

EATING IN THE SUCCAH ON THE FIRST NIGHT

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

The following is a discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

You should dwell in a Succah (Emor 23:42)

Every adult male is Biblically obligated to eat a k'zayis of bread in a succah on the first night of Succos. The Talmud (1) derives this obligation from the similar obligation of eating a k'zayis of matzah on the first night of Pesach. Since these two obligations are closely related, their halachos are similar in many respects. Like all mitzvos, this mitzvah, too, can only be properly fulfilled if there is prior planning and clear knowledge of all the requirements. Let us review the pertinent halachos:

WHEN IS IT EATEN

In the late afternoon of Erev Succos, one should not fill himself with food or wine so that he will be able to eat the k'zayis of bread with a good appetite (2).

The k'zayis of bread [and the Kiddush that precedes it (3)] may not be eaten until it is definitely night (4), no earlier than 50 minutes after sundown (5). If one ate before that time, he must eat another k'zayis of bread in order to fulfill the mitzvah (6).

The k'zayis of bread may not be eaten after midnight (7). B'dieved, though, one who did not eat before midnight should do so after midnight and recite the proper blessing (8).

Preferably, one should sit down to eat the k'zayis of bread immediately after coming home from Ma'ariv. Unnecessary delays should be avoided (9).

HOW MUCH MUST BE EATEN

There are various views in the poskim about the exact measurement of a k'zayis. Since this is a Biblical obligation, it is proper to be stringent and eat at least 1.75 fl. oz. of bread, though one who eats 1 oz. of bread fulfills his obligation.

There is a view in the Rishonim (10) that holds that the minimum amount of bread one is obligated to eat in the succah on the first night is a k'beitzah, not merely a k'zayis. Although the basic halachah does not require the larger amount (11), still it is proper to satisfy that view as well (12). The amount to be eaten [to satisfy all views], therefore, is 3.5 oz. of bread (13).

The bread which is eaten [whether it is a k'zayis or a k'beitzah (14)] must be eaten within a time-span

of 3 to 4 minutes (15). No talking may take place until the full amount is chewed and swallowed (16). L'chatchilah, it is proper to chew and then swallow the bread in its entirety (17).

THE BASIC PROCEDURE

One is obligated to eat the minimum amount of bread even if he does not enjoy it and even if it causes him distress (18). Even a person who is classified as a **choleh sh'ein bo sakanah** is obligated to eat a k'zayis of bread (19).

Before eating the bread, one must have in mind that he is about to fulfill the Biblical mitzvah of eating bread on the first night of Succos (20). If one fails to have this intent and eats the piece of bread as he normally does every Shabbos or Yom Tov, it is questionable if he has fulfilled the mitzvah (21). In any case, he should eat another portion of bread with the proper intent (22).

One does not fulfill his obligation by eating cake, etc. (23) Only bread made out of one of the five species of grain is valid.

Women are exempt from this mitzvah, but if they do eat the required amount of bread in the succah, it is considered a mitzvah and they may recite the blessing (24).

There are some who maintain that the bread should be eaten without being dipped in honey (25), etc. Most poskim are not particular about this stringency (26).

ARE WE REQUIRED TO FULFILL THIS MITZVAH WHEN IT IS RAINING?

There are many discussions in the poskim concerning the obligation to eat in the succah on the first night of Succos if it is raining. The following points are raised:

- If rain is falling, is one obligated to eat in the succah or not?
- If it is raining, is one obligated to wait and see if the rain will stop so that he can eat in a rain-free succah?
- If one does eat in the succah while it is raining, can a blessing be recited?
- If a person ate in the succah while it was raining and then the rain stopped, is he required to eat in the succah again?
- If a person ate in the succah while it was raining and then went to sleep, is he obligated to get out of bed to eat again once the rain has stopped?

Since there are different rulings on all of these issues, the following, then, is a summary of the majority opinion (27):

If it is raining steadily and there is a reliable weather forecast for rain all night, one should make Kiddush [with shehecheyanu] and eat a k'zayis [or a k'beitzah (28)] in the succah. No blessing over the succah is recited. The rest of the meal is eaten inside the house (29).

