



THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

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These halachos were shown by Rabbi Ostroff to **HaGaon HaRav Moshe Sternbuch, shlita**



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I heard that when setting up a ping-pong table on Shabbos one must reverse the order, i.e. first hold the board in the air and then position the legs, is this true?

No, it is false and the following will explain why.

The *Gemora* in *Beitz'a* 32b teaches us that certain *keilim* when erected on Shabbos must be erected *b'shinui*, i.e. different to the way it is normally set up. This is because when erecting these particular *keilim* it appears as if one is making a tent – first the legs and then the roof or cover – and therefore a variation from the norm is required.

However, this only applies to *keilim* whose function is similar to a tent's. Just as a tent's inside is utilized for living in, usage etc, so to *keilim* whose 'inside' or 'underside' is used require a deviation when setting up.

A table, *Tosefos*¹ tell us, is not an item whose underside is used and therefore it would not require deviation from the norm and may be set up in the regular manner. Therefore when setting up a ping pong table one may first position the legs and then place the board on top of the legs.

Do you have an example of a k'li where the deviation from the norm is necessary?

The *gemora* tells us that one uses the space beneath a bed and the *Rishonim* say that it is used for storing shoes or sandals during the night. (Food is not stored beneath a bed

because an unclean *ruach* descends upon the food when one sleeps in bed). However, *Tosefos* says that although the underside is used, since it is not the primary reason for setting up the bed, one need not change from the norm unless the bed has two sides (headrest and footrest for example) that either reach the floor or are within three *tefachim*² from the floor.

In such a case one must first hold the board in the air and then slide the legs in underneath. Since it is setup in an awkward manner one will remember that tent erecting on Shabbos is forbidden and will not erect a tent.

What about setting up a bench on Shabbos?

It has the same *halacha* as a table, because a bench's underside is not used either.

What is the halacha regarding the use of barrels as table legs when the barrel is being covered by the board?

This issue is based on the previous one. The *Taz* says that covering a four-sided *k'li* automatically accredits it as a usable space and requires a deviation from the norm. Since a barrel has four sides, when using it as table legs one must hold the board in place and then slide in the barrel. The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*³ disagrees with the *Taz* and permits erecting a table even

¹ *Tosefos* in *Beitz'a* 32b 'milmata'.

² Either 24cm or 28.8cm.

³ *Hilchos Yom Tov simon* 502:6.

when it has four sides that reach the floor or close to the floor, but the *Mishna Berura*⁴ *paskens* like the *Taz*.

Does it make a difference whether the legs were already in position?

A crucial point. The *Mishna Berura*⁵ says that one is only required to vary from the norm when one first positions the legs and then places the top board but if the legs were already in position and one is merely placing the top, no deviation is necessary. This is because *Chazal* required a deviation from tent building, which is usually accomplished by positioning the sides and placing the roof. In this case it does not resemble tent building and hence no need for the deviation.

Is there a problem covering a wide bath or tub on Shabbos?

In yeshiva there used to be a large, wide tub on wheels that was used for storing bread and challa used for Shabbos. The *Shulchan Aruch*⁶ says that when covering a large tub one must make sure that one does not completely cover the tub. Another way to circumvent the problem is if the contents of the tub reach the top, because an *obel* is fashioned when there is a space of at least a *tefach*³ (squared) covered, but when the contents reach the top, an *obel* is not formed, thereby sidestepping the entire issue.

If a bird flies into the house through an open window, am I permitted to shut the window?

One of the 39 *melachos* of Shabbos is Trapping – *Tzeida*. We will try and encompass some of the many rules which govern this *melacha* and are decisive in

ascertaining whether the Trapping is a biblical one or only *d'rabanan*.

An animal or creature is considered trapped *mid'oraisso* when under a human's total control. (This does not mean that you must hold a line by its tail, it is sufficient to ensnare it into its cage).⁷ This is accomplished when enclosing an animal into a confinement where one is able to catch it with one dash.⁸

Chazal broadened the biblical prohibition and forbade trapping into even larger confinements. This does not mean though that closing the gate on a deer roaming in a field would be a rabbinical prohibition, because the trapping must at least enhance the ability to fully trap the animal and in such a case it does not.⁹

Chazal tell us that a bird is called biblically trapped when encaged in a small cage and rabbinically trapped in a house etc.

Therefore when a bird flies into a house through an open window, it is forbidden to shut the window because you will be trapping the bird!

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לזכר נשמת חנה בת ברוך

⁴ *Simon* 315:22.

⁵ *Ibid*. See also the *Chazon Ish* 52:1-2.

⁶ *Simon* 315:13.

⁷ *M" A 3 Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 316:5.

⁸ *M" B* 316:4.

⁹ See the *Shulchan Shlomo* 316:3.

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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.