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Sukkah in the Rain

Probably one of the most widely known *halachot* on *Sukkot* is that if it is raining, the meal is moved indoors. The source of this rule is the following *Mishnah* (2:9):

... If rain fell, when may he clear out [of the *sukkah*]? When a dish of porridge would be spoiled [by the rain]. To what can this matter be compared? To a slave who came to fill the cup for his master and [the master] poured the jug over his face.

The question that one should ask is why indeed the advent of rain exempts one from eating in the *sukkah*? Initially one might think that this law is an extension of another well known law – *mitzta'er patur* – if someone is painfully uncomfortable they are exempt from sitting in the *sukkah*.

The *Rav ztz"l* (*Harerei Kedem* 111) explains that such a conclusion is difficult for two reasons. Firstly, the *Rambam* discusses the laws of *mitzta'er* (6:7) in a different place to when he discusses the exemption in the event of rain (6:10). Furthermore the *Gemarah* that discusses *mitzta'er* seems to suggest that these two laws are distinct. The source of the rain exemption is stated explicitly in the *Mishnah* as cited above. The *Gemarah* (28b) however, brings the law of *mitzta'er* as a position held by *Rava* (an *amora* from the period of the *Gemarah*).

For this reason, the *Rav ztz"l* explains that the exemption of rain is different from the exemption of *mitzta'er*. The latter is dependant on the anguish felt by the individual in question. If he is painfully uncomfortable then he, personally, is exempt from sitting in the *sukkah*. The exemption of rain operates in a different manner. When it is raining, it is not dependant on subjective discomfort felt by each of the individuals but rather, the advent of rain invalidates the actual *sukkah* as it is no longer a suitable dwelling.

This understanding explains why the *Mishnah* followed the law with a *mashal* (parable). The *mashal* serves to illustrate the entire situation as inappropriate from the fulfilment of the *mitzvah* and thus the rain invalidates the *sukkah* as a whole.

The *Rav* used this understanding to explain a particular custom that *Rav Moshe Soleveitchik ztz"l* had on the first night of *Sukkot*. By means of introduction we will ask, what if it is raining on the first night of *Pesach*? The *Rama* (639:5) rules that on the first night rain does not exempt one from eating in the *sukkah* and one must eat a *kezait's* worth. (This is learnt from a *gzeirah shava* – see *Mishnah Berurah* for explanation.) The *Mishnah Berurah* however cites other opinions that hold there is no difference between the first night and the other days of *Sukkot*.

Now, if it was raining on the first night, *Rav Moshe* would eat a *kezait* in the *sukkah* as directed by the *Rama*. He would then wait, even till late in the night, till the rain stopped, then wake his family so they could eat another *kezait* in the *sukkah* to satisfy the opinions that argue against the *Rama*.

The *Rav* posed the following question, if the other opinions hold that rain exempts them from eating in the *sukkah* even on the first night, then surely waking the family up so late at night would qualify as a case of *mitzta'er*. Consequently they should be exempt in any case.

Rav Moshe responded that everyone agrees that there is no exemption of *mitzta'er* on the first night. The reason why those opinions exempt people from eating in the *sukkah* when it is raining is because when it is raining, the *sukkah* is no longer defined as a *sukkah* (“*leikah alei'ha shem sukkah klat!*”). There is no *sukkah* in which to perform the *mitzvah*. Later in the evening when the rain ceases, the *sukkah* “returns” and there is no exemption of *mitzta'er* explaining why the family was woken to perform the *mitzvah*.

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Revision Questions

סוכה א' ז' – ב' ט'

- What does one need to do in order to fix a *sukkah* that has a roof of planks of woods (which are not plastered)? (Include both opinions) (א' ז')
- When would a *sukkah* be *kosher* if the roof was covered with metal rods? (א' ח')
- Can one make a *sukkah* by carving out a room from a stack of hay? (א' ח')
- If a *sukkah* was made of hanging walls, how close to the ground must they be? (א' ט')
- What are the dimensions of the walls such that they are not required to be tall enough to reach the *schach*? (א' ט')
- What is the maximum gap (of empty space) allowed between the *schach* and the walls? (א' ט')
- What is the maximum space (of roofing) allowed between the *schach* and the walls? (א' י')
- What two cases are brought in the *Mishnah* as examples for the *halacha* referred to in the previous question? (א' י')
- Is a *sukkah* built like a tent (א) acceptable? (א' י"א)
- If someone slept under their bed in the *sukkah* have they fulfilled the obligation of sleeping in the *sukkah*? (Explain both opinions.) (א' ב')
- Explain the debate regarding a *sukkah* whose wall is supported by a bed? (א' ב')
- What is a *sukkah meduvlelet* and is it *kosher*? (א' ב')
- Are the following *sukkot* acceptable: (א' ג')
 - A *sukkah* constructed on a boat?
 - A *sukkah* constructed in a tree?
- Which of the two *sukkot* described in the previous question can one enter on *Yom Tov* and why? (א' ג')
- Can one make a *sukkah* where trees are used to make the walls? (א' ד')
- Which people are exempt, due to their circumstance, from sitting in a *sukkah*? (א' ד')
- What can one eat outside a *sukkah*? (א' ד')
- What three things did *R' Tzadok* do when he was given food less than a *ke'beitzah* and why? (א' ה')
- List the two opinions regarding the number of meals that one must eat in a *sukkah*. (א' ו')
- Explain the debate regarding a person whose body was inside the *sukkah* yet the table from which he was eating was outside the *sukkah*? (א' ז')
- Which three people are exempt from eating in the *sukkah*? (א' ח')
- Complete the following phrase: (א' ט')

” _____ עושה _____ כל שבעת ימים אדם עושה _____”
- If it is raining, from what point is one allowed to move inside? (א' ט')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
16 th April י"ח ניסן ג' לעומר Sukkah 3:1-2	17 th April י"ט ניסן ד' לעומר Sukkah 3:3-4	18 th April כ' ניסן ה' לעומר Sukkah 3:5-6	19 th April כ"א ניסן ו' לעומר Sukkah 3:7-8	20 th April כ"ב ניסן ז' לעומר Sukkah 3:9-10	21 st April כ"ג ניסן ח' לעומר Sukkah 3:11-12	22 nd April כ"ד ניסן ט' לעומר Sukkah 3:13-14

