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**Talmud Yerushalmi Institute ([www.talmudyerushalmi.org](http://www.talmudyerushalmi.org))**

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### **Is it better to steal a little or a lot?**

**Few people do not understand that stealing is a reprehensible act. We think of thieves as those who cause others a financial loss, especially a significant one. The bigger the loss, the bigger the thief.**

**We are aware of our glaring infractions, but we tend to neglect the routine albeit minor infractions that we commit. How many times do we cause someone a small loss or just an inconvenience? How many of us freely change our minds about a commitment after giving it further thought?**

**The Talmud Yerushalmi teaches us that the sin which brought on the demise of the Generation of the Flood was theft, not just any theft, but the specific theft of small amounts, amounts so small that the perpetrator could not be held liable in court.**

**It was specifically this kind of theft that led God Himself to exact justice. It was negligible theft, not significant theft which led to the destruction of the entire civilized world. When the people can not exact justice, God does.**

**Negligible theft is just a case in point of the broader wrong-doing of committing a crime which can not be brought before a court. Going back on one's word even if it does not cause a financial loss, even if it just causes an inconvenience is also a wrong-doing of the same nature. This kind of wrong-doing too may incur Divine Retribution. (Bava Metsi'ah 4:2)**

**May God grant us the wisdom and self-awareness to recognize our negligible but routine infractions and steer us away from their consequences! (Michael Linetsky)**

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