

MITZVAH 34: RETURNING STOLEN ITEMS

by Rabbi Moshe Goldberger

"If one sins and becomes guilty, he should return the item which he stole." (Vayikra 5:23)

A person who has stolen is obligated to return a stolen item or its monetary value to the original owner or his heirs.

The Rambam cautions us in Hilchos Geneivah (1:2) that we may not steal even a tiny item. One may not steal even as a joke, with intention to return the item (ibid.). One may also not buy stolen property from a thief. This is a terrible sin, for it encourages the thief to continue his crimes (ibid. 5:1).

If one did steal intentionally or unintentionally, he must return the stolen item.

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