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THE DEVELOPMENT OF *MINHAG* AS A REFLECTION OF HALAKHIC ATTITUDE: FASTING FOR A FALLEN *SEFER TORAH*

The significant room left for custom, for *minhag*, within the rich tapestry of Jewish observance is clearly displayed both in practice and in text. Just as the Torah, Oral and Written, explicit and derived, stands as the embodiment of the revealed Divine will, and the enlightened perceptions of the Talmudic sages comprise the formidable body of rabbinic law, yet another layer of wisdom translated into behavior is welcomed to a place of honor among the actions and attitudes that constitute the mandated Jewish existence. This layer draws its authority from the Jewish people directly, whom the Talmud assures us are “if not prophets, then certainly the descendants of prophets.”¹ The religious conduct of the Jewish community, in whole or in sections, attains the status of law, differing from biblical and rabbinical precepts in priority² and severity, but not in authority or in the earnest nature with which issues of *minhag* are considered.

It is, then, with such a mindset that the great decisors of Jewish law have continually viewed *minhagim*, probing their individual natures to uncover the essence of intent and significance beneath the surface, analyzing their structures to determine the most accurate practical manifestation. It is thus instructive to examine one such example of traditional behavior, a *minhag* subject perhaps to multiple possible origins, with ensuing ramifications as to the details of its observance.

Many observant Jews are aware, from the earliest stages of their education, of an apparently obligatory response to the spiritual calamity and disgrace of a Torah scroll falling to the ground. The reaction to this unfortunate event has traditionally been the declaration of a period of fasting, ranging from one day to the more widespread yet staggering concept of an ordeal lasting forty days. However, examination of the *Shulhan Arukh* leaves us uninformed of this notion; in *Yore De'a* (282:1) we are instructed to treat the *sefer Torah* with *kavod gadol*, great honor,

yet no provisions are made for the incidence of its falling. Further searching into the words of the immediate commentaries does bear fruit, albeit in a different section of the *Shulhan Arukh*. R. Abraham Gumbiner, in his *Magen Avraham* to *Hilkhot Tefillin* (*Orah Hayyim* 44:5) cites in the name of *Mishpetei Shmuel* (#12) a practice to fast upon dropping one's *tefillin*; following which, he adds that "this is also the practice when a *sefer Torah* falls." He notes further that the latter case commands greater stringency, not distinguishing between the presence and absence of an outer covering, a distinction he considers relevant to the case of the *tefillin*.

With *Magen Avraham's* reference, this custom entered into mainstream, authoritative codification, and great *posekim* strove to define its character and its attributes as assiduously as any aspect of halakha. However, the *minhag's* late appearance onto the literary scene added an element of concern as to the best approach to understanding this practice; indeed, no less a luminary than R. Shmuel Engel expressed frustration in dealing with an issue that has "no source in the Talmud."³

It is perhaps with this motivation that many authorities commenced their analyses by undertaking the task of identifying a talmudic text that may have served as the inspiration for this practice. The suggestion can perhaps be made that the many sources cited lend themselves to being grouped into two categories, indicating two distinct approaches to the understanding of this fast, with a resulting impact on the formulation of the halakha.

Emblematic of the first approach is the theory of R. Hayyim Halberstam, the Tsanzer Rebbe. In his *Resp. Divrei Hayyim* (1:59) he makes reference to the Talmud's description of the ceremony practiced on the occasion of an emergency fast day, proclaimed as an instrument of prayer during a crisis of famine or drought (*Ta'anit* 16a). A Torah scroll was brought into the street, and a repentant Jewish nation would declare, "this modest vessel was in our midst, and it was humiliated by our transgressions." It follows, apparently, that there is a linkage between sin and a disgrace to a *sefer Torah*; further, an incidence of dishonor to a Torah scroll, however accidental, must be indicative of Divine displeasure with the behavior of the Jewish people. Thus, such an occurrence is taken as a call to repentance, and a public fast day is clearly an appropriate response to such a call.⁴

