

Weekly Halacha Discussion

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics provided weekly. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Carrying on Yom Tov: Is it Always Permitted?

QUESTION: *Since it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, some people install combination locks on their doors so that they can lock and unlock their homes without carrying a key. On Yom Tov, however, when it is permitted to carry under certain circumstances, many people carry their house keys and do not use their combination locks. Is carrying a house key permitted on Yom Tov when one has a combination lock?*

DISCUSSION: It is forbidden according to all views and could be a violation of Torah Law.

There is a common misconception concerning the Labour of Carrying on *Yom Tov*; many people are under the assumption that all carrying is permitted. In fact, this is not true. To better understand the specifics of this halachah, we need to distinguish between three different types of carrying, each with its own set of *halachos*:

- 1) Carrying for a positive *Yom Tov* purpose – **permitted**
 - 2) Carrying for no purpose – **prohibited**
 - 3) Carrying for a “preventive” purpose – **questionable**
- Carrying for a positive *Yom Tov* purpose – permitted¹**

Carrying on *Yom Tov* is clearly permitted when the object being carried is needed on *Yom Tov*; e.g., it is permitted to carry food from one house to another, to wear a watch, to carry a handkerchief² or to carry a raincoat in case of rain.

It is permitted to take a baby outside for a stroll, to carry a *Sefer Torah* or another *sefer* for the purpose of studying it, to carry a *lulav* on Sukkos or a shofar on Rosh Hashanah,³ or to carry any object which will be used to fulfil a mitzvah which should be fulfilled that day. It is also permitted to bring someone a gift, even if the item will not be used on *Yom Tov*.⁴ All of these are

1 Some *poskim* hold that medications should not be carried, since that is not considered a universal need (*shaveh l'chol nefesh*). While others are lenient, it is best to employ a *shinui* when carrying medications on *Yom Tov*; Harav S. Z. Auerbach (*Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 33, note 90).

2 Even two handkerchiefs may be carried as long as both are in one pocket. If they are in two separate pockets they may not be carried unless both will be needed; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (*Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 19, note 7; Harav Y. S. Elyashiv (*Mevakshei Torah, Yom Tov*, pg. 269).

3 The custom follows the opinion of most *poskim* who permit carrying a *lulav* or a shofar for women (or minors) who want to shake the *lulav* or hear the shofar, even though women (and minors) are not obligated to fulfil these *mitzvos*; *Shulchan Aruch* Harav 589:2; *Igros Moshe* O.C. 3:94; *Az Nidberu* 13:38. A minority opinion forbids carrying for this purpose; *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 589:1 quoting *Sha'agas Aryeh* 106.

4 *Mishnah Berurah* 516:12, 14.

considered positive, constructive purposes, and are permitted on *Yom Tov*.⁵

It is important to remember that a “positive *Yom Tov* need” includes only what is needed for that same day, which extends only until sunset of that day. It is strictly forbidden to carry an object which is needed only for the next day, even if the next day is another day of *Yom Tov*. It is forbidden, therefore, to carry home a *tallis* or a *machzor*, if the reason for carrying it is that one is planning to pray in a different *shul* the next day. When the next day is Shabbos and a proper *eiruv tavshilin* was prepared, it is permitted to carry on *Yom Tov* for a Shabbos need.

Carrying for no purpose – prohibited

It is strictly forbidden to carry an object that meets no *Yom Tov* need at all, such as carrying around a used tissue, a button, or a piece of paper which is not needed on *Yom Tov*. If the carrying takes place in a public domain (*reshus ha-rabim*) it is Biblically forbidden⁶ unless a valid *eiruv* (*tzuras ha-pesach*) was made.⁷ Most *poskim* hold that an *eiruv chatzeiros* is not required for *Yom Tov*. To satisfy all opinions, it is recommended that when an *eiruv chatzeiros* is made for Shabbos, *Yom Tov* should be included as well.⁸

Thus before taking the baby carriage for a stroll on *Yom Tov*, one should check that only items that are needed (or that one may reasonably assume will be needed⁹) during the walk are in the carriage. Similarly, before leaving the house for a walk on *Yom Tov*, one should rid himself of any items which will not be needed during the walk.¹⁰

Carrying for a “preventive” purpose – questionable

There is a debate among the *poskim* concerning a third type of carrying, one which can neither be classified as a “positive, constructive purpose” nor as having “no purpose” at all. The case in question concerns the permissibility of carrying the key to a safe containing money or other non-*Yom Tov* needs since the owner does not feel secure hiding the key in the house. In the opinion of some *poskim*¹¹ this is considered a “positive” *Yom Tov* need since were the owner not to

5 This is permitted even if one could have just as easily carried the object before *Yom Tov*; *Mishnah Berurah* 498:10.

6 *Sha'ar ha-Tziyon* 618:5.

7 For this reason, the city *eiruv* should be checked before *Yom Tov* just as it is checked before Shabbos.

8 *Mishnah Berurah* 528:1.

9 Based on *Mishnah Berurah* 618:10.

10 *Minchas Yom Tov* 98:126.

