

WAITING IN A HOTEL LOBBY

by Rabbi Yisroel Belsky ztl

QUESTION 60:

There are two buses that go from the Wall Street area to Monsey in the evening, about 40 minutes apart. One day I just missed the first bus. Near the bus stop is a fancy new hotel. Can I go into the lobby of the hotel to wait for the next bus? Can I sit on a couch in the lobby? Can I use their bathroom? Can I take out my laptop PC and do some work? Do I have to ask at the reception desk if I can do these things? Could I do such a thing if it happened every week?

RABBI BELSKY

I don't see anything wrong with someone using the lobby once in a while. It's understood that the public walks around there, not just people who are customers of the hotel. But I don't believe that the hotel is too happy about people who use it regularly.

QUESTIONER

So if I don't do it too often, could I in a sense 'set up shop' there?

RABBI BELSKY

No. Sitting on the couch is one thing, or to use their facilities. Going to the bathroom may be an accommodation that is available to anyone who urgently needs to use it. But when it gets to the point of sitting on the couch with your laptop, you should go to the desk and ask if it's OK with them.

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION 61: WAITING FOR A CAR SERVICE

I was at Pathmark and I called a car service to take me home, and the service said it will send a car to Pathmark within 10 minutes. After 8 minutes, someone offered me a ride home. Do I have to call the car service to cancel the ride? Do I owe the car service something anyway, since I caused one of their cars to come pick me up? How about if I've been waiting for their car for 20 minutes? Or 2 minutes?

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