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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן תרכ״ט סעיף ז׳-י״א

Halacha Highlight

Supporting *schach* with something that is susceptible to *tumah*

Mishnah Berurah Siman 629 Seif Koton 22

דלכתחלה יש לזהר להעמיד הסכך בדבר במקבל טמאה

L'chatchila*, one should be careful not to support his *schach* with something that is susceptible to *tumah

Mishnah Berurah (ס״ק כב) in his analysis of Shulchan Aruch's uncertainty whether one may use a ladder for *schach* introduces an important principle regarding *schach*. The principle is known as מעמיד—*ma'amid* and refers to a material that supports the *schach*. Mishnah Berurah states that one's *schach* should not be supported by something that is susceptible to *tumah* out of concern that one may mistakenly use that item for *schach*. The reason it is acceptable to utilize a stone wall for the walls of one's *sukkah* even though one may not use stone for *schach* is that it is uncommon that one would use stone for his *schach*. This principle is cited by many authorities but they agree that *b'dieved* or if one has no other choice he may use something that is susceptible to *tumah* to support his *schach*.

Chazon Ish (או״ח סי׳ קמ״ג סק״ג) in the name of some Rishonim contends that anytime the structure of the *sukkah* relies upon something that is susceptible to *tumah* and without that object the *sukkah* would not be able to stand, it is disqualified due to the principle of *ma'amid*. Although the *schach* may be resting on an object that itself is fit to be used for *schach*, e.g. a bamboo pole, nevertheless if that item is supported by something that is susceptible to *tumah*, e.g. metal pole, the *schach* is unfit because of the principle of *ma'amid*. As long as the structural integrity relies upon something susceptible to *tumah* the *sukkah* is invalid. Accordingly, even if the walls of the *sukkah* are wood and one uses wooden crossbeams to support the *schach*, if the walls are held together by metal nails or screws the *sukkah* would be unfit because of *ma'amid*. The majority of authorities disagree with Chazon Ish and maintain that the scenario that he describes is *ma'amid d'ma'amid*, meaning the *schach* is two steps away from the object that is susceptible to *tumah* and as such remains valid.

Overview

Siman 629 Seif 7:

It is not clear whether one may place a ladder on the roof to place *schach* upon it. Therefore, *schach* should not be placed upon it nor should it be placed on *schach* to hold it in place. The same *halacha* is true for any utensil that is susceptible to *tumah*, e.g. a bench or chair that is susceptible to *tumas midras*.

- One should avoid supporting his *schach* with something that is susceptible to *tumah* but *b'dieved* or if one has no other material it is acceptable for *schach* to be supported with material that is susceptible to *tumah*. (M.B. 22)
- It is obvious to Darkei Moshe that a ladder may not be used for *schach*, therefore, one should avoid using it to support *schach*. If the ladder does not have holes and rungs are nailed in there is a disagreement whether it valid *schach*. (M.B. 23)
- As long as it is fit to become *tamei* it may not be used even if it is new and never became *tamei*. (M.B. 25)

Siman 629 Seif 8:

It is acceptable to attach beams to the wall of the *sukkah* with iron nails or to bind them with pieces of worn out clothing that are susceptible to *tumah*.

- This is permitted even according to the opinion who does not allow *schach* to be supported by something that is susceptible to *tumah* since the *schach* does not rest upon the iron nails and the nails are there to hold the crossbeams in place. (M.B. 26)

Siman 629 Seif 9:

All types of food are susceptible to *tumah* and may not be used for *schach*.

- Even if the food was not made susceptible to *tumah* it may not be used for *schach*. (M.B. 28)
- There is a disagreement whether cinnamon may be used for *schach*. (M.B. 29)

Siman 629 Seif 10:

Fig branches with figs or vines with grapes – if there is more volume to the branches than the food it may be used for *schach* but if not it may not be used for *schach*. If the branch was harvested for the food the "handle" is considered food and is susceptible to *tumah* and the rest of the branch is needed to nullify the "handle" as well. If the branch was harvested for *schach* the "handle" is not considered food and is considered part of the branch to nullify the food. If the branch was harvested for food and one now wants to use it for *schach* that intent does not change the fact that the "handle" is considered food unless an action is performed that makes it evident that one wants to use it for *schach*, e.g. stomping on them.

- Magen Avrohom is stringent and considers the stalk a "handle" even beyond the three *tefachim* that is technically counted as the "handle." Therefore, one should not use stalks before all of the grain has been removed. (M.B. 31)
- Since it is common for grain to remain in the ears one should not use stalks of grain as *schach* unless he has removed the ear altogether. (M.B. 31)

Siman 629 Seif 11:

One may use *pinogo* which in Arabic is called *shumar* (which is animal food that people consume only as a medicine.)

Stories to Share

Care with Cast-Offs

ש״ע ס׳ תרכ״ט, ז׳: ״והוא הדין בכל כלי המקבל טמאה...״

One family's schach got ruined over the winter. They wanted their new schach to be light and compact in addition to being durable. After some research they decided to purchase mats specifically made for schach. The mats definitely fulfilled all of their hopes and the family was very proud of them. The trouble was that they were so lightweight that the wind easily blew them off. Of course, at times there was no wind. They wondered whether they were absolutely obligated to somehow anchor their new schach.

When this question was brought to Rav Shamai Kehas Gross, shlit"a, he ruled that the schach definitely had to be anchored. "In siman 629 the Shulchan Aruch discusses what is permitted to use to anchor the schach. If one did not anchor it, it is possible that he does not fulfill his obligation even when there is no wind!"

The family didn't want to waste a moment more than necessary to anchor their schach. They took some broken bits of wooden furnishings that they found lying around in the public domain and put them on the sechach. When they heard that this was problematic because the broken pieces were actually former keilim, they found other items that had never been vessels and used them to anchor the schach. But the members of the family were afraid that they may not have fulfilled their obligation while the broken bits had been used to anchor the schach.

When this question reached Rav Gross, he reassured them. "Although the Tzitz Eliezer writes that one should avoid sitting in such a sukkah, b'dieved you fulfilled your obligation."

אורח כהלכה, ע׳ תקע״ו-תקע״ז