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Parshas Vayechi ✍️ Rabbi Meir Leib Mandelbaum

Spread the Wealth

In this week's *parsha*, Yaakov reprimanded Shimon and Levi for their actions, and declared that they should be scattered throughout Klal Yisroel. Rashi explains that the purpose of their dispersion was in order to prevent them from banding together in the future. Rashi adds that teachers of Torah would descend from *Shevet* Shimon; the high demand for teachers in every place in which Bnei Yisroel will ultimately settle would ensure their separation. The *Yalkut* indicates that this dispersion would be accomplished for *Shevet* Levi in the same manner; members of these *shevatim* will be present in *yeshivos* and *Batei Knesios* wherever *Yidden* will be found.

It is puzzling that the targets of Yaakov's reprimand were assigned such an important responsibility. If there was a flaw in the characters of Shimon and Levi, how could they be entrusted with the lofty task of teaching Torah to Klal Yisroel?

Rav Hirsch addresses this question, focusing on the seemingly repetitive nature of the two phrases of Yaakov Avinu's declaration: "*Achalkeim b'Yaakov v'afitzeim b'Yisroel*"; he also highlights the difference in meaning of the similar terms "*achalkeim*" and "*afitzeim*." The word "*Achalkeim*" refers to dividing or apportioning, as in "*achalek shallal*" - "I will divide the spoils." This was the first part of Yaakov's plan. Shimon and Levi didn't have a character **flaw**; they had a character **trait**, a *middah*, and like all *middos*, they must be channeled for *kavod shamayim* in order to be used properly. Their *middah* was pride in their heritage and zealotry in protecting its honor. The name Yaakov, as opposed to Yisroel, is our "*Galus*" name. Their *middah* of pride and passion for Torah is of immeasurable value during this long *galus*, for it is a tremendous asset for a

teacher of Torah to possess a fiery passion for his Torah way of life. Thus, "*Achalkeim b'Yaakov*" actually means that Yaakov Avinu enabled Klal Yisroel, no matter how far flung during exile, to receive a much-needed portion of pride and passion through their teachers of Torah.

"*Afitzeim b'Yisroel*," however, refers to a simple dispersion, one not motivated by a concern for where the scattered "portions" will settle, as we say regarding our status of exile, "*Unifutzoseinu kaneis*- bring us in from our dispersion". This kind of scattering will be necessary "*b'Yisroel*," when we will no longer be in *galus*, but rather in Eretz Yisroel, where our pride and passion for Torah will be evident throughout the land. There, the passion of Shimon and Levi can be a danger, and they must therefore be scattered for their own sake.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l comments that we do find the zealotry of Levi demonstrated throughout history, such as at the sin of the *Egel Hazahav*, when *Shevet* Levi answered Moshe's call, and by the actions of Pinchas, who faced Zimri alone. However, we do not find that *Shevet* Shimon had similar incidents to their credit. On the contrary, Zimri himself was from the tribe of Shimon. Rav Yaakov concludes that to successfully use the *middah* of "*Kana'us* - zealotry," one must be entirely grounded in Torah learning, as Levi was; only then will one's zealous actions truly reflect the honor of the Torah.

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Shaimos and Geniza

Rabbi Pesach Gottesman

It is well known that *kisvei kodesh*, *sefarim*, and papers containing Torah must be treated with respect and not be thrown out. These *kisvei kodesh* are referred to as *Shaimos* - literally "names." What is not commonly known is the severity of these *halachos* and their far-reaching ramifications. *Shaimos* used to be less common since *sefarim* were used until they were worn out. The proliferation of *kisvei kodesh* due to the ease of printing and photocopying is a relatively recent phenomenon. Hagoan R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L (O.C. IV 39) encourages minimizing unnecessary *shaimos* material. The *Gemara Shabbos* (115b) refers to those who write *sefarim* which may come to destruction as "*sorfei hatorah*."

Shem Hashem

It is an *issur d'oraisa* to destroy or erase one of the seven names of Hashem (*Makos* 22D). (See *Yoreh Deah* 276, 9 for a list of them.) The Rema (ibid 10) writes that two "*yuds*" which are written in place of Hashem's name should not be erased unless absolutely necessary. R' Moshe Feinstein (Y.D. II, 138) writes that the same applies to the letter "*hey*." There is a disagreement as to whether the "*hey*" in "*Bais Hey*" (B"H) is part of Hashem's name or refers to the word "Hashem." Therefore, one should not write these letters on correspondence which is likely to be thrown out. Writing a word which refers to Hashem's name but is not His name, such as "*Dishmaya*" or "*Aibeshter*" is permitted.

The Rema (ibid 13) writes that one should be careful not to erase the word "*shalom*," although the Shach comments that most people aren't cautious in this regard. R' Moshe differentiates between giving a *berachah* of *shalom* (since the word refers to peace) and writing the word alone, which may be considered a reference to Hashem. The *Mishnah Berurah* (84,6) also *paskens* that one should not write the full word "*Shalom*." The Shach (*Yoreh Deah* 179,11) writes that when Hashem's name is written in a language other than *Lashon Hakodesh* (such as G-d) it may be erased (although it should not be said in an unclean place such as a bathroom or shower). Care should be taken to not treat such a name with disgrace (*Ginzei Hakodesh* 7,12, by Rabbi Yechezkel Feinhandler, 5762).

