

THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

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Parshas Bo 5766

My hotel room door is opened with a card, what may I do on Shabbos?

This is a complicated matter and when relevant one should seek guidance from one's rav. We will attempt to depict the problems and possible solutions.

The problem with opening a door with a card is that it activates an electric circuit,¹ which in turn enables the lock to open. (In some cases this even activates a printed report in the Hotel's security office).

One might leave the hotel room before Shabbos but upon returning after shul or after the Shabbos meal it is prohibited to open the door. The argument one might use is that sleep involves *oneg Shabbos* and should permit opening the door; however, it is prohibited to violate an *issur* for *oneg Shabbos* or even for a *mitzvah*.

What if people would not go to shul if they knew they could not re-enter their room?

Although we find that certain people who venture out for *pikuach nefesh* may return home, even though *issurim* are violated,² we do not find the leniency for personal *mitzvos* and thus it is not a valid argument.

What about asking a gentile to open the door?

This might present a solution but it is by no means simple. Halachic technicalities aside, if one would be permitted to tell a gentile to open

¹¹ We will not discuss the nature of the *issurim* involved with opening and closing an electric circuit. Suffice that it is accepted by all *poskim* to be *osur*.

² The *Iggros Moshe* permits returning even if when it involves *issurei d'oraissa* and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach only permits returning when it involves *issurei d'rabanan*.



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a door with a card, by the same logic one would be permitted to instruct a gentile to carry keys and open the door to one's house (even without an *einav*). It is possible that on a one time basis one may tell a gentile to violate an *issur d'rabanan* (a rabbinical violation) and open a house door but it seems wrong to have it done on a regular basis, when other totally permitted solutions are available.

It is likely that if there is no other hotel available and one will be secluded in one's room the entire Shabbos without *oneg Shabbos*, it is permitted with a gentile. However, each case must be treated individually and one should consult one's rav.

There is a video camera for security in a hotel lobby; may I walk in front of it?

Apparently, several shuls are fitted with this security device and the question is the same. There are two types of video cameras: cameras that constantly film and cameras that operate when a figure passes by. The former is far simpler because one does not initiate anything by passing in front of the camera - one's image merely appears on the monitor.

But what if the video is recorded?

Indeed it is more problematic. However, even in the latter case, where one triggers the camera and it starts filming and recording, it should be permitted.

The reason is because the Torah prohibited a person from doing a *melacha* on Shabbos through an action but a *melacha* performed without any initiative or action should not be forbidden.

Are you not defying the laws of *p'sik reisha*?

Not exactly. A p'sik reisha is a result of an action that one performs, knowing that another action that involves an *issur* will be performed as a result. For example, washing hands over one's lawn. Washing the hands is the foremost action and a by-product is the watering of the grass. The p'sik reisha, i.e. the by product is *osur* because it is produced from one's action. There is room to say that a by-product action that is produced without altering one's normal pattern of behavior is not even a p'sik reisha. In the above case one is walking in the same normal manner and the device is activated without intention or planning.

Would that mean that it is permitted to walk through a door opened with an infra red beam?

No, it is not the same. In the former case one does not derive any benefit from the camera and its filming and thus its activation is not associated to the person. In the latter case one purposely activates the electronic eye to open the door and this is considered a direct action. Likewise, if one installs a light above the main entrance to illuminate on approach, it must be deactivated before Shabbos, as it is engineered to operate in that fashion and benefit is obtained from the action.

An anecdote: the Jerusalem police installed security cameras in the old city and around the Western Wall and the question arose as to whether one may walk to the *kosel* on Shabbos. The leading *rabbonim* instructed the police to install cameras that operate constantly – not the type that are activated on sensing movement. The *heter* was based on the reasoning that 'being filmed' without choosing to do so and without actively doing anything to activate the filming is permitted.

What's with motion detectors on Shabbos?

Some homes are equipped with motion detectors installed in rooms, which are activated when a person enters the room. Seemingly the same logic would apply as above, namely that one has no interest that they operate when one is at home and nothing personal is being done to

activate them. Nevertheless, since it is in one's control one should deactivate them or cover them before Shabbos.

However, if one arrived at a home and they are not deactivated or covered, one may enter the room.

These cases might be compared to satellite photography, where anyone venturing outside is photographed. Nevertheless one may venture outside on Shabbos, because we do not operate the satellites nor are we interested in this photography.

I must emphasize that all the above is not intended as a *p'sak halacha* in any way, but as it is a frequently asked question, we chose to present the problems.

Vort on the Parsha

The question posed by the wicked son is different from the others. With reference to the wicked son it says: "when your sons **say** to you – what is this service all about?" whereas the question posed by the *tzaddik* and simple sons it says "when your son **asks** you, to tell (*לأنך*)". Rav Me'ir Simcha haCohen says that the wicked son does not want a reply; he poses a question as mockery and wants it to linger. The other sons want an answer and ask to satiate their thirst for knowledge.

Food For Thought

May I walk past a detector that turns on a security light in the street?

What happens if I find money in my pocket on Shabbos?

May I move a hazardous item out of harms way?

Are there any restrictions as how to move it?

Answers coming be" H next week.

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If you would like to send a question to Rav Ostroff, you can write to him at shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com.

Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive *p'sak*.