

## 34. Building

### הַבִּנְיָה

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to construct, erect, add to, or assemble a structure. Activities prohibited within this *melachah* include building a permanent structure on the ground constructed of wood, stone, brick, mortar, or other building materials; preparing or improving the ground, or whatever is attached to the ground, by digging or filling a hole, or leveling the ground and the like for the purpose of building or for habitation; and repairing, improving or adding to a structure, including hanging a door on its hinges, resetting a window, making a hole in the wall, opening a hole in the floor, or knocking a nail into the wall.

2. Also included within this *melachah* (*toladot*) are erecting a permanent tent,<sup>1</sup> even if not attached to the ground; joining two boards or pieces of wood together, whether with a nail or glue or by interlocking

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1. **Building a “Blanket Fort”** Some prohibit building a “blanket fort,” which is a blanket placed over chairs. However, it would seem that you could be lenient for the following reasons: Although there is a rabbinic prohibition of erecting a temporary tent (see paragraphs 5 and 6 below) building structures that cannot stay up on their own indefinitely, according to some *poskim*, does not fall into the *melachah* as well. Therefore, haphazardly throwing blankets over chairs should not be considered *boneh* according to this reasoning.

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them in such a manner that they remain joined;<sup>2</sup> setting type in a printing press; making a vessel from earth, clay, glass or other materials; and assembling parts<sup>3</sup> of a vessel or an implement, as for example, inserting the handle into an axe or a hammer.

The *melachah* also includes activities of this nature involving food, as in making cheese, or pressing fruits such as figs or dates into a particular shape or mold.<sup>4</sup>

3. As previously stated, you are forbidden to build a permanent structure, and to enlarge it or add to it in any manner. This includes plastering or cementing a wall, driving a plank into the wall or into the floor, inserting a peg and driving a nail into a wall, hanging a door on its hinges, and setting a window in its frame. If the door or window is made to be opened and closed regularly<sup>5</sup> in this fashion it is permissible. Therefore, you may remove and set back in place a window set on the roof as a skylight, or a door covering the entrance to the cellar. You are, likewise, permitted to lock a door or a window with a bolt or a latch. However, you may not close an opening in a wall or in a window with anything that is to be left there permanently. You may only close the opening with something that will be kept there temporarily.

4. Setting up a permanent tent, even if it is not attached to the ground, is in violation of the *Melachah* of Building, provided (1) the tent is set up for an extended period of time, that is for at least eight or nine days; (2) it consists of at least three partitions with a covering

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2. **Playing with Building Blocks** A child may play with building blocks and similar toys where the pieces are placed on top or alongside each other, or loosely interconnected, but are not screwed or tightly joined together. The adult may help the child as well.
  3. **Adjusting Binoculars** You are permitted to use binoculars or some other optical instrument, such as a telescope, on Shabbat. You may adjust the instrument in order to focus it, as this is its normal use and does not involve assembling or disassembling any of its parts.
  4. **Making Decorative Shapes** You should not mold food into a particular form, or use an instrument designed to cut fruit such as melons into particular shapes for decorative purposes. Also, you should not make napkins into decorative shapes, such as flowers, boats, etc., or make origami on Shabbat.
  5. **Regular Use** An entrance that is used at least once in less than thirty days is considered as one that is in constant use.

over them; and (3) it measures at least one handbreadth (*tefach*) by one handbreadth to the height of a handbreadth at the top or within three handbreadths from the top.

5. *Chazal* also prohibited building a temporary<sup>6</sup> structure;<sup>7</sup> erecting a tent that is temporary; digging or filling a hole in the ground without any intention to build, and certain activities that might lead to digging a hole or leveling the ground, such as dragging heavy furniture on the ground.

