

HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

Volume 16 Issue 4



{ TOPIC }

Kissing Mitzvah Objects



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► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita on current issues.

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Kissing Mitzvah Objects

Throughout the day we kiss many different mitzvah objects, such as *tzitzis*, *tefillin*, and *sifrei Torah*. In this issue we will discuss the custom to kiss mitzvah objects.

Kissing is an act by which one connects to purity.¹ When kissing a mitzvah item, we show how valuable the mitzvah is to us.²

Kissing *Tzitzis*

The Rema³ says that when one “sees” his *tzitzis* he should kiss them.⁴ However, no mention is made in the Rema to kiss them when most people do, which is during *Krias Shema* in the morning. The *Darchei Moshe*⁵ does mention that some have the custom to kiss *tzitzis* when reciting “*u’re’isem...*”⁶

The *Kaf Hachaim*⁷ says that each time one recites the word “*tzitzis*” he should kiss them. The *Aruch Hashulchan*⁸ mentions to kiss the *tzitzis* a few times when reciting the parshah of *tzitzis*, but does not mention when. However, in another place the *Aruch Hashulchan*⁹ mentions to kiss them by *l’vriysem osa*, but he says that if one does not so it is

1 *Pischei Shearim* 10:7. Refer to *Vitzvar Yosef Bar* 1:2-3.

2 *Rama* 24:4; *Aruch Hashulchan* 3.

3 *Ibid.*

4 See *Oles Yitzchak* 3:3 regarding kissing the knots.

5 24.

6 *Ben Ish Chai, Va’eira* 1:21.

7 24:18.

8 24:3.

9 60:9.

not an issue.¹⁰ The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*¹¹ mentions that one should kiss the *tzitzis* when reciting the word “*tzitzis*” during the recital of *Krias Shema*. When one says “*u’re’isem*” he should look at the *tzitzis* and kiss them. One holds the *tzitzis* until “*u’nechmadim*” (in *Emes V’yatziv*) and then kisses them and puts them away.

Some do not have the custom to kiss *tzitzis* during *Krias Shema*,¹² but most people follow the custom mentioned in the *Darchei Moshe* to kiss them.¹³

The custom of Harav Moshe Feinstein, *zt”l*,¹⁴ was to only kiss his *tzitzis* by *Emes* and not during the rest of *Krias Shema*.

On Tishah B’Av at *Shacharis* many do not kiss the *tzitzis*, since no *brachah* is made on them.¹⁵

When putting on *tzitzis*, one should not kiss them between the *brachah* and the wrapping since it would be a *hefsek*.¹⁶

Baruch She’amar

The custom is to hold two *tzitzis* when reciting *Baruch She’amar* and kiss them upon the conclusion. Some *poskim* say to just hold the *tzitzis* during *Baruch She’amar* without

10 Refer to *Yalkut Yosef* 25, page 434, who mentions that kissing the *tzitzis* is not required when reciting “*u’re’isem*.”

11 17:7.

12 Opinion of the Gra (*Beis Baruch* 11:13; *Beis Avi* 3:16). This was also the opinion and custom of the Chazon Ish, *zt”l* (*Daas Noteh* 1, page 203:37, 2, page 390:733). For more on this, see *Siach Tefillah*, page 112:footnote 27.

13 *Otzer Kol Minhagei Yeshurun*, page 150.

14 *Rivevos Ephraim* 2:48:99.

15 *Mishnas Yosef* 1:93:3.

16 *Yalkut Yosef* 1, page 19:3.

mention of kissing them.¹⁷ However, the Mishnah Berurah¹⁸ and others¹⁹ do say to kiss the *tzitzis* upon the conclusion of *Baruch She'amar*. Some suggest that kissing the *tzitzis* at the end of *Baruch She'amar* shows love to the *tzitzis*, since one is holding them throughout the recital of *Baruch She'amar*.²⁰

Some mention that there is a custom to hold two *tzitzis* because it says “*Baruch*” in *Baruch She'amar* 13 times, and there is no *brachah* without the name of Hashem (which equals 26). Therefore, we hold two *tzitzis* strings, which have 16 strands of cotton and 10 knots, equaling 26.²¹

Removing and Kissing the Tefillin

One should kiss the *tefillin* both while removing them and while putting them on.²² By kissing the *tefillin* one shows how precious the mitzvah is to him.²³ (Kissing the *tefillin* when putting them on is not considered a *hefsek*.)²⁴ However, the Shulchan Aruch does not mention kissing the hand once one touches the *tefillin*.