Most *poskim* allow bills or coins which have "G-d" written on them to be brought into a bathroom, even when uncovered (see *Ginzei Hakodesh* 14,5). Words containing the same letters as the *Shem Hashem* (such as "*S'dei Chemed*" or "*elohim*" referring to idols) have no *kedushah* and may be erased.

Kisvei Hakodesh

The *issur* of destroying *kisvei kodesh* is *d'rabbanan* according to most *poskim* (Rambam, *Sefer Hachinuch*, Noda B'Yehuda), although some are of the opinion that the *issur* is *d'oraisa* (*Magen Avraham* 154,9). Therefore, all *kisvei kodesh*, written in any language, such as *Gemaros*, *Midrashim*, *siddurim*, notes of *shiurim*, and even children's books which are published to teach *halachah* or stories from *Chazal*, must be put into *geniza* (including the entire *sefer*, margins, covers and binding). The *Gemara Shabbos* (90A) states that "*Mekak Sefarim*" (decay of *sefarim*) must be put into *geniza*, including margins which were cut off or hole punches of Torah papers (*Ginzei Hakodesh* 8,7), which have already been studied from. Other *poskim* are *makel* on all margins (see M.B. 334,50). Slipcovers designed to honor *sefarim* must be put into *geniza*; those whose purpose is only to protect *sefarim* do not have to be put into *geniza*. Boxes which hold sets do not need *geniza* unless they are made

to honor the *sefarim*. Folders which are used only for *divrei Torah* must be put into *geniza*.

Where Jewish newspapers and magazines containing Torah articles are concerned, differentiation must be made between those whose primary purpose is printing news coverage and non-Torah subjects, and those which are primarily Torah-oriented. The former do not need to be put into *geniza* since the Torah becomes secondary to the rest of the paper and so the paper does not have the higher level of *kedushah*. In order that the Torah should not be subject to *bizayon*, these publications should be wrapped well in a bag and then may be placed in a garbage bag (*Ginzei Hakodesh*, in the name of Hagoan R' Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l and *ylcta* Hagoan R' Chaim Pinchus Sheinberg). Others require them to be double-wrapped (Agudas Yisroel of Illinois and CRC Guidelines). If the magazine contains Torah or *Hashkafa* articles which cannot be considered secondary to the rest of the content, the Torah pages should be put into *geniza*. It should be noted that a typical banquet ad book in Chicago contains several *pesukim* and *ma'amarei Chazal* and should be wrapped up before being thrown out. *Limudei kodesh* homework and *parshah* pages should be put into *geniza*; if the paper mainly describes classroom activities, it may be wrapped up and put into the garbage. Classroom notebooks for *limudei kodesh* are *shaimos*. Some *poskim* are lenient regarding Torah papers of temporary use and permit one to wrap them and then dispose of them (*Tzedaka V'chesed* 16,37). Binders which are used only for *limudei kodesh* have the status of *tashmischei kedushah* - accessories of *kedushah* - and may not be used for secular subjects unless a *tenai* (stipulation to allow other uses) was made. If no *tenai* was made, they must be put into *geniza*. *Pesukim* written on a whiteboard may be erased (see *Ginzei Hakodesh* 11,11) although great care should be taken not to write the *shem Hashem*.

Certain Torah-related papers do not need to be put into *geniza*. *Mareh mekomos* (citation of sources) for a *shiur* and *simanim* (hints to Torah) which have no real meaning have no *kedushah* at all (*I.M. Y.D. II, 75*). The same is true of drawings and sketches which refer to a *halachah* but lack captions. Words which inform consumers of a halachic status without additional instruction (such as "Yoshon") or are declarative statements (such as "This package may not be opened on Shabbos") are not *shaimos*. The same is true of *shailos* regarding *halachah* (the actual written questions).

Generally speaking, only *pesukim* of three words are subject to *geniza*. Writing a *posuk* in a non-straight line, such as in a curve or two words on top of two words, avoids *shaimos* issues. Those sending invitations must ensure that full *pesukim* are not written in a way which may lead to *bizayon* (*I.M. YD II, 134*).

Prevention of Bizayon

The responsibility to prevent *sefarim* from being subject to *bizayon* includes not just one's own *seforim*, but any *kisvei kodesh* one may encounter. If someone finds a *sefer* on the ground on Shabbos in a place without an *eruv*, he should ask a non-Jew to put the *sefer* in a respectable place. If this is impossible, one should carry the *sefer* together with another person into a safe place. If there is no one else available, one should carry it less than four *amos*, then stop (preferably sit down) and continue in this manner until one is able to place the *sefer* in a respectable place, but not into a *reshus hayachid*. (See *Shulchan Aruch* 334,17; 301,42; 266,7; *Ginzei Hakodesh* 2,40). A torn piece of a *sefer* which is not usable is *muktza*. However, it may be picked up from the floor on Shabbos in a regular fashion if necessary.

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