

■ PATH TO STABILITY

It's Better to Be Smart Than to Be Right

I am employed by a chessed organization that does wonderful work. Overall, I am happy at my job, but recently, a frustrating situation has arisen.

My contract came up for renegotiation, and I wished to make several changes to it. My employer told me that he was too busy to discuss the contract, but he did agree that I could begin to bill according to the changes I wished to implement and that we would sort things out later.

After billing according to the new contract for six months, my employer finally told me that he was ready to discuss the contract. To my surprise, he gave me a hard time with many of the changes that I had asked for.

Six months ago, I would have been willing to be flexible on several of the items. Now, however, I have already billed for six out of the 12 months of the contract, and I feel that it is unfair of my employer to expect me to recalculate all of my previous invoices and credit him with the difference. My earnings for the last six months have already been spent.

When I told this to my employer, he disagreed with me vehemently and accused me of being inflexible. I think he is the one who is being unreasonable.

Who is right?

Having heard only your side of the story, we cannot even attempt to determine who is right. In our view, however, the question of who is right is irrelevant.

According to halachah, you might not have any claim whatsoever against your employer. As long as you did not sign a new contract, you were employed under the terms of the old contract. Your employer's verbal agreement that you can bill temporarily according to a new arrangement does not necessarily constitute a binding agreement.

When your employer told you

that he was too busy to discuss the terms of your new contract with you, he may well have meant that *he did not agree to the terms you requested but he was not interested in arguing with you over it at that time.*

You, however, read his words as a tacit agreement to the new terms, which may not have been his intention at all. Had you made an effort to clarify the matter at any time since, you might have saved yourself a lot of frustration.

In any dispute, it's better to be smart than to be right. The

ranks of the unemployed are full of people who were right.

We advise you to forget about who is right and who is wrong and try to find a compromise that will satisfy both you and your employer. Do not turn this into a matter of principle. It's not your place to punish your employer, even if he was wrong. It will only backfire on you. You should come to the negotiating table ready to recalculate your invoices and credit your employer, if necessary.

But the money is spent, you say. True. But maintaining a

healthy relationship with your employer is worth more than the money you are arguing over, however much it might be.

Employees often need favors from their employers. You might need to take off unexpectedly once in a while, you might come late to work here and there, and you might make mistakes in your work. If you have shown flexibility to your employer in the past, he is far more likely to overlook these things.

There is another reason why it's worth keeping your employer happy. Few people stay at a job forever. When it comes time to look for your next job, you need to know that your current employer will have good things to say about you. Future employers will not want to hire you if they hear that you are stubborn and inflexible. No short-term gain justifies the risk of earning that kind of a reputation.

We are not suggesting that you cave in to all of your employer's demands. We at Mesila believe that negotiation is a healthy process, and that it's important that both sides feel that they got a good deal in the end.

You know your employer, and you can undoubtedly figure out which clauses in your contract he really has a problem with and

which he would be willing to live with. If you show him that you are willing to give in on the things that are most important to him, you can ask him to give in on what's most important to you.

Difficult as it may be for you to recalculate your previous invoices, you would not want to have money in your possession that was not earned fairly. This is especially so because you work for a *chessed* organization and your salary is paid with *zedakah* money.

Remember, Hashem has all the money in the world, and He is the only One who provides *parnassah*. If you are meant to have that money, then Hashem will find a way to return it to you.



Mesila is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families and businesses in Israel achieve financial stability and independence. With over 25 chapters across Israel, Mesila is rescuing hundreds of families and businesses from the cycle of poverty and debt through its three-pronged approach of education, counseling and financial assistance. Readers are invited to submit questions and feedback to hamodia@mesila.org, or by fax to (02) 500-0478.



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