17 Magen Avraham 51:1; Kaf Hachaim 48:1; Aruch Hashulchan 51:2.

18 51:2.

19 Ben Ish Chai, Vayigash 1:7; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 14:2. See Rivevos Ephraim 8:516.

20 Gam Ani Odecha (Shlesinger), page 21.

21 Otzer Kol Minhagei Yeshurun, page 151.

22 Beis Yosef 28, Shulchan Aruch 28:3, Elyah Rabbah 5, Shulchan Aruch Harav 28:10, Chaye Adam 14:15; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 10:20; Ketzos Hashulchan 8:6, Aruch Hashulchan 28:7, Kaf Hachaim 28:18. Some say one should kiss the tefillin when removing them from the bag (Kaf Hachaim, *ibid.*). Although all the *poskim* say *chachamim* should kiss the tefillin when taking them off and putting them on, it means everyone should do so (Elyah Rabbah 28:5; Os Chaim V'shalom 28:4). There is no difference if one wishes to kiss the tefillin box or the tefillin while they are in their plastic covering (Daas Noteh 3, page 189:377).

23 Levush 28:3, Kaf Hachaim 28:18. Refer to Chesed Lalafim 28:5.

24 Nemukey Orach Chaim 28:2, Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:10, Rivevos Ephraim 1:27:1; Daas Noteh 3, page 189:376. Refer to Halachah Berurah 28:13, who argues; see Otzros Yosef 2, page 9; Mein Omer 1:54, page 78.

Kissing Tefillin While Davening

The Shulchan Aruch²⁵ mentions when one recites “*u’keshartam l’os al yadecha*” during *Krias Shema*, he should touch his *tefillin shel yad*, and when saying “*l’totafos bein einecha*” he should touch his *tefillin shel rosh*. The Mishnah Berurah²⁶ says one should do this when we mention *tefillin* in the second *parshah* of *Shema*.²⁷

The Aruch Hashulchan²⁸ mentions that some kiss the hand after touching the tefillin, but this is not warranted. In fact, the *poskim* who discuss touching tefillin do not mention kissing one’s hand, but this seems to be the custom of many. However, some do indeed mention it.²⁹

There are other places in davening where the custom is to touch the tefillin (and kiss one’s hand afterwards). These include “*Oter Yisrael b’sifarah*,”³⁰ “*Yismechu hashamayim v’sagel ha’aretz*” in *Hodu* and *Yehi Chevod*.³¹ This also applies when saying “*Yotzer ohr u’vorei choshech*” in *Birchos Yotzer Ohr*.³²

Harav Moshe Feinstein, *zt”l*,³³ did not have the custom to kiss his tefillin when reciting “*posei’ach es yodecha*” during *Ashrei*. However, others do quote this as being the custom.³⁴

25 O.C. 61:25.

26 61:39.

27 Refer to *Mishneh Halachos* 18:35.

28 61:10.

29 *Chayei Adam* 14:15 (it is done to show how special the tefillin is to us); *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 10:17.

30 *Mishnah Berurah* 25:13.

31 *Be’er Moshe* 8:50.

32 *Ibid*. Refer to *Be’er Heitiv* 59:1; *Mases Kapai* 1, page 41. See *Ben Ish Chai*, *Shemos* 1:1, who mentions not to touch the *shel rosh* in this situation.

33 *Rivevos Ephraim* 2:48:99.

34 *Be’er Moshe*, *ibid*.

The Steipler Gaon, *zt"l*,³⁵ would kiss the box of the *tefillin shel yad* while reciting “*u’keshartam l’os al yadecha*” in *Krias Shema*.³⁶

Kissing a *Sefer Torah*

The Rema³⁷ says that a parent should bring his child to kiss the *sefer Torah*, to train him in mitzvos and to show the importance of the *sefer Torah*.³⁸

When the *sefer Torah* passes in front of one or if one passes the *sefer Torah*, the custom is to kiss the outside of the *sefer Torah* with the mouth.³⁹ If one can’t do so, he places his hand on the *sefer Torah* and then kisses his hand.⁴⁰

Some question the custom to kiss the hand after it touches the *sefer Torah*.⁴¹ However, others mention that there is no issue with this, since one is doing so to indicate that when his hand touches the *sefer Torah*, his hand has *kedushah*.⁴²

Some raise an issue with kissing the *sefer Torah* with one’s lips, since if one has a cold he is now transferring germs from his lips to the *sefer Torah*. If another person kisses the *sefer Torah* after him it could pose a danger. In addition, when kissing the *sefer Torah* with one’s lips one has to come

35 *Toldos Yaakov*, page 302; *Orchos Rabbeinu* 1, page 44:41.

