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Shabbat Shorts

Last time on Shabbat Shorts, we explored how the melacha of boneh (building) applies to braiding hair.

Now, let's look at the examples of a Pack and Play, strollers, and a folding chair/table. These are considered collapsible keilim (vessels). So is it boneh to set them up on Shabbat?

To answer, we need to explore what fits into the category of boneh. Broadly, the Shulchan Aruch rules that binyan l'shaah (a structure that one intends to disassemble on the day it was built) is not considered boneh. But a structure that is l'olam (permanent) or that one plans to erect for a significant time period is considered boneh. These categories get divided into subsets and are relevant all of the time on Shabbat.

Regarding our question of a Pack and Play, strollers, and a folding chair/table, the Gemara in Shabbat 138a (by which the Shulchan Aruch paskens in Orach Chayim 315:5) gives us a case study to work off of. This is the 'kisei teraskal' (a collapsible chair).

The kisei teraskal is ruled מותר לנטותו לכתחילה "permissible to open from the outset". Why? Rashi explains by detailing how the collapsible chair functions: עליונו של עור ומקפלין אותו וכשמסלקין אותו סומכין אותו לכותל וכשרוצה לישב עליו נוטה ויושב על ד' רגלים, "the top of the chair is made of skin and they collapse it. And when they are done using it, they lean it up against the wall. And when they want to sit on it, they open it up and sit on its four legs".

What makes the kisei teraskal completely permissible is that it is fully built before its use, and its established purpose includes being folded and unfolded. In short, nothing is being assembled, and unfolding and folding it is part of using the chair in its entirety. Practically, this means the kisei teraskal and comparable structures are not only not considered in the category of binyan l'olam (a permanent structure), but they are not even considered a kind of binyan to begin with!

Returning to our case, this means that a Pack and Play, strollers, and a folding chair/table are completely permitted for use on Shabbat as no building

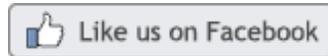
whatsoever is being executed through them!

As a larger value, refraining from boneh on Shabbat, builds (pun intended) our awareness of how much we create in our daily lives. And it also gives us the luxury of being fully present with what we have in the moment. And sometimes we may even be surprised to find out what is considered building and what isn't!

I love feedback!
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