This attitude is clearly evident among other authorities. *Mahari Beruna* notes a Talmudic discussion of proper responses to the disgrace and destruction of holy objects (*Moed Katan* 25a), observing that the underlying motivation of these actions (such as rending one's garments)

is due to it being “indicated to him by Heaven that he is in need of repentance.”⁵ Additional significance can be attributed to this particular text in that it is also cited by *Mishpetei Shmuel*, *Magen Avraham*’s original source. The immediate reaction to the introduction of this text, which deals in this instance with a *sefer Torah* consumed by flames or otherwise destroyed, is to note that in our case the scroll has received no irreparable damage, and can immediately be lifted off the ground and restored to its state of honor.⁶ However, the relevance of this source can perhaps become more apparent if it is viewed not as an absolute, explicit commandment to enact a day of fasting, but rather as an indication of the halakhic attitudes which gave rise to this custom. R. Yonatan Shteif further underlines this sensibility by noting another text which attributes some level of transgression to one who merely witnesses a sin (*Yoma* 70a), suggesting that “perhaps he is being shown from Heaven a necessity to correct his actions.”⁷

Other scholars followed this stream of thought, noting additional texts linking fasting, witnessing a spiritual mishap, and repentance. R. Yehoshua Baumol contributed the statement of the Jerusalem Talmud (*Moed Katan* 3:7) that “one who witnesses the passing of a Torah scholar is as one who witnesses a Torah scroll consumed with flames; R. Abahu said, I swear I tasted nothing that entire day.”⁸ R. Moshe Chaim Grinfeld cites the Talmud’s relating of a dispute between R. Elazar and R. Yose in the synagogue in Tiberias (*Yevamot* 96b), which concluded with the tearing of a Torah scroll in anger. R. Grinfeld observes that there is an apparent connection between the merit of the community and the well-being of the *sefer Torah*; likewise, an untoward occurrence involving a *sefer Torah* must be taken as indicating a fault on behalf of the community.⁹ Similarly, R. Yekutiel Yehuda Rozenberger makes reference to Moses’ destruction of the tablets upon realizing the worshipping of the golden calf, again linking harm to a holy object with communal iniquity.¹⁰ Another suggestion in this vein serves as a possible basis for the opinion, found in only a small minority of rabbinic writings on the subject despite its popularity in public perception, mandating a forty-day fast.¹¹ R. Yosef Ben Naim notes that the aforementioned text in *Moed Katan* also relates the story of R. Huna, the straps of whose *tefillin* inverted themselves, provoking him to respond with a forty-day fast. While R. Ben Naim concedes that R. Huna certainly adhered to an extraordinary level of piety, the indication is nonetheless that forty days seems a fitting period to observe in reaction to the disgrace of a holy object, especially of a *Sefer Torah*, which commands a greater level of sanctity than *tefillin*.¹²

These theories appear to conform to a specific approach, that a disgrace to a symbol of spirituality represents a deficient religious standard in the community, making appropriate a response of fasting as an expression of penitence. However, it would seem that there exists also a slightly different perspective among authorities. This view would share the understanding of the fast as a method of repentance, while offering an alternative option as to its motivation.

Perhaps the earliest indication of this path is a comment of Ramban in his commentary to *Humash*. In summation of the curses at the end of *parshat Ki Tavo*, the Torah states, “*Arur asher lo ya-kim et divrei haTorah ha-zot*,” cursed is he who does not uphold these words of Torah.¹³ The Jerusalem Talmud,¹⁴ questioning the nature of a “falling” Torah that would require upholding, quotes in the name of R. Shimon the terse explanation, “this refers to the *hazan*.” Ramban expands on this homiletically by criticizing “a *hazan* who does not uphold the Torah scrolls and stand them up in the appropriate manner so they should not fall.” Many authorities (for example, R. Meir Eizenshtat in his *Resp. Imrei Esh* #6) understand this comment to mean one that, through careless handling of a Torah scroll, allows it to fall; such a person has committed a transgression of sufficient severity to enter a category of “cursed.” The fast, then, comes as an attempt at penitence designed to escape the resulting punishment. Along these lines, the great halakhic authority *Elya Rabba* (*Orah Hayyim* 40:7) quotes the *Iggerot Ramaz* #37 that the fast atones for the transgression of disgracing a Torah scroll.

