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Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: Recently, a Resorts International casino opened in Queens, New York. I am not a gambler, but I read that this casino has altered the “game of dice” (also known as the dice game that rhymes with “traps”) in their establishment to differ from how it is played elsewhere. They did so to give the house a bigger advantage. Not that they would care—but what would the Halacha say about this practice?

ANSWER: If the facts as you have presented them are correct and the overwhelming majority of other casinos have a standardized dice table, then the altered dice table at Resorts International creates a misleading impression and may fall under the prohibition of Geneivas Da’as (deception). Since this deception occurs when money is involved it may also be considered Gezel (theft).

The Gemara in Chullin 94a establishes the foundational prohibition of Geneivas Da’as, teaching that it is forbidden to mislead another person even when no explicitly false statement is made. The Gemara provides multiple examples of such behavior including offering a gift to another without intent to give the gift because one knows the gift will be refused or creating the appearance of doing a favor for someone that is not genuine. This demonstrates that the Torah prohibits not only explicit falsehoods, but also any conduct that leads another person to form an incorrect assumption.

Geneivas Da’as is understood as a broad and binding principle. The Ritva (Chullin 94a) explains that Geneivas Da’as is included within the general prohibition of theft and applies when no money is involved as well. The Sefer Yere’im (Mitzvah 235) and the Semag (Lav 74) likewise treat Geneivas Da’as as a serious

violation, rooted in the Torah’s demand for honesty.

Applying these sources to the case of the casino, if the establishment alters the game of dice in a way that increases the house advantage while seemingly presenting the game as it is usually played, it is creating a false impression in the minds of the players. The players believe they are engaging in a familiar game with known odds, when in reality, the odds have been shifted against them in a concealed manner. This is precisely the type of misleading conduct prohibited by the above referenced Gemara. It is not necessary for the casino to explicitly lie to its patrons; the very act of structuring the game in a deceptive way constitutes Geneivas Da’as.

Furthermore, because this deception causes players to lose money under false pretenses, it aligns with the category described in Bava Metzia 61b and Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 228:6 as Gezel. The casino is not merely benefiting from chance or from a disclosed house edge; it is extracting money through a misrepresentation of the underlying terms of the game. In Halachic terms, that is indistinguishable from selling a product under a false claim or inflating the value of an object through deception.

Therefore, based on the sources above, such a practice would be prohibited. It constitutes Geneivas Da’as and because of the money made by the casino through the deception, it may also be classified as Gezel.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Raising children with refined Middos (good character traits) has always been a challenge—even for the greatest Tzaddikim (righteous people).

There is a well-known story about the holy Tzaddik, Rav Pinchas of Koretz ZT"l. One of his children had developed the negative Middah of dishonesty, which caused him deep anguish. Rav Pinchas explained that truth is the seal of Hashem and if his son had embraced falsehood, it was as though he had distanced himself from Hashem—Rachmana Litzlan (Heaven forbid) — a painful contradiction to our very purpose in this world.

In response, Rav Pinchas undertook an extraordinary step: he conducted himself as if he were in Aveilus (Halachic mourning over the dead). He sat Shiva, wept, and davened with intense sincerity.

This powerful reaction made a deep impression on his son. It stirred him to reflect on his ways and ultimately return to the proper path, embracing the Middah of truth with genuine devotion.

On The Parsha

“Im B’chukosai Tailechu” - if you walk in my statutes – Rashi explains this to mean, “That you shall strive with great effort in studying Torah.” Rav Henach Leibowitz ZT"l explained that striving with great effort in the study of Torah means that one must use all of one’s powers of reasoning to ensure that each and every piece of Torah that is said is both textually and logically compelling. The truth of a Sugya (Talmudic passage) must emerge organically, and not by, for example, randomly inserting complex structures and explanations without sufficient justification. Also, a Sugya must not be studied once – it must be learned and re-learned for days and sometimes weeks. This is the study of Torah that Rashi references above – Torah study with an absolute dedication to truth.

The Gemara (Bava Metziah 84a) explains that when Raish Lakish passed away, Rav Yochanan was in a state of despair upon losing his long-time study partner. The Sages asked, “Who shall go study with him, so that his anxiety will be relieved? Rabbi Elazar Ben Pedas should go because he is sharp and proficient in his studies.” He went and sat before him.

Whatever Rav Yochanan said, he would cite a proof supporting his view. Rav Yochanan exclaimed rhetorically, “You are like Raish Lakish?! Whenever I said something to Raish Lakish, he would pepper me with 24 questions – and I provided 24

responses! And through this back and forth the truth would emerge. You cite proofs to me? [I need to be challenged for the truth to emerge!]” Rav Yochanan then ripped his clothing in agony and cried, “Where are you Ben Lakish? Where are you Ben Lakish!”

With the demise of Raish Lakish, Rav Yochanan lost his ability to plumb the depths of Torah and he no longer had the tools to enable him to find the absolute truth in the Torah that he learned. Walking in Hashem’s statutes means seeking supreme and absolute truth in the study of Hashem’s Torah. Rav Yochanan could no longer do that which explains his extreme reaction. This is the deeper understanding of walking in Hashem’s statutes – doing so with the perspective of seeking absolute truth.

By the same token, Rav Dessler ZT"l is cited in Sefer HaZikaron L’Baal HaMichtav M’Eliyahu (Vol. II p. 76) regarding the Gemara (Taanis 23a) that discusses Choni HaM’agel. Choni fell asleep for seventy years. When he woke, he went to the Bais Midrash. He became weak of spirit when no one recognized him or responded to him. He then requested mercy and passed away. Rava explained, “That is what people say, give me friends or give me death.” Rav Dessler explains that Choni wished to die, not out of a desire for honor due to him that he did not receive. Rather, he could no longer find a study partner to study Torah with and engage in the pursuit of pure truth that can only emerge through a suitable study partner dedicated to deriving it.

*“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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