don't have any substance. Although the person who emitted the odor is not permitted to learn Torah until the odor dissipates or until he moves away from the odor, everybody else is permitted to.

If the waste substance is wrapped up in a bag, but odor still emanates from the bag, there is a dispute among the poskim how to view such an odor. Some poskim view this as odor without substance because the waste is covered. Accord-

ing to this view, it is sufficient to be out of range of the odor. (It is not necessary to be seven feet away from the place where the odor ends to recite brachos or daven.) Other poskim disagree and hold since the odor penetrates the cover, we view the odor as odor with a source, and one would be required to keep a distance of seven feet from the place where the odor ends before reciting *devarim shebikdusha* (Biur Halacha beginning of siman 79).

### **Diapers**

A practical application of the above halacha is with a child's dirty diapers. If a dirty diaper is wrapped up and has no smell that emanates from the bag, one is permitted to recite all *devarim shebikdusha* right next to the diaper. If a child is wearing a dirty diaper, and one smells the odor coming from the diaper, he must be seven feet from the place that the **odor** ends before reciting *devarim shebikdusha* (since the opinion of some poskim is that this is considered an odor that has a source). If one is near a child that is wearing a diaper, as long as he does not detect any odor, he is not required to check the diaper before reciting *devarim shebikdusha*. The reason for this is that even if the child is dirty, some poskim permit a bracha to be made when the waste is covered and the odor is not detected. (This is known as a *sfek sfeika* (double doubt) maybe the child isn't dirty, and even if he is, some poskim permit it. See Halichos Shlomo 20:4; Ishei Yisroel ch.52 note 71-72.)

### **Proper Disposal of Diapers**

If one wishes to discard a soiled diaper in an area that a bracha may be recited, he should be careful to wrap the diaper in a way that the smell is contained in the bag. Sometimes a few bags may be required. Some have the practice of discarding the soiled diapers outside the door of the house, in the doorway. This, however, is not permitted on a regular basis if there is a mezuzah affixed to the doorpost. The reason being that it is not considered respectful for the mezuzah (Y.D. 286 Pischei Teshuvah 7).

Rabbi Langer learns full-time at the Kollel.