As before, authorities rally to marshal support for this possibility, suggesting a number of possible sources as indicative of such an attitude in the Talmud. R. David (Karliner) Freidman contributes the story of R. Elazar (*Menahot* 32b) who, upon realizing that he had displaced a *sefer Torah* from a bed to the ground, felt anguish “as one who had been bitten by a snake.” R. Friedman then derives from elsewhere in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 98b) that hunger and snake bites are comparable in severity.¹⁵ The author of the *Kappot Temarim* (*Sukka* 41b) relates this concept to the Talmud’s restriction against praying with a Torah scroll in hand, with Rashi’s comment that the concern is that the Torah will fall. While R. Moshe Feinstein questions the necessity to prove the obvious point that a Torah falling is a disgrace,¹⁶ R. Hayyim Yeshayahu Koenig derives a more specific legal principle from this text. The intent of this passage, he maintains, is that one who is charged with protecting a Torah scroll is exempt from praying if that will interfere with his task. Should he choose to pray instead, he is liable for the consequences as if he had intentionally caused the *Sefer Torah* to fall.¹⁷ The position of

Kappot Temarim is thus more sharply focused; the message of this Talmudic passage is not merely to indicate that it is a disgrace for a Torah scroll to fall, but rather to highlight the moral responsibility to prevent this from occurring. Once again, no clear imperative to fast emerges from this passage; however, if viewed as an influence towards a *minhag* reflecting a halakhic attitude, its significance is more readily apparent.

Others lending their support to this attitude include R. Yehuda Leib Tsirelsohn, who refers to the Talmudic condemnation of those ignorant individuals who disrespectfully refer to the Ark of the Torah as “*arana*” (*Shabbat* 32a). If those who merely use speech to slight the container of the Torah are to be criticized, how much greater must be the rebuke for those who allow a physical disgrace to the Torah itself!¹⁸ R. Mordechai Brisk notes similarly the events related in *I Shmuel* chapter 6 upon which the *midrash* expands, in which a slight to the Ark results in terrible consequences.¹⁹ R. Yoel Teitelbaum offers a more complicated approach. *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Hayyim* #603, quoting *Be’er Sheva* to *Sanhedrin* 95a) and R. Yaakov Weil²⁰ rule that one who sends an agent on a mission, if that agent is killed in the process, bears responsibility for that which befalls the appointee. Likewise, the Torah functions on behalf of the Jewish community, and the head of that community is responsible for any misfortune the Torah encounters.²¹

Thus there emerges two distinct approaches to the reason for this fast. While all agree that the fast serves as a method of penitence, the first group maintains that this is a general repentance, expressed in response to the heavenly signal manifested by the misadventure of the Torah scroll. The second school focuses on the disgrace to the Torah scroll as an egregious transgression in itself, necessitating alone a major show of repentance independent of the general spiritual status of the community.

R. Aryeh Leib Grosnas articulates this second position in a responsum addressing the issue of whether or not an invalid Torah scroll also warrants fasting in the event it falls.²² Adopting the position that the fast is due to the offense of disgracing a holy object, R. Grosnas initially notes the opinions of R. Yehezkel Landau²³ and R. Moshe Sofer²⁴ that a *sefer Torah* that becomes invalid retains its holiness, and is thus equal to a valid one for this issue. He then further states that even were this not the case, a fast would still be called for, as Ritva²⁵ equates anything with the Holy Name on it with a Torah scroll; certainly an invalid *sefer Torah* fulfills this standard as well.²⁶

