

Mentally Agreeing to Accept an Offer

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Case: I put my house on the market. One night, I received an email from my agent notifying me that he got a bid for \$400,000. I was happy with that amount and decided to accept it. I was planning to respond to the email the next day but in the morning before I got a chance, I received another email from the agent informing me that when the prospective buyer did not receive an immediate response, he raised his offer to \$415,000.

Question: May I take the offer of \$415,000 or am I already locked into the offer of \$400,00?

Answer: According to the letter of the law, you are not locked in; however, Chazal teach us that once a Jew commits himself to something, even if he only committed in his mind and did not verbalize his thoughts, he should stick to his commitment and do what he had decided to do.

This is a *middas chasidus* (pious way of acting), that is based on a story found in the Gemara in *Makkos*. The gemara says that Rav Safra was once presented with an offer while he was in the middle of reciting Kriyas Shema. Since he did not respond, the potential buyer raised his offer. He continued upping his offer until Rav Safra finished Kriyas Shema and was able to reply. Rav Safra then told him that because he intended to accept the original offer, he would sell the item at the first price that was presented and not for the higher prices that were subsequently offered. This conduct is known as *dover emes b'livavo*, speaking truth in one's heart. One who speaks truth in his heart is careful not to even think something that is untrue; therefore, it is a *middas chasidus* for you to go ahead and sell the house for the original price you were offered after you already had made up your mind to accept that price.