36 See *Rivevos Ephraim* 6:12.

37 *O.C.* 149:1. This is also quoted in *Levush* 149:1.

38 See *Minhagei Hachida*, page 96:4; *Kaf Hachaim* 155:12.

39 *Kitzur Shlah*, page 137; *Chesed L’Alafim* 135:9; *Kaf Hachaim* 10, *Yesod V’shoresh Ha’avodah* 8:9, *Shaarei Ephraim* 10:4, *Halichos Shlomo Tefillah* 12:footnote 68, *Beis Baruch* 31:169.

40 *Shaarei Ephraim* 10:4. Refer to *Minhag Yisrael Torah* 149:4, *Pischei Shearim* 10:4, *Edos Yisrael* 63:page 159. Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zt"l*, was opposed to kissing the *sefer Torah* with one’s hand and then kissing one’s hand (*V’aleihu Lo Yeibol* 1, page 100).

41 *Shaarei Rachamim* 10:5.

42 *Pischei Shearim* 10:7.

איז ער להקצי"ה בעולמו אל יזאמור שאלה הן המצוות של הלכה בלבד... (ברכות ה.)

close to it, and why should this person be able to say that he is closer to the *sefer Torah* than others?⁴³ The custom of many *gedolim*, however, was not to be concerned with this.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, in a situation where one knows that someone who has a contagious cold kissed the *sefer Torah mantel*, Harav Elyashiv, *zt"l*, said that it should be removed and washed.⁴⁵

When one is carrying a *sefer Torah*, he should not lower the *sefer Torah* for children to kiss, as this is a disgrace to the *sefer Torah*.⁴⁶ The Yaavetz⁴⁷ mentions that when a child kisses the *sefer Torah* the parent should make sure that his nose and mouth are clean.

It is not proper for a chazzan to walk around the shul with the *sefer Torah* so people can kiss it. Instead, the congregants should go to the *sefer Torah* and kiss it.⁴⁸

One is allowed to touch the *sefer Torah* with his *siddur* and then kiss the *siddur*.⁴⁹

One should be careful if a non-Jew was invited to a

43 *Edos L'Yisrael*, page 159:63; *V'yas Avraham*, page 297, footnote 120; *Orach Ne'eman* 134:11; *Osrei Lgefen*, page 133; *Oles Yitzchak* 3:3; *Orchos Harav V'Hrosh Hayeshivah*, page 60. See *Shaarei Siach*, page 93:165; *Yisa Yosef* 1:32.

44 *Kuntres V'zos HaTorah*, page 18, footnote 77. See *Edos Moshe*, O.C. 19-20. The custom of Harav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, is to kiss the *sefer Torah mantel* with his mouth (*Ohel Yaakov*, *Kavod Sefer Torah V'sifrei Kodesh* 1, footnote 37, see *Asicha* 2, page 258).

45 *Chashukei Chemed*, *Maseches Avodah Zarah* 17a.

46 *Rivum Sheinbuch* 16, page 4, *Tzitz Eliezer* 12:40, *Shaarei Siach*, page 93:166; *Beis Baruch* 31:171, *Yad Yitzchak* 3:166:2, see *Aruch Hashulchan* 282:2, *Chai Moshe*, page 156.

47 *Siddur Yaavetz*, page 160.

48 *Yad Yitzchak* 1:166:2.