Having analyzed the basis of this custom, *posekim* are now prepared to define the practical parameters of its observance in a consistent fashion. An initial concern, perhaps affected by the preferred approach,

is that of who precisely becomes obligated in this fast. If the fast is to atone for the specific transgression of dishonoring a *sefer Torah*, it should seemingly be necessary only for the party or parties responsible.²⁷ However, if the event is taken as an indication of divine displeasure, its impact is perhaps widened to the witnesses, or even members of the congregation, present or not.²⁸ Some authorities give weight to both theories, assigning a primary obligation to those responsible for the incident, while recommending a similar fast for those present, albeit lesser in obligation²⁹ and severity.³⁰ It should also be noted that some decisors, while adhering to the theory that the fast is for the trespass of dishonoring a Torah scroll, nonetheless obligate the entire congregation, alleging that they too share in the responsibility. The Satmar Rebbe is among these, referring back to Ramban's usage of the verse "Cursed is he who does not uphold," suggesting passivity is equally criticized.³¹ Such logic still leaves room to distinguish between members of the congregation who were present and those who were not, as observed by R. Abraham Steinberg³² and others.³³

It is interesting to note that the question of whom to obligate in the fast is discussed also in relation to falling *tefillin*,³⁴ and while many authorities are lenient towards the witnesses of this event, the explanations they provide are similarly reflective of the above positions. R. Zalman Sorotzkin offers a logic relevant to those who favor the "Divine message" interpretation, observing that while the Torah scroll is communal property, *tefillin*, as a personal *mitsva*, can be said to reflect only on its owner.³⁵ For the other position, R. Moshe Grunwald notes that the entire community bears the responsibility for a Torah scroll's well-being and the consequences thereof, while the burden of protecting *tefillin* falls on the individual alone.³⁶

Even if culpability is extended to the entire congregation, the difference between the two positions would still manifest itself in another instance, one in which the Torah scroll was degraded by outsiders, the congregation helpless to do anything. This dialectic was played out in a correspondence between R. Shmuel Aharon Rabin and the Tsanzer Rebbe. In his *Resp. Shem Olam* (1:39), R. Rabin responds to an issue brought to his attention by the Tsanzer Rebbe, concerning a synagogue whose members discovered that their Torah scroll had suffered an act of vandalism at the hands of non-Jewish thieves. Having ruled that the fast is primarily the responsibility of those involved in causing the disgrace, with the other members of the congregation affected in at best a secondary manner, he is inclined in this instance to be lenient on the innocent congregation, although allowing that perhaps those who actually

discovered the scroll are comparable to the Talmud's reference to one who witnesses the burning of a *sefer Torah* (*Moed Katan* 26a), and some fasting is appropriate for them. He notes further toward the side of leniency the position of R. Tsevi Ashkenazi that the rending of garments in the latter incident is primarily for those who were present at the occasion of the intentional destruction.³⁷ The Tsanzer Rebbe himself disagrees, expressing his aforementioned opinion that the incident is to be taken as a sign of divine displeasure and that therefore issues of liability are irrelevant.³⁸ The Sohatchover Rebbe, R. Abraham Borenstein, is lenient in such a case, agreeing with *Resp. Shem Olam* that the focus is the transgression of disrespecting a *sefer Torah*.³⁹

Along these lines, R. Yehoshua Baumol discusses whether or not total lack of control (*ones*) diminishes the obligation to fast in such an event. In the process he fine-tunes the position that views the fast as relating directly to the iniquity of showing dishonor to a Torah scroll. He acknowledges the counterintuitive possibility that disgracing a Torah scroll may be a rabbinical prohibition,⁴⁰ which, combined with the position of the *Netivot haMishpat* #234 that inadvertent rabbinical transgressions require no atonement, calls into question the necessity of this fast. In this regard, he cites *Kesef Mishne*⁴¹ in developing a principle that the inherent holiness of a Torah scroll mandates a severity that transcends the issue of biblical or rabbinical origin.⁴²

