

BORROWING A TRADE-SHOW PASS

by Rabbi Yisroel Belsky ztl

QUESTION 49:

I was able to register on-line to get a free pass to the PC Expo show, but didn't get around to doing it. A friend who had a pass went the first day, and offered to lend me his pass for the second day. Can I use it? Is there a problem of chillul Hashem when people at the show assume I'm the person written on the badge, and I tell them that I'm just borrowing a friend's badge?

RABBI BELSKY

If you already registered and you lost your badge, so then you could use his. There's no question about that. It belongs to you; you just don't have the proof, so you use some other proof, namely his badge. But if you didn't register, it's not as simple. A lot of people could have done things, but they don't get around to it, and so they don't own what they could have owned. I suppose by now it's too late.

QUESTIONER

In the week or two before the convention, the free on-line registration ended, and after that the fee is \$25. I'm not sure why they do it that way. But two weeks before the actual conference the free registration ends, and you can't register for free anymore.

RABBI BELSKY

What happens when a store charges a certain price, and if you register early you get a discount, otherwise you have to pay full price? Somebody comes at the last minute and he makes phony papers that indicate that he registered two weeks earlier. You're taking a service that is being sold at \$25 - it has that value - and you're taking it and not paying for it. Just because you had an opportunity to get it for nothing and you didn't take it, doesn't mean you have a right to take it now.

QUESTIONER

The example you gave that is permissible, where if I lost my badge and use someone else's, is there a problem then of chilul Hashem? Do I then have to tell people at the show that it's not my real name, that I really have someone else's badge because I lost my badge?

RABBI BELSKY

You don't have to tell them. You're not obligated to tell them you lost your badge.

QUESTIONER

But what if they want to contact me in the future, and they ask me my name? Then I'd have to say this is not my real name, that I'm using someone else's badge, and get into the story that I lost my badge. Would I have to worry about the possibility of chilul Hashem?

RABBI BELSKY

If you feel it may come to that, then you have a problem. Then you can't do it. But if you're not going to do any business, you could tell them, "No, I'm not interested right now ..."

QUESTIONER

So I should avoid telling people this badge is really not mine.

RABBI BELSKY

Absolutely. Telling them would cause all kinds of suspicion.

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION 50: PERSONAL BUSINESS AT WORK DURING LUNCH

There is some personal business that I sometimes do during my lunch hour. I told my boss about it, and he said as long as I do it on my own time (e.g. during lunch) that's fine. When I use the phone for this purpose at lunch, it might be that the person in the next cubicle can overhear, and he may be wondering, why is that Orthodox Jew doing that non-work activity during work hours. Would it reduce the potential for chillul Hashem if I mention it to the person in the next cubicle, so he doesn't get the wrong impression? Is doing that in any way an obligation of mine, i.e. to reduce the potential appearances of chillul Hashem, even when one is not doing anything wrong?

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