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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן קמ"ו סעיף ג'-קמ"ז סעיף א'

Halacha Highlight

Touching *kisvei kodesh* with one's bare hand

Rema Siman 147 Seif 1
ויש אומרים דהוא הדין שאר כתבי קדש
Some say that the same *halacha* is true for other *kisvei kodesh*

Shulchan Aruch mentions the prohibition against touching a *sefer Torah* with one's bare hands. Rema adds that there are authorities who maintain that one may not even touch other *kisvei kodesh*, meaning the other works of Tanach that are written on parchment with special scribe's ink (מ"ב סק"ג). He then notes that custom is not to be stringent about this matter but it is proper to be stringent if one did not first wash his hands. In other words, if one is not certain whether his hands are clean it is preferable for one to wash his hands before touching *kisvei kodesh*. When one has washed his hands it is permissible to touch *kisvei kodesh* with one's bare hands (מ"ב סק"ד).

Teshuvas Shev Yaakov (סי' י"א ד"ה גם) suggests that Rema's lenient ruling with regards to touching *kisvei kodesh* with one's bare hands explains why *sifrei Torah* generally have two rollers and other *kisvei kodesh* have only a single roller. Since it is prohibited to touch a *sefer Torah* with one's bare hands, it is necessary to have two rollers so that one will be able to hold the *sefer Torah* without having to touch it with one's bare hands. In contrast, since there is no prohibition against touching *kisvei kodesh* with one's bare hands two rollers are not necessary (ע' שערי תשובה סי' תרצ"א סק"ד). Rav Chaim Kanievski, however, relates that the Chazon Ish instructed that his *kisvei kodesh* should have two rollers since if they were to be made with only a single roller one would have to touch them by hand (ארחות רבינו ח"ג עמ' רט"ז). Rav Akiva Eiger (שו"ת רעק"א מהדו"ק סי' נ"ח) wrote that if one has a *mezuzah* affixed to his doorpost without a covering it is not proper for one to touch the *mezuzah* with his bare hand. It is best to pull one's garment down so that he could touch the *mezuzah* with his garment rather than with his hand.

Stories to Share

Beneath His Dignity

מ"ב, ס' קמ"ז, ס"ק ז': "ומצות גלילה אף כי רבה היא נהגו לכבד אף לקטנים..."

When a certain man was called up to do gelilah, he refused outright. "What, will I do gelilah like a little child?"

Although the gabbai tried to explain to him that it is a great mitzvah and children are honored only because they can do it and this will educate them to do mitzvos, he still refused.

At this point, the gabbai got upset. "I don't think you are allowed to refuse gelilah, just like it is forbidden to refuse an aliyah. Presumably, refusing gelilah carries the same punishment as refusing an aliyah. Our sages revealed that refusing an aliyah shortens one's lifespan, chas v'shalom..."

The man still refused, claiming that there was no correlation, although he could not explain why.

When this matter came to the attention of Rav Shammai Kehas Gross, shlit"a, he agreed with the man who had refused gelilah. "It seems clear that one who refuses to do gelilah since he believes this is beneath his dignity is not in the same category as one who refuses a certain aliyah. Regarding an aliyah, the gemara in Berachos states that refusing shortens one's life because it says of the Torah, כי הוא חייך. But that only applies to reading from the Torah, not lifting or wrapping it.

Rav Gross added, "Nevertheless, it is improper to refuse to do gelilah since this is a disgrace to the Torah. One must understand that honoring the Torah in any way whatsoever is a great honor!"

אורח כהלכה, ע' קנ"ג-קנ"ד

Overview

Siman 146 Seif 3:
It is prohibited to talk while the *haftorah* is read similar to the restriction during *krias hatorah*.

- One must also listen to the *berachos* recited with the *haftorah* and answer אמן. (M.B. 16)

Siman 146 Seif 4:
It is not necessary to stand while the Torah is read (some authorities are stringent and stand and this was the practice of Maharam)**.**

- When the Torah is being transported one is obligated to stand until it is no longer visible or until it reaches its place. Even leaning on something is not permitted. (M.B. 17)
- During the recitation of ברכו and ברוך ה' וכו' all opinions agree that one must stand. (M.B. 18)
- Bach asserts that even Maharam agrees that one is not obligated to stand; it is just correct to stand since a person should see himself as though he is standing at *Har Sinai*. Someone who is weak and will not be able to focus while standing should sit. (M.B. 19)
- All opinions agree that one may sit between *aliyos*. (M.B. 20)

Siman 147 Seif 1:
It is prohibited to touch a *sefer Torah* with one's bare hands without a kerchief. Some maintain that the same *halacha* is true for other sacred writings but this is not the custom. It is appropriate to be stringent if one did not wash his hands but when it comes to a *sefer Torah* even this is prohibited. **The most distinguished person who received an *aliyah* does *gelilah* and the custom is to purchase the honor for large sums of money in order to make the *mitzvah* dearer.** Some maintain that if the covering is linen on one side and silk on the other the silk should be next to the *sefer Torah* and rolled around the Torah but this is not the custom. The Torah should not be wrapped in a torn piece of material if another is available. One should not make a covering for a *sefer Torah* from old material that had already been used for a non-sacred purpose, see below *siman* 153.

- The Gemara explains that if one grasps the Torah with his bare hands and reads from it he is not rewarded for his act. The same is true if he grasps the Torah for *gelilah* or to fix it. Mere touching of the Torah is also prohibited unless it is absolutely necessary and even then one should wash his hands first. (M.B. 1)
- One must be careful during *hagbah* to not touch the *sefer Torah* with one's bare hands even when adjusting the parchment. It is permitted to touch the rollers with one's bare hands. Some are stringent about the matter and one who chooses to be stringent in a place that is not stringent must do so in a manner that people do not realize he is behaving stringently. (M.B. 2)
- Rema's discussion is limited to where the other *sefarim* are written on parchment with דיו but printed *sefarim* may be touched with one's hands even without first washing. However, if one knows that he touched dirt he must first wash his hands. (M.B. 3)
- When Rema writes that it is best to be stringent he refers to where one has not been paying close attention to where his hands have been and there is a concern that he touched a covered part of the body but if one washed his hands there is no reason to be stringent. (M.B. 4)
- The *golel* [who nowadays is called *hagbah*] takes reward equal to all the *aliyos*. (M.B. 5)
- Some rule that the most distinguished person is given *"gelilah"* even if he did not receive an *aliyah* and that is the common practice. (M.B. 6)
- Nowadays the custom is to honor even regular people with *"gelilah"* to promote peace. Although the *mitzvah* of *"gelilah"* is great the custom is to honor children who can understand matters of sanctity to train them in *mitzvos*. The *gabbai* should not honor someone with *hagbah* whose hands shake and one whose hands shake should not accept an offer to do *hagbah*. (M.B. 7)
- *B'dieved* if they made the covering from old material it is not prohibited for use. (M.B. 12)
- Any article made to serve a sacred object may not be made from something that had been used for mundane purposes but it may be used for a *talis* bag. (M.B. 13)