

# RETURNING LOST OBJECTS PART 11

*by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen*

Last week we began to discuss the laws of what one who finds an item must do once he is clear that he is obligated to guard the item and try to find its rightful owner. We will continue with these laws below.

The finder must be careful to preserve the item so that it does not get damaged. For example, if he found a book he should not store it in a damp place where it might become moldy. Furthermore, the finder is not allowed to borrow the item for his personal use.

If the finder discovers the identity of the owner of the lost item he is not obligated to deliver it to the owner, rather he can call him and request that he come to pick it up. Once the owner has been notified, it becomes his responsibility to travel to the finder to reclaim it.

If the finder cannot contact the owner but knows his identity he should try to return the item in a manner that the owner will definitely be able to retrieve it - for example, he should not leave it outside the front door of the owner's house, because someone may steal it before the owner discovers it. Rather he should try to hand over the item to the rightful owner.

If the finder does not know the identity of the owner he is required to publicize his find in the hope that the owner will discover the location of his lost item. If he finds it the item in a self-contained area such as a summer camp, then he can simply put up a sign in the most frequented location and announce it when many people are gathered together.

If, however, he found it in a large town, then he should put up signs in the communal areas, such as shuls that are close to where the item was found.

In the following week we will discuss what to write on the signs and the effort required in putting them up,

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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

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