



Bet Horaah בית הוראה Shaarei Ezra שערי עזרא



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DETAILED HALACHOT OF BUILDING A SUKKAH

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1. Walls of the Sukkah:

- **Minimum Requirement:** The sukkah must have at least two full walls and part of a third wall. The two full walls should be at least 7 tefachim wide (approximately 56-70 cm), and the third wall should be at least 1 tefach (about 8-10 cm). The fourth side can be completely open.

- **Materials:** The walls can be made from any material sturdy enough to withstand a normal wind. They should be solid and stable. Walls that move back and forth in a regular wind, such as sheets, are invalid and should be avoided.

- **Height:** The walls must be at least 10 tefachim high (about 80-100 cm). If they are too low, they do not count as valid walls.

- **Gaps:** The walls must not have significant gaps. A gap of less than 3 tefachim is permitted at the bottom, known as lavud. Gaps larger than this invalidate the sukkah.

- **order:** Care should be taken not to place the schach before the walls are set up. For example, if one hangs the schach on the frame of the sukkah before putting up the walls, this is invalid.

2. The Schach:

- **Material:** The schach must come from something that grows from the ground but is detached (e.g., branches, bamboo, wooden slats). It must not be made from something that is susceptible to impurity (e.g., metal, finished products). Natural growth like overhanging tree branches cannot be used as schach. The beams of the schach should not be 4 tefachim wide (approximately 32 cm), as this resembles sitting in a permanent house and detracts from the temporary nature of the sukkah.

- **Coverage:** The schach must provide more

shade than sunlight. A sukkah with too many open spaces where sunlight dominates is not valid. The spaces between the branches should not be large enough to allow more sun than shade inside the sukkah.

- **Positioning:** The schach must be placed intentionally, with the purpose of creating a kosher sukkah or for shade.

Schach may be placed by a non-Jew as long as it is put there for the purpose of providing shade. However, it is preferable, if possible, for a Jew to place the schach, or at least to shake or adjust it after the non-Jew has placed it.

- **Support:** The schach may rest on the sukkah's walls or on a frame. Many refrain from supporting the schach with metal poles or vinyl strings, which are not valid for schach, unless the schach can hold well without them and they are used solely for extra support.

3. Height of the Sukkah:

- **Minimum Height:** As mentioned above, the walls must be at least 10 tefachim high, but even if they meet this requirement, care should be taken when placing the schach to ensure that there remains a space of at least 10 tefachim underneath it. The schach should not hang below this height.

- **Maximum Height:** The sukkah must not be taller than 20 amot (approximately 10 meters or 32 feet). A sukkah higher than this is not valid because it is too far from the human experience of sitting in a Sukkah.

4. Open Air and Overhanging Objects:

- **Open Air:** The sukkah should be built under open skies, without any overhanging



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objects like tree branches, roofs, or pergolas. If such an object casts shade, the sukkah may be invalidated, as it interferes with the mitzvah of dwelling under the schach.

- **Partial Overhang:** If only part of the sukkah is shaded by overhanging branches or structures, the area directly under the overhang cannot be used for fulfilling the mitzvah, though the rest of the sukkah may still be valid. If branches hang over a wall of the sukkah, that wall may become invalid, potentially reducing the number of valid walls required for the sukkah, which can invalidate the sukkah altogether.

5. Dimensions:

- **Minimum Size:** The sukkah must be large enough to hold most of a person's body, a table, and the food being eaten. The minimum dimension for the floor space is 7x7 tefachim (about 56-70 cm²).

- **Large Sukkot:** There is no maximum size limit for the floor area of the sukkah as long as it remains temporary and retains the basic structure of three walls and schach.

Summary of the Halachot of Using the Sukkah

1. Eating in the sukkah:

- It is a Torah obligation to eat meals in the sukkah during the entire Chag of Sukkot.

- **Bread and Mezonot:** Any meal that includes bread or foods made from grains (Mezonot) that are a larger than the size of k'beitza (about 2 ounce) must be eaten in the sukkah.

- **Other Foods:** Foods like fruits, vegetables, and drinks may be eaten outside the sukkah, but it is praiseworthy to eat everything in the sukkah. Also rice may be eaten outside the sukkah, although the bracha for it is mezonot.

- **Kiddush:** Kiddush should be recited in the sukkah before beginning a meal.

2. Sleeping in the sukkah:

- Men are obligated to sleep in the sukkah, whether for a nap or

overnight. However, in places where it is very cold or difficult to sleep, or unsafe one may be lenient.

- Women are exempt from the mitzvah of sleeping in the sukkah, but they may do so if they wish.

3. Living in the sukkah:

- One should treat the sukkah as their primary dwelling for the duration of the holiday, spending as much time as possible in it, including relaxing, studying, and socializing.

