

# HALOCHOSCOPE



son uttering it indeed means Hashem, this is acceptable. If he is imitating the prevailing culture, he should realize that the word could represent an 'idol'. It is therefore important to think before using this word, and to have in mind Hashem. Even Shalom, when it means the Master of peace, may not be uttered in a bath-house. One may not use this word in greeting in these places, for the same reason. Moreover, the poskim debate whether one may even mention the name of a friend called Shalom in a bath-house. Some even forbid the use of a translation. Others permit using a translation, presumably because in translated form it does not have the same level of sanctity. This debate seems to be specifically about this word. It is considered both a real Name of Hashem and an ordinary word meaning peace. The translation of a true *Shaim* is considered, for certain *halachos*, like a *Kinuy* in the original Hebrew. The poskim debate mentioning them in places of the various levels of uncleanness. The consensus is to follow the lenient view. However, translations of real *Shaimos*, that in their original may not be erased, may not be uttered in unclean places. This includes the Yiddish Go-t or the English G-d.

Reading translations in print involves thinking. In unclean places, one may not think of holy things. In addition, bringing the publication into an unclean place involves some disrespect. However, in the case of a secular publication, the presumption is that it does not have true sanctity. It was never intended as a reverent reference. The issue then arises, while it may not be considered disrespectful to take this publication into a bathroom, may one read it there? If he thinks of Hashem, this could be forbidden. If he thinks of the prevailing mundane usage, this could be like mentioning it, which is forbidden as well. However, one may read and study things that discuss paganism, when trying to avoid it. One must take care not to accord it reverence. In this respect, if the literature clearly refers to *shaimos chol*, there should be no issue with reading it in a bath-room. [See Refs to sections A and B, Sanhedrin 60a 63b 92a 101a Shavuos 38b-39a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 40 43 84-85 156 334:12-21, YD 147 179:8 276:13 [284:2], CM 87:16 19 20, commentaries. Tzedaka Umishpat 16:31-39, notes.]

In conclusion, One must be careful when mentioning the word 'G-d', as detailed above. One should avoid using it in an unclean place. One may take secular books that mention god or gods into an unclean place. Books that contain reverent references to Hashem, in any language, should not be taken there, if possible. If they are already there, one should not read these in such places.

**On the parsha ...** *Go outside the camp ... For Hashem your Lord walks in the midst of your camp to save you ... and your camp shall be holy. He shall not see in you a matter of ervah .. and He will turn from behind you ... [23:16]* That means, He will not go before you as it is written. [Ibn Ezra]. Why does the Torah switch its language, sometimes saying that Hashem goes before us, sometimes in our midst, and when He sees a matter of *ervah* in us, He turns away from behind us? Perhaps, it is as though we will have placed Hashem behind us! By displaying a matter of *ervah* in His presence, we show such disrespect and irreverence that we 'push Hashem to the back' behind us. Then, He will leave the camp, out the back door!

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## This week's question:

**May a book of mundane content be left to read in the bathroom, if it has the word 'god' written inside? May one say this word in English, when referring to Hashem, in an unclean place? What about using it with no specific intention, or in a mundane context?**

## The issues:

A) Protecting the sanctity of sacred utterances and items

B) A place of mundane physical activity

C) The name of Hashem in a foreign language (not Hebrew), and with mundane intent

## A) The sanctity of utterances and sacred items

Sacred items are treated with reverence. The *mitzvos* that apply to this include: *Umikdashi tira'u*, show awe for the sanctuary; *Lo sechalelu*, do not desecrate Hashem and His Name; *Lo sa'asun kain*, do not profane items dedicated to Hashem as would be done to idols. Such items might be serve or service holiness, or be actual holy items. Items twice removed from the source of the sanctity, but used in its connection, have some sanctity. We learn from the *mitzvah* to cover the blood of slaughtered undomesticated animals or fowl, that one may not behave disrespectfully towards a *mitzvah*. While an item is in use for the *mitzvah*, or anytime that it is still viable, it may not be used for mundane purposes, even if it will not interfere with its uses in the service of the *mitzvah*.

