

בית הוראה דיעטראיט  
**BAIS HORAAH OF DETROIT**  
HALACHA HOTLINE

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF **HaRav Shmuel Irons** שליט"א VAAD HALACHA **Rav Aharon Yoel Sorscher** • **Rav Yissachar Wolf** • **Rav Boruch Miller**

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## ISSUE #15 – SHAIMOS FAQs

### Commonly Received Questions and their Answers

Below are some common questions and answers based on psakim from the rabbonim of the Bais Horaah. Please note: in the event one believes they have heard a different opinion in the past, one's family posek should always be consulted. Mareh mekomos for any specific answers below are available by email request to [ask@bhdetroit.org](mailto:ask@bhdetroit.org).

### • What types of items require Genizah (respectful burial)?

- 1) Items of Kedusha (sacred writings) - this includes any papers that include content intended to teach Torah
  - 2) Tashmishei Kedusha (items which are used in service of objects of kedusha e.g. a tefillin bag or a sefer Torah cover)
  - 3) Any item with Hashem's Name on it
- Below is a partial list of items in these categories:
    - Tefillin (battim and retzuos)
    - Mezuzos & Mezuzah Cases
    - Seforim, Siddurim, and books on Torah subjects (in any language)
    - Papers containing one or more of the names of Hashem
    - Tefillin Bag (see below for Tallis Bag)
    - Plastic Tefillin Boxes
    - Seforim, pages torn from a sefer (even if blank, and even a partial scrap), the cover detached from a sefer
    - Bracha cards (even those which do not contain Shem Hashem), i.e. cards for Ner Chanukah, Krias Shema, or Hadlakas Neiros
    - Torah pamphlets, i.e. parsha or halacha newsletters, even if they are intended to be discarded

### • What types of items may be placed in the trash?

- The following items may be wrapped once and placed in the trash:
  - Lulav (some have the practice of burning lulavim with their chametz)
  - Esrog
  - Schach (may be left near the garbage without wrapping for pickup)
  - Shofar
  - Talis Bag, Esrog case, Lulav case, Challah Board, Challah Cover or Mishloach Manos bags that contain part of a pasuk (Note: if the object contains a full pasuk, Genizah is required.)
- The following items can be placed in the trash without any wrapping:
  - Kippah
  - Kittel
  - Clear plastic from a Talis bag
  - Seforim slip-case which does not have design (typically a white box)
  - Shipping box used for seforim
  - Bookcase – if it was used exclusively for seforim, a halachic authority should be consulted.
  - Torah tapes/CDs/USB (however, the label may require Genizah depending on what is printed)

### • Is there a concern of erasing Torah or Shaimos that appears on a screen or is stored digitally?

- In general, digital displays are not a Shaimos concern because the content is temporary. Once the power is removed from the device, the image disappears. However, E-Ink based devices (such as the Amazon Kindle) use a technology that can be problematic; the image is formed by the movement of physical capsules, which remain in-place forever unless erased. As such, some opinions consider E-Ink displays similar to a written paper. Therefore, erasing the name of Hashem on such a device would be problematic, and a halachic authority should be consulted. Torah or Shaimos that is maintained on storage media such as a cassette tape, USB or hard drive may be erased or overwritten since the content is not visible.

### • What should be done with bibles, seforim or commentaries on the Torah that were written by non-Torah observant authors?

- A halachic authority should be consulted as, depending on the specific details, it may not be permitted to be placed in the trash or Genizah.

### • What should be done with tzitzis or a talis?

- The garment portion may be wrapped and put in the trash. The strings may technically be wrapped and put in trash; however, it is praiseworthy to act stringently by putting them into genizah.

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- **What should be done with frum magazines or newspapers?**
  - Since the primary purpose of these publications is for news and enjoyment as opposed to teaching Torah, Genizah is not required. However, because they contain Divrei Torah, they should be double wrapped. If, for some reason, such a publication contains one of the seven names of Hashem, that portion must be torn out and put into Genizah.
- **Can items which require Genizah be put into a Recycling Bin instead of burying them?**
  - No, this should not be done.
- **May a usable sefer be put into Genizah?**
  - Before putting a sefer into genizah, one should first attempt to give it away. However, if the sefer is an old print, has mistakes, or is otherwise undesirable, it can go immediately into Genizah. Journals or other such 'temporary-use' seforim may also be placed immediately into Genizah.
- **What should be done with food packaging that has pesukim written on it by non-Jewish companies? (i.e. egg cartons or bread packaging)**
  - These items may be placed in the trash because the printing was not done for a Torah purpose.
- **Do cereal boxes that indicate the correct bracha or Chanukah candle boxes with the brachos printed on them require Genizah?**
  - Cereal boxes may go in the trash since this is not considered a form of teaching Torah. However, Chanukah candle boxes with printed brachos (even without Shem Hashem) require shaimos.
- **Is it permitted to write pesukim on jewelry or clothing?**
  - It is not permitted to write pesukim or a Shem Hashem on jewelry or clothing. The reason for this is that in the course of normal usage, such items are exposed to unclean places which would constitute desecration for those words. If the item has already been created, a halachic authority should be consulted as to whether one may continue wearing it. In any case, such items will ultimately require Genizah.
- **What should be done with a wedding invitation that contains words of a pasuk?**
  - Since this item is not meant to teach Torah, it may be double-wrapped and discarded in normal trash. If the invitation includes a complete pasuk or one of the names of Hashem, Genizah is required. However, it is permitted to tear off that section and throw the rest into the regular trash.
- **Does a paper which contains the letters "ב"ה, "א"י"ה, "בעז"ה, or "בס"ד" automatically require shaimos?**
  - No, these particular abbreviations do not require Genizah. However, other substitutions even in other languages may require Genizah depending on the specific case. Simply replacing Hashem's name does not remove the Genizah requirement in most situations. A halachic authority should be consulted as this is a complex area of halacha.
- **Do homework and test papers that do not contain three words of a pasuk require shaimos?**
  - Yes. As long as the goal of these papers is to teach Torah subjects, the number of words from a pasuk does not play any factor. This includes most limudei kodesh homework, even if it doesn't have any words of a pasuk, and even if they are entirely in English. The leniency of "three words of a pasuk" applies only to materials that are not intended to teach actual Torah. An example of this is kriah books which have less than three words of a pasuk. However, any paper which is intended to teach Torah subjects requires burial even if contains less than three words of a pasuk.

***It is important for every Jewish home to have a bag or container designated for Genizah items. The container should be handled respectfully and should be accessible to members of the family to allow for proper treatment of shaimos items throughout the year.***

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