6. You are not permitted to spread a cloth or other covering over partitions, even if there are less than three partitions, if it is for the purpose of shade or protection.<sup>8</sup> However, you are allowed to do so<sup>9</sup> if the cover was already partly extended before Shabbat at least over an area of one handbreadth by one handbreadth or there are less than three handbreadths between the rings or loops upon which the cover is hung, as this is considered adding to a temporary tent which is permissible.<sup>10</sup>

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6. **Opening and Closing a Playpen or a Crib** You are permitted to open and close a collapsible playpen or crib. You may slide the latch and lock it in place, and lower or raise the mattress. However, you may not loosen or tighten any screws.
  7. **Opening and Closing Folding Chairs, Tables, and Beds** You are permitted to open and close a folding chair and a folding table on Shabbat, as they are constructed to be used in this manner. You may also extend the length of a table by lifting or adding a leaf. Similarly, you are permitted to open and close a folding cot or a bed, such as a hi-riser or a convertible couch.
  8. **Extending the Hood on a Baby Carriage** You may open and extend the hood on a baby carriage, provided it was attached to the carriage before Shabbat. Some require opening the hood a handbreadth before Shabbat and then extending it fully on Shabbat.
  9. **Covering and Uncovering Utensils** The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 315:13) takes a strict view and classifies covering a large vat as a violation of *boneh*. *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid.*, 315:49) endorses this opinion in regard to large vats, but notes that many *Rishonim* were of the opinion that building an *ohel* (tent) does not apply to the covering of utensils, and therefore there is no need to protest against those who are accustomed to be lenient in this matter. Similarly, you may remove and reattach the covers of utensils, even if they are made to be screwed on, because the covers are not intended to remain attached to the vessels but only to be used constantly for opening and closing them.
  10. **Covering a Baby Carriage** You may not spread netting on top of a baby carriage if the netting was not spread at least one *tefach* before Shabbat began. However,

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If there are three or more partitions that extend to the ground you may not spread a covering over them, even if it is not for shade or protection, unless the covering was designated for the purpose before Shabbat, or it is not intended as a covering. You may spread a covering if there are not three partitions, and the covering is not for shade or protection or for some other use beneath it. Therefore, you may place a board on table legs, as there are no partitions, nor do you intend to make a tent but only to use the board as a table. If the temporary structure does not in any way serve as a tent it is likewise permissible. You may not open an umbrella or a parasol as it forms a tent and is intended for shade or protection from the rain.<sup>11</sup>

7. Setting up a partition without a covering over it is permissible if it is intended for privacy or for beauty, such as hanging tapestry on the wall, in the home, or in a *sukkah*, or a curtain on the window or in a doorway, provided it does not require much effort or special skill. However, you may not set up such a partition if it is for the purpose of rendering something permissible, which for the lack of a partition would be prohibited or invalid. Therefore, you are not permitted to put up a partition in order to create a private area so as to permit carrying on Shabbat, or to put up a partition to serve as a necessary third wall for a *sukkah*. However, if the partition was already opened and extended up to a handbreadth before Shabbat, you may open it fully on Shabbat, even if it is in order to render something permissible. Therefore, you are allowed to open out a folding screen or a folding door if it was already opened a handbreadth before the start of Shabbat.

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you may put a plastic covering on top of a hood that was already closed in a permissible way to protect a child from rain. The reason is that since the hood is already in place and the plastic covers it directly with no space in between the hood and the plastic, no *ohel* has been created (*Mishnah Berurah* 315:31). See the next *Melachah*, note 2 regarding opening and closing the protective covering of a *sukkah*.

11. **Opening and Carrying an Umbrella** You may not open or close an umbrella on Shabbat, nor should you carry an umbrella that was opened by a non-Jew or opened before Shabbat, even where there is an *eruv*.

8. A partition that is not fastened at the bottom and will therefore blow and flap in the wind is not considered a partition at all and may be put up on Shabbat for any purpose.

9. You may not make a hole in a wall or in anything that is attached to the ground. You are not allowed, as already noted, to dig a hole in the earth or to level the ground.<sup>12</sup> You are likewise prohibited from spreading sand in the yard or on an unpaved floor in the house. If the sand was set aside before Shabbat and kept in a designated place, you may use it to spread over a paved floor or to cover excrement, provided the sand is not so moist that removing some of it will leave a hole in the sand pile.