If there is no reliable weather forecast and there is a possibility that the rain will stop [e.g., it is

drizzling or it is raining on and off], it is proper to wait an hour or two for the rain to subside (30). The poskim agree, however, that if the delay will disturb the dignity and pleasure of the Yom Tov, or if the family is hungry and/or tired, there is no obligation to wait.

If the rain stops while the meal is being eaten inside the house or even after the meal has finished, one is obligated to eat at least a beitzah (31) of bread in the succah. Even if the rain stops after midnight, a beitzah of bread must be eaten in the succah. If one has already gone to bed and then the rain stops, there is no obligation to get out of bed in order to eat in the succah (32).

FOOTNOTES

1 Succah 27a.

2 Mishnah Berurah 639:27.

3 Beir Halachah 639:3.

4 Rama O.C. 639:3.

5 This is the generally accepted time for "night". Under extenuating circumstances, there are those who permit eating the bread a few minutes earlier. Since this is a Biblical mitzvah, it is proper - weather permitting - to wait for 72 minutes after sundown, to satisfy the views of the Rishonim who hold that before that time it is not definitely night.

6 Mishnah Berurah 639:25. If, mistakenly, one ate the bread even earlier than sundown, not only must he eat another k'zayis but he must also repeat the blessing of leishev basukah.

7 Rama 639:3.

8 Mishnah Berurah 639:26. In that case, though, at least a k'beitzah of bread should be eaten.

9 Mateh Efrayim 625:42, 44.

10 Quoted by the Ritva and Ran in Succah 27b.

11 O.C. 639:3.

12 Mateh Efrayim 625:51; Mishnah Berurah 639:22.

13 The amount of a beitzah according to the Chazon Ish.

14 Mateh Efrayim 625:52 and Eleff le-Mateh 87.

15 Mishnah Berurah 639:22. Children under bar mitzvah may take up to 9 minutes for the amount to

be eaten--Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 54 note 130).

16 Kaf ha-Chayim 639:50.

17 Mateh Efrayim 625:52. Mishnah Berurah, though, does not mention this.

18 Beiur Halachah 639:3.

19 Bikurei Yaakov 639:6,24; Aruch ha-Shulchan 639:17.

20 Mateh Efrayim 625:51; Mishnah Berurah 625:1. In addition to this, one should bear in mind the reasons behind the mitzvah of succah. According to some poskim (Bikurei Yaakov 625:3 based on Bach), failure to have this intent invalidates the mitzvah. Mishnah Berurah, however, rules, that b'dieved one fulfills his obligation even if he does not have in mind the reasons for the mitzvah.

21 See Chidah (Simchas ha-Regel, quoted in Mo'adim U'zmanim 6:69) who questions if one has fulfilled his obligation in this case. See, however, Mishnah Berurah 60:10, quoting the Chayei Adam.

22 Mateh Efrayim 625:53.

23 Mishnah Berurah 639:21.

24 Sefaradic women, though should not recite the blessing on this mitzvah or on any mitzvah which they are not obligated to perform, such as lulav, shofar, etc.

25 See Yechaveh Da'as 4:37 for the various views.

26 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Nishmas Avraham O.C. pg. 320 and Harav O. Yosef (ibid. pg. 337). Tzitz Eliezer (15:32-14) maintains that one should be stringent. See also Mo'adim U'zmanim 1:86.

27 Based on rulings of Mateh Efrayim and Mishnah Berurah.

28 Mateh Efrayim 625:51, 62 and Elef le-Mateh 84. See, however, Ktzei ha-Mateh who holds that when raining all agree that a k'zayis is sufficient.

29 When reciting Hamotzi, one should have in mind that he will recite Birkas ha-Mazon inside the house.

30 Some poskim are more stringent and recommend waiting until midnight.

31 In this case, a k'zayis is not enough.

32 There is a minority opinion (Mo'adim U'zmanim 1:86, based on his understanding of the Gr"a; Harav M. Soloveitchik, quoted in Reshimos Shiurim (Succah, pg. 92) and in Mesorah Torah Journal, vol. 14, pg. 57) which maintains that even after going to sleep one is obligated to get out of bed in order to eat in the succah.

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