The Torah says that when Hashem is within our camps, our camps shall be holy, and He shall not see within us a nakedness. These are a *mitzvah* to keep unholiness from the presence of holiness, including writings and mouthing words of Torah and *tefilos*, and a *mitzvah* forbidding bringing something holy into a place reserved for the unclean. In a place where it is impossible to contain unclean items, one may not recite a *tefilah*. If a holy item must be taken in there it must be kept covered. If a dirty item is brought into a clean place, covering it would be sufficient to allow holiness to remain.

There are levels of uncleanness, such as where a foul smell is or is not present. There are also levels of holiness, such as thinking, saying, uttering Names of Hashem, or bringing in items that are on one of the levels of sanctity. Depending on the level, the covering or concealment can vary. In general, there are two levels of covering up. One could put it into one pouch, or a double pouch, or one can erect a partition or canopy.

Items attain holiness as they are made with intent, or when dedicated for exclusive use in connection with holiness. A *Sefer Torah* is written with intent to endow it with special holiness. Its materials are also prepared in this way. Its manner of writing, lettering, content and preparation are all invested with sanctity. Printed *sefarim* also have holiness in their lettering and content. Ordinary items designated for use in servicing holy items attain their sanctity when they are first used. One can stipulate that they do not become dedicated for this use. Then they remain mundane while the holy item is not being

serviced by them. Items used for a *mitzvah* attain their sanctity only while they are being used in the service of the *mitzvah*. They should be treated with some respect afterwards.

Holy quotes in a secular publication are not usually cited for learning purposes. Newspapers sometimes contain Torah lessons, or words representing holy Names. Currency, sometimes contains an excerpt of a verse, a Name of Hashem, or even a picture of Scripture. Personal correspondence often includes a verse written in wit. There is an issue with respectful treatment and disposal of these items, leading the Talmud to forbid writing the Names of Hashem for no reason, or to write or engrave them on mundane items.

The poskim debate using a *passuk*, excluding Hashem's Name, in a personal letter. As a witticism many permit it, with stipulations. As a Torah lesson, it must be treated with due respect. Even the word '*shalom*', which is translated as 'peace' but also refers to Hashem in context, should not be written in full. Abbreviations may be used, but a minority consider any letter meant as part of Hashem's Name to be holy.

In an invitation, an entire *passuk* might be written, as a prayer or blessing, rather than a witty reference. This is discouraged by the poskim. While they need not be put in *genizah* (locked storage of old *shaimos*), when such items are disposed of they are left to rot with undesirable matter. If they are wrapped respectfully, or in their envelopes, and placed in there gently, this saves them from the disrespect. They will be buried in a landfill. If incinerated, they are destroyed indirectly, which is acceptable. If Torah thoughts must be included in a newspaper, they should be given their own page.

Currency will not be disposed of disrespectfully, but will be taken into places where the holy words might be shamed. If the words are too small to read without a magnifying glass, it is clearly not made to be studied. Further, there is a possibility that this does not even count as lettering. Photo-offset is also less like lettering than is printing. However, engraving and embossing might be considered lettering. Amulets were often hung on children who were not potty-trained. They contain holy Names written with special intent and are worn in a designated pouch. However, the pouch is never opened and the lettering is never read. The poskim discuss jewelry with the Name of Hashem on it. Firstly, assuming engraving could be considered writing. Second, there are substantial grounds to forbid benefiting from this jewelry. Third, the issue of going into unclean places is raised.

A *Sefer Torah* may not be taken into a rest room even with its cover and a pouch. *Tefilin* require a double pouch. Printed *sefarim* are a subject of debate. They need at least one pouch, and maybe two. Some maintain that items that contain no Names of Hashem, or are not printed or written in square characters require one pouch. A *talis* used for *davening* is considered more holy than the small *talis katan* worn all day. It should be left outside the rest room. [See Shabbos 61b Erchin 6a, Gitin 6b, Rosh Hashana 18b, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. Y.D. 276:13 282 283:4 284 O.C. 40 43, commentaries. Tzedaka Umishpat 16: note 43 Chavos Yair 16. Igros Moshe Y.D. II:134.]

