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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן תרל"ג סעיף א'-ב'

Halacha Highlight

Temporary walls

Shulchan Aruch Siman 633 Seif 1

סכה שהיא גבוהה למעלה מעשרים אמה פסולה

A sukkah that is more than twenty amos high is invalid

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' א') writes that a sukkah that is more than twenty amos tall is invalid. In other words, if the airspace in the sukkah from the ground until the schach is more than twenty amos the sukkah is invalid (מ"ב סק"א). It doesn't matter how wide or narrow the sukkah is or whether the walls extend all the way up to the schach or not, the sukkah is invalid. The reason it is necessary to emphasize this is that there are differing opinions in the Gemara why a sukkah that is twenty amos tall is invalid. The accepted reason is that the Torah requires the sukkah to be a temporary dwelling. Chazal determined that up until a height of twenty amos one need not build permanent walls in order to support one's sukkah, but once the sukkah is taller than twenty amos the walls must be constructed in a permanent manner so that they should not collapse. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ג) emphasizes that the actual material of the walls is not what is important. The important point is that the sukkah must be constructed at a height that allows it to be made from temporary materials.

Aruch HaShulchan (סעי' ב') writes that one should not think that since the Torah commanded that the sukkah should be temporary that one should not make solid, firm walls. The only concern is that it should be possible to be made temporary. He then suggests that perhaps it is a beautification of the mitzvah if one builds his sukkah out of temporary materials that will be dismantled after sukkos rather than in one's house where the roof could be removed and replaced with schach. However, he rejects this notion explaining that the primary requirement that the sukkah should be temporary applies to the schach rather than the walls and as such there is no advantage to building walls that are temporary rather than permanent.

Overview

Siman 633 Seif 1:

A sukkah that is higher than twenty amos is invalid, regardless of how wide it is or whether the walls extend to the schach or not. If it is twenty amos it is valid even if all of the schach is higher than twenty amos since the inner airspace is not twenty amos.

- In other words the inner airspace of the sukkah was more than twenty amos. (M.B. 1)
- An amah is measured by six "tight" tefachim since for this matter we are stringent. (M.B. 2)
- The reason such a tall sukkah is invalid is that a sukkah must be possible to be temporary and at that height it must be built in a permanent fashion. (M.B. 3)

Siman 633 Seif 2:

If the sukkah was taller than twenty amos and branches extend downwards into the airspace, if the schach produces more shade than sun it is valid but if not it is invalid.

- In other words, if one measured until the bottom of the branches there would be less than twenty amos. (M.B. 5)
- Meaning those branches produce more shade than sun if the upper schach were to be removed because shade and sun is measured from twenty amos and below. (M.B. 6)