

If a man will take a vow to Hashem or swear an oath to prohibit a prohibition upon himself, he shall not desecrate his word; according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do. (30:3)

Rashi teaches that vows and oaths apply only when one seeks to render prohibitive that which is permitted. One cannot, however, utilize oaths and vows to permit that which is forbidden.

Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, was an individual known by many titles, one of which was *Lubliner Rav*. He followed a long line of distinguished *rabbanim*, one of whom was the famous *Maharshal* who preceded him by four centuries. The *Maharshal* was a formidable *gadol*, a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar without peer, and a *Kabbalist* of great renown. The following story was often related by *Rav Meir Shapiro*. He had discovered it in the *pinkas*, ledger, of the *Chevra Kadisha*, Jewish Burial Society of Lublin.

The *Maharshal* had a student whose wife had passed away. The husband was overwrought from the tragedy and just could not overcome the deep depression that enveloped him. His distinguished *Rebbe* called for him and asked for an explanation. At first, the young man demurred from divulging the reason for his melancholy. Finally, the student gave in and informed the *Maharshal* of his vow. Apparently, when his wife was ill, he had given her his word that he would never remarry. His *Rebbe* countered that such an oath has no validity, since it is contrary to the Torah. One is to marry and procreate. It was, therefore, not only permissible for him to remarry, but it was actually incumbent upon him to do so.

The student listened to the *Maharshal* and remarried. A short time later, the city was in a frenzy when, one morning, the young man who had followed his *Rebbe's* instructions

– died! When the *Maharshal* was informed of this turn of events, he immediately summoned the members of the *Chevra Kaddisha* to his house. He instructed them to prepare the body in the usual manner: *taharah*, purification, and *tachrichim*, shrouds; when they were prepared to bury him, they were to notify the *Maharshal*. The *Chevra Kaddisha* did so.

The *Maharshal* arrived at the burial site and wrote the following note, which was placed alongside the deceased: “*Shalom Aleichem*, Peace unto you, Heavenly Tribunal. I (the *Maharshal*) ruled in accordance with the laws of the Torah to permit this man to marry again. I decree upon ‘You’ with the powers (granted me by the) of the Torah that You should return my student to me.” The *Maharshal* affixed his name to the paper, placed it into the hand of the deceased, and insisted that the grave be left uncovered. After lowering the body, they all left the cemetery. The grave was left uncovered.

One hour later, the young man arose from his grave, dressed in shrouds, and proceeded to walk

through the streets as if nothing had ever happened! When the “deceased” entered his home, his wife ran out in shock. The next day, the *Maharshal* summoned his “reincarnated” student to appear before him in street clothes. When the student entered the *yeshivah*, the other students became visibly frightened. Employing the power vested in him through the Torah, the *Maharshal* immediately decreed that the angel in charge of *shikchah*, forgetting, should prevail and use his powers over the city of Lublin, so that everyone would forget what had taken place. The young man raised a beautiful family, meriting to see generations of proud Jewish children devoted to Torah and *mitzvos*.