

Bava Metzia 3**Self-Incrimination**

Our *Gemara* mentions the dispute between Rabbi Meir and the Sages about the power of witnesses. The Sages were of the opinion that if witnesses said to Reuvein, “We saw you eat *cheilev* (forbidden fats). You have to bring a sacrifice to garner atonement,” and Reuvein responded, “I never ate the forbidden fats,” Reuvein would not have to bring a sacrifice. Rabbi Meir felt that since witnesses can obligate a financial payment or corporal punishment, they can also obligate a person to bring an offering. Rabbi Meir challenged the Sages. “Witnesses can put a person to death with their words. Certainly, they should be able to obligate a sacrifice.” The Sages responded that the person could always exempt himself from having to bring a sacrifice by claiming that he ate the forbidden fats on purpose. Only someone who eats by mistake has to bring a sacrifice, and the witnesses can never truly prove what his intention was when he ate the *cheilev*.

Tosfos ask about this conversation: What about the rule that “*ein adam meisim atzmo rasha*”—“a person cannot render himself an evildoer”? A person who speaks ill of himself is not believed. If a person said that he ate forbidden fats deliberately, he would be making himself an evildoer. He does not have the credibility to render