



THE KEDUSHA OF SEFORIM

HONORING SEFORIM

Seforim are considered "the garments of HaShem," no less. Indeed, *Chazal* teach us that a person who treats them with respect will be respected by others; the reverse applies to a person who does not.

(אבות פ"ד מ"ו לפיה"מ, ס' חסידים סי' תתקטז)

Reb Shimon ben Tzemach, author of the *Tashbetz*, treated *seforim* with such loving care that he brushed the dust off them with a special silk cloth. In this merit, his reward was that the *seforim* which he authored would never be infested with bookworms.

In all the libraries that the Rebbe Rashab visited, he found that even when the *seforim* standing immediately near the *Tashbetz* were affected with bookworms, that *sefer* alone stood untouched.

(שנה בשנה תשכ"ג ע' 490)

Respect for *seforim* includes: placing them in a respectable bookcase, keeping them off the floor or a surface on which people are sitting, depositing torn pages in *sheimos*, setting them right side up, and keeping them at a distance from anything unclean.

(רש"י ור"י לאבות ד,ו, ר"ה שער היראה פט"ו, א"ר ס' מ סק"ה, שוע"ר סי' מ"ה ס"ג, פסקי הסיפור סוף הל' תפילין)

The *Maharil* – a *Rishon* who is a major source for many current *minhagim* – used to show his respect for *seforim* by telling anyone carrying a *sefer* to pass through a doorway ahead of him. Whenever a *sefer* fell, he would lift it up and kiss it.

(ליקטי מוהרי"ל סי' צח, צט)

Reb Yehuda HeChassid, a contemporary of *Rambam*, gives us numerous instructions on caring for *seforim*. For example: If a *sefer* and other valuables fall to the ground, one should lift the *sefer* first. Similarly, if liquid spills on a *sefer* and on other items, one should dry the *sefer* first. A *sefer* should not be placed near the edge of a table where it is likely to fall, and when handing someone a *sefer*, one should do so with his right hand. Finally, a *sefer* should not be used for any mundane purpose.

(ס' חסידים סי' תתקכג, תתצו, תתקכב, קט)

LOVING REVERENCE

Late at night, under cover of darkness, the *tzaddik*, Reb Yechiel of Gostynin, would steal into the *beis midrash* of Kotzk unnoticed and return every *sefer* to its proper place.

(היהודי הקדוש ע' יב)

A *sefer* should of course be positioned on the shelf right side up, not upside down.

It once happened that a certain fellow took a *Gemara* down from its shelf for reference and unknowingly replaced it upside down. Suddenly it crashed to the ground. He picked it up and replaced it – once again upside down, and the same thing happened. After this repeated itself again, he realized that something was amiss. He checked how he had placed it, and once the *sefer* was positioned correctly, it remained in its place.

(קב הישר פנ"ד)

The Rebbe related: "I was once in the presence of the Frierdiker Rebbe when another person present got up to leave without closing his *sefer*. Though the Frierdiker Rebbe was always careful not to trouble others, he called the man back and gently reminded him to close his *sefer*. After the man left I asked the Frierdiker Rebbe, 'I know how careful you are not to trouble others. Perhaps you could have instead asked me to close the *sefer*?'

"The Frierdiker Rebbe answered that aside from the importance of closing the *sefer*, it is preferable that the learner close the *sefer* himself."

(שיח"ק תשכ"ד ע' 246)

"THE BROKEN LUCHOS, TOO, WERE KEPT IN THE ARON"

Anyone who sees *seforim* in a state of disrepair and dishonor is obligated to save them. There was once a man who was not careful to do so, and after his passing his body was dragged from his grave and beaten. He later told his son in a dream that the reason for his disgrace was his former disregard for the *kedusha* of *seforim*.

(ס' חסידים סי' צו)

After recovering from an illness, Reb Elimelech

of Lyzhensk related what he had then seen in the higher realms:

"As I approached the entrance to the heavenly *yeshiva* of Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg, I met Mordechai, the late *seforim*-binder of our town. Knowing him to be a simple, unlearned individual, I asked him how he had merited reaching such a lofty sphere.

He told me how at his judgment, the *Beis Din shel Maalah* brought all the torn pages that he had collected over the years from the damaged *seforim* and placed them on the scale. This had earned him a direct entrance to *Gan Eden*. However, since he was so lacking in learning, he first had to be taught Torah, beginning with *nigleh*, the revealed dimension of the Torah, and now he was ready to study *nistar*, the Torah's hidden dimension – at the *yeshiva* of Reb Shmelke."

(אוצר הסיפורים ח"ה ע' טט)

SEFORIM AS PROTECTORS

The Rebbe taught that in addition to their obvious benefits, *seforim* protect a home and those who live in it.

The elder chossid, Reb Foleh (Refoel) Kahn, related: In the year תרע"ו (1915), when the Rebbe Rashab left the village of Lubavitch, he left behind a full crate of valuable *kisvei yad* (manuscripts) written by many Rebbeim and *gedolei Yisroel* in the Moscow home of a chossid by the name of Reb Zelka Parsitz. When I once visited Reb Zelka with another few *temimim*, we opened the box and saw what it contained. Reb Zelka told us that his home had been searched by the dreaded Secret Police numerous times, yet its officers had never once opened the box.

