



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. The Merchant of Vegas
2. Legal Language
3. Answer to Yiddle Riddle



**This issue is sponsored by Herschel Kulefsky, Attorney at Law, 15 Park Row, New York, NY 10038, 1-212-693-1671**

Lee Vyner <vynerl-m@actcom.co.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

*The Talmud says that someone who earns their salary from gambling is invalid as a witness in a Jewish court because the person who lost doesn't really pay with a full heart. Therefore, the money that he wins is considered theft. If so, what about the stock market? People literally gamble as to the price of a particular commodity or stock, and the person who has a holding of this particular item certainly does not want the price to deteriorate. So is someone who gambles on the stock market invalid as a witness? Lots of love, Lee Mandy and Laivy Avraham (the cutest baby in the world bi'h)*

Dear Lee and family,

Stocks are a legitimate investment. Buying stocks is essentially no different than buying diamonds, land, or wheat. True, the stock market has an element of risk, but don't confuse 'lost wages' with 'Las Vegas.' Do you know of any business which involves no element of risk? If so, do you know their phone number?

Gambling, on the other hand, is a game where each person hopes to guess the right number on the dice, or pick the right horse. Gamblers are invalid as witnesses in a Jewish court.

The Sages of the Talmud differ as to why gamblers are invalid. According to one opinion, someone who wins a bet is like a thief, because he collects prize money that he didn't 'earn' and to which he has no true legal claim.

According to another opinion, only a professional gamester — who has no other source of income — is invalid as a witness. His integrity is suspect, because he spends his day in pursuits which contribute nothing to society. According to this opinion, someone who gambles only part-time can be a valid witness, provided he's involved in some productive activity.

The following story is told about the Chafetz Chaim: A man once asked the Chafetz Chaim to bless him that he should win the lottery, but the Chafetz Chaim refused. "But you give blessings to people who gamble on stocks, why not when they gamble on lotteries?" the man asked. The Chafetz Chaim answered that he gives blessings to stock investors because if the stock goes up, no one loses money. But blessing one lottery ticket is a 'curse' upon the other lottery tickets.

Source:

- Talmud Sanhedrin 24b
- Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 34:16
- Story thanks to Will Shulman

Bill Baldwin from <Hbal@ewol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

*I would be very grateful if you could give me some information. Could you please tell me what the word 'shoftim' means? The matter arose because of a letter I received from a group using the name 'The Shoftim Society.' They asked me to participate in a forum entitled 'The Nuremberg Trials: An Inside Story.' The Jewish attorneys comprising the group are based in Columbia, South Carolina. The reason for the invitation came about because I was one of the U.S. Prosecutors at the trial. I told them that I'm sorry but I won't be able to attend, since at the proposed time of the forum we will be in the process of moving north to New Hampshire.*

Dear Mr. Bill Baldwin,

'Shoftim' means 'judges.' It's a noun, not a verb. One judge is called a 'shofet.' *Shoftim* is also the name of one of the 24 books of the Torah, the Book of Judges, which teaches about the era from the time of Joshua until the time of Samuel. As an American/Israeli, and son of a holocaust survivor, I want to personally thank you for your role in bringing some of the offenders to justice.

## Yiddle Riddle

### Last week we asked:

<i>Good is no good</i>	<i>And spelling me backwards</i>
<i>Whenever I'm near.</i>	<i>Is no less forbidding.</i>
<i>As his I'm mistaken</i>	<i>Have you guessed the nature</i>
<i>When taken by ear.</i>	<i>Of my little 'con' game?</i>
<i>'Thou shalt' by my side</i>	<i>If you're right then I'm not.</i>
<i>Is an order for quitting,</i>	<i>Now what is my 'name'?</i>

Reuven Subar ©1997

**Answer:** My name is 'Lo' — spelled 'lamed alef.' 'Lo' means 'no' and 'not.' It sounds like the word spelled 'lamed vav' which is Hebrew for 'his.' 'Lo' spelled backwards is 'Al,' which also means 'not.'

*If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@virtual.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.*

Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**  
Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

Ask The Rabbi is available from several sources:

- World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>
- Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America. Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.
- E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub ask (your full name)" to [listproc@virtual.co.il](mailto:listproc@virtual.co.il)

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel  
38 East 29th Street 8<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10016, USA  
613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

972-2-581-0315  
1-212-213-3100  
1-905-886-5730

972-2-581-2890  
1-212-213-8717  
1-905-886-6065

ohr@virtual.co.il  
RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@aol.com  
Somayach@MSN.com

©1997 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved

**Issue #141 - 1 March 1997 - Shoftim**

Dedication opportunities are available for Ask The Rabbi — Please contact us for details  
This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.