



VIDEO: MAY ONE GIVE A CORPORATE GIFT TO AN AKUM?

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Halacha Center

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Question: When it comes to this time of year, many companies give out corporate gifts to all of their employees. Is there a problem with giving a gift to an Akum?

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By Rabbi Yosef Kushner

The Gemara says (Avoda Zarah 20), that it is assur d'oraysa to give an Akum a *matnas chinam* (free gift). The way we come out *Halacha L'maysseh* is that this applies to all *Bnei Noach*, not just *ba'alei avodah zorah*.

Question: There does seem to be a widespread custom to give these gifts to all employees including an akum. How do we reconcile this practice?

Answer: There are two potential heterim for this:

1. If there is a person who is "makiro" (an acquaintance) it may be permitted. As you have a relationship with these individuals, it will most likely be reciprocated in kind, that being the case, *Chazal* look at it more like a *mecher* (transaction), therefore it is not considered a standard gift. This would be true for employees in a company or a cleaning lady in your house. In both cases showing appreciation will most likely spur them to work harder in order to pay you back.
2. The second heter is *darkei shalom*, which is not a blanket heter. The Rishonim explain this to mean that if you don't give it, there will be *eiva* (enmity). The Gemara explains that if you are supporting *Yidden* and *Bnei Noach* together, and you only give to the *yid*, then there will be complaints and issues.

These two heterim both have a similar reasoning behind them. The idea is that we cannot just give gifts out for no reason, but if there is some sort of benefit to be received by you,

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or you are avoiding potential problems, that would be allowed.