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Halacha – Jewish Law

Question: I live in Lawrence and attend a Daf Yomi class each morning in Far Rockaway before commuting to Manhattan via the Long Island Railroad (LIRR). The New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) offers a much cheaper "Far Rockaway Ticket" for trips to Manhattan compared to the pricier "Lawrence Ticket," since Far Rockaway falls within New York City while Lawrence is in Nassau County. Because I am present in Far Rockaway each morning, the MTA app allows me to buy the discounted round-trip ticket from there. My question is: On my return home from Manhattan, can I exit the train at Lawrence—my actual home—instead of riding all the way to Far Rockaway, as indicated by the discounted ticket that I bought?

Answer: Thank you for this thought-provoking question which can be likened to the classic "Stop-Over Question," like when someone living in Denver buys a plane ticket to Los Angeles (with a stop in Denver) because it is cheaper than a direct plane ticket to Denver—and wonders if it is permissible to just disembark in Denver. According to Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky Shlita one should avoid this practice unless absolutely necessary.

Regarding your specific question, several Halachic concerns suggest that you should not get off at Lawrence, but continue on to Far Rockaway as your ticket states. MTA Chair Janno Lieber specifically mentioned that the discount was intended for "Far Rockaway riders." Plus, the MTA uses GPS to confirm your phone's location in Far Rockaway before allowing the ticket purchase. Exiting early at Lawrence could be seen as misleading the MTA about your trip, which may constitute Genaivas Da'as (deception), as discussed in Chullin 94a. Additionally, the Chofetz Chaim in Ahavas Chessed teaches, based on "Midvar Sheker Tirchak" (distance yourself from falsehood), that when deception is used to avoid paying

money legitimately owed, it constitutes a form of theft. The discount was designed for Far Rockaway riders not for Lawrence riders.

Rav Yavrov ZT"l, referencing Sefer Chassidim in his Niv Sfasayim, also rules that even hinting at dishonesty through physical actions is forbidden, drawing from "Hin Tzedek," meaning our conduct should always be truthful. Thus, if people notice you buying a Far Rockaway ticket in the morning and see you getting off at Lawrence on your return trip home, it could violate this principle.

On the other hand, there are strong arguments for permitting you to depart the train at Lawrence. Rav Shmuel who was cited above did not rule that it was outright forbidden. Rav Yisroel Dovid Harfenes Shlita has ruled that it is allowed as long as it is not an explicit condition of sale (i.e. that it is not stated somewhere in the terms and conditions that the ticket may only be used for trips that start and end in Far Rockaway).

There is also debate between Rashi and Tosfos regarding the nature of Genaivas Da'as. According to Rashi, the prohibition only applies when something deceptive is actually said. If nothing is spoken, and the other party misleads themselves, no transgression occurs. In your case, you simply board, show your valid ticket, say nothing untrue, and leave at Lawrence.

Consider also Minhag HaSochrim, or common accepted commercial practice: universally, it is understood that passengers can (and do) disembark at any stop along their route, and no train system requires travel to the final printed destination.

Moreover, the MTA seems to have chosen to verify only your location via GPS, not residency or ultimate destination. If you are physically in Far Rockaway, you can buy the ticket—even if you do not live there.

Further, the ticket terms state that the Far Rockaway Ticket

"can be used for direct travel *between* [emphasis added] Far Rockaway and stations in LIRR Zone 1 [Manhattan]." Nowhere does it require riding all the way to Far Rockaway and prohibit disembarkment at an intermediate stop that is in between such as Lawrence.

However, the issue of Chillul Hashem (creating a negative impression of Torah observance) should be considered. For instance, if we pay extra for a beautiful Esrog on Succos, should we not also pay more for the Lawrence ticket to avoid any perception of impropriety?

In summary, compelling Halachic opinions exist on both sides. Those who wish to take the stricter approach and not exit the train at Lawrence or exit at Lawrence and pay for the Lawrence Ticket are acting Lifnim M'Shuras HaDin - going above and beyond the basic requirement of the law (and deserve praise). Those who follow the lenient position also have legitimate Halachic basis to support their actions. You are encouraged to discuss the matter further with your Rav for personalized guidance.

On The Parsha

When Yosaif's brothers plotted to kill him, Reuvain stepped in and tried to stop them. "Do not shed blood," he urged them. "Throw him into this pit here in the desert, but do not lay a hand on him." The Torah then reveals his true motive: "Reuvain suggested this in order to rescue him from their hands and bring him back later to his father." (Genesis 37:22)

Rashi comments that only Hashem could confirm Reuvain's true motives, because to an outsider, his suggestion seemed just as cruel as his brothers' actions. He proposed putting Yosaif into a pit that Rashi says contained snakes and scorpions. On the surface, it looked like he was simply choosing a different way to kill Yosaif.

But only Hashem knew what was really in Reuvain's heart. Only Hashem could point out that Reuvain's harsh words hid a plan to rescue his brother. He meant to come back later, pull Yosaif from the pit, and bring him home.

This story teaches us about the essence of integrity, it doesn't depend on appearances, but on what is truly in our hearts. Someone might do something that looks good while secretly having bad motives or do something that looks questionable while actually aiming for

something noble. Ultimately, only Hashem knows where true integrity lies.

Rashi adds further explanation by explaining that Reuvain, as the firstborn, felt especially responsible for Yosaif. He knew the blame would fall mostly on him, so he could not just follow the crowd and do whatever the rest of his brothers wanted.

This sense of taking personal responsibility to do the right thing is also crucial for integrity. Reuvain didn't say, "I am only one person – all of my brothers are against me – what can I do?" Instead, he recognized his unique position as the firstborn and acted accordingly.

Still, the story carries a sobering warning. The Torah says that Reuvain returned to the pit and did not find Yosaif. Rashi says that he was not there when the brothers sold Yosaif because he was either caring for his father or repenting for a past transgression. Either way, he should have remained by the pit and saved Yosaif as soon as he had the chance.

So, while good intentions are important, they are not enough by themselves. Reuvain meant well, but without seeing his plan through, tragedy resulted. True integrity, as Hashem desires, matches pure intent with decisive, persistent action. It is not enough to have righteous plans—we need to be present and committed until the end. This is the intent of "HaMaschil b'Mitzvah Omrim Lo Gemor" – one who begins a Mitzvah is told to finish it.

Reuvain's story is both an aspiration and a caution: strive for a sincere heart that even Hashem would vouch for but pair your intentions with the resolve to complete your mission. May we achieve both: intentions worthy of Divine approval and the perseverance to fulfill them promptly.

*"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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