



KI TETZEI

This Shabbat, we will read the Parsha of Ki Tetzei, which contains a very large amount of Mitzvot, too numerous to mention them all here. One of the most well-known in this week's reading is the mitzva of Hashavat Aveida, or Returning lost Objects.

Simply put, everyone knows the basics of this mitzvah; if you find an object on the street or in some public area, you make an effort to seek out some identification and return it to its owner. That's about all the Torah seems to say about it, but there's much more. What if there are no identifying marks on the object? And what marks can count as valid identification? How long do you have to announce that you've found something if nobody claims it? A week? A year? A lifetime? When someone claims it, how do you know he's not lying? Not such a simple mitzvah anymore, is it?

This is just one example of why there are two necessary parts of the Torah, the Torah She'Bichtav, or "Written Torah," and the Torah She'ba'al Peh, or the "Oral Torah." The former includes the five books of Moses, the Navi, and the K'tuvim (Writings). The latter includes the Mishna and the Gemara, or Talmud. Often, as in this example, a passage that is written in the Torah CANNOT be completely understood at all without the help of the Talmud. Indeed, the 7th and 8th grade students at our school spend some time going through sections of Talmud that discusses what exactly must be done with found objects and how to properly care for the property of other people.

We may often THINK we know all we need to know, but there's always more. We have to keep studying and delving deeper into it.

And on that note...Welcome back to school! May all our GRTWA students have a great year of learning ahead!

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Cohen