

Shoel U'Mashiv

Can I Pick Up My Car Keys?

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Q - Someone had placed their keychain, which had on it both their car keys and their house keys, next to their *Tallis* bag in one of the cabinets in the back of the main sanctuary. As they went to take their *Tallis* out, the keys fell. He came up to ask me whether he could pick up the keys and put them back?

A - What is the potential problem?

This is a *Muktzeh* question. The *Rambam Hilchos Shabbos* 24:13 says that the idea of *Muktzeh* is to ensure that *Shabbos* remains different from the rest of the days of the week. On *Shabbos* one should walk differently, talk differently, dress differently and handle objects differently. There is a discussion about whether *Muktzeh* is one of the more severe Rabbinic prohibitions or one of the more lenient. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, one should be careful with it, as they would any other prohibition.

How can keys make a keychain *Muktzeh*?

There is a concept of *Bassis L'Davar Ha'Assur*. The word *Bassis* translates to "support." The *Mishnah Berurah* 310:24 explains that *Bassis L'Davar Ha'Assur* is any non-*Muktzeh* item that is deliberately used to hold a *Muktzeh* item, and it is treated like the *Muktzeh* item. One of the more common *Muktzeh* items found around the house is a *Kli Sh'Melachto L'Issur*, which is an object whose principle use is for something that is prohibited. The *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasah* 20:80 says that a car key is considered a *Kli Sh'Melachto L'Issur*. Therefore, it makes the entire keychain a *Bassis L'Davar Ha'Assur*.

How can one move a keychain?

The *Shulchan Aruch O.C.* 308:3 says there are two instances in which a *Kli Sh'Melachto L'Issur* can be moved. First is if the body of the item is needed (e.g., a hammer is *Muktzeh* since its primary use is for building, but it can be moved if it is needed to crack open a nut). The second is if the space that it occupies needed (e.g., a pen was left on one's chair). Alternatively, the *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasah* 20:86 says one may move the keychain by grasping the non-*Muktzeh* keys. The reason being it's better to move the *Muktzeh* keys in an indirect manner than to take them off the keychain and must grab them directly.

What is the best solution for our friend whose keys fell?

Since he did not need the keys for any reason, nor did he need that space that they had fallen to, neither of the leniencies quoted by the *Shulchan Aruch* applied. However, that which The *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasah* suggested did apply. Therefore, I told him he was able to put his keys back by grabbing one of the non-*Muktzeh* keys on the keychain.