HOLY BOOKS

HOLY BOOKS: DEFINITION

Holy Books: Definition

A Jewish holy book is any book that contains:

- God's name in any language, not just *Hebrew*,
- Any lines (*psukim*) of *Torah*,
- *Midrashim*,
- *Halacha* in any language, or
- *Mishna/Talmud* and their commentaries.

HOLY BOOKS: PLACEMENT

HOLY BOOKS: ORIENTATION

Holy Books: Correct Orientation

Put holy books in their correct location:

- Remove a holy book from an inappropriate place to a place suitable for holy books.
- Turn right-side up a holy book that is upside down or backside up.
- Do not use any holy book--even of lower priority or holiness--to prop up or raise the top of a non-holy or less-holy book (for example, so you can read it better).

REASON It is disrespectful to use a holy book as a book holder.

HOLY BOOKS: ON SEAT

Holy Book: Raise from Seat

You may place a *siddur* or *chumash* flat on chair seat or bench on which no one is sitting, but it is an act of piety to stand it up on its edge.
To sit on a bench or other seat where a holy book rests, raise the book up at least a little; a single piece of paper is sufficient elevation.

NOTE If you are sitting on a bench and someone puts a holy book on the bench, you must stand up or raise the book off the bench. You may not stand a *siddur*, *chumash*, or other holy book up on its edge on a bench or pew in order to be allowed to sit on that bench.

HOLY BOOKS: STACKING ORDER

Holy Books: Stacking Order

When piling up several holy books, put them in this order (top to bottom):

- *Torah* (Jewish Bible)
- *Nach*/Prophets
- *Talmud*, *siddur*, and any other holy books.

Holy Books: Carrying Order

When carrying holy books, you may put a *Torah* or *Talmud* below other books to prevent their falling or to make them easier to carry. For piling books on top of each other, see Holy Books: Stacking Order.

HOLY BOOKS: MODEST DRESS

Holy Books: Being Undressed

You should not be naked or have intercourse in a room with holy books, unless:

1. There is a wall or divider between yourself and the holy books within 10.5 inches of the ground and at least 40 inches tall (or as tall as needed to block a line of sight between yourself and the book), or
2. You cover the books with two layers of paper or some other material.

REASON It is not proper respect to the holy books.

NOTE This is true even if the couple is covered, as is the proper practice, and even if they are more than 4 *amot*/7 feet away, since the entire room is considered to be one domain.

HOLY BOOKS: DISPOSAL

Holy Books: Disposal

For holy book disposal, see *Sheimot*: Disposal.

© Copyright 2026 Richard B. Aiken | www.practicalhalacha.com