

Sukkos 5787 Q&A

Twenty questions, every answer from the Gemara and halachic sources.

For learning and general review only — not halacha l'maaseh. For practical questions, ask your Rav.

1. Is there a limit to how tall a sukkah can be?

Yes — a sukkah whose sechach is higher than twenty amos is not kosher, though Rabbi Yehuda validates it.

(Mishnah Sukkah 1:1)

2. Is there a minimum height as well?

Yes — a sukkah lower than ten tefachim is also not kosher.

(Mishnah Sukkah 1:1)

3. How many walls does a kosher sukkah need, at minimum?

At least three.

(Mishnah Sukkah 1:1)

4. What if the sechach lets in more sun than shade?

The sukkah isn't kosher — the shaded area the sechach creates has to be greater than the sunlit area.

(Mishnah Sukkah 1:1)

5. Can you use a sukkah built weeks before Sukkos as-is?

Beis Shammai says a sukkah built more than thirty days before the chag is invalid; Beis Hillel validates it. Either way, one built for the sake of the chag is kosher even from the start of the year.

(Mishnah Sukkah 1:1)

6. Why does a sukkah become invalid once it passes twenty amos high?

The Gemara gives three reasons. Rabbah: under twenty amos, the eye still takes in the sechach. Rabbi Zeira: the shade must come from the sechach itself, not the walls. Rava: it's about dwelling — up to twenty amos, temporary; higher, permanent.

(Sukkah 2a)

7. What's the basic idea behind sitting in a sukkah for seven days?

The Torah is telling a person to leave his permanent, fixed home and live in a temporary one for the week.

(Sukkah 2a)

8. Do the walls of a sukkah have to be a certain material?

No — the Gemara discusses a sukkah with iron walls and kosher sechach on top and concludes it's still valid. It's the roof, not the walls, that makes a sukkah a sukkah.

(Sukkah 2a)

9. Are women obligated in the mitzvah of sukkah?

No. One might think their exemption follows from the same logic used for other time-bound mitzvos, but Abaye teaches that it's actually its own halacha given to Moshe at Sinai.

(Sukkah 28b)

10. What happens if it starts raining hard while you're eating in the sukkah?

You're allowed to go inside — the Mishnah compares it to a servant who pours his master wine, only for the master to fling it back in his face.

(Mishnah Sukkah 2:9)

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11. So can you skip the sukkah entirely if it's raining on the first night?

Not entirely — many hold a person still eats at least a kezayis of bread in the sukkah that first night regardless, since it's tied to the same obligation as matzah on the first night of Pesach.

(Rama, Orach Chaim 639:5)

12. Can you use somebody else's lulav to fulfill the mitzvah on the first day of Sukkos?

Only if he gave it to you as a gift — even a gift on condition that you give it back. A borrowed lulav doesn't work on the first day, but that kind of conditional gift does.

(Sukkah 41b)

13. How do we know “pri eitz hadar” in the pasuk means an esrog?

Because it describes a tree whose wood tastes the same as its fruit — and that's the esrog tree.

(Sukkah 35a)

14. The Torah says “kapot temarim” — why do we take only one palm branch?

The word is spelled without a vav, in its short form, which teaches that only one branch — not several — is meant.

(Sukkah 32a)

15. What does “anaf eitz avot” refer to?

The hadas — its leaves grow braided together in a way that looks corded, which is what avot means.

(Sukkah 32b)

16. Does it matter which way up you hold the lulav?

Yes — it must be held the way it grew, thick end down, the same way the wood of the Mishkan had to be set up according to how the trees grew.

(Sukkah 45b)

17. Why did the Mikdash aravah override Shabbos on the seventh day?

A different aravah than the one bound with the lulav — long branches stood around the mizbeach. It overrode Shabbos to publicize that it's a real Torah-level mitzvah, since the Torah never says so explicitly.

(Sukkah 43b–45a)

18. Were the daled minim originally taken every day of Sukkos, or just once?

Min haTorah, only on the first day outside the Mikdash — but all seven days inside it. After the Churban, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai enacted that lulav be taken everywhere for all seven days as a remembrance of the Mikdash, which is why we still do it today.

(Mishnah Sukkah 3:12)

19. If the sechach is spread unevenly — thick in some spots, thin in others — is the sukkah still kosher?

Yes, as long as overall there's more shade than sun.

(Mishnah Sukkah 2:2)

20. Can a sukkah's roof rest on something like the legs of a bed frame?

Yes, that's kosher — though Rabbi Yehuda adds that the sukkah itself has to be able to stand on its own, without relying on the bed for support.

(Mishnah Sukkah 2:2)