49 *Avnei Derech* 10:13; *B'mareh Habezeq* 6:10. Some quote the opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zt"l*, who did not like using one's *siddur* for this purpose (*Ohel Yaakov*, *Kavod Sefer Torah V'sifrei Torah*, page 260:6. For others who allow it, see *ibid.* 10:25, footnote 29).

hachnasas sefer Torah or to the *seudah* after it. The non-Jew should not be given the *sefer Torah* to kiss.⁵⁰

Kissing the *Sefer Torah* before the *Brachah*

Before reciting the *berachah* on an *aliyah* some have the custom to kiss the *sefer Torah* by taking a *tallis*⁵¹ or the *gartel* of the *sefer Torah* and passing it on the *klaf* of the Torah.⁵² Others are concerned that doing so may cause one to erase some of the letters of the Torah.⁵³ Others have the custom to touch the *klaf* near the letters, and not to actually touch any letters of the *sefer Torah*.⁵⁴ Many have the custom to kiss the *sefer Torah* at the end of an *aliyah*.⁵⁵ However, there is no need to kiss the place that was just read.⁵⁶

Pointing the Pinky Finger

There is a custom to point the pinky finger at the *sefer Torah* during *hagbah*.⁵⁷ Some say there is a source for this *minhag*,⁵⁸ while others say that there is no real source; therefore, many have the custom not to point any finger during *hagbah*.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ *Chedvasa Tlisei*, page 51:1.

⁵¹ *Aruch Hashulchan* 139:15. Refer to *Alei Siach*, page 96:7.

⁵² *Shaarei Ephraim* 4:3, *Halichos Shlomo Tefillah* 12:footnote 68, *Shaarei Halachah U'minhag*, O.C. 85, *Orchos Rabbeinu* 1, page 71:27; see *Ketzos Hashulchan* 25:badei 24.

⁵³ *Shulchan Hatohar* 139:8, *Shaarei Rachamim* 4:4, *Nemukei Orach Chaim* 139:1, *Avnei Yushfei* 7:29:5; see *Kaf Hachaim* 27.

⁵⁴ Harav Yisroel Belsky, *zt"l*.

⁵⁵ *Magen Avraham* 139:14, *Yad Ephraim* 12, *Elyah Rabbah* 14, *Shaarei Ephraim* 4:21, *Mishnah Berurah* 35, *Aruch Hashulchan* 15, *Piskei Teshuvos*, page 161, *Shaarei Halachah U'minhag*, O.C. 85.

⁵⁶ *Siach Tefillah*, page 258.

⁵⁷ *Meam Loez*, *Devarim* 27:26:page 1037, *Minhag Yisrael Torah*, page 181, *Rivevos Ephraim* 2:80:23, 5:215, 6:63:4. A lefty should use the same finger to point as a right-handed person (*Be'er Moshe* 2:3:14, *Yemin Moshe*, pages 38-39:footnote 68).

⁵⁸ *Lev Chaim* 4:page 193 (new).

⁵⁹ Harav Yisroel Belsky, *zt"l*; this was the custom of Harav Shlomo Zalman

איז ער דאס צו טוהן? און ווען? (ברכות ה.)

Those who point at the *sefer Torah* kiss their finger afterwards.⁶⁰ Some point out that the pointing should be done with the index finger,⁶¹ but whoever points uses the pinky.⁶²

Kissing the *Paroches*

When leaving shul, some have the custom to kiss the *paroches*.⁶³

When getting an *aliyah* and passing the *paroches* on his way to his seat, some have the custom to kiss the *paroches* out of love for it.⁶⁴ Some who speak from the *bimah* or the *shtender* in front of the *paroches* have the custom to kiss it before speaking.⁶⁵ It's possible that the reason for this is because the speaker has his back to the *aron kodesh*. When he kisses the *paroches* he shows that he is doing so for the honor of Hashem.⁶⁶

Placing One's Hand on a *Mezuzah*

Many have the custom when entering or leaving a room to place a hand on the *mezuzah* ⁶⁷ and then kiss their hand⁶⁸

Auerbach, *zt"l*, and the custom of Harav Elyashiv, *zt"l* (see *Doleh U'mashkeh*, footnote 272). Refer to *Siach Tefillah*, pages 248-249:footnote 65, *Rivevos Ephraim* 5:215.

60 *Meam Loez*, *Devarim*, *ibid*.

61 *Sefer Chaim* 3:6.

62 Opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, quoted in *Teshuvos Hagrach* 1, page 177, 2, page 599. Regarding the practice to use the pinky finger, see *Don U'din* 1:35.

63 *Maasei Nissin* 2, 293.

64 *Shaar Ephraim* 4:35; *Likras Shabbos* 2, page 129, footnote 32.

65 *Heichel Avodas Hashem*, page 10.