- Activities typically done in a home should, ideally, be done in the sukkah to fulfill the commandment of teshvu ke'ein taduru (dwelling in the sukkah as one dwells in their home).

4. When exempt from the sukkah:

- If it rains hard enough that it would spoil your food, you are exempt from eating in the sukkah. However, very light rain does not exempt one from eating in the sukkah.

- If conditions in the sukkah make it uncomfortable (e.g., cold, extreme heat, insects), one is not obligated to stay, as the mitzvah is to dwell comfortably, just as you would in your home.

- A person who is sick or uncomfortable, or caring for someone who is sick, is exempt from the sukkah.

5. Decorating the sukkah:

- It is customary to decorate the sukkah with beautiful items to enhance the mitzvah. These decorations are considered part of the sukkah and must not be removed or used for personal benefit during the holiday.

6. Order of blessings:

- Before eating a meal in the sukkah, the blessing "Leishev BaSukkah" is recited. According to Sephardim, the obligation applies only to meals that include bread, while Ashkenazim say the blessing applies to Mezonot as well if eaten in a quantity greater than k'beitza, such as cakes, cookies, and crackers.

- On the first two night (outside of Israel), the Shehechyanu blessing is also recited in addition to the blessing for the sukkah and Kiddush.

SUMMARY OF THE HALACHOT OF THE ARBA MINIM (FOUR SPECIES)

1. The Four Species:

- The four species are the lulav (palm branch), etrog (citron), hadassim (myrtle branches), and aravot (willow branches). These must be taken together to fulfill the mitzvah.

- The mitzvah of the Arba Minim is performed every day of Sukkot except on Shabbat.

2. Requirements for Each Species:

The measurements mentioned are 8-10 cm per tefach; thus, ideally, the lulav should be about 32 cm, and the hadas and aravah should be about 24 cm. However, the Shulchan Aruch 650 brings a smaller measurement.

- **Lulav:** The lulav spine must be at least 4 tefachim in length, and the top of its spine (the central leaf) should be straight and not split. It should be fresh and green, not dried out.

There are various opinions on whether the top spine of the lulav may be split at all, or if a small split is acceptable, and to what extent.

- **Etrog:** The etrog must be whole and unblemished. It should not have any significant spots or damage that affects its beauty (hadar). A black dot on the upper part of the etrog, where it starts bending upwards, may invalidate it. Additionally, two or more black dots on the rest of the etrog also invalidate it. Common brown spots on an etrog are often leaf marks, which occur

SUMMARY OF THE HALACHOT OF THE ARBA MINIM (FOUR SPECIES)

when the etrog grows with a leaf resting against it. These marks typically do not invalidate the etrog, as they are considered natural and do not detract from the hadar (beauty) of the etrog. The pitom (the stem at the top) should be intact, though the etrog is kosher if it was detached from the tree without a pitom.

- **Hadassim:** Three branches are used. Each branch should be at least 3 tefachim long, with clusters of three leaves growing from the same point along the branch. The majority of the branch should have leaves.

- **Aravot:** Two willow branches are used. They should be at least 3 tefachim in length. The leaves should be long, smooth-edged, and fresh, not dried out.



3. Binding the Lulav:

- The lulav, hadassim, and aravot are bound together, typically with strips of palm leaves. The hadassim are placed on the right side of the lulav, and the aravot on the left. According to the Arizal, the hadassim are placed with one to the right of the lulav, one to the left, and the third in the back. The two aravot are also spread, with one on the right and one on the left.

- The etrog is held separately in the left hand when performing the mitzvah.

4. When to Shake the Arba Minim:

- The mitzvah is performed during the day, ideally before Shacharit or during the morning prayers (Shacharit) before Hallel, but it can be done at any time during the day. According to the Arizal one should try to shake the Lulav in the Sukkah.

- Before the bracha is recited, the lulav with the hadassim and aravot are held without the etrog, and some hold the etrog upside down. Then the blessings "Al netilat lulav" and "She'cheyanu" are

recited, and afterward, the etrog is taken or turned right-side up and brought close to the lulav.

- After the blessing, the lulav and etrog are shaken in six directions while held close together.

Here's the standard sequence according to the Arizal custom (Some have different customs regarding how to turn and shake the lulav):

1. South (right)
2. North (left)
3. East (straight)
4. Up
5. Down
6. West (backward)

5. Who Is Obligated?

- Men are obligated to perform the mitzvah of the Arba Minim, while women are exempt but may choose to perform the mitzvah if they wish. If a woman decides to shake the lulav, according to Sephardi halacha, she would do so without reciting the blessing. However, according to Ashkenazi practice, she may recite the blessing.

- The Arba Minim should be owned by the person performing the mitzvah. On the first day of Sukkot, they must belong to the person fulfilling the mitzvah and not be borrowed. Therefore, when sharing, it is customary to give the Arba Minim as a temporary gift (matana al menat lehachzir).