10. You are not permitted to sweep an unpaved floor as it may lead to leveling the holes or depressions in the earth. You may sprinkle water even over an unpaved, earthen floor in order to keep the dust from rising. You are permitted to pull a chair, a bench, or some other object over the ground, since you do not intend to make holes and tracks in the earth, provided the object is not so large or heavy as to inevitably leave holes or tracks in the ground.

You may not pull up an object that is embedded in the ground; for fear that you may come to level the hole in the earth. If you stored radishes in the field and some of the leaves are uncovered, you may grasp the leaves and pull them up, because you will not come to level the earth in the field.

11. You may not set<sup>13</sup> hair<sup>14</sup> in braids or undo braids on Shabbat, as the interweaving of the strands of hair resembles building, and undoing the braid resembles its demolition.

12. **Playing Ball on Unpaved Ground** See *Melachah* 1, note 5.

13. **Setting the Hair** A woman may not braid her hair, nor set her hair in curlers on Shabbat. However, she may gather the hair and arrange it by hand. She may also use a hair band, ribbon, hairpins, clips, or decorative combs to keep the hair in place, and she is permitted to wear them in the street, even where there is no *eruv*.

14. **Use of a Hairspray** You may not use a hairspray, thickener, or lotion to stiffen and set the hair in place on Shabbat.



## 35. Demolishing

### הסותר

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to demolish or break down any permanent structure, whether made of wood, stone, brick, mortar, or other materials, for a constructive purpose. Activities prohibited within this *melachah* include undoing any of the operations indicated in the previous *Melachah* of Building.

2. Also included within this *melachah* (*toladot*) are dismantling a permanently erected tent; detaching and removing a plank from the wall or from the floor; and separating boards or pieces of wood that were fastened together.

3. Whatever activity is considered a Biblical or a rabbinic transgression of the *Melachah* of Building similarly constitutes a Biblical or a rabbinic transgression of the *Melachah* of Demolishing when it involves the demolition of something that was constructed,<sup>1</sup> or undoing any of the operations that comprise the *Melachah* of Building.

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1. **Opening a Locked Door** If the key to the door of the house is lost, you are not permitted to remove the door hinges or to break the lock. You may, however, open the lock with a knife or a pin. If a young child is locked in, you may remove the door or break it open, if need be, in order to free the child. You should not delay and seek to distract the child until the key is found, as the child may be endangered by the severe fright.

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4. *Chazal* also prohibited dismantling a temporary tent<sup>2</sup> and closing a folding partition which may not be erected or set up on Shabbat. You are allowed to remove and replace the covers or side panels of boxes and vessels if they are so constructed that they are normally opened and closed in this manner.

5. You are not permitted to break open a vessel, or to take it apart, or to make a hole in it.<sup>3</sup> If it is necessary in order to have food on Shabbat, or wine for *Kiddush*, you are permitted to break open a container or to open a carton, provided you do not thereby construct or form a vessel.<sup>4</sup>

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2. **Opening and Closing the Roof or Covering over a *Sukkah*** When a *sukkah* is made with a roof that is attached and opens and closes on hinges, you are permitted to open and close the roof on Shabbat and on Yom Tov. You are also permitted to cover the *sukkah* with a plastic covering in order to protect it from the rain, and to uncover it on Shabbat and Yom Tov, taking care not to move the *sechach*, which is *muktzeh*. If the covering is on a roller, and it is a distance of more than one *tefach* from the *sechach*, you can cover the *sukkah* only if the cover was already open a minimum of one *tefach*. See the previous *melachah*, paragraph 6 and note 10.
  3. **Removing the Cork from a Bottle** You may remove the cork from a wine bottle with a cork screw, if necessary, even though it will make a hole in the cork.
  4. **Opening Containers of Food** Cartons and containers of food should be opened before Shabbat. For a discussion of the laws pertaining to opening them on Shabbat when necessary, see *Melachah* 24, note 5.