He added, "This box saved me a number of times."

When he was eventually asked to return it to the Rebbe, he was saddened, and said, "Who will now protect me at home?"

(לקו"ש ח"ג ע' 213, שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 116)

CONSIDER THIS!

- To whom is one showing esteem when according respect to a *sefer*?
- Why is closing a *sefer* and returning it to its place an act of respect towards the *sefer*?

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MARRYING A RELATIVE

According to Torah, a man may marry a close relative such as a niece or a first cousin. In recent generations it has been proven medically, that marrying such a relative poses a significantly higher risk of having children born with genetic diseases (such as blindness *r"l*). Would such a marriage now be forbidden due to the health risks to the children?

- The Gemara¹ actually considers it a mitzvah to marry a relative, especially the daughter of one's sister. The Rishonim² explain the advantage that it will result in a better marriage, and that he is helping his own family.
- Since this Gemara is brought as a halacha in Shulchan Aruch³, it would be impossible to forbid something which is explicitly permitted in Shulchan Aruch. One may⁴, however, suggest refraining from such a marriage due to the risks to the children involved.
- In the *tzava'ah* (ethical will) of Reb Yehuda Hachosid he cautions against marrying a niece. Many question how he could forbid something considered a virtue in the Gemara? There are those⁵ who explain that indeed both the Gemara and Reb Yehuda Hachosid were aware of dangers inherent in such a marriage, but the Gemara marshaled the principle *שומר מצוה לא ידע דבר רע* - one who engages in a mitzvah that has a **minimal** risk attached (where the element of danger is not common), the mitzvah will guard him from harm. The Gemara regarded the risk minimal enough for the mitzvah to save one's children from danger. However Reb Yehuda Hachosid realized that in his day people were marrying their relatives not purely for the sake of the mitzvah, and thereby forfeiting the safeguard afforded by the mitzvah, hence he warned against it.
- It should be noted that there are several published⁶ answers from the Rebbe in which he consents to marriages between relatives, provided they are healthy.

1. יבמות ס"ג ע"א, סנהדרין ע"ו ע"ב.
 2. רש"י ותוס' שם, מאירי ליבמות שם, רמב"ם פ"ב מהל' אסו"ב ה"ד ומגיד משנה שם.
 3. אה"ע סי' ב סעי' א.
 4. ציץ אליעזר חט"ו סי' מד, אבל ראה שו"ת דברי יציב חלק אבה"ע סי' ח.
 5. שו"ת אבן הראשה לר"א קלאצקין סי' לא; ספר אפי זוטרי על שו"ע אבן העזר שם (להר"י פארדו בנו של בעל החסדי דוד על התוספתא); וע"ע בשו"ת דברי חיים ח"א אבה"ע סי' ה; שו"ת שם אריה חיי"ד סי' כז.
 6. שערי הלכה ומנהג אבה"ע עמ' עז.

THE PANIM ME'IRO

Reb Meir Eisenstadt, also known as the "Maharam Ash," was born in Poland in the year *Taf Lammed*. He was a nephew of the "Shach" and learned by the "Magen Avraham" and Reb David Oppenheimer. He was known to be one of the greatest *rabbanim* and *talmidai chachamim* of his day and served as *rov* in many cities, culminating with the city of Eisenstaedt. He was the Rebbi of Reb Yonasan Eibshitz, and is most well-known for his *sefer* "Panim Meiros," amongst the other *seforim* he compiled. He was *niftar* on *Chaf Zayin Sivan* תק"ד (1744).



In his *sefer* "Kosnos or" Reb Meir writes:

"The *possuk* says "Am zu yatzarti li, thilasi yesapeiru" – 'This nation I have created for myself; they will tell my praise.' The Zohar says that the word 'Am', *this* nation, (as opposed to 'Ami, *my* nation) is a reference to simple folk. The Zohar also states that when the unlearned Yidden rise early to praise Hashem, He accepts it to be as if they have learned the deepest parts of Torah.

This is what the *possuk* says "Am zu yatzarti li" – I have created ignorant who cannot learn, "thilasi yesapeiru" – they can serve me by singing my praise.



It happened once that Reb Meir disappeared from his town for a full year, without leaving any indication of his whereabouts. The community, sure that he had passed away, wanted to appoint one the *dayonim* of the city as the new Rav. On the day that they convened to write the new "Ksav Rabbonus," a letter from Reb Meir arrived for his wife telling her that he knows that a *Dayan* will be appointed as the new Rav and she should not feel bad. He added that he had been notified from above by being shown the *possuk*, "Higdil alai akev," of which the last letters spell out "Leib" – the name of the new Rov.

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

DAILY COMMITMENT

During one *yechidus* with Mr. Peter Kalms (*Teves*, 5737), a famous British philanthropist and activist, various world issues were discussed.

Suddenly, the Rebbe said, "I would like to change the topic. It would be a good idea for you to begin setting aside time to learn Torah."

To this Mr. Kalms replied, "Certainly, Rebbe. I will set aside time twice a week for Torah study." But the Rebbe was not satisfied with this. "No, it has to be every day. It could be for just a few minutes at a time, but it must be a daily study. It is not important that you learn from the original; many *seforim* have already been translated."

"And," the Rebbe added with a smile, "If you do it in public, without keeping it a secret, others may learn from you..."



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