

May a Jew Pay for Non-Kosher Food for a Corporate Party?

Rabbi Yosef Kushner

Question: May a Jewish employer order non-kosher food for his non-Jewish employees to have a party?

Answer: It is forbidden for a Jewish employer to purchase non-kosher food for his employees if he pays for it prior to or at the time of purchase (see Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 450:6 and Y.D. 132:4).

For this reason, it is halachically problematic for the Jewish employer to use a company credit card to pay for the non-kosher food, since he is the owner of the business. Although the halachic status of purchases made by credit card is not entirely clear (as perhaps the credit card company is considered to have made the actual purchase), this should certainly be avoided.

One possible solution is suggested by the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 450:6), who writes that one may give cash to a non-Jew and ask him to purchase food himself. But nowadays, this is a difficult solution to implement practically, since everything must be expensed properly, and most people do not use cash anymore.

A second solution may be for the employer to ask them to pay for the food themselves and the employer will take responsibility to compensate them afterwards. However, this too is not always a viable option, since many employees do not wish to pay for work-related expenses and then be compensated.

A third possible solution, which may be the most practical one, is to give the employees a preloaded gift card that is usable anywhere (not a gift card designated specifically for a non-kosher food establishment). The employees may then use the gift card to purchase food at a non-kosher restaurant.