66 Refer to *B'shvilei Haminhag* 2, page 99.

67 *Birchei Yosef* 285:2, *Meam Loez*, *Eikev*, page 578.

68 *Pischei Mezuzah* 285:16. Refer to *Salmas Chaim* 570, *Sefer Matamim*, page 116:8, *Misgeres Hashulchan* 11:18.

to show love for this mitzvah.⁶⁹ Others kiss the *mezuzah*.⁷⁰ Some say that one should only touch the *mezuzah* without any kissing.⁷¹ One who does kiss the *mezuzah* should not do so out of habit, and should have in mind what is written in the *mezuzah*. One should recite the following when placing a hand on the *mezuzah*: ה' שומרי ה' צלי על יד ימיני ה' ישמור צאתי ובואי לחיים ולשלום מעתה ועד עולם וכו'.

The Birchei Yosef⁷² says the Arizal had the custom to place his middle finger on the *shin* of the *mezuzah* and then kiss his finger. There is no obligation to kiss the *mezuzah*, although it is a nice practice.⁷³

The Chazon Ish had the custom to look at the *mezuzah* without touching it.⁷⁴

Kissing the Land of Eretz Yisrael

The Gemara⁷⁵ relates that Rav Abba kissed the rocks of Akko. The Rambam⁷⁶ mentions that the greatest of wise people would kiss the stones and roll in the dirt of Eretz Yisrael.⁷⁷

The Brisker Rav was asked why he did not kiss the stones

69 Refer to *Ben Ish Chai, Vayeira* 1:21.

70 Harav Yisroel Belsky, *zt"l*; see *Chayei Adam* 15:1, *Secheil Tov*, pages 66-67; *Toras Chaim*, page 165.

71 *Darchei Moshe* 285:2, *Drisha* 1, *Ben Ish Chai, Ki Savo* 2:3; see *Pischei Shearim*, pages 113-114.

72 *Y.D.* 285:4.

73 *Melamidecha L'hoyel* 1, page 255:7.

74 *Dinim V'hanhagos of the Chazon Ish, Y.D.* 3:5:10, *Orchos Rabbeinu* 3, page 164:2, *Derech Sichah* 1, page 517.

75 *Maseches Kesuvos* 112a.

76 *Hilchos Melachim* 5:10. For a discussion about kissing the stones on Shabbos, see *Chashukei Chemed, Maseches Kesuvos* 112a.

77 For more on this see, *Vitzvar Yosef Bar* 1:7.

of Eretz Yisrael. He replied that it is only meant to be done by one who is a great, wise person — a *talmid chacham*.⁷⁸

It should be noted that one who does kiss the stones of Eretz Yisrael is not fulfilling any mitzvah when doing so. It should only be done by someone who is on a level to do so.⁷⁹

The Ponovezher Rav kissed the land of Eretz Yisrael upon the onset of *shemittah*.⁸⁰

Some have the custom to kiss the stones on the Kosel Hamaaravi.⁸¹

The Shlah⁸² mentions kissing the graves of the Arizal and Harav Yosef Karo (the author of the *Beis Yosef*).

The Rambam would kiss the graves of our *Avos* in the Me'aras Hamachpeilah.⁸³

Kissing Food

When seeing a piece of food on the floor, some have the custom to pick it up and kiss it.⁸⁴

Kissing an *Esrog*

Some quote the custom to kiss the *esrog* on Hoshanah Rabbah after one has finished using it.⁸⁵

Kissing *Sefarim*

When one sees a *sefer* on the floor he should kiss it while

78 *Mases Hamelech, Maseches Kesuvos*, page 373. For a discussion on this, see *Chashukei Chemed, Maseches Kesuvos* 112a.

79 *Chashukei Chemed, Maseches Kesuvos*, ibid. See *Mases Hamelech*, page 373.

80 Ibid.

81 *Tzitz Eliezer* 10:1:79,j

82 *Igeres Eretz Yisrael* page 217.

83 *Sefer Chareidim*, page 254; *Admas Kodesh*, page 91.

84 *B'noheg Sh'b'olam*, page 188.

85 *Otzer Yisrael* 7, page 120.

picking it up.⁸⁶ One who sees an upside-down *sefer* should kiss it.⁸⁷

Kissing Matzah and Maror

The Mishnah Berurah⁸⁸ says that some people kiss matzah, *maror*, and *daled minim*, as well as the sukkah when entering it. This is all done to show the love for the mitzvah.

