

# DO NOT STEAL PART 3

*by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen*

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In the previous article, we discussed the three forms of stealing: Stealing in secret (geneiva), stealing in public (gezeila) and cheating someone of what is rightfully theirs (oshek). In the coming weeks we will focus on various forms of taking items and discuss whether they constitute stealing according to the Torah. We will see that the prohibition of stealing applies to a far wider range of actions than we may have initially thought.

### Taking Items of Miniscule Value

It is forbidden to steal any item regardless of its value. Even if the item is worth less than a prutah\*\* , one may not take it without permission. For example, a person stays in a hotel and when he leaves, he takes a small ketchup packet from the dining area. It is quite possible that the hotel owner objects to people taking anything with them, therefore the visitor should refrain from this practice unless he is completely certain that the owner allows people to take items when they leave.

The one exception to this is if one can be totally sure that nobody would ever object to such an item being taken. For example, one may take a splinter of wood from a fence in order to use that splinter - if in fact, the owner of the fence does in fact object, then taking the splinter would constitute stealing.

### Taking as a Practical Joke

One may think that taking a friend's item as practical joke is not considered stealing since the joker intends to return it. However, this is considered to be a form of stealing that is prohibited by the Torah. Taking something even temporarily is nonetheless an act of thievery. It is important to educate one's children taking things in such a fashion is an unacceptable activity.

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\*Much of the information for this essay is taken from "Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Yisroel Pinchos Bodner.

\*\*A prutah is defined as the lowest common denomination coin that can be used to purchase items. A penny or nickel is certainly less than a prutah.

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