

Should a Business Have a General Heter Iska?

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Question: I am starting a lending company that gives loans with interest. Since it is possible that I may have clients who are Jewish, and I may not even realize they are Jewish, should I get a general *heter iska* just in case?

Answer: A general *heter iska* is a very good idea to have in your business. In fact, before the war, Rav Azriel Eiger of Lublin (a great-grandson of Rav Akiva Eiger) promoted the idea that every individual should have a general *heter iska* for all their business pursuits. He noted that many people stumble in this area of halacha and wrote that having such a general *heter iska* would be the solution. Many Rabbanim agreed with this idea.

Rav Aharon Kotler, however, was opposed to the idea. He said that even though we find that a person can make a general declaration annulling all vows he makes in the coming year, one cannot do the same with a *heter iska*. This is because a *heter iska* needs a *kinyan*, which has to be specific to the transaction it applies to. He says that one cannot do this in a general way and it must be specified for each deal individually.

In your business of lending money, it may be a good idea to have a general *heter iska* just in case, but if you know that you are lending money to a Jewish person you should definitely make a *heter iska* that is specific to him.