



Halachos of
SHAIMOS

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Please note that the material presented is not meant to be a comprehensive guide to the halachos of Shaimos. In any case of question or doubt a Rabbi should be consulted.

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Halachos of SHAIMOS

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Day 1

Introduction: One area of Halacha that in recent years has taken on increasing relevance is the halachos of Shaimos. With the proliferation of inexpensive and convenient printing, printed words of Torah now appear in all Jewish homes in a variety of forms. The Torah prohibits discarding דברים שבקדושה, *holy items*, in a non-respectful manner, i.e., throwing them into the trash. Items classified as דברים שבקדושה require גניזה, *respectful burial*, colloquially known as "Shaimos." This month we will discuss which common items are Shaimos and the appropriate method of disposal for each item.



Day 2

We will begin our discussion of Shaimos with halachos pertaining to seforim, parts of seforim, and items that service seforim (days 2 – 9). All seforim/siddurim are Shaimos. This includes chumashim, siddurim, machzorim, bentchers, meforshim (commentaries), etc. This applies regardless of the language of the sefer.

Additionally, photocopies of any of the above are also considered Shaimos (to be continued).

To illustrate: Diane was moving to a small apartment and knew that her new residence would not have room for all of her books. Diane inherited her great aunt's tattered copy of Gateway to Happiness, and had never touched it since. She decided to discard it instead of taking it with her. The book must be placed in Shaimos.

מ"ב ס' קנד סקכ"ד, גנזי הקודש פ"ח ס"א



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Day 3

A sefer/siddur etc. should only be placed in Shaimos if it is unlikely that it will be learned from. If part of the sefer is damaged and the rest is in good condition, the entire sefer **may** be placed in Shaimos if one anticipates that the sefer will not be used due to its damaged condition.

To illustrate: Diane is permitted to place the tattered copy of Gateway to Happiness in Shaimos because its condition renders it unfit to be used.

גנזי הקודש פ"ח ס"ב ובהגהה שם אות ט'



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Day 4

Pages of a sefer that became detached are Shaimos. This applies even if the detached part does not contain any words of Torah. Because the page as a whole contained words of Torah, the entirety of the page is *שקדוש*, *holy*, and is thus Shaimos. Similarly, the cover of a sefer that became detached should also be put in Shaimos.*

*Note: This halacha does not apply if the sefer was never learned from.

מ"ב ס' שלד שקל"ז ושעה"צ שקל"ה



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Day 5

We previously learned that a detached sefer cover is Shaimos, even if the cover itself does not contain any Torah content. A jacket/slipcase cover that is meant to beautify the sefer is considered Shaimos, as well. A clear laminated book cover that merely serves a protective function is not Shaimos, and may be discarded in the trash (if it is not apparent from the jacket that it serviced a sefer/siddur, etc).

To illustrate: Malka thoroughly enjoyed Rabbi Avigdor Miller's classic 'Rejoice O Youth'. Over time, she began to find the jacket cover cumbersome, and decided to discard it. This colorful book jacket is Shaimos.

Chedva treasured the siddur she received when she first began davening. After a number of years, the protective clear laminated jacket peeled off of the siddur. It may be discarded in the trash.

גנזי הקודש פ"ח סי"א



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Day 6

A cardboard box used to temporary hold a number of seforim together is not Shaimos. However, a box that is intended to beautify a sefer/siddur, and is made to protect it for a long time, is considered Shaimos.

To illustrate: Shira received a beautiful set of machzorim which came in a fancy leather case. Shira decided that since the machzorim would be housed on a shelf, the box was unnecessary. The box is considered Shaimos.

גנזי הקודש פ"ח סי"א



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Day 7

We previously learned that parts of a sefer that became detached are Shaimos, even if the detached parts are devoid of Torah content. This halacha only applies to parts of **the sefer itself**. A sticker (i.e., sticky-tab) or bookmark that was placed in the sefer is not Shaimos and may be thrown into the trash. The same halacha applies to gift wrapping around a sefer or any external tape etc. affixed to a sefer. Such items are not considered Shaimos because they do not service the sefer; rather their function is to assist the learner.

To illustrate: Gittel was concerned that her Chumash might get mixed up with that of someone else in her class. In order to distinguish her Chumash from everyone else's, she affixed a small piece of yellow tape to its spine. Eventually, the piece of tape fell off. It may be thrown in the trash.

גנזי הקודש פ"ח ס"י, ס"י"ב



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Day 8

A bag or box **designated** to function as receptacle for Shaimos becomes **שׂוֹדֵק**, *holy*, because it is servicing the words of Torah placed inside of it. Consequently, even when the seforim/papers etc. of Shaimos are removed, the bag/box itself is considered Shaimos and must be disposed of accordingly.

גנזי הקודש פ"ח סי"ז



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Day 9

A **used** mezuzah case is Shaimos. This applies even when the case does not come into direct contact with the mezuzah. Nails or tape that fasten the mezuzah to the doorpost are not Shaimos and may be placed in the garbage.

