

## Shaimos Guidelines

**Rabbi Moshe Heinemann, Star-K Rabbinic Administrator**

It is forbidden by the *Torah* to discard holy objects by throwing them in the trash. Objects which have been used for a *mitzvah*, although they have no *kedusha*, holiness, (of their own) may also not be thrown, as they are, into the garbage. However, one may burn them or wrap them in plastic and put them in the garbage. Included in this category are *s'chach* of the *sukkah*, *tzitzis*, *esrogim*, *lulavim*, *hadasim*, *aravos*, and a *talis* bag.

Objects which do have *kedusha* must be wrapped in plastic and buried. Included in this category are *tefilin*, *tefilin* bags, *mezuzos*, *mezuzah* covers, and *seforim*, whether handwritten, printed, or photocopied.

### **Holy Objects Also Include:**

1. Paper on which a *halacha*, Jewish law, is printed or written with intention to tell the *halacha*, a commentary of the *Tanach*, *Mishna*, *Gemara*, *Rishonim*, and *Acharonim* or a *medrash* of *Chazal* which is intended to explain a *posuk*, verse, or to teach us how to conduct ourselves in *mussar* or *hashkafa* [Jewish outlook o ethics].
2. A paper on which three consecutive words of a *posuk* from *Tanach* have been written in one line with the intention of quoting the *Tanach* (as opposed to a *melitzah*, a saying, which is not *shaimos*). Invitations from organizations and individuals that contain parts of *pesukim* are *shaimos*, however, the sentence *Od Yishama*, as frequently included in wedding invitations, is a *melitzah*, not intended to explain the *posuk*.
3. Any paper or material on which is written one of the names of *HaShem*, G-d. However, the Hebrew letters IY"H, BE"H, and B"H may be discarded according to the *halacha* and Jewish custom, however, it is an act of piety to tear off those and put them into *shaimos*. The Hebrew letters BS"D definitely may be put into the trash.

In the above cases, the *shaimos* or *divrei Torah*, may be cut away from the paper and be buried, if so desired. However, pieces of paper that fell off from a *sefer*, even if there is no writing or print on them, are considered *shaimos*. Letters, or printed matter, in the Hebrew language are not *shaimos* if they do not conform with one of these specifications. Letters or printed matter in English, or any other non-Hebrew language, are *shaimos* if they conform with the above stipulations.

Newspapers and magazines which contain secular information should not be put into *shaimos*. They degrade the real *shaimos* that are buried with them, especially if the advertisements and pictures are not within the spirit of the *Torah*. The pages that have *Torah* may be removed and put into *shaimos*, or the whole paper may be wrapped in paper and then placed in a plastic cover, *kli besoch kli*, one covering over another covering, and placed into the garbage.

If a *sefer* was covered with a book cover, that cover, when taken off, should be put into *shaimos*. Homework and test papers in *Limudei Kodesh*, Jewish studies, may be *shaimos* depending on whether they fall into the above categories. One may dispose of a *yarmulka* in the garbage.