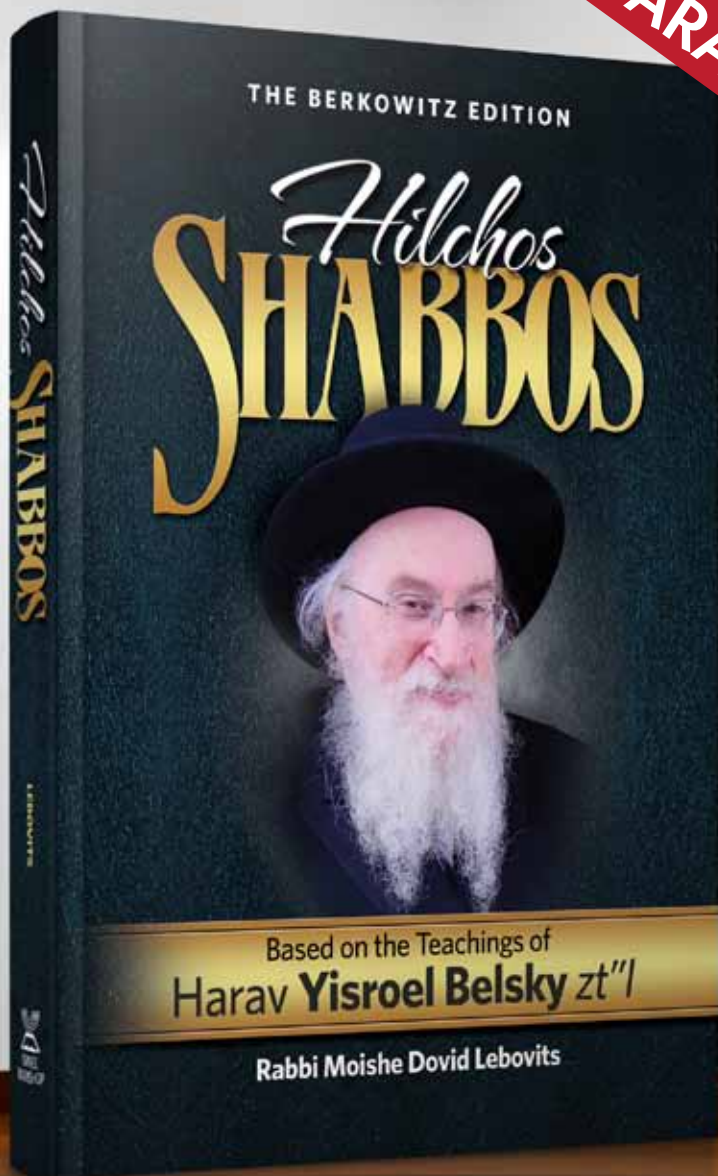
⁸⁶ *Aruch Hashulchan*, Y.D. 282:11.

⁸⁷ *Beis Lechem Yehudah*, Y.D. 282.

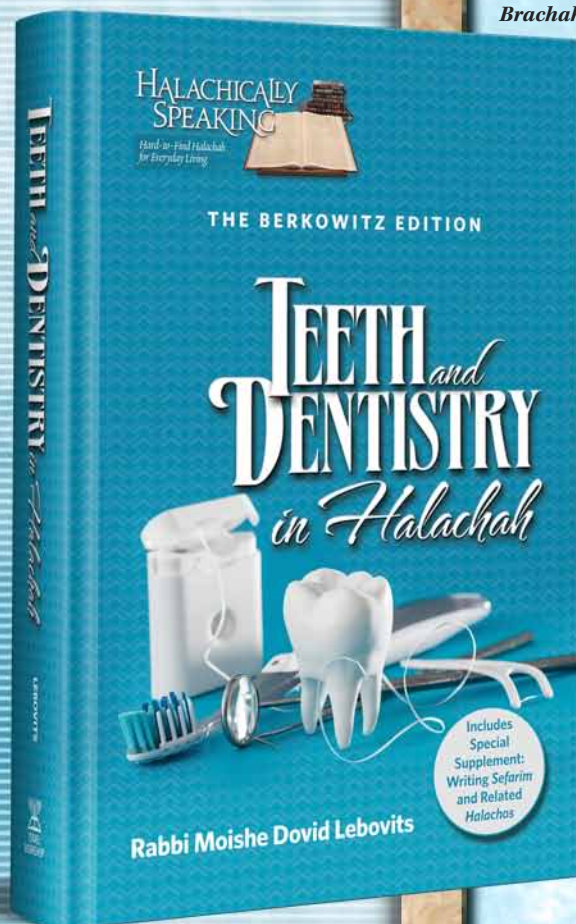
⁸⁸ 477:5.

