

SUKKOS ISSUES

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: Is there a halachic difficulty in using a succah with a metal frame?

Discussion: Yes. Although it is permissible to use a metal frame to support the walls of a succah[1], placing sechach directly on the metal frame is problematic because we follow the opinion of some Rishonim who maintain that any object that directly supports the sechach must also be made from materials that are kosher for sechach[2]. Since kosher sechach cannot be made from metal, l'chatchilah one may not place sechach directly on top of a metal-frame succah. B'diavad, however, such a succah is kosher. In a case where only a metal-frame succah is available, it is permitted to use this type of succah even l'chatchilah[2].

Question: May one use a metal-frame succah l'chatchilah if wood strips are placed over the metal frame and the sechach is placed on the wood?

Discussion: Some poskim permit using a metal-frame succah if the sechach does not lie directly on the metal, since the sechach is no longer touching the metal and being supported by it, but rather by the wood which is directly under it[4]. Other poskim are hesitant about this leniency, since the sechach is really being supported by the metal frame, and the wood serves merely as a barrier between the frame and the sechach[5]. According to these poskim, the only way to use a metal-frame succah is to use the wood strips in a way that they become the main support for the sechach. For example, by placing heavier wooden strips diagonally across the top of the frame and putting the sechach on top of the diagonal strips, the wooden strips become the support for the sechach rather than the metal frame[6].

Question: Does it make any difference who puts the sechach on the succah?

Discussion: The basic halachah permits any person—male or female, adult or minor, Jew or non-Jew—to put the sechach on the succah as long as it is placed either l'sheim mitzvas succah or l'sheim tzeil[7]. Nevertheless, l'chatchilah it is preferable to be stringent and allow only an adult Jewish male to place the sechach over the succah[8].

Question: In the face of an approaching storm, is it permitted to nail or tie down the sechach to the walls or the frame of the succah?

Discussion: It is permitted to tie down the sechach to the walls or the frame of the succah with any string or rope that is available. Although l'chatchilah sechach supports must also be made from

materials that are kosher for sechach, in this case the rope or string is not considered as support, since under normal weather conditions the sechach will remain intact without being tied down[9].

However, to nail the sechach down is not permitted. As explained earlier (5 Tishrei), a succah must be a temporary structure. When sechach is nailed down, especially if it is nailed down so well that it blocks the rain from entering the succah, the succah takes on the character of a permanent structure. Such a succah is not valid, even b'diavad[10].

Question: When reciting Havdalah over wine or grape juice in the succah, does one recite leisheiv ba-succah?

Discussion: The general rule is that leisheiv ba-succah is recited only before a kevius seudah, a sit-down meal consisting of at least a k'beitzah (approx. 2 fl. oz.) of either bread or cake. Sitting in the succah merely to drink wine or grape juice, even if the drinking takes place with an entire group and for a long period of time, is not considered a kevius seudah and a blessing is not recited[11]. Some poskim rule, therefore, that leisheiv ba-succah is not recited over wine when it is drunk for Havdalah[12].

Other poskim, however, make a distinction between drinking wine just for enjoyment and drinking wine in the performance of an important mitzvah such as Havdalah. In their opinion, the blessing of leisheiv ba-succah is recited when wine is drunk for Havdalah, since the mitzvah of Havdalah elevates the drinking and gives it the dignity of a kevius[13]. Although either opinion may be followed as there is no prevalent custom, those who want to avoid a potentially questionable situation should make sure to eat some bread or cake immediately after Havdalah, which allows them to recite leisheiv ba-succah according to all opinions[14].

Question: If it rains during Chol ha-Moed, can one fulfill the mitzvah of succah by sitting in the succah underneath a hand-held umbrella?

Discussion: Most poskim agree that it is permitted to do so, even if the umbrella is held at a height of over ten tefachim[15]. Sitting under a hand-held umbrella—as opposed to a patio umbrella which is built into and supported by a table—is still considered as if one is sitting directly under the sechach since a regular umbrella is not a stationary, fixed obstruction like a patio umbrella. An umbrella moves with every movement of the hand that is holding it and hence cannot be considered a real obstruction. Indeed, it is reported that the Brisker Rav sat under an umbrella in his succah[16].

1. Care must be taken, however, that the canvass or other material be firmly attached to the frame so that the walls are sturdy enough not to flap around in a normal wind.

2. In addition to this opinion, there is another view which maintains that even an object that does not directly support the sechach, but supports the support of the sechach, must also be made from material which could be kosher sechach. Although Chazon Ish (O.C. 143:3) rules in accordance with

this view, Shulchan Aruch O.C. 629:8 and the majority of the poskim do not accept this stringency, and the accepted custom is to be lenient; see Chelkas Yaakov 3:127, Minchas Shelomo 2:55 and Mo'adim u'Zemanim 1:82.

3. Mishnah Berurah 629:22; 630:58. See also Chazon Ish 143:3 and Minchas Yitzchak 4:45.

4. Based on Bikurei Yaakov 629:9; see Mikra'ei Kodesh, Succos 1:21.

5. This is unrelated to the minority opinion of the Chazon Ish mentioned in note 45. In our scenario, according to these poskim, the metal frame is not a "support of a support"; there really is only one support of metal, and the wood is altogether unnecessary to support the sechach—it merely rests upon the metal, the support coming entirely from the metal underneath it.

6. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 2:55). See Mikra'ei Kodesh, ibid.

7. O.C. 635:1. See Avnei Nezer, O.C. 475.

8. Based on Mishnah Berurah 14:4 and 649:14. See Bikurei Yaakov 635:2 and Kaf ha-Chayim 8.

9. See Shevet ha-Levi 6:74 and B'tzeil ha-Chochmah 5:44.

10. Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 633:6 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 629:32. See also Ha-Elef Lecha Shelomo 366.

11. Mishnah Berurah 639:13.

12. Shevet ha-Levi 6:42.

13. Chazon Ish (quoted in Rivevos Efrayim 1:428; 3:424) and Luach Eretz Yisrael. See also Shevet ha-Levi 6:42. [Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Succas Chayim, pg. 202) rules that this applies only to wine, not to grape juice.]

14. Rav Y. Y. Kanievsky (Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 2, pg. 228); Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasah 58:22), who recommends reciting the leisheiv ba-succah before borei peri ha-gafen; see Minchas Shelomo 2:58-35 and Ma'adanei Shelomo, pg. 70.

15. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 2:8-20). See also She'arim Metzuyananim b'Halachah 135:5 and Nefesh Chayah, O.C. 629. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, however, disagrees and does not permit sitting underneath an umbrella in the succah (Succas Chayim, pg. 52).

16. Ha-Succah ha-Shalem, miluim, 13:4.

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