

BREAKING SOMETHING IN A STORE

by Rabbi Yisroel Belsky ztl

QUESTION 80: BREAKING SOMETHING IN A STORE

If you break something in a store, who is the person you should ask whether or not you have to pay for it? Should it be the owner, manager, or is it okay to ask a cashier or salesperson. I've found that cashiers and salespeople invariably say it's okay, since they don't lose anything. For example, in a supermarket chain, my daughter broke a large yogurt, and the cashier refused to accept payment. Am I still required to go ask the store manager?

RABBI BELSKY

I would simply say that when it comes to a very small item, like a yogurt - maybe a little less or a little more - you could ask the cashier. I believe the cashiers are told that they should be nice and polite, and that it's not good for the reputation of the store to be very strict with customers. So this isn't a problem. Since it's important for public relations to establish a sort of flexibility, they generally don't mind.

When it comes to anything larger than just a dollar or so, if someone damaged a large item, he should take it to the management and say, "This happened accidentally, but nevertheless, I'm responsible." The manager will very likely say, "Don't worry about it," since he still wants to follow the "customer leniency" policy of the supermarket. But still, you should ask. When it comes to a smaller item, however, you can go to the cashier, and you don't have to go to someone higher up.

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION 81: CLOTHES INTENDED FOR CHARITY

As I gained weight, I put aside some clothes to give to charity. I assumed that since the clothes did not fit me, I would not need them anymore. I felt that even if I might be able to wear them later, I would still buy new clothes. Several months later, I lost enough weight so that the clothes fit me again. I had never gotten around to giving the clothes away as intended from the beginning. I would like to now use at least some of the clothes. Am I allowed to wear the clothes temporarily until I give them away? Can I opt to not donate them at all, and wear them on a permanent basis?

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