



Overview

Halacha Highlight

Reading newspapers on Shabbos

Shulchan Aruch Siman 307 Seif 16

אבל לשון הקדש שרי

But in lashon kodesh it is permitted

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' ט"ז) enumerates many categories of literature, some that one may not even read during the week and others that one may not read on Shabbos. Rema adds that when Shulchan Aruch restricted reading books of proverbs and parables he was referring to books written in a foreign language but if they are written in lashon kodesh it is permitted. Mishnah Berurah (סי"ק ס"ג) explains that lashon kodesh contains sanctity and one could learn Torah related matters from the words themselves. Therefore, if one receives a letter written in lashon kodesh it is permitted to read it since one can study lashon kodesh from the letter and often times it contains pesukim as well. However, financial documents may not be read in lashon kodesh. Rav Nissim Karelitz (איל משולש שטרי הדיעות פ"ז הע' קל"ט) writes that nowadays everyone would agree that in Eretz Yisroel one may not read books of proverbs and parables simply because they are written in Hebrew since that is the spoken language and reading such books will not increase one's understanding of lashon kodesh. Additionally, it is possible that Modern Hebrew is not lashon kodesh that some Poskim permitted one to read on Shabbos.

Mishnah Berurah (שם) discusses reading a newspaper on Shabbos and writes that although Shvus Yaakov is lenient, many other authorities adopt a stringent position since it contains business related matters. Poskim divide newspapers into three different categories. 1. A newspaper that contains news without any business related matter may be read according to some authorities while others maintain that it is preferred to adopt a stringent position since it may contain distressing news which one may not read about on Shabbos. 2. A newspaper that contains business related matters may not be read on Shabbos even if one avoids the business related matters since people should avoid temptations. 3. Newspapers that have columns devoted to Torah related matters and columns related to business related matters. Many Poskim rule that one may read the Torah related sections whereas there are other authorities who write that one should adopt a stringent approach and just gaze at the words rather than read them aloud (פסקי תשובות אות ט).

Siman 307 Seif 18:

Regarding consultation with a רב, whatever is permitted during the week is permitted on Shabbos.

- ❖ It is permitted only when related to health but otherwise it is prohibited since it is considered weekday talk. (M.B. 67)

Siman 307 Seif 15:

If a wall or curtain contains images of unusual looking animals or images of people involved in important events, e.g. the wars of Dovid and Goliath and they write the identity of the animal or person, it is prohibited to read it on Shabbos.

- ❖ The concern is that it will lead to reading financial documents. (M.B. 57)

Siman 307 Seif 16:

It is prohibited to read secular proverbs and parables, erotic literature as well as books about wars on Shabbos. They are also prohibited during the week since it constitutes a gathering of scoffers and violates the prohibition of האלילים, אל תפנו אל, meaning you should not turn towards your inclination and erotic literature also involves exciting one's yetzer hora. Whoever writes, copies and certainly prints such literature causes the public to sin. It appears that one can infer that the prohibition against secular literature and books about wars applies when it is written in a foreign language but if it is written in lashon kodesh it is permitted. (This appears correct to me based on the Tosafos in perek כתבי אל and the custom is to be lenient.)

- ❖ History books written from a religious perspective may be read on Shabbos even if written in a foreign language since one can learn mussar and awe of Hashem from them. (M.B. 58)
- ❖ Certainly one who goes to theaters and circuses or other pastimes violates this. Even on Purim it is only permitted to remind one of Achashverosh. As a result of our multitude of sins the matter is not taken seriously and people go to the theater and will face serious consequences. (M.B. 59)
- ❖ Chazal relate that one who causes others to sin is worse than one who kills since causing him to sin affects him even in the world to come. (M.B. 61)
- ❖ Whatever may not be read may not be moved. (M.B. 62)
- ❖ Financial documents may not even be read in lashon kodesh. With regard to reading newspapers, although Shvus Yaakov is lenient many authorities adopt a stringent since the newspapers contain financial news as well. (M.B. 63)
- ❖ Many authorities are stringent and prohibit this and accordingly there is no difference whether the letter was written in lashon kodesh or a foreign language. (M.B. 64)

Siman 307 Seif 17:

It is prohibited to study on Shabbos and Yom Tov anything other than Torah and even other books of wisdom are prohibited. There is an authority that is lenient and following his rationale it is permitted to gaze in a telescope on Shabbos (and turn it around or move it as is discussed in siman 308).

- ❖ The custom is to be lenient but Elya Rabba writes that one who is G-d fearing will be stringent. (M.B. 65)