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Ask The Rav



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Writing Pesukim on Invitations

Q: I have been asked many times by people preparing wedding and Bar Mitzvah invitations who write pesukim on them whether it is preferable not to write complete pesukim, since the invitations will eventually be thrown into the garbage and may thereby be subject to bizayon.

A: The common practice is to be careful not to write complete pesukim on wedding and Bar Mitzvah invitations, especially in ksav Ashuris, because they may come to be treated disrespectfully. However, many poskim have been meikil regarding writing half-pesukim, and therefore, one who is meikil certainly has upon whom to rely.

To understand the basis of this ruling, the Rambam, in his teshuvos (Siman 7), writes that it is forbidden to write pesukim on paper that may come to be treated disrespectfully. However, this is not necessarily a proof to our case, since the Rambam is referring specifically to ksav Ashuris and not to other forms of writing.

Similarly, in Shu"t Rav Pe'alim (Yoreh Deah IV, Siman 34), he writes that in his time a new practice had developed of printing invitations in ksav Ashuris for weddings, with some people even writing pesukim such as "Motzei ish motzei tov," etc. Since the recipients do not preserve these invitations and they are eventually thrown into the garbage, he writes that those who do so should be admonished. See also Mishnah Berurah (Siman 638, se'if katan 24), who prohibits engraving a pasuk such as "BaSukkos teishvu" and the like and hanging it in the sukkah, because it may come to bizayon.

See also Shu"t Igros Moshe (Yoreh Deah II, Siman 135), where Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l writes: "I myself was careful not to write any pasuk even on the wedding invitations of my sons and daughters, not even 'Kol sasson v'kol simcha,' etc., and this is the proper practice for everyone." Accordingly, it would seem that one should not write pesukim on invitations, since many people are not careful to wrap the invitations before discarding them, and this could cause others to come to bizayon. Nevertheless, there are several grounds for being meikil and לימודי זכות for those who do write pesukim on invitations.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, in another teshuvah (Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah IV, Siman 38), presents a basis for leniency in writing pesukim on invitations. He writes that although elsewhere he ruled stringently that even the words "Kol sasson v'kol simcha, kol chassan v'kol kallah" should not be written, there are those who write "Kol sasson v'kol simcha" on two separate lines, with two words on each line, and similarly "Kol chassan v'kol kallah" on two separate lines. The reason is that two words alone cannot be considered writing a pasuk, and since they are written on separate lines, they do not combine to constitute the writing of a pasuk, since such lines do not appear in the pasuk itself. This is seemingly a valid sevara. Furthermore, it is well known that the intention is not to write the pasuk itself, but rather to use the language of the pasuk as a brachah. He concludes that it is more logical to be lenient in this regard.

Another limud zechus can be based on what is quoted in the sefer Nekiyus V'Kavod LaTefillah: There is no concern with writing portions of pesukim. The concern is specifically with complete pesukim, since they may come to bizayon. However, half-pesukim that have no independent meaning, particularly when they are being used merely as מליצות, are permitted. Thus, it is customary to write, "Od yishama b'arei Yehudah u'v'chutzos Yerushalayim kol sasson v'kol simcha," which is actually a combination of two parts of a pasuk in Yirmiyah (33). He does note, however, that some are machmir even in such a case. See there. Several other poskim likewise permit writing half-pesukim, including Shu"t Avnei Yeshpeh (II, Siman 79) and Sefer V'Yaalehu Lo Yibol (II, page 121) in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l. One can also add the limud zechus brought in Yalkut Yosef (Orach Chaim I, Siman 3), who writes that perhaps there is less kedushah in letters printed in our standard printing process, and this is not comparable to the Rambam's ruling, which deals with actual writing. This is especially so since there is some difference between printed letters and the letters used in a Sefer Torah. Similarly, in Shu"t Shlom Yosef (Siman 15, os 3), the Rogatchover Gaon was asked regarding envelopes on which the return address was printed in ksav Ashuris, seemingly contrary to the ruling of the Rema (Siman 284). He responded that although the Rambam instructed against this, in our case, since it is only printed, there is no concern. See there. Similar leniencies regarding printing are found in Shu"t She'eilas Shlomo (II, Siman 93).

The sefer Or Sarah (page 128) brings the rulings of Rav Ovadia Yosef zt"l that when printing advertisements, invitations, receipts and the like, and writing pesukim on them, they should be written in a non-Ashuris script—not in square letters like those used in a Sefer Torah—but rather in a rounded script and the like. In such a case, there is no concern if the invitation is subsequently discarded, and it is permissible to write them this way l'chatchilah. He likewise permits writing half-pesukim l'chatchilah, as is apparent from the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 284:2) regarding an iggeres shelomim. As a final limud zechus, one can also add the opinion of the Panim Meiros, brought in Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak (Siman 18), who brings a proof from the Yerushalmi in Sotah that pesukim that were written with the intention that they eventually be erased do not have kedushah from the outset. Just as they do not have kedushah with regard to making one's hands tamei, so too they do not have kedushah with regard to erasing them. Things that are written for only a limited amount of time and are then intended to be discarded may not have the same status of kedushah, since "kol ha'omed limachok k'machuk dami." Although the Minchas Yitzchak himself challenges the Panim Meiros' proof from the Gema-

ra in Sotah, the sefer Shulchan HaMevuar (Hilchos Sefer Torah, Siman 282, page 283) defends his reasoning and explains that this principle can indeed be derived, as is also apparent from Shu"t Chavos Yair (Siman 16) and Sefer Bnei Yonah (Siman 276), as discussed in the Minchas Yitzchak. Another possible basis for leniency is to make a condition from the outset that no kedushah should take effect upon the printed words. This is also based on the words of various poskim who maintain that writings containing divrei kedushah that were not written lishmah do not have the same prohibition against erasing them. Although there are those who are machmir, with an explicit condition that no kedushah should take effect, there is room to be meikil.

