

If Someone Invites Me to Eat with Him in a Restaurant, Can I Assume That He Will Be Paying for My Meal?

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Question: Reuven asks Shimon, a business professional, to join him for lunch in a restaurant in order to ask him some business-related questions. When the bill comes, Shimon expects Reuven to pay for his meal; however, it soon became clear that Shimon was not planning on doing so. Can Shimon tell Reuven that he should pay?

Answer: The Poskim discuss a case where someone tells his friend to come eat a meal with him. Most Poskim say that if he doesn't expressly tell his friend that he will be sponsoring, it cannot be assumed that the meal is free. The exception to this rule would be if it is standard industry practice that someone seeking information pays for the entire meal of the other party. If that were the case, it can be assumed that he is paying for the meal. Otherwise, this assumption cannot be made.

There are some Poskim who disagree and say that if someone invites his friend for a meal, even if he doesn't expressly say that it is free, it can be assumed that he won't charge for it. Since this is a *machlokes haposkim*, the *muchzik* will have the upper hand. Still, as long as the meal isn't paid for yet, the one who invited his friend to the restaurant cannot be forced to pay on behalf of the invitee.

Question: Can Shimon then say that if his meal is not being paid for, he will consider this a business meeting and will charge for the advice he is giving?

Answer: If it is the norm in the industry to charge for this type of advice, then he could make that claim.