R. Baumol continues his discussion with a consideration of circumstances perhaps even more extenuating than *ones*: that is, the introduction of a positive action into the situation that led to the fall. In specific, his responsum deals with a *sefer Torah* that fell as a result of a *Simhat Torah* celebration.⁴³ Although noting the Talmud's dispensation in another context of damaging behavior caused by a *mitsva* ("rats bereshut," *Bava Kama* 32a), he concludes that leniencies are inappropriate in this area. R. David Friedman, however, is slightly more forgiving in discussing a Torah that falls in the midst of the performance of the *mitsva* of *hagba*.⁴⁴ One more level that exists to find room for overlooking the fast is the instance of a Torah that falls as a result of an effort to save it from a fire; this topic is taken up by R. Aharon Rozenfeld in his *Resp. Minhat Aharon* (3:255).

Another interesting issue, also arguably revolving around the above possibilities, is that of one who removes a Torah scroll from the ark and with that action causes another, evidently precariously placed, to fall. R. Yoel Ungar required this individual to fast, apparently feeling that he has experienced a negative sign, regardless of his own lack of negligence.⁴⁵ *Resp. Bet haYotser*, however, focuses on the transgression,

ruling that the original individual that carelessly returned the scroll to the Ark should fast.⁴⁶

Likewise flowing from these courses of thought is the question of whether or not this fast is comparable to a *ta'anit halom*, a fast observed in reaction to a disquieting bad dream. If the fast is due to an indication of divine displeasure, it would seem to be directly analogous to a *ta'anit halom*. However, if the focus is on the specific transgression, the fast would merely be an independent expression of repentance not subject to the laws of a *ta'anit halom*. These laws include observance of the fast even on the Sabbath,⁴⁷ a practice uncommon to non-biblical fasts. This is based on the assumption that the alleviative powers of the fast function best when employed immediately. Interestingly, the seemingly contradictory assumptions that the fast must be on the day of the event, and yet that it should not be observed on the Sabbath, have combined to form the bases of some opinions allowing complete forgoing of the fast when these conditions are relevant.⁴⁸ Further, an ad hoc fast normally requires a preceding acceptance, or *kabbala*; this requirement is thus a matter of dispute in relation to this fast.⁴⁹

Another fast that could enter in an interesting relationship with our subject is that of *Yom Kippur*. As the day of divine mercy and atonement, any spiritual calamity on that occasion can certainly be taken as an ominous sign of the highest degree. Conversely, the day effects atonement for all transgressions occurring on that day, obviating the need for a subsequent display of repentance.⁵⁰ Thus, the precise nature of the fast once again bears relevance, and this issue is addressed by several *posekim*.⁵¹

Having established the principles of discussion, the *posekim* proceed to elucidate the other concerns relevant to this custom. One disputed topic is whether or not any leniency can be recognized if the scroll fell only on the steps or a carpet but not the actual floor.⁵² Another is the event of a *sefer Torah* falling only partially to the ground, with a portion of it remaining safe.⁵³ R. Tsevi Pesah Frank considers the case of a man holding a scroll who falls, with the scroll itself not actually touching the ground.⁵⁴ R. Rozenberger considers the case of a man who upset a cabinet, not realizing that it contained a Torah scroll.⁵⁵

The attitude taken by halakhic authorities toward the central and peripheral issues concerning this practice serve as a magnificent endorsement of the ability of the Jewish people to illuminate and enhance, through *minhag*, pre-existing religious thinking. It is fascinating to note that the identical positions are again represented in a parallel practice that has arisen for this circumstance, that of subjecting the Torah scroll to an examination of its validity and making all necessary repairs.⁵⁶ The

Lutzker Rav notes the popular understanding that this is a show of honor to the Torah; it is thus understandable as an antidote to the transgression of disrespecting the holy text. He questions, however, the honor inherent in an act that calls into doubt the validity of the scroll. Rather, he prefers the view that the examination stems from a concern that a defect in the *sefer* led to the spiritual disaster.⁵⁷ The two possibilities recorded in his writings again mirror the original understandings.

