

What Can a Shul or Mikvah do About the Many Aveidos Left on The Premises?

Rav Baruch Fried

Question: What can a shul or mikvah do if it finds itself overloaded with *aveidos* that people left there?

Answer: If they already have been *koneh* it, they are stuck with it. However, if whoever has jurisdiction over the premises had in mind not to acquire it, and it is only picked up after the person who left it there is *meya'esh*, they can keep it. However, that is often not the case. Often, whoever left it there completely forgot about their item, without ever being *meya'esh*.

Going forward, some Poskim suggest that the problem can be rectified by putting up a sign that anything left on the shul property becomes *hefker* after a reasonable amount of time. This would only work if the sign is hung in a prominent place so that people know it is there and presumably agree to abide by it and allow their items to become *hefker*.

Furthermore, the sign would only work for things that are normally left behind. If someone's passport fell out of his pocket and got lost, it would not become *hefker*, because the sign would not absolve the shul from returning things that the owners wouldn't expect to leave behind. For such things, they would have to be returned like a regular *aveidah*.