The sefer Tzedakah U'Mishpat of Rav Yaakov Blau zt"l likewise permits writing half-pesukim on invitations, such as "Od yishama," etc. He explains that this is because they are not written in ksav Ashuris, there is generally some variation from the exact wording of the pasuk, and some write them in a rounded script. In such a case, there is room to be meikil.

L'halacha, although there are many grounds for leniency, nevertheless our practice is to be machmir not to write complete pesukim in ksav Ashuris, due to the concern that they may come to bizayon.

Feeding a Child Food with a Hechsher That His Parents Do Not Accept

Q: I have been asked many times regarding food bearing a hechsher that the father does not accept. May he give it to his young children? Chazal say (Yevamos 114b), "Lo sochelum" — "Lo saachilum," that one may not feed forbidden food to a child. Perhaps the father is merely machmir for himself and does not actually consider the food questionable or assur. This question is especially common when someone receives food as gifts bearing various hechsheirim, some of which he does not accept. If he cannot give the food to his children, what should he do with it?

A: If the father himself does not use this hechsher, it is because he is concerned that the food is not completely acceptable for him to eat. If so, why should he give it to his young children? Even if he personally considers it presumably kosher b'dieved, we know that the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 343:1) rules that a father may not actively feed his child even a rabbinic prohibition. This does not only mean placing the food directly into the child's mouth; even placing the food in front of him so that he will eat it himself is prohibited.

The Mishnah Berurah (343:5) writes that one may not give a child food even merely to play with, such as a grasshopper, because the grasshopper might die and the child might eat it. Giving him candies with a hechsher that is not acceptable to the father is therefore considered as though he is actively feeding him.

The Magen Avraham (Siman 616, se'if katan 2), explaining the ruling that one begins chinuch with a child at nine years old, writes that although chinuch generally applies to the father, nevertheless, it would seem that one may not give the child forbidden food, since this is comparable to feeding him neveilah בידיים. This is not comparable to a sukkah, where one may give him food outside the sukkah, since in that case the eating itself is not inherently assur. Here, however, the food itself is prohibited, and it is therefore like giving him neveilah. The implication is that even when the father does not place the food directly into the child's mouth, but merely places it in front of him and the child eats it himself, this is prohibited.

Furthermore, sometimes the hechsheirim that the father does not accept involve possible Torah-level concerns, such as orlah, tevel, canned fish, and the like. Although the Be'er Heitev (616:4) and Mishnah Berurah (ibid., se'if katan 5) permit giving a small child something that may contain chametz on Pesach, that leniency is referring to a child who is ill, as they explain there.

In addition, the entire concept of chinuch is to train the child how to conduct himself when he grows older, due to the concern of "dilma asi l'misrach." For example, when Tisha B'Av falls on Motzaei Shabbos, we do not give a child to taste from the kos of Havdalah. Therefore, it is certainly important to educate a child to eat food with the hechsher accepted by his father, so that as he gets older he will understand to ask and inquire which hechsheirim are acceptable.

Feeding a Child from a Non-Toiveled Utensil

Q: Is it proper to feed a child from a glass plate or a glass bottle that has not been toiveled, since the obligation of tevilas keilim is only d'rabbanan? What if the utensil cannot currently be toiveled and the child needs to eat?

A: A child's eating is not merely considered the child's own act of eating; it is also the father's use of the utensil, since the father is responsible for feeding his child. Accordingly, the prohibition applies to the father, who should not feed his child from a utensil that has not been toiveled.

Even if the child eats by himself, the purpose of tevilas keilim is to remove the utensil from the tumah of an aku"m and bring it into the kedushah of Yisrael. Just as we are careful regarding a child not to have him nursed by a non-Jewish nurse (Yoreh Deah 81), so too one should not give him food from a utensil that still has the status of tumas aku"m.

Although according to most poskim tevilas keilim is d'rabbanan (Yoreh Deah 120), and regarding glass utensils everyone agrees that the obligation of tevilah is only d'rabbanan, as explained in my sefer Ohel Yaakov on the laws of tevilas keilim, nevertheless, the concept of tumas aku"m itself applies even on a d'rabbanan level, therefore it would be forbidden for a parent to feed their child from a utensil that wasn't toveled, this was the opinion of Harav Moshe Feinstein Zt"l brought in the sefer Oheli Yeshuran.

However, when the child needs to eat immediately and there is no other option, it is permissible b'dieved, as we find similar rulings in orach chaim siman 343, and in the sefer Tevilas Keilim (4:2) .

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