R. Sorotzkin concludes his study by asserting that “the focus is not on sackcloth and fasting, rather on repentance and good deeds; and in the instance of degradation to the Torah, *rahmana li-tslan*, one must strive to show honor to the Torah, that it should not lie in the corner; rather one must establish times for public Torah study, and specifically that of children; also, one should honor the Sabbath, which is equal to the entire Torah.” The Satmar Rebbe echoes this sentiment: “And the main thing is, from this day on, to show honor to the Torah, and the main honor is to involve oneself with it in purity, for this is its wish and desire, and thus its honor; and it is appropriate to establish times for public Torah study and to meditate on it before the community, and to supervise Torah study with open eyes.”⁵⁸ Once again, the underlying themes adorned by *minhag Yisrael* have been emphasized through the practice of custom and accompanying halakhic analysis. The spiritual behavior of *kelal Yisrael*, even that which develops beyond the scope of the Scriptures and the Talmud, is recognized by the great halakhic minds as displaying deeply rooted principles of religious thought, and the halakha determined accordingly.

NOTES

1. *Pesahim* 66a.
2. The Jerusalem Talmud does go as far as to state twice that *minhag mevatel halakha*, that *minhag* can cancel preexisting law (*Bava Metsia* 7:1 and *Yevamot* 12:1); although the practical scope of such a statement is in actuality severely limited, its very existence does indicate something of the binding nature of *minhag*.
3. *Resp. Maharash Engel* 1:82. It is interesting to note that R. Yechezkel Landau expressed similar sentiment in a responsum addressing the practice of donating one-tenth of one’s income to charity (*Resp. Noda beYehuda* II, *Yore De’a* #198). However, his more vehement comment, “I have no comfort discussing an issue which has no foundation in the Talmud, for the Talmud is the source from which to draw points of logic (*sevarot*) and proofs, and a matter which has no source cannot have found on its behalf proof and logic with a foundation, but rather only *sevarot kreisiyot* (non-

- intellectual, instinctual thinking),” calls into question the efforts of the authorities cited in this work; alternatively, it can also be understood as underscoring the motivation to find a talmudic basis, as detailed below.
4. R. Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe, in his *Resp. Divrei Yoel* #7, writes extensively to oppose usage of this passage as a proof.
 5. *Resp. Mahari Bruna* #127. See also *Resp. Minhag Elazar* 3:52.
 6. Indeed, this objection is raised by authorities; see for example *Resp. Iggerot Moshe Orach Hayyim* 3:3, and note his thorough analysis of this text. *Resp. Divrei Hayyim* (1:59) himself points out further that the Talmud later on (*Moed Katan* 26a) explicitly excludes destruction by unavoidable accident (*ones*) from requiring fasting or rending one’s garments.
 7. *Resp. Mahari Shteif* #205.
 8. *Resp. Emek Halakha* 2:9; see also *Resp. Nefesh Haya* #44.
 9. *Resp. Hayyim beRetsono* #4.
 10. *Resp. Torat Yekutiel* 1:49. Note also a comparable observation in *Resp. Moznayim laMishpat* #5.
 11. The vast majority of authorities recommend either a one-day fast or the three-day “*behab*” (Monday-Thursday-Monday) cycle, and there is also support for the continuous two-day fast believed by kabbalistic scholars to be worth more than forty days of fasting (see *Resp. Arugat haBosem Orach Hayyim* #20, quoting *Shiyurei Berakha Yore De’a* 282:4, and others), while R. Ephraim Greenblatt discusses the possibility of a half-day fast (*Resp. Rivevot Efrayim* #128). A comprehensive discussion of various atonements can be found in *Resp. Siah Yitshak* #297 (see also *Resp. Mishpatekha leYa’akov* [printed in *Resp. vaYa’an Yosef*] #4). Further reference to the forty-day model can, however, be found in R. Yosef Shaul Nathanson’s *Divrei Shaul al Aggadot haShas to Sanhedrin* 43, s.v. “*vi-kruz*”; also, *Resp. Tson Yosef* (#7) quotes from Hida, R. Hayyim Yosef Dovid Azulai (in the *Sefer le-David Emet*), the observation that the forty-day period corresponds to the period of time necessary for the receiving of the Torah. Forty-day fasts are also given significance in *Bava Metsia* 85a.
 12. *Resp. Tson Yosef* #7, citing the author of the *Resp. Divrei Yaakov* writing in the journal *Ohel Moed*, issue 8 of the year 5688, #58.
 13. *Devarim* 27:26.
 14. *Sota* 7:4, cited by *Tosafot*, *Sota* 37b, s.v. “*Rabbi Shimon*.”
 15. *Resp. Imrei David* #115.
 16. *Resp. Iggerot Moshe Orach Hayyim* 3:3. R. Feinstein does acknowledge that this passage indicates the emphasis placed on protecting a Torah scroll.
 17. *Resp. Hukkei Hayyim, Yore De’a* 77:2.
 18. *Resp. Gevul Yehuda* #7.
 19. *Resp. Maharam Brisk* 2:14; see also *Resp. Tehilot David* #62.
 20. *Resp. Mahariv* #125.
 21. *Resp. Divrei Yoel* #7.
 22. *Resp. Lev Arye* #40. Other authorities who also deal with this, with unanimously stringent conclusions, include Hida in his *Resp. Hayyim She’al*; the Muncazer Rebbe, R. Chaim Elazar Schapira, in his *Resp. Minhag Elazar* (3:52); and R. Avraham David Horowitz, *Resp. Kinyan Torah beHalakha* 7:76.
 23. *Resp. Noda beYehuda* I, *Yore De’a* #71 and *Orach Hayyim* #9.