גנזי הקודש פ"ו סכ"א, סכ"ג



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Day 10

Thus far we have discussed the halachos of Shaimos as it pertains to seforim and their accessories. We will now turn our attention to the application of Shaimos to papers and the like (days 10 – 21). Any quotation from Tanach, Chazal, Meforshim, etc. that is meant to convey a complete Torah thought (be it an explanation of Torah, a halacha, a Torah perspective or conduct) is Shaimos. This applies to both printed and handwritten words of Torah, in all languages (to be continued).

שו"ע ס' שלד סי"ב



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Day 11

It was previously mentioned that even short quotations of Torah that convey a complete Torah thought are Shaimos. However, if the words of Torah are used merely for stylistic reasons but are not intended to convey a Torah thought per se, they are not Shaimos. This is referred to as *מליצה*, *stylistic prose*. At times, it may be difficult to determine if something is considered *מליצה* or not. A Rov should be consulted.

To illustrate: Tehilla spent a week in Eretz Yisrael and stayed with her older sister and family. Upon leaving, she wrote a thank you note to her sister. In it she wrote, "I see what a great wife you are – your husband must think about you *מי ימצא*!" In such an instance, the words of Tanach are merely being used for eloquence, and are thus considered *מליצה*. Consequently, the card is not Shaimos and may be thrown in the trash.

יו"ד ס' רפד ס"ב



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Day 12

Oftentimes, a single page may contain some words of Torah but primarily consists of non-Torah information. In such an instance, one may cut out the Torah portion and designate it for Shaimos and discard the rest of the page in the trash.*

To illustrate: Bina comes home from school with a weekly newsletter. The newsletter primarily consists of the weekly happenings at school, and at the bottom of the page has a short d'var Torah. The news portion may be thrown out and the Torah portion designated for Shaimos.

*Note: This is in contrast to portions of a page of a sefer that became detached (see above, day 4).

גנזי הקודש פ"ט ס"ו ובהגהה



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Day 13

A paper on which three consecutive words of a Pasuk from Tanach are written on a single line (not in the form of מליצה) is considered Shaimos. In such an instance these words are Shaimos even if they do not convey a complete thought.

אגרו"מ יו"ד ח"ד ס' ל ח ד"ה וכבר



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Day 14

We have learned that three consecutive words of a Pasuk of Tanach written on a single line is considered Shaimos. We have also learned that if these words are being quoted for style, it is not considered Shaimos. It is common that wedding invitations contain fragments of *pesukim* printed upon them (i.e. עוד ישמע בערי יהודה etc.). There is a dispute among the *poskim* regarding the status of such invitations. Some maintain that such invitations are Shaimos. According to this view, the entire invitation should be placed in Shaimos or the Pasuk cut out and placed in Shaimos and the rest of the invitation discarded. Others hold such quotes are considered מליצה and the entire invitation may be freely discarded. If the words of the Pasuk are not printed in a straight line (rather they are arched etc.), the invitation is certainly not Shaimos.*

*Note: One who is designing an invitation should keep this in mind. If the words of the Pasuk are indeed arched, then all the recipients of the invitation will not have a question of how to dispose of the invitation.

גנזי הקודש פ"ט ס"ו,
פסקי הגר"מ היינעמאן שליט"א



Day 15

Notebooks and tests that contain complete thoughts of Torah are Shaimos. This applies even if they were written by children.

גנזי הקודש פ"י ס"ו



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Day 16

Stories from Chazal are Shaimos. This applies even if the stories were translated and or adapted for children. Stories about gedolim/gedolim books are not Shaimos and may be discarded in the trash.*

*Note: Oftentimes, such books contain pesukim and or quotations from Chazal.

גנזי הקודש פ"י ס"ג-ד'



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Day 17

Pictures that are drawn to educate about Torah (i.e., pictures of the ארבע מינים, *four species for Sukkos*) are not Shaimos. If the pictures have a caption which is a quote from the Torah or Chazal (i.e., under the esrog it is written פרי עץ הדר), the quote is Shaimos.

גנזי הקודש פ"י סי"א



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Day 18

The complete text of a beracha is Shaimos even if it does not contain the name of Hashem. A fragment of a beracha (i.e. **שהכל נהיה בדברו**) is not Shaimos (to be continued).*

To illustrate: One year, Mosdos Rochel Leah sent out a sefiras ha'omer card for their annual fundraising drive. The calendar contained the text for the beracha of sefiras ha'omer. The card is Shaimos. The following year, they sent out a tefillas haderech card for their annual fundraising drive. This too, is Shaimos.

*Note: If one can discharge their obligation with the fragment of the beracha (such as **ברוך המבדיל בין קודש לחול** which constitutes a full beracha), those words are Shaimos.

גנזי הקודש פ"י סי"ג-סי"ד



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Day 19

We previously learned that a fragment of a beracha is not Shaimos. It is not uncommon to encounter food packaging that will inform the consumer of the appropriate beracha of the food, and will say ברכתו שהכל and the like. Such packaging is not Shaimos. However, if the food packaging contains the complete text of a beracha or a halacha, a Rov should be consulted regarding how to proceed.

