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Sukkah Daf 5

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Source for the minimum height of a sukkah

The Gemora asks how we know that a sukkah must be at least 10 tefach tall.

Rav and Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Yochanan (or Rabbi Yonasan) and Rav Chaviva say that the ark was 9 *tefachim*, and its cover was 1, making the top of the ark 10 *tefachim* off the ground. Hashem says that He will to Moshe there, and speak to him from on top of the cover. Rabbi Yossi says in a braisa that the divine presence never descended below, and Moshe and Eliyahu never ascended above, indicating that the upper and lower realms are two different domains. Since the divine presence rested on the ark, which was 10 *tefachim* off the ground, we see that 10 *tefachim* is the lower domain, necessitating a barrier of at least 10 *tefachim*.

The Gemora challenges the first part of Rabbi Yossi's statement from two verses (one that says that Hashem descended on Mt. Sinai to give the Torah, and one that says that in the future, Hashem will stand on Mt. Olives), and answers that both refer to descending to above 10 *tefachim* off the ground.

The Gemora then challenges the second part from the verse that says that Moshe ascended to

Hashem, and from the verse which says that Eliyahu ascended to the heavens in a wind, and answers that they ascended only until 10 *tefachim*.

The Gemora challenges both parts of his statement from the verse which states that Moshe grabbed the heavenly throne, and Hashem pairshav – spread on him His cloud (which Rabbi Tanchum explains means that Shakai [Hashem] moved from the aura of His presence, with his cloud protected him).

The Gemora answers that Hashem only descended to above 10 *tefachim*, and lowered His throne to just below 10 *tefachim*, where Moshe grabbed onto it.

The Gemora says we know the ark was 9 *tefachim*, since the verse says it was 1.5 amos, and each amah is 6 *tefachim*, but asks how we know that the cover was a *tefachim*.

Height of the ark cover

Rabbi Chanina taught in a braisa that all the utensils have 3 dimensions defined, except for the cover, which only has the width and length defined, but we learn that its height is a *tefachim* from the



smallest of dimensions, which is the frame of the table.

The Gemora asks why we don't learn its height from the other utensils, which were higher, and answers that we can only reliably assume the smaller amount, since it definitely is at least that large, but not the larger.

The Gemora asks why we don't learn its height from the tzitz – headplate, which the braisa describes like a plate of gold, 2 fingers wide, and spanning from ear to ear. It had two lines engraved, the bottom saying *kodