

Hold Your Tongue

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Rav Moshe Zev Granek

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https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BER82_011_Vayigash_Holy_Tounge_The_Satus_of_Lashon_HaKodesh.mp3

And behold, your eyes see, as well as the eyes of my brother Binyamin, that it is my mouth speaking to you.

Bereishis 45:12

According to Rashi, one of the things that proved Yosef's identity to his brothers was that he spoke *lashon hakodesh*. The Ramban disagrees and says that everyone in Canaan at the time spoke *lashon hakodesh*. The Nachalas Yaakov, backing Rashi, cites the Gemara in Sotah that each of the seventy nations spoke its own language, and Klal Yisroel spoke *lashon hakodesh*. If so, the Canaanites must have spoken a language other than *lashon hakodesh*.

It seems from here and other places that there is a *machlokes* whether *lashon hakodesh* was given only to Klal Yisrael. This question may have halachic implications. Sefer Vayomer Yitzchak is unsure whether it is permitted to teach a gentile *lashon hakodesh*, since it is *asur* to teach him Torah. (He concludes that it is permitted.) Other *poskim*, like the Yafeh Laleiv, hold that it is forbidden because the gentile may use his knowledge of *lashon hakodesh* to study Torah, so one violates *lifnei iveir* by teaching him the language and enabling sin.

Another potential ramification is the ruling of the Rama (O.C. 307) that one may read books written in *lashon hakodesh* on Shabbos even though books in other languages are often forbidden (due to the *gzeirah* against reading business documents). According to the Magein Avraham, the reason is that *lashon hakodesh* is intrinsically holy and renders the material similar to *divrei Torah*. However, others understand the Rama differently.