

## A Gift Card for Yom Tov

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### Chizuk - Inspiration

In anticipation of Pesach, the organization, Keren Zichron Naftali, directed by Rabbi Kalman Katz and Rabbi Cheskin Green in Lakewood, New Jersey, undertook a meaningful initiative to support the local Kollel community. They distributed \$150,000 worth of gift cards for use at neighborhood grocery stores, aiming to help Kollel families manage their Pesach expenses. The recipients were deeply grateful, using the cards to buy the food and other necessities required for Yom Tov.

After Pesach, Rabbi Kalman received an unexpected phone call from a member of the Kollel at Bais Medrash Gavoha. The man expressed his thanks for the grocery card but explained that he wished to return it. Surprised, Rabbi Kalman asked why. The Kollel man explained that he was enrolled in SNAP, the New Jersey food stamp program, which had provided him with sufficient benefits to cover all his food expenses for Yom Tov. He acknowledged that he still had food expenses after Pesach, but he felt uncomfortable keeping the card, knowing the funds had been specifically raised to help with expenses for Pesach.

The sincerity and integrity of this Kollel man, who lived with his family on a modest budget, left Rabbi Kalman speechless. This display of honesty and wholesomeness—choosing not to use the gift card for purposes other than those intended—was a testament to the Kollel man's pure character. Rabbi Kalman assured him that he was welcome to use the card for expenses unrelated to Pesach and thanked him for the inspiration and integrity that he had demonstrated.

### On The Parsha

"And there was a quarrel between the herdsmen of Avrohom's cattle and between the herdsmen of Lot's cattle." (Bereishis 13:7).

The separation between Avrohom and Lot came about because their livestock had increased significantly, leading to

ongoing disputes among their herdsmen.

The actual nature of the disputes is explained by Rashi: "Lot's herdsmen grazed their animals in fields not belonging to them, which Avrohom's herdsmen objected to, considering it theft. Lot's herdsmen responded that since the land was promised to Avrohom, and Lot was likely to inherit him, their actions did not amount to robbery. The Torah then states: 'And the Canaanites and the Perizzites were then dwelling in the land,' indicating Avrohom had not yet been awarded possession."

This situation highlights how individuals can use rationalization to justify actions. Lot's herdsmen believed that future ownership justified grazing on land currently owned by others, constructing an argument to support their conduct.

Their justification followed this logic: The land will belong to Avrohom; Lot will inherit Avrohom; therefore, Lot will own the land in the future, making current grazing permissible.

The argument did not deny the ethical issue of theft but attempted to reframe the present situation as an exception due to anticipated changes in ownership. This type of reasoning is common, where people develop arguments for why certain circumstances should be treated differently from general rules.

Rashi points out the flaw in this reasoning by noting: "And the Canaanites and the Perizzites were then dwelling in the land" - indicating Avrohom did not yet possess the land.

The land at that time was owned by the Canaanites, and potential future changes in ownership were not relevant to current ethical considerations. Appropriating property based on expectations of future ownership is unethical.

Avrohom's herdsmen interpreted the behavior as inconsistent

with existing property rights and addressed it directly. They referred to it as it is, robbery.

Lot's herdsmen sought to justify actions they wished to take, beginning with the desired outcome and developing supporting arguments.

Avrohom's herdsmen prioritized what was currently considered right, allowing ethical standards to guide their actions.

Rashi's commentary suggests the importance of examining one's reasoning when confronted with questionable behavior—whether one is genuinely persuaded by ethical principles or simply constructing arguments that appear convincing to serve one's own self-interest.

### Halacha – Jewish Law

**QUESTION:** Often, during a review for a test, students may be tempted to influence the teacher's choice of questions by saying things like, "We didn't learn that!" or "We don't have notes on that!" Sometimes these statements may be technically true—perhaps the students don't have notes because they never took them when the material was taught. However, the intention behind such statements is to imply that the topic was never taught and therefore should not be included on the test. Is this kind of behavior permitted?

**ANSWER:** The Torah explicitly commands, "Stay far from a false matter" (Shemos 23:7). The Chofetz Chaim, in his works *Ahavas Chesed* (Section 3, Chapter 7) and *Sefas Tamim* (Chapter 7), clarifies that this commandment is not limited to judges in a courtroom. Rather, it is a Torah prohibition that applies to everyone in all situations. If you deliberately make a false statement to your teacher, you are directly violating this commandment.

Even if there is no outright lie, but you choose your words to mislead your teacher, this falls under the category of *Geneivas Da'as*—deceiving someone into believing something false. This prohibition is discussed in *Chullin* 94a-b and *Bava Metzia* 59b-60b. The *Sefer Yereim* (Mitzvah 235) and the *Ritva* consider *Geneivas Da'as* to be a biblical prohibition, while the *Smak* holds it is a rabbinic prohibition. Regardless of the categorization, all authorities agree that this is a serious transgression. The bottom line is that you are

tricking your teacher into acting on false information, which is clearly forbidden.

One might argue that there are times when bending the truth is permissible "for the sake of peace," as discussed in *Yevamos* 65b-66a. However, as explained in *Niv Sfasayim* (II #2 and #5-6), this exception is extremely limited. It only applies when trying to prevent genuine conflict or to avoid causing significant emotional harm—not when trying to gain a personal advantage or to avoid something unpleasant. In this case, claiming "we didn't learn that" to avoid certain test questions is for self-interest, not for peace, so the exception simply does not apply.

Some people mistakenly believe that writing something false is less serious than saying it. However, Rav Meir Dan Plotzki (in a letter cited in *Kli Chemda*) strongly rejects this idea, and other authorities—including the Maharsha (on *Bava Basra* 15a), *Tosfos*, *Yad Ramah*, *Chedvas Yaakov*, and *Beis Ephraim*—agree. The Halacha is clear: lying in writing is just as forbidden as lying verbally. In fact, some authorities consider written lies even more severe because they involve a deliberate action. Therefore, whether you say in class or if you were to write "that wasn't in our notes," the prohibition remains the same.

Telling your teacher—or even implying—that material was never taught when it actually was is prohibited. Depending on your words, this could be considered either lying or deception and none of the limited exceptions to the requirement of being honest would apply.

*"May I back out of a school carpool that  
I have already committed to?"  
"Should I report a co-worker who is acting dishonestly?"*

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