24. *Resp. Hatam Sofer Yore De'a* #279.
25. *Megilla* 26b, s.v. “*ve-hani mili*,” cited by Hida in his *Resp. Hayyim She'al*.
26. By extension, many other holy objects would also fulfill this standard, in addition to *tefillin*, as ruled by the aforementioned *pesak* of *Magen Avraham*. R. Shraga Feivush Schneelbag discusses a fallen *mezuzah* parchment in his *Resp. Shraga haMeir* (3:13), citing the lenient view of *Resp. Lev Hayyim*, in contrast with that of *Resp. Maharsham* (2:264), and *Sefer Bet Arye* quoting *Sefer Leket haKemah haHadash*. See also *Resp. Meshiv keHalakha* 1:217 and *Sha'arei Emet* 1:6. *Resp. Shevet haKehati* (1:385) parallels this with the question of only one of the four parchments of *tefillin* falling, an issue *Resp. Siach Yitshak* is lenient with. He then continues to examine the status of printed books, concluding that the modern printing process constitutes a reduced sanctity; and further, R. Meir Arik, author of the *Resp. Imrei Yosher*, has ruled that the book covers serve as the protective covering considered relevant by *Magen Avraham*. Conversely, the position of R. Grosnas would indicate leniency if a *Megillat Esther* falls, as it contains no mention of the Holy Name. Indeed, R. Ephraim Greenblatt in his *Resp. Rivevot Efrayim* 449:3 quotes the *Resp. Afarkasta deAnyah Orah Hayyim* #24 to this effect. See however R. Yosef Tsevi Dushinsky, *Resp. Maharits* 1:114, and *Resp. Shevet haKehati* 2:318.
27. See, for example, Hida's position in *Resp. Hayyim She'al* #12 and *Birkei Yosef, Shiyurei Berakha Yore De'a* #282; he concedes, however, that it is considered a matter of piety for all present to fast. See also *Resp. Minhat Aharon* 1:229 and *Resp. Meshiv keHalakha* #274.
28. Note discussions in *Resp. Maharash Engel* 1:82, *Resp. Bet Yitshak, Yore De'a* 2:162, and *Resp. Imrei David* 6:2, as well as *Resp. Iggerot Moshe Orah Hayyim* 3:3.
29. See *Resp. Emek Halakha* 2:9 and *Resp. Zekan Aharon* 2:16.
30. See *Resp. Avnei Tsedek Yore De'a* #116.
31. *Resp. Divrei Yoel* #7. Note also similar positions in *Resp. Hayyim beRetsono* #4, *Resp. Nahalat Yoel Ze'ev* 1:2, *Resp. Minhat Asher* 1:111, and *Resp. Torat Yekutiel* #50.
32. *Resp. Mahze Avraham* 2:5.
33. See *Resp. Gevul Yehuda* #7 and *Resp. Hazon Nahum* 1:86.
34. See, for example, *Resp. Tson Yosef* #7, citing *Sede haAretz* 3:31 on the side of stringency and *Resp. Hayyim She'al* 1:12 in the opposition. See also *Resp. Kiryat Hanah David* 2:77.
35. *Resp. Moznayim laMishpat* #5.
36. *Resp. Arugat ha Bosem, Orah Hayyim* #20.
37. *Resp. Haham Tsevi* #17.
38. *Resp. Divrei Hayyim* 1:59. It should be noted that there is an apparent contradiction to be found later in *Resp. Divrei Hayyim II, Hoshen Mishpat* #33; see *Resp. Bet haYotser* #15 and *Resp. Divrei Yoel, Orah Hayyim* 7:3.
39. *Resp. Avnei Nezer, Yore De'a* #375.
40. Note *Mishne Torah, Yesodei haTorah* 7:8, where Rambam assigns the “*makkot mardut*” common to rabbinical prohibitions to one who destroys holy texts, and *Kesef Mishne*.
41. *Hilkhos Sefer Torah* 6:2.
42. *Resp. Emek Halakha* 2:9.

