

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

### Hold the Line



RABBI  
MOSHE TZVI  
CRYSTAL

Everyone knows it is very hard to start a diet when all of your favorite foods are available for consumption. If you have a weakness for cheesecake, it's going to be hard to watch what you eat if you have a fridge stocked with your favorite varieties. The key, then, is to remove the temptation. Out of sight, out of mind, as the saying goes. When a person wants to improve himself or herself in this time of introspection and repentance that is the month of *Elul*, *Rosh Hashana*, and *Yom Kippur*, we can imagine that such a strategy would help as well. In fact, that is part of the admonition in our *parasha* not to keep false weights and measures in your home. Don't keep things around that could lead to temptation to sin. But there is something else that we need to

know. The *passuk* in this week's Torah portion says: "When you will build a new house, you will make a fence for your roof, so that you will not place blood in your house if one who falls shall fall from it." Homiletically, says *Chassam Sofer* (brilliant Talmudist and *halachic* authority of Austria-Hungary in late 18<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century), this *passuk* could be understood as follows: If you will want to rectify your actions and build yourself anew, you have to set a fence for yourself to keep away from what you have stumbled upon. Do not, however, make a fence for yourself that will bring you to sin and thereby cause you to fall. How would this happen? Let's go back to the diet for illustration. A normal reaction to eating something outside of your diet plan is to say, "I'm already cheating, I might as well enjoy myself!" Once you begin to break your rules, it is a very slippery slope, and within a short time the diet could be nothing but a dream of something you tell yourself you will do someday. With *mitzvos*, as well, just because you've created your own boundary to keep away from something does not mean that the evil inclination will leave you alone. You will be tested on your resolve, and if that resolve is broken at the fence, it is a slippery slope down to transgressing a *mitzvah*, as well. About this, the Torah implores, don't let your fences become the jumping-off point for further downfall—hold the line there and push back to your fences! 🕊

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM  
ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Reuven borrowed an egg from Shimon. When he opened it, he noticed a drop of blood in the yolk. He threw it out in accordance with the *Rema's* ruling (Y.D. 66:3) that nowadays, the custom is to throw out any egg containing blood.

**Q** Must Reuven repay Shimon an egg, or perhaps, he need not since Shimon would have thrown out the egg anyway?

**A** *Shulchan Aruch* (C.M. 232:19) rules that when one sells another eggs which are found to be unfit for consumption (because a chick started forming inside), it is considered to be a *mekach ta'us*, an erroneous transaction, and the seller must return the money to the buyer. However, the custom became prevalent to not return the money, and a custom overrides *halacha* (in certain instances). (Further clarification of this issue and the significant limitations of this concept can be found in the *Magen Avraham's* comment 690:22 on the *Rama's* defense of the minhag to *klop* for Haman when hearing the *Megilla*.)

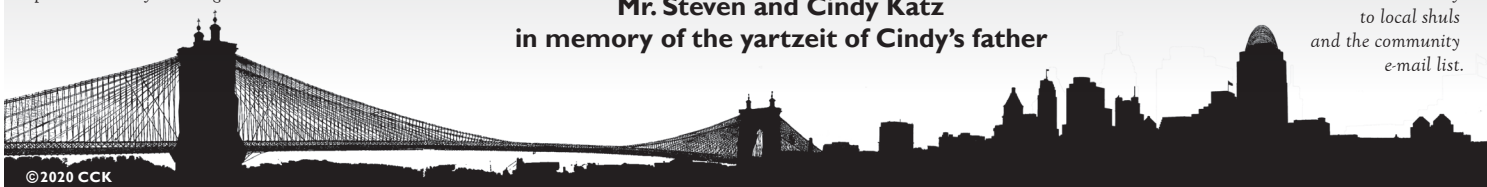
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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

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In other words, according to the strict *halacha*, the sale should be nullified, but the custom was to treat the transaction as binding, and the buyer would lose the money. Therefore, if the buyer had not yet paid, he would be responsible to still pay for the eggs.

According to this custom, it would seem that here, too, Reuven must repay Shimon an egg, as if it were a binding transaction.

My father-in-law, Rav Elyashiv, told me that this 'custom' was said regarding a merchant selling the eggs, in which case Shimon, the merchant, could claim that had he not sold it to Reuven, he would have sold it to someone else and not have lost out on the money. However, if the eggs were meant for Shimon's personal use and not meant to be sold, Reuven would be exempt from repaying him, for Reuven could claim that he didn't cause Shimon any loss because Shimon would have thrown it out himself.

## A SHINING EXAMPLE

During the period of *shiva* for the fourth child, a son, that they had lost, Rebbetzin Tzipporah Chana Levine, wife of the famed *tzaddik* of Jerusalem, Rabbi Aryeh Levine, was *davening* when two recent immigrants from Russia came to visit her to perform the *mitzvah* of comforting the mourner. While they watched her *daven*, they could not keep from exclaiming to each other, in Russian because they thought she did not understand, "How does she pray with such serenity? How is she so composed?" After she finished, the Rebbetzin

In the latter scenario, we find no 'custom' that the buyer (Reuven) should have to repay the seller (Shimon) for such an egg and, therefore, Reuven would be exempt from repaying Shimon an egg. 🕒

## A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Name two scenarios in this week's *parasha* where something that normally carries the penalty of *kareis*, is permitted.

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕒

looked at the women, and having heard and understood what they said, responded. "I am able to remain composed through this ordeal for a very simple reason. My loving Father in heaven has decreed that this is how things should be. Instead of my son learning in a mortal *yeshiva* below in this world, Hashem has decided that he should learn in a heavenly *yeshiva*!" 🕒

## Special Welcome to

**Rabbi Nossan and Mrs. Libi Wiggins, our newest members!**



## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

As the Jewish immigrants of late 1800s and early 1900s began to go on vacation, this gave rise to the "Jewish" resorts of the Catskill mountains of New York. Jews were forced to create their own hotels, as they were mostly barred from non-Jewish ones. These hotels boomed from the 1920s to '60s, resulting in the area's nickname, "The Borscht Belt." The hotels provided everything from pools to golf courses to comedy shows, and in fact many Jewish comedians got their starts in these resorts. At the same time, a similar thing was happening on the shores of Lake Michigan across the lake from Chicago in a Michigan town called South Haven. The original Jewish settlers of the area were immigrants who had been given money by a Chicago aid organization to start farms, and there were approximately thirty Jewish farms in that area. The short growing season led the farmers to look for other ways to earn an income. Seeing how popular the area was in the summertime, the Jewish farmers began to build hotels on their land to accommodate guests. Eventually, the farms were entirely converted into resorts. Over sixty Jewish-owned hotels operated in the area, which is now aptly nicknamed, "The Catskills of the Midwest." 🕒

SOURCES: Levine, David "History of Borscht Belt Hotels and Bungalow Colonies in the Catskills." *Hudson Valley Magazine*. Michigan Historic Marker: North Shore Dr. South Haven, Michigan. Registered Site L2212.

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