



### **A Kosher Piece of Meat Does Not Make a Treif Pot Kosher**

Another important point to consider is that even if it is true that a person could use the internet for positive and necessary purposes, the fact remains that this does not render the internet a good thing in and of itself. The positive part of the internet certainly does not cancel out the negative and permit internet use across the board. We can explain this idea with a wonderful parable that is related by

the Ben Ish Chai Z"l (*Ben Ish Chayil, Drush 1 for Shabbos Zachor*):

There was a Jewish man who lived in a small village that was inhabited by people who acted in an improper way and blatantly committed many *aveiros*.

This man had a daughter who was very refined and pious. When she came of age, he began to look for a fitting match for her. He traveled to a large and

illustrious yeshiva and picked out the best and most distinguished *bachur* to be his daughter's *chassan*. The father promised him full support and a very sizable dowry.

The wedding was held with much joy. Indeed, the father of the bride provided the young couple with a beautiful home to live in, including a spacious study equipped with all of the highest-quality *sefarim* available.

The man told his new son-in-law, "Listen to me, my dear *eidim*. This village is full of lowly sinners. Let me give you some advice for your own good: Stay away from them!

"You are still young and they could have a very bad influence on you. But look at this house that I have provided for you! You can sit here and immerse yourself in your learning day and night and I will take care of all of your family's needs. I beseech you, spend your days learning and don't have anything to do with the locals!"

The son-in-law was amused by his *shver*'s words. He thought to himself, "Does he really expect me to sit at home by myself all day and never speak to anyone at all?"

He told his father-in-law, "My dear *shver*, I understand you well. *Boruch Hashem*, I have had the merit of seeing the light of Torah and I know its power. I would like to use that light to draw the people of the village close and return them to the proper path. I am certain that I can influence them in a good way, and

I am not at all afraid that they will have a negative influence on me.”

The father-in-law did not agree with this line of reasoning and warned the young man that coming into contact with the people around him would only place him in spiritual peril.

The dispute between the father-in-law and son-in-law went on day after day. Although the father-in-law issued his opinion, the son-in-law disregarded him and did the opposite. This went on until one day, when the father-in-law was struck with a brainstorm, and did the following:

He knocked on the door of his son-in-law’s house at a time when the young man was in the middle of learning and told him, “I am very sorry to tell you this, but I won’t be able to give you any supper tonight.”

“What do you mean?” the son-in-law asked. “What happened?”

The father-in-law explained, “My non-Jewish worker was in my kitchen today, and he took a piece of pork out of his pocket and it fell into the pot of meat that was cooking on the stove for supper. What can I do? The entire pot became *treif*.”

“Let me see the pot,” the young man said. “It is very possible that it isn’t a problem at all.”

He walked over to his father-in-law’s house and went into the kitchen to analyze

how big the pot was and how much meat was in it. He then said, ‘You are right. There is less than 60 times more kosher meat than *treif* meat. This means that the *treif* meat is not *batel* (annulled) and the entire pot of meat must be thrown out!’”

The next day, the father-in-law once again knocked on his son-in-law’s door. He told him, “Another *shaylah* came up today and I want to make sure I did the right thing.”

He related, “A poor man was walking in the street today and was passing by a non-kosher restaurant. He saw that one of the pots, which was full of non-kosher food, was sitting outside on the sidewalk. The man happened to be holding a piece of kosher meat in his hand. When he passed by the pot, his kosher piece of meat slipped out of his hand and fell into the pot of *treif* meat. This was terrible for him, as he had no other food to eat for supper.

“When he told me what happened, I remembered your ruling from yesterday. I took a look at the pot and saw that there was less than 60 times more *treif* meat than the one piece of kosher meat. I realized that this meant that the kosher meat is not *batel*, so the entire pot is now kosher. So I told the poor man that he is allowed to take one piece of meat out of the pot and eat it!”

When the son-in-law heard this, he became very distressed and he cried out, “What did you do? You caused this Yid to eat *treif* because of your ignorance!”

“What do you mean?” the father-in-law asked. “Yesterday you told me that if a *treif* piece of meat falls into a kosher pot, the entire pot becomes *treif* if there is

less than 60 times more kosher meat than non-kosher meat. I assumed that the opposite is also true. If a piece of kosher meat falls into a *treif* pot, it makes the entire pot kosher if there is less than 60 times more *treif* meat than kosher meat.

What's the difference between the two stories?"

The young man replied, "One kosher piece of meat can't make an entire pot of *treif* meat kosher! But one piece of *treif* meat can make an entire pot of kosher meat *treif* if there aren't 60 times the amount of kosher meat to counteract it!"

The father-in-law then declared, "My dear *eidim*, listen to what you are saying! One good thing cannot transform an entire 'potful' of bad things and make them good. That is exactly what I've been telling you. One upstanding Yid does not necessarily have the power to transform many sinners into good people just by hanging around with them. But one bad thing can transform an entire potful of good things and make them bad. One rotten person does, unfortunately, have the power to ruin many good people through his negative influence."

We can learn a very deep lesson from this parable. If any entity contains one good thing, that doesn't make the entire thing kosher and good. On the contrary, one bad thing can destroy many good things. The best strategy, then, is to stay far away from bad things altogether by establishing strong safeguards and boundaries to ensure we remain untouched by influences that might lead us astray ch'v.