



ERETZ HEMDAH

ASK THE RABBI SERVICE

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Drawer with Aluminum Foil Roll

Question: In one of my kitchen cabinet drawers, I keep a roll of aluminum foil along with items I may use on Shabbat. May I open this drawer on Shabbat?

Answer: We will first identify a roll of aluminum foil's *muktzeh* status. An object that is not fit for use on the present Shabbat is *muktzeh*. If it is a usable "utensil," but its main use is for forbidden purposes, it is a relatively lenient form of *muktzeh* called *kli shemelachto l'issur*. If it is not yet a utensil (or a food) and making it one would require a Shabbat violation or a pre-Shabbat designation for permitted usage, it is the more severe *muktzeh machamat gufo* (intrinsic *muktzeh*) (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 308:38; Rama ad loc. 7).

Aluminum foil is not used when on its roll;

rather, one cuts a piece to size for its present purpose, which is then a usable utensil. Since it is forbidden to cut such a piece (see Orchot Shabbat 19:125), we view the roll according to its present stage – as an unusable object (*ibid.*). (A roll of toilet paper, though, is not *muktzeh* (*ibid.* 126) because when there are no viable alternatives, there are halachic ways to use the toilet paper (see Living the Halachic Process I, C-16)).

When a *muktzeh* item rests on an otherwise non-*muktzeh* object, the "base" can take on the *muktzeh* item's status, based on a concept called *bassis l'davar ha'asur* (Shulchan Aruch, OC 310:7). There are several conditions for the status of *bassis* to exist: 1) The *muktzeh* was on the base when Shabbat entered (*ibid.*; Mishna Berura 266:26). 2) The *muktzeh* was placed with the intention that it would remain there on Shabbat in a significant manner (Shulchan Aruch, OC 309:4; see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 20:520). 3) The *muktzeh* item(s) is more "important" than non-*muktzeh* items that also rest there (Shulchan Aruch, OC 310:8).

From your description, it sounds like conditions 1 and 2 are met, so the question depends on whether the aluminum foil (and other *muktzeh* items) is more important than the non-*muktzeh*. In this context, a *kli shemelachto l'issur* is treated as non-*muktzeh*. Since such items may be moved for usage purpose and when they are in the way (*ibid.* 308:3), the drawer may be opened to make available the objects you wish to use and then closed.

The individual homeowner's perspective

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on importance is the determinant (Mishna Berura 310:33). A prominent early source, the Magen Avraham (277:8), posits that *challa* is more important than the candles on the table. However, regarding more exact parameters, there are many opinions (see Orchot Shabbat 19:(414)). Some suggest that importance depends on overall value to the person (i.e., if he could choose what to hold on to, which would it be, so that price is crucial) (Q&A 14 of Rav S.Z. Auerbach in Tiltulei Shabbat). Other opinions stress functionally in the specific context (Igrot Moshe, OC V, 22.17 assumes that glasses are more important than a relatively large amount of money, but only if it is his only pair). Still others consider the relationship between the objects and the specific *bassis* (Shevet Halevi VIII:52 says that a *challa* is more important than candles/candlesticks on a table where one eats). Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata (20:55) posits that it is crucial for the permitted object to be necessary for Shabbat. In any case, these parameters are unlikely to make a difference in a drawer

used for general storage, where many things could possibly be used at this time.

Usually, when a *muktzeh* item does not make the base a *bassis*, we should still shake off the *muktzeh* before further moving the base, if this is feasible (Shulchan Aruch, OC 310:8). However, it is not feasible to simply shake out a cabinet drawer. While moving the *muktzeh* aluminum foil along with the drawer seems regrettable, no halachic construct forbids keeping it in the drawer when it does not create a *bassis* (see Orchot Shabbat 19:(386)).

Therefore, if the aluminum foil and other fully *muktzeh* items are a minority in importance, you may pull out the drawer on Shabbat. ■

Having a dispute?



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