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Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: Our company is based in New York which is an “at-will employment-state.” This means that, unless we have a contract – they can fire us at any time even without two week’s notice. Generally speaking, we get a cost of living raise which ranges from 3% to 5% each year. Senior management told us that this year, the company needed to reign in expenses, and we were told that if we forgo our cost of living raise this year, the company would get back on track and raises would be paid next year. We agreed to forego our raises for the year.

Later, I found out that while raises were withheld from us, Senior Management gave themselves a raise. I feel that we were lied to, and I am really surprised because generally speaking, I have found Senior Management to be good and honest people. I do not know whether to tell my colleagues what happened or not. If I do tell them, and Senior Management found out that I told them, they will be angry at me. If I do not tell them, I feel that I am complicit in their lie and am not being honest with my coworkers.

I have two questions: Was Senior Management’s behavior acceptable and should I tell my colleagues about what Senior Management has done?

ANSWER: At first thought, it would appear that Senior Management’s behavior is very disturbing. However, after some reflection, it could very well be that Senior Management was not intent on denying you something that they did not deny themselves. Perhaps in years’ prior, they withheld raises for themselves while they paid

you and your colleagues a raise - this year, it is your turn to forgo a raise. In your question, you described your managers as, “...good and honest people.” We are obligated to judge good people favorably. (See Sefer Chafetz Chaim, Be’er Maim Chaim in the introduction – Positive Commandment #3). This is not limited to judges - the Mitzvah applies to men and women at all times (Sefer HaChinuch #235). Accordingly, you should give Senior Management the benefit of the doubt that they have not done anything untoward and that withholding raises from you was warranted and perhaps they withheld raises from themselves the year before. You should not tell your colleagues about what Senior Management has done as it may anger them unnecessarily. We would be wise to remember the Gemara in Shabbos (127b) “One who judges his friend as worthy, will himself be judged worthy by Hashem.”

On The Parsha

Parshas Emor outlines the observance of the Yomim Tovim (Jewish festivals), including specific instructions regarding Yom Kippur, such as the prohibition against work, the concept of atonement, and the obligation to engage in self-affliction (Leviticus 23:26–23:32). One of the primary forms of affliction on Yom Kippur, the tenth of Tishrei, is fasting. Notably, the Sages (Chazal) introduce a significant principle concerning the day preceding Yom Kippur, the ninth of Tishrei. The Gemara in Berachos (8b) and Yoma (81b) states that anyone who eats and drinks on the ninth of Tishrei is regarded by the Torah as though they have fasted on both the ninth and the tenth days. The Mitzvah of eating prior to Yom Kippur carries such importance that

fulfilling it is equated with an extra day of fasting. Why does the Torah credit an individual with a second day of fasting for eating on the ninth of Tishrei?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT”L commenting in his “Emes L'Yaakov” on this week’s Parsha, notes that if a person had not eaten on the day before Yom Kippur, the affliction (Inui) by fasting on Yom Kippur itself would not be recognizable as the Inui of the tenth at all. For this reason, the Torah commanded eating on the ninth and obligated stopping before nightfall, so that the Inui of the tenth would be discernible as the Inui that the Torah commanded. The Prisha (Orach Chaim 604) observes in a similar fashion that were a person to fast on the tenth alone, with no contrast preceding it, observers might mistake the affliction on the tenth for ordinary fasting or fasting due to illness, weakness, or some private distress.

From this point of view, the meals consumed on the ninth day do not serve solely as preparation for fasting on the tenth by providing the necessary energy to do so. Instead, they are considered an integral component of the fast on the tenth, as without the preceding eating, the act of fasting on the tenth would not be recognized as the Inui mandated by the Torah. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that one can get credit for fasting on the ninth through eating, since it forms an essential part of the observance on the tenth.

Indeed, the Torah’s decision to grant a person credit for fasting on the ninth—simply by eating—underscores the significance of making the true purpose of the fast evident. The Inui experienced on Yom Kippur is meant to be unmistakably recognized as fulfillment of Hashem’s command, and not for any other reason. By clearly establishing that the fast is directly mandated by the Torah, and not a result of personal circumstance or hardship, one fulfills the Mitzvah as the Torah intended. Furthermore, the reward for such clarity is substantial: one is considered as though an additional fast day was observed. This remarkable benefit highlights the premium that the Torah places on those who reveal and clarify the

truth about a Mitzvah’s observance, emphasizing the value of honesty and transparency in fulfilling Hashem’s will.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz ZT”L, the “Chazon Ish” (1878-1953) was born in Europe and eventually moved to Bnei Brak in Israel. When he first moved there, he rented an apartment on the corner of HaRav Sher and Ben Pesachya street. After some time, however, he informed the owner of the apartment that he had heard that the price of apartment rentals in the area had gone up. Due to the price increase, he felt that he had to move because he did not have enough money to pay for the higher rent.

The landlord was confused, “I have not raised your rent! It would be an honor to have the Rav continue living here as long as the Rav would want.”

The Chazon Ish responded, “I do not wish to deprive you and your family of the additional rent that you are rightfully entitled to now that prices in the area have gone up. I cannot pay you the additional rent, so I will move so you can receive the higher rent from someone else.”

*“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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