

## Proper Treatment of the Name of God - Part I – Background and Wedding Invitations

- I. Introduction.** The next chapters discuss issues that pertain to the proper treatment of the name of God both in print and in electronic form. We will focus specifically on those issues of *shaimos* that relate to modern technology and/or contemporary society. In order to properly understand the issue we must preface with a detailed explanation of the status of *ksav ashuris*. We then cover the application of these halachot to the modern wedding invitation.
- II. K'sav Ashuris .**
- A. What is K'sav Ashuris?**
1. Letters of a *sefer Torah*. In general, the term *ksav ashuris* refers to the type of writing that is used in our *sifrei torah*. Such letters have a special status of *kedusha* even if they are not written to express any words of Torah.
  2. *Gilyon Maharsha (Yoreh Deah 284)* expands the definition of *k'sav Ashuris* to include any block print. Based on this definition it would seem that even secular Hebrew newspapers and books have to be treated with the same respect as *ksav ashuris*. Many authorities, however, point out that even if block print is considered to be *ksav ashuris*, when printed from a printing press in a way that would clearly not be a valid for writing a kosher *sefer torah* (see *Chayei Moshe* chapter 13 footnote 39 for a complete list of authorities who subscribe to this view) they do not have any special *kedusha*.
  3. Rashi letters. *K'sav Sofer (Responsa Even Haezer 22)* points out that “Rashi letters” are certainly not to be considered *ksav ashuris*. In fact, some suggest that Rashi invented this style of writing with the specific intention to avoid any problems of *ksav ashuris* (*Responsa Machane Chaim* 1:25).
- B. What special halachot pertain to ksav ashuris? Rama (Yoreh Deah 284:2)** cites an opinion that forbids writing secular material in *ksav ashuris*. *Pischei Teshuva (Yoreh Deah 271:20)* writes that one may not discard secular hebrew books written in *ksav ashuris* in a disrespectful fashion. This opinion seems to apply even according to those authorities who allow writing secular material in *ksav ashuris*. *Sefer Reishis Chochmah (Sha'ar Ha'yirah* chapter 15 s.v. “*v'kein*”) points out that Hebrew newspapers should not be treated disrespectfully for this reason. Indeed, Rav Moshe Betzalel Alter of Gur, rules that secular Israeli newspapers may not be brought to the bathroom. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Responsa Igros Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:76*) permits bringing newspapers printed in Hebrew to the bathroom because you can't learn any *halachot* from them.
- III. Wedding Invitations.** When people get married there are numerous halachic issues that must be dealt with. It is crucial that a young couple have a Rav who they feel comfortable with who may address all of their halachic queries.

Sometimes the issues pertaining to the wedding invitations can be lost in the myriad of halachic issues that arise around the time of the engagement and wedding. We will outline the two primary halachic issues pertaining to invitations.

A. *Pesukim*. It is a common practice for people to include segments of *pesukim* relating to the theme of marriage on the top of wedding invitations. The *Shulchan Aruch* (283:4) rules that one should not write *pesukim* on a *tallit*. *Shach* (ibid.) explains that this is prohibited because eventually the *tallit* will be thrown away (one does not have to put a *tallit* in *genizah*) and the *passuk* would be thrown away with it. For this reason, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *Shlit"l* (*Kovetz Teshuvot* 115) writes that *pesukim* should not be published in newspaper advertisements. Based on these sources, at first glance it would seem to be prohibited to print *pesukim* on wedding invitations, as they are likely to be discarded in the trash. However, whether it is indeed prohibited to print *pesukim* and the exact parameters of the prohibition is the subject of debate amongst the leading contemporary *poskim*. It should be noted that this discussion is limited to *pesukim* that are exact quotes. The phrase “*Na’ale et Yerushalayim al Rosh Simchateinu*” is not a *passuk* and may therefore be printed on any invitation according to all authorities.

1. Rav Moshe Heineman *SHLIT"l* in an article published on the Star – K website writes that the *passuk* of “*Od Yeshoma*” is most often used as a *melitza* (common expression or figure of speech) and is not written on the invitation as a *passuk*. For this reason he argues that one may print invitations with the entire *passuk*, and one who receives such an invitation may throw it away.
  2. Rav Aaron Tendler in a response on the JemSem website takes a far more stringent approach. He argues that the *passuk* “*Kol Sasson V’kol Simcha*” (even without the words “*od yishama etc.*”) may not be printed on an invitation even if it is split up and even if only two words from the *passuk* are printed. The fact that the letters are generally written on a curve serves to address the problem of *sirtut* (prohibition of three block lettered words in a row without a line) but does not help to address the issue of *shaimos*.
  3. Rav Herschel Schachter *SHLIT"l* has ruled that printing the *passuk* beginning with “*Od Yishama*” is prohibited but merely printing “*kol sason etc.*” is certainly only a *melitza* and therefore permissible.
- B. *K’sav Ashuris*. Based on the above discussion about *ksav ashuris*, Rav Herschel Schachter has said that wedding invitations should not be written in *ksav ashuris*. Many early *poskim*, including *Rav Paalim* (Responsa; Yoreh Deah 32) and *Ksav Sofer* (Responsa; Even Haezer 22), also take the stringent view on this matter. However, *Chasam Sofer* (cited in *K’sav Sofer* ibid.) allowed wedding invitations to be written in *ksav ashuris*. The

logic for this ruling is that invitations should not be considered “*divrei chol*” (mundane words), but are considered to be words written to perform the *mitzvah* of rejoicing with a *chassan* and *kallah* in the nicest form.

Indeed, *Aruch Hashulchan* (*Yoreh Deah* 283:14) notes that most people have the practice of using *ksav ashuris* for wedding invitations.

**IV. Conclusion.** We have discussed the details of the issue of *shaimos* as it relates to wedding invitations. Next week, we will *iy”h* continue our discussion of contemporary issues of *shaimos* with a halachic analysis of the status of tapes and compact discs that contain Torah. We will also discuss the propriety of including the heading “*bet heh*” and “*bet samech daled*” on secular papers.