### **B) Rest Rooms**

In Talmudic times a *bais hakisai*, privy, was a secluded area in a field. If used for solid relief it was a *bais hakisai kavua*. Whether or not the waste matter was present, the location itself posed a problem. A *bais hakisai arai*, unfixed area, is any spot chosen for urination, with less stringent rules. *Batei kisa'os parsiyos*, Persian privies, were constructed to remove all waste through a drain immediately. They also have a more lax ruling.

*Bais hamerchatz*, a public bath house, has a lot of body grime in the water. Even when nobody present is unclothed, the room is considered unclean. The changing rooms are less stringent when nobody unclad is present. A *mikvah*, ritual immersion pool, is only used when the body grime has been removed. It is considered a clean area when no-one present is unclothed. By association, one would avoid saying holy things there if possible. The room in which a married couple sleep is also treated as a possible unclean area. Modern day rest rooms are discussed by the poskim. If a bath or shower are also present, the room is likely to have some grime. Modern drainage makes it like *batei kisa'os parsiyos*. In general, while there are reasons to rule leniently on these rooms, the poskim avoid relying on these extensively. One on a trip wearing *tefilin* who needs to go, has no choice but to remove them and leave them somewhere, so he is allowed to take them in with him. If one is in a place where he can leave the sacred item outside the rest room in a safe place, he should not take it in with him. For items that require one pouch, many poskim rule leniently, allowing them to be taken there inside a pocket. [See Brochos 23b-26a Shabbos 40b 61b-62a Sanhedrin 21b, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. Y.D. 282:4 O.C. 43:1-2, 74, commentaries. References to Halochose II:44:C, VIII:39:B.]

### **C) Shaimos bela'az, Names of Hashem in a foreign language**

The Name of Hashem in a foreign language and script (used in many foreign currencies) is a discussion all unto itself. For most *tefilos* and *brochos*, one fulfills his duty in any language, provided that he translates it accurately. There is debate on whether certain *shaimos* can be translated properly, without losing their true meanings. The *mitzvos* that apply to uttering the Name and swearing apply to translations as well. Erasing a translation of a holy Name is more lenient than erasing one in the original Hebrew.

One might use it for mundane purposes for emphasis, like an expletive, the way pagans use names of their gods. Gentiles use the same word to mean a true G-d and a pagan god or concept. If they believe in Hashem as well as another power, we do not know what they mean when they use this word. In the Torah, there are *shaimos chol*, mundane names, that do not have the special sanctity of *Shaim Hashem*. [They still have the sanctity of a *sefer torah*.] In fact, one should take care not to afford them equal respect to true *Shaimos*. In English, we often distinguish them by not capitalizing them.

There is a Scriptural *mitzvah* forbidding mentioning other gods' names. [The *Tanach* mentions the names of gods. However, when mentioning a currently worshiped god, the Talmud changes it to a somewhat derogatory name. Defunct gods may be mentioned.] It is also forbidden to cause a pagan to utter the name of his god, *lo sazkiru*, do not cause the pagan gods' names to be mentioned. Mentioning a *shaim chol* with no reverence is permitted, as it is mentioned by the Torah. In addition, it does not represent a particular idol. A Jew uttering a name and attributing it with powers, means his own G-d. However, this itself poses a dilemma: utterance in vain. One may use Hashem's Name in prayer, even if it is an informal wish-out-loud. However, one must use it reverently.

Often we mention a *Kinuy*, appellation, in the original Hebrew, such as *Rachum*, the Merciful One. This can sometimes refer to ordinary people as well. In addition, some words are used as substitutes for the holy Names, to avoid uttering them, such as '*Ribono shel olam*', Master of the universe. The poskim debate the sanctity of a translation of the real *Shaimos*. Many consider them on the same level as a *Kinuy*. Accordingly, if the per-