11 *Rama* O.C. 618:1.

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carry the key on his person, he would be so worried throughout *Yom Tov* that his enjoyment of the holiday would be marred. Others, however, maintain that since the purpose of carrying the key is primarily to prevent a loss, the carrying is not a *Yom Tov* need and is not permitted.¹² *Mishnah Berurah* rules that it is proper to be stringent and not to carry when the purpose of the carrying is to prevent a loss. Other *poskim* rely on the more lenient view and allow this type of carrying, and many people follow the lenient view.¹³

A house key, however, may be carried according to all views, since houses almost always contain food, clothing and other *Yom Tov* needs so that one would feel uneasy about leaving them unlocked. All *poskim* agree, therefore, that it is a genuine, positive *Yom Tov* need to carry a house key.¹⁴ In the exceptional case when one's "house" (e.g., a hotel room or an empty house that one might occupy as a guest) does not contain anything that he needs for *Yom Tov*, the halachah would be comparable to the aforementioned case about carrying a key to a safe. But even when all *poskim* agree that carrying a house key is a genuine *Yom Tov* need, carrying a key is permitted only when no other option is available. If the house can be locked and then reopened without carrying a key, all *poskim* would agree that it is prohibited to carry the key. Carrying under such circumstances falls into the category of carrying for "no purpose", which is strictly forbidden.¹⁵ Thus:

- A homeowner whose house has a combination lock may not carry a house key on *Yom Tov*.
- If there is someone in the house who is readily available to open the door, a key may not be carried.
- One who wears his house key on a Shabbos belt or tie clip on Shabbos should do so on *Yom Tov* as well.
- If on Shabbos one hides his key under a mat, etc., he must do so on *Yom Tov* as well.
- Many *poskim* hold that it is only permitted to carry

the key that is needed for opening the entrance door to the house. If there are other keys on the same ring, they must be removed from the key ring before going outside.¹⁶

QUESTION: *Is it permitted on Yom Tov to carry garbage out of the house? Is it permitted to transfer garbage from the backyard or garage to the front of the house so that it can be picked up by the Sanitation Department?*

DISCUSSION: Some *poskim* consider the removal of trash from the house a legitimate *Yom Tov* need, since leaving it in the house causes unpleasantness which detracts from the enjoyment of *Yom Tov*.¹⁷ According to this opinion, when the garbage cannot be removed to an enclosed area it may be taken outside. Other *poskim* hold that this is not considered carrying for a "positive purpose," since one has no "need" for the garbage. In their opinion, this is similar to carrying for a "preventive purpose" which we discussed earlier, since the main reason for removing the trash is to prevent a foul odour or to create space for additional garbage.¹⁸ In the previous discussion concerning a house key, we concluded that it is questionable whether this type of carrying is permitted, but that many conduct themselves in accordance with the lenient opinion. In this case, contemporary *poskim* agree that if the garbage smells and it cannot be removed to an enclosed area, it is permitted to carry the trash outside.

But all *poskim* would agree that it is forbidden to transfer garbage which is already outside of the house (in the garage or back yard) to the lawn in front of the house in order for it to be picked up by the Sanitation Department. Surely, this serves no *Yom Tov* need whatsoever and is not permitted on *Yom Tov*. In addition to the prohibition against carrying, there is also the issue of handling *muktzeh*,¹⁹ so clearly this should be avoided.

¹² *Taz* 618:1; *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 618:1.

¹³ *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 618:3; *Minchas Yom Tov* 98:125. *Chayei Adam* 96:1 rules that a *baal nefesh* should be stringent.

¹⁴ *Mishnah Berurah* 618:5. But this is only permitted for food or other *Yom Tov* needs for that day only. One who is leaving the house and will only come back that night (which is halachically the "next day") or the next day, cannot rely on this; Harav Y. S. Elyashiv (*Mevakshei Torah, Yom Tov*, pg. 267). Harav S. Z. Auerbach, however, permits this since it is "today's need" to leave the house and the house cannot be left open; thus the key is needed for today, not for the next day (*Minchas Shelomo* 2:35-9).

¹⁵ *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 618:1.

¹⁶ *Igros Moshe O. C.* 5:35; Harav S. Z. Auerbach (quoted in *Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 33, note 92); *Hilchos ha-Moadim* 5:9. Other *poskim*, however, are more lenient and allow carrying the entire ring of keys; See *Minchas Yitzchak* 8:30; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (*Mevakshei Torah, Yom Tov*, pg. 268); *Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 19, note 14; *Teshuvos v'Hanhagos* 1:348. Car keys, however, are considered severe *muktzeh* and may not be carried; Harav S. Z. Auerbach (*Tikunim u'Miluim* 20, note 254).

¹⁷ Harav Y. Y. Kanievsky (*Orchos Rabbeinu*, vol. 2, *Yom Tov*, 6).

¹⁸ Harav Y. S. Elyashiv (oral ruling, quoted in *Yom Tov in Halachah*, pg. 156).

¹⁹ Since in almost all cases, once the garbage is out of the house, moving garbage based on the *graf shel re'ii* leniency is not applicable.