גנזי הקודש פי"ב ס"ד



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Day 20

There is significant debate regarding the proper disposal of Jewish newspapers and magazines. The ideal solution is to remove the Torah content from these items for Shaimos, and throw the rest of the newspaper/magazine in the garbage. Oftentimes doing so can be tedious. Some opinions maintain that the entire magazine may be placed in Shaimos due to the Torah content contained therein. Others object to doing so, saying that such forms of media often contain pictures and advertisements that are contrary to the spirit of the Torah, and will thus degrade the other items of Shaimos with which they will be buried. According to some opinions, such items may be double-wrapped and then placed in the garbage. A Rov should be consulted.

גנזי הקודש פי"ד ס"ד,
פסקי הגר"מ היינעמאן והגר"ש פירסט שליט"א



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Day 21

Missionary literature that contains quotations from Tanach should be burnt or double-wrapped and then thrown into the trash.

פסקי הגר"מ היינעמאן שליט"א



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Day 22

Thus far we have dealt with objects that are referred to as דברים שבקדושה, *objects that possess an inherent holiness*, due to the words of Torah contained within. We will now move on to discuss objects that were used for a mitzvah (days 22 – 24). Objects that were used for a mitzvah do not possess inherent holiness and therefore are **not** Shaimos.

Nonetheless, such items may not be disposed of in a disgraceful manner. Rather, such items should be wrapped (according to some, double-wrapped) in plastic and then placed in the garbage (to be continued).

To illustrate: Following the conclusion of Sukkos, the Grossmeyer family was unsure what to do with their ארבע מינים, *four species*. The species may be wrapped (according to some, double-wrapped) and placed in the garbage.

The Katzenfield family was unsure how to dispose of their used wicks following Chanukah. The wicks may be wrapped (according to some, double-wrapped) and placed in the garbage.

רמ"א או"ח סי' כא ס"א,
פסקי הגר"מ היינעמאן והגר"ש פירסט שליט"א



Day 23

It was previously mentioned that items previously used for a mitzvah may not be disposed of in a disgraceful manner, and that such items should be wrapped (according to some, double-wrapped) in plastic and then put into the garbage. The Rema writes that some individuals are extra sensitive to the give respect to the mitzvah item and are careful to place such items in Shaimos. The Rema writes that one who does so will merit a beracha.

To illustrate: Meira noticed a stray string of tzitzis lying on the floor of the living room. It must have become detached from one of her boy's tzitzis! Meira retrieved the string and placed it in the family's pile of Shaimos.

גמ"א או"ח ס' כא ס"א



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Day 24

Certain items are loosely associated with mitzvos but possess no holiness whatsoever. Such items may be disposed of in the trash. Included in this are yarmulkes/kippahs, challah covers, kittels, tzedaka boxes, menorahs, plastic wrapping for arba minim.

עיין גנזי הקודש פט"ז ס"י ובהגהה
פסקי הגר"מ היינעמאן והגר"ש פירסט שליט"א



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Day 25

Electronic devices that store words of Torah on them (i.e., a usb drive, laptop) are not Shaimos. Such items may be placed into the trash.

הגר"ש פירסט שליט"א



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Day 26

Thus far we have discussed which items are classified as Shaimos. We will now turn our attention to the procedure of גניזה, the process of disposing of the Shaimos. The procedure of Shaimos disposal is as follows. Items that are classified as Shaimos are buried underground, in a place and at a depth that one is confident they will not become uncovered. Some say that prior to burial, the Shaimos items should be sealed in a bag (to be continued).

שו"ע או"ח ס' קנד ס"ה, גנזי הקודש פט"ו ס"ח,
פסקי הגר"מ היינעמאן שליט"א



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Day 27

Certain items possess an extra level of קדושה, *holiness*, and must be buried in a pottery vessel [or plastic substitute]. Included in this are megillos written on klaf (*special parchment*), mezuzos, and tefillin parshiyos. One who intends to dispose of such items should consult with a Rov.

שו"ע או"ח סי' קנד ס"ה



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Day 28

Once the Shaimos has been buried, there is no requirement to mark the area in which it has been buried. One may walk freely above the ground under which the Shaimos have been buried.

גנזי הקודש פט"ו סי"א,
אמת ליעקב יו"ד ס' רעו הערה 197



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Day 29

One should not print/write words of Torah in a place where there is concern that the paper or the like will not be accorded the proper respect or end up in Shaimos as the halacha mandates. To illustrate: Leah was designing a poster for the dedication of a new shul. If it seems likely that the posters will not be disposed of according to the halacha, she should not incorporate any pesukim/words of Torah on the poster (to be continued).*

*Note: At times, such a quote may be considered a מליצה and is thus permitted (see above, day 14). Alternatively, she can arch the letters so that no three words appear consecutively on a line.

שו"ע יו"ד ס' רפג וט"ז סק"ג



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Day 30

The importance of treating words of Torah with the appropriate dignity and respect should not be underestimated. Indeed, we find many places where Chazal stress the severity of kavod HaTorah, *honor of the Torah*. It is written that treating words of Torah with the proper respect and being careful with the halachos of Shaimos is a great zechus that protects Klal Yisrael from terrible decrees, Heaven forbid.

גנזי הקודש ע' יט



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Mazel Tov on
completing a month
of Halacha Yomi!