The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן תרכ״ט סעיף י״ט

Overview

Siman 629 Seif 19:

If one spread out a sheet over the *schach* because of the sun or beneath the *schach* because of twigs, in other words, so that leaves and branches would not fall on one's table, the *sukkah* is invalid. If, however, the sheet was spread out for decorative purposes it is valid as long as it is within four *tefachim* of the *schach*. Some maintain that if one's *schach* is valid and he fears that the *schach* will dry or branches will fall and he will be left with more sun than shade so he spread out a sheet so that it should not dry out or beneath it so that the branches should not fall – since the sheet is there to maintain more shade than sun it is invalid. If, however, the sheet is there to protect one's self from the sun and branches or for decorative purposes the *sukkah* is valid as long as it is within four *tefachim* of the *schach*. One should not follow this course of action unless it is evident that one's intent is to protect one's self or if the sheet was soaked in water so that everyone will see that it is there to dry.

- The sheet added for decorative purposes may not add shade necessary for the *sukkah* to have more shade than sun. (M.B. 53)
- The second opinion maintains that if the sheet is hung to protect the inhabitants from the sun and branches rather than to maintain the kashrus of the *schach* it is valid. (M.B. 55)
- The second opinion refers to where the *sukkah* had plenty of shade from the *schach* and there was no concern that due to branches falling it would end up with more sun than shade and the only reason for spreading out the sheet was for protection, therefore, the *sukkah* is valid. (M.B. 56)
- Although one should be stringent in accordance with the first opinion if branches will fall into one's food from the rain or the wind it is preferable to spread out a sheet within four *tefachim* of the *schach* and eat in the *sukkah* without reciting the *beracha* than to eat inside. (M.B. 58)

Halacha Highlight

Coloring *schach*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 629 Seif 19

אבל אם לא פרס אלא לנאותה וכו׳

But if one spread out the sheet for decorative purposes etc.

Shulchan Aruch first cites an opinion rules that if one spreads out a sheet for protection from the sun or to keep pieces of *schach* from falling, the *sukkah* is invalid since the sheet serves as a layer of invalid *schach*. If, however, one spread out the sheet for decorative purposes and it is within four *tefachim* of the *schach* it is valid. Mishnah Berurah (ס״ק נ״ג) explains that since in this case the sheet is designed to serve the *schach* it is subordinate to it and thus does not disqualify the *sukkah*. The reason why it must be within four *tefachim* of the *schach* is that if it is more than four *tefachim* from the *schach* it is not subordinate to the *schach* and would invalidate the *sukkah*.

Some authorities use this *halacha* as proof for another ruling. *Poskim* discuss whether it is permitted to color *schach*. According to some authorities, since the *schach* is valid and merely coloring is insignificant (חזותא לאו מילתא היא) it should be valid. They contend that coloring the *schach* cannot be considered worse than spreading out a sheet beneath the *schach* for decorative purposes which is permitted and coloring the *schach* is even more lenient. Other authorities suggest that if the *schach* is colored gold and the coloring has substance to it the matter is subject to the debate as to whether wood becomes subordinate to its gold plating and consequently susceptible to *tumah*. In the event the coloring does not have any substance it may Rabbinically invalid since its appearance has changed. Rav Chaim Kanievski relates that Chazon Ish maintained that coloring *schach* does not invalidate it and issued practical rulings accordingly. Sefer Sukas Shalem asserts that if the *schach* is colored the color of the *schach* according to all opinions it would remain valid (ע׳ ספר הסוכה השלם מילואים לפ״ח אות׳ ע׳).

Stories to Share

New Year, New Question

ש״ע ס׳ תרכ״ט, י״ט: ״אבל אם לא פרסה אלא לנאותה כשרה...״

People figure that if their sukkkah was kosher last year it follows that it will be kosher the next. After all, if all the components are the same and it was kosher last year, how can there be any problem now? But one rav had a change of heart when, after unpacking his sukkah one year, he noticed that his sechach was filled with tiny bugs. Apparently, the communal storage room of his building was infested and the creatures had burrowed into his sechach. He immediately let people know that there was a serious kashrus problem with sechach stored in inappropriate places. Although the sukkah was theoretically kosher even with this sechach as long as the bugs didn't fall too frequently—like leaves which fall from a tree, on today's amud—it was obviously prohibited to eat in such a sukkah. How can one be certain that a miniscule bug did not fall into his food? Obviously he could not eat in this sukkah!

Someone who noticed that his sechach was contaminated tried to think of a solution. The sechach was very durable and would be a pity to lose. Besides, he could not afford to purchase new sechach. After much thought he had an idea: why not spread a sheet under the sechach, ostensibly to decorate the sukkah?

When this question reached Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt"l, he ruled that it is permitted. "One who wishes to spread a sheet or the like under his sechach to beautify it—even if his main reason is to avoid the problem of insects in the sechach—is permitted. This has the same halachos as any decoration of sechach. If it is hung within four tefachim of the sechach it is entirely nullified to the sechach."

פסקי שמועות, ע׳ מ״ט