

Halacha Highlight

Ink that fades and loses its color

Shulchan Aruch Siman 32 Seif 27

אותיות ותבת שנמחקו קצת

Letters and words that become partially erased

Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק קכ"ח) mentions a dispute about the status of a letter that lost its black color and what remains appears red. According to Pri Megadim, since red is an invalid color for *tefillin*, if the ink fades to red the letter has become invalid and fixing it would violate the requirement that the letters must be written in order. Chasam Sofer disagrees and asserts that if the ink developed a red tinge as a result of age it remains valid. The requirement, *Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai*, is that *tefillin* must be written with ink that is black but if over time the ink develops a red tinge it remains valid. Nevertheless, one should retrace the letters with fresh ink to restore them to their black appearance. It is even permissible to retrace Hashem's name without concern that the new layer of ink is erasing the old layer of ink since they are both the same substance. Mishnas Sofer (סי' טי ס"ק ל"ד) rules that although one should not protest against those who follow the lenient opinion on this matter, *l'chatchila*, one should make an effort to follow the opinion of Pri Megadim and one should obtain new *parshiyos* whose ink is black.

Recently a new method of darkening faded letters was innovated. It is possible to spray a certain clear chemical onto faded letters or to heat up this chemical so that steam rises and the bottom of the parchment is held above this steam. The effect in both methods is that the

Overview

Siman 32 Seif 26:

If letters of Hashem's name touch it is permitted to separate them.

- ❖ The *seif* refers to where the letters became attached while writing but if they became attached after writing it is prohibited to separate the letters. (M.B. 126)
- ❖ It is certainly permitted to separate letters of Hashem's name attached to another word as long as one leaves the last dot before reaching the letter in Hashem's name intact. (M.B. 127)

Siman 32 Seif 27:

Letters and words that become partially erased - if enough remains that a child would still recognize the letter it is permitted to trace over the letter to darken it and it is not considered as though the letters were written out of order.

- ❖ If the letter was never dark enough the letters may not be traced since it is considered as though the letters are being written out of order. (M.B. 128)
- ❖ The *seif* applies when some of the ink remains but is faint but if it came off altogether tracing the letter would involve writing out of order. (M.B. 128)
- ❖ There is a dispute whether it would be considered writing out of order if the ink remains but fades to red. (M.B. 128)

letters darken to their original black color and the parchment remains white. Poskim (ע'י פסקי תשובות) write that as long as the letters were valid before this treatment there is nothing wrong with using this treatment to enhance the appearance of the letters and to assure that they should not fade to the point of being invalid altogether.