6. Care for the Arba Minim:

- The species should be kept fresh throughout Sukkot. The lulav and branches can be wrapped in moist paper or kept in water to prevent them from drying out.

- The etrog should be handled carefully to avoid damage, as an etrog with significant blemishes may become invalid.

SIMCHAT TORAH: CELEBRATION VS. MOURNING

As the day of Simchat Torah approaches, the dilemma is clear: should we celebrate it as we do every year, or should we change course and mark it as a day of remembrance for the horrific tragedy that occurred the previous year? Many have different ideas and approaches, with some advocating for one perspective over the other, while others suggest observing both—celebrating the day while acknowledging the sadness. We will try to clarify the Torah approach on this matter.

The halacha addresses a few cases that we can relate to our matter. Let's consider what a person who lost a parent on a holiday should do regarding celebrating the chag on the yahrzeit, and whether the yahrzeit takes precedence. The halacha permits such a person to celebrate the holiday regularly and even listen to music on Chol Hamoed.



Another example, one whose relative passed away on the holiday may not begin avelut (mourning), even though the obligation of avelut is from the Torah on the first day. The joy of the holiday overrides it (O.H. 548).

Now, there is a distinction between a person who lost a relative, which is stricter, and a national catastrophic event, which is treated more leniently as it's not personal. Accordingly, one may surely celebrate the holiday, even though sad events occurred the year before.

We also need to acknowledge that, unfortunately, during the difficult galut, our nation has experienced many tragedies, many of which occurred during holidays. Still, we celebrate those days regularly and do not allow that sadness to override or overtake the day. For that reason, we set

SIMCHAT TORAH: CELEBRATION VS. MOURNING

aside a special day, Tisha B'Av, to remember and mark all the tragedies of Am Yisrael.

Another important point is that the celebration of Simchat Torah is considered avodah; it is not done for our own happiness or joy, but one must be happy for the sake of the mitzvah and Hashem. The Vilna Gaon once said that the mitzvah to be happy on the chag is one of the hardest mitzvot, as it requires one to con-

trol their emotions and feel happy even at times when they do not naturally feel that way.

Still, it is important to mention the loss we experienced, either during the tefilah or Torah reading, just like many recite Yizkor on holidays and do not consider it an interruption of the celebration.

יכול המטייל לעשות סוכה מהמכוננית ולאכול שם כפי הצורך.

הונה נמצאו כמה דרכים להפוך את המכוננית לסוכה עם מקפידים על כמה תנאים.

אם ישנם שני מכוניות, ניתן לקרב אותם ואז צדדי המכוניות יוצרות שני דפנות, ומכיון שלהכשר סוכה נצרכים שלושה דפנות, אם כן אם יש לפותח את דלת המכוננית ואז נעשה דופן שלישי, וכל מה שנותר זה להניח סכך על גביהם.

אולם יש לדעת שדופן שיש תחתיה ריוח של שלשה טפחים (24 ס"מ) הרי היא פסולה, ומכיון שתחת המכוננית יש ריוח של שלשה טפחים ויותר יש להניח משהו שישגור את המרוח הנ"ל או לחנות את המכוננית קרוב למדרכה גבוהה ולודאות שהריוח הוא פחות משלשה.

דבר נוסף שיש לתת עליו את הדעת הוא שמכיון שהחלל תחת הסכך בסוכה שעשויה כנ"ל נמוכה בדרכ"כ, לכן יזהר שלא ירד הסכך לתוך עשרה טפחים ויפסול את הסוכה.

כשיש רק מכוננית אחת אפשר לקרב אותה אל גדר או קיר ואז הגדר והמכוננית יוצרים שתי דפנות, ואם פותחים את דלת המכוננית נוצר דופן שלישי. גם כאן יקפיד שתחת הדלת לא יהיה ריוח של ג' טפחים. מכוננית שיש לה דלת קדמית ודלת אחורית, יפתח את שניהם ואז יהיו לו ג' דפנות.

מכוננית שיש לה גג שמש נפתח שאז אפשר להניח עליו את הסכך ולשבת תחתיו ולאכול. ויש לודאות שהגג הוא לא פחות משבעה טפחים (56 ס"מ) לרוחב ולאורך. כמו כן שיש עשרה טפחים פנויים תחת הגג שמש, שהרי חלל סוכה הוא עשרה טפחים.

ואף שדפנות המכוננית רחוקות ממקום הסכך, יש להתיר זאת מטעם הדין של דופן עקומה שהיא הלכה למשה מסיני. הדין של דופן עקומה מתיר לנו להמשיך גג פסול מהדופן עד הסכך מכל ארבעת הצדדים עד ד' אמות.

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