

Do I Need to Buy My Products From a Jew?

## Rav Eliezer Cohen

**Case:** I buy a lot of supplies for my business. I can buy from a local Jewish hardware store, or from one of the big box stores. The local store has average prices, and the big box stores are cheaper.

**Question:** Do I need to buy the products from the Jewish store?

**Answer:** There is a *pasuk* that says, “*Vechi simkiru mimkar l’amisecha oy kana miyad amisecha, al tinu ish es achiv*” (When buying or selling to other Jews, don’t overcharge your fellow Jew). *Rashi* brings a *Medrash* that asks, why does the Torah say it in this format, that if you are selling or buying from a Jew you shouldn’t overcharge, instead of simply stating, “Don’t overcharge your fellow Jew”? *Rashi* explains that the Torah is teaching us that we are supposed to buy and sell to Jews and give them preference in order to help support them. This holds true only if the price difference between the two is small.

**Question:** How much **more** should I pay to buy from a Jew?

**Answer:** The *Minchas Yitzchok* brings multiple opinions. One opinion says that one should pay up to 1/6 more to buy from a Jew. The Chafetz Chaim brings down the same thing as well. This would fit very well with the *pasuk*, as that *pasuk* is referring to *ona’ah*, which means charging a Jew more than 1/6 of the market value for a product.

Sometimes Jewish stores do not have easy return policies, and then one may be stuck with the item if it doesn’t work for him. If that is the case, one has no obligation to buy from the Jewish store.

However, it is very important to try to buy from a Jewish store whenever possible, even if that may cause some slight inconveniences, such as spending a bit more or traveling a bit further.

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