

Halachos of Daily Living

Shoveling snow on shabbos: Is the shovel *muktza*?

We have discussed many aspects of shoveling snow. What about the shovel, isn't it *muktza*?

If snow

shoveling is permitted on Shabbos, a snow-shovel is certainly not *muktza* since it is a *Kli*

SheMelachto L'Heter, a

utensil whose primary function is for permitted usage on Shabbos. What if I only have a regular shovel available? Sefer Nishmas Shabbos (4:247) concludes

that a regular shovel is considered a *Kli SheMelachto L'Issur*, a utensil whose primary purpose is

for *melacha*, such as shoveling earth. This type of item

can be moved on Shabbos if one needs the *muktza* item for a permissible use on

Shabbos. Assuming there are leniencies in shoveling snow on Shabbos, one would

be permitted to use a shovel for this purpose.

In addition to the concerns of carrying, *muktza*,

and demolishing, which were addressed in previous installments of Halacha Yomis, are there any other concerns regarding snow removal on Shabbos?

Yes, there

are in fact two more issues:

Some prohibit

snow shoveling because of *mashveh gumos* (leveling the ground - a form of *boneh*,

building) (The 39 Melachos, Vol. 4 p. 1098 c). However, Sefer Nishmas Shabbos

(4:247) rules that this does not apply to surfaces covered indoors by wood, tile, carpet, or linoleum and outdoors by cement or asphalt.

Other poskim

consider snow shoveling to be forbidden under the category of *tircha yiseira* (excessive

strain) because it is a very laborious activity (The 39 Melachos, quoting Shu"t

Lev Avraham Siman 49). The Nishmas Shabbos (ibid.) rules leniently in this regard because *tircha* is

permitted for a mitzvah. Since shoveling the snow prevents people from slipping

and falling on the snow and ice, it is considered *tircha* done for the sake of a mitzvah.