



THE HAKHEL COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

SPECIAL EDITION

Summer 5764

HALACHOS WITH RELEVANCE TO THE SUMMER MONTHS-PART TWO

Teshuvos written by HaRav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita

With the summer months upon us, Hakhel is distributing the following questions and answers relating to issues which come up during the summer. Part One dealt with issues with special relevance for those traveling to and from bungalow colonies in the “Mountains”. This issue deals with toys and games children play with regularly.

Generally, parents are obligated to teach their children over the age of chinuch to refrain from performing all prohibited activities on Shabbos. Shabbos is a special day that one should spend immersed in Torah learning and davening. Therefore, it is not proper for one over Bar Mitzvah or Bas Mitzvah to occupy themselves with toys or games. Children under Bar/Bas Mitzvah are permitted to play games. However, not all games are permitted to be played on Shabbos. A parent’s obligation of chinuch is to teach one’s children not to play with toys and games. Young children below the age of chinuch are permitted to play with all types of toys and games. However, an adult is prohibited to give toys or games directly to the child, but may place it in front of the child, whereupon the child will take it himself.

1. May children play with toys that make noise on Shabbos?

Many poskim are of the opinion that any child above the age of four or five should be taught not to play with toys that make noise on Shabbos. Those children under this age are permitted to play with such noise-making toys (e.g., talking dolls, talking games, etc.). However, as stated above, one should not hand it directly to the child. If the child is crying, one is permitted to give the toy to him directly. However, care should be taken that when one gives it to the child, one should not cause the toy to make noise.

2. Is a child permitted to play in a sandbox on Shabbos?

Normally, it is prohibited to play with sand on Shabbos, as it is muktzah. However, sand that is in a sandbox is not deemed muktzah because it has been designated for this type of play. Therefore, a child may play in a sandbox on Shabbos. However, water should not be used in the sand due to issur of Losh

3. Is a child permitted to play with Erector sets, Legos and other construction-type toys and games?

Any toy that needs to be screwed together is prohibited because of the issur of Boneh. Therefore, one may not play with a construction set on Shabbos. On the other hand, because one merely sticks together the pieces, one is permitted to play with Legos, Tinkertoys and the like on Shabbos.

4. Is a child permitted to swing on a swing attached to a tree on Shabbos? or to go to sleep in a hammock on Shabbos?

One is permitted to use a swing on Shabbos which is suspended from a swing frame. A swing that is suspended from a tree, however, poses a problem. One may use such a swing only if A) the swing is attached indirectly to the tree, e.g. it is suspended from hooks that are attached to the tree, B) the tree is sturdy enough that it will not shake when the swing is being used, and C) the swing must be attached to the hooks before Shabbos. In contrast, a swing that is attached to a door post may be attached and detached on Shabbos and it is not considered Boneh.

In some bungalow colonies, a tire is attached to a tree. A person may not swing from it on Shabbos unless it is attached as described above.

5. Is a child under Bar or Bas Mitzvah permitted to ride a bike, Big Wheel or roller skates/blades in an area containing an Eruv?

Young children may ride on bicycles, tricycles, Big Wheels and the like, however, older children should be discouraged from doing so on Shabbos.

6. Are children under Bar or Bas Mitzvah permitted to play ball on Shabbos in an area containing an Eruv? What about Ping Pong?

Young children are permitted to play ball on Shabbos, but, they must be careful not to play near the road or near the end of the Eruv where it is possible that the ball may roll outside the Eruv. Ping Pong is permitted on Shabbos.

7. If a ball gets stuck in the tree on Shabbos, may one knock it out of the tree with a broom or other non-mukzeh object?

In a situation where the ball gets stuck in a tree or bushes higher than three tefachim (approximately 11½ inches) from the ground, one is forbidden to poke a stick into the tree or bushes, or to climb onto them or shake them.

8. Is it permissible for me to spread a fly net over the hood of the baby carriage or playpen because of the prohibition of forming an Ohel on Shabbos?

On Shabbos one is forbidden to cover a crib, playpen or carriage with a mosquito net. However, if the net was placed on the crib, playpen or carriage before Shabbos and the net was extended at least a tefach (approximately 3¾ inches) over the crib, playpen or carriage, one may extend it on Shabbos. If the hood of the carriage was extended a tefach as stated above, then one may place a mosquito net over the carriage on Shabbos since it is considered as an extension to the canopy hood which is already in place. However, if the hood was not opened a tefach before Shabbos then one may not place a mosquito net on it on Shabbos.

If the hood was not opened before Shabbos or the mosquito net was not placed on the crib or playpen before Shabbos then one should get two people to hold the net open and then one should push the carriage, crib or playpen under it, for in such a case, one does not transgress the issue of erecting an Ohel.

9. If I forget to put on the hood of the baby carriage before Shabbos, may I put it on Shabbos if it locks into place?

On Shabbos one is forbidden to open a canopy. Therefore, one cannot attach a hood of a carriage on Shabbos to protect the child. If the hood was attached to the carriage before Shabbos, some poskim are of the opinion that the hood may be opened. Other poskim disagree and permit the hood to be opened only if it was already opened approx. 3.75 inches and a person is only extending it further. The same applies in regard to folding the hood back up.

10. May one open a playpen or portable crib on Shabbos?

One is permitted to open a playpen, crib or carriage on Shabbos as long as one does not need to tighten any screws or bolts to hold it open. However, one may not open a portable crib that needs to be interlocked on Shabbos. However, it is permitted on Shabbos to open a portable crib that does not interlock. Regarding the models of portable crib which have a removable bottom, one should hold the bottom of the crib in the air and get someone else to push the crib under it, because of the problem of Ohel.

11. May I bathe my child who got dirty on Shabbos?

One is permitted to wash or bathe a child who became dirty in warm water that was heated before Shabbos. However, a bar of soap or washcloth may not be used.

12. My child refuses to walk on his own. Can I carry my child if there is no Eruv?

One is forbidden to carry, drag or swing by both hands a child outside of an Eruv, whether or not the child can walk by themselves. If a child refuses to continue to walk, one should try to bribe the child by offering some type of prize to encourage him to continue. If this will not help, one should try to get a non-Jew to carry the child. If this, too, is not possible, then one may carry the child less than four amos (approximately seven feet) at a time until one reaches home. When one gets home, one should try to get the child to enter the Eruv or house by themselves.