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43. Note also *Resp. Minhah Aharon* 2:70.
44. *Resp. Imrei David* #116 ; note a more stringent approach in *Resp. Minhah Aharon* 3:84
45. *Resp. Riva* #27.
46. *Resp. Bet haYotser* #14. *Resp. Minhah Asher* (1:111) concurs.
47. *Ta'anit* 12b.
48. See *Resp. Beit Yitshak Yore De'a* 2:165. See also *Birkei Yosef Yore Dea* #340, *Resp. Avnei Cheifetz* #59, and *Resp. Lev Avraham* #4.
49. See *Resp. Mahari Beruna* #127, *Lev Avraham* #4, and *Minhat Aharon* 3:213.
50. Note *Mishne Torah, Hilkhoh Shegagot* 3:9.
51. See *Resp. Kerem Shlomo Orah Hayyim* #44; *Resp. Siah Yitshak* #297; *Resp. Shevut Yaakov* 2:9; and *Resp. Imrei Esh, Hoshen Mishpat* #29.
52. See *Resp. Minhah Elazar* 3:52; *Resp. Emek Halakha* 2:9; *Resp. Siah Yitshak* #25; *Resp. Moznayim la-Mishpat* #5; *Resp. Gevul Yehuda* #7; and *Resp. Kiryat Hana David* 2:50:4.
53. See *Resp. Imrei David* #116; *Resp. haElef Lekha Shlomo, Orah Chaim* #361; *Resp. Minhah Elazar* 3:52; *Resp. Tehilot David* 2:63; *Resp. Hayyim beRetsono* #4; *Resp. Shraga haMeir* 3:51; *Resp. Nahalat Yoel Ze'ev* 1:2; and *Resp. Hukkei Hayyim* 3:77.
54. *Resp. Har Tsevi, Orah Hayyim* #40. He favors the understanding that the fast is for the disgrace of the *sefer Torah*, and since it did not touch the ground this disgrace is significantly diminished, regardless of the calamitous nature of the event.
55. *Resp. Torat Yekutiel* 1:49.
56. See *Resp. Tsits Eliezer* 5:1 (note, in general, his extensive analysis of this topic), and *Resp. Mahari Shteif* #205, among others.
57. *Resp. Moznayim laMishpat* #5.
58. *Resp. Divrei Yoel* 7:4.