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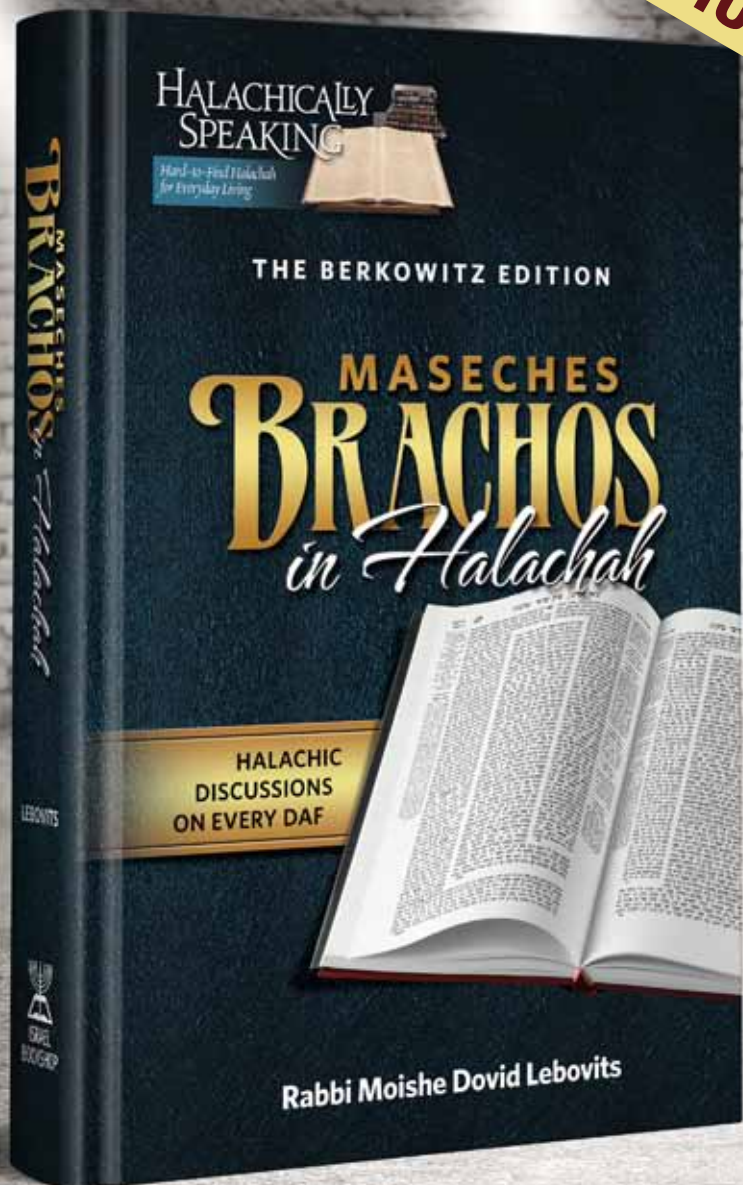
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Ithaca, NY

Valley Stream, NY

Freeport, NY

Levittown, NY

Garden City, NY

Middle Village, NY

College Point, NY

Farmingdale, NY

East Setauket, NY

Westbury, NY

Monroe, NY

Bellport, NY

Bronx, NY

Pelham, NY

Canarsie, Brooklyn, NY

Yorktown Heights, NY

Howell (Lakewood), NJ

Paramus, NJ

Columbia, MD

Owings Mills, MD

Clermont, FL

Jacksonville, FL

Port Orange, FL

University Heights, FL

Royal Palm Beach, FL

Pembroke Pines, FL

Hollywood, FL

Fort Lauderdale, FL

Parkland, FL

Boynton Beach, FL

Coral Springs, FL

Framingham, MA

Waltham, MA

Stroughton, MA

Warrensville Heights, Ohio

Philadelphia, PA

Norfolk, VA

Virginia Beach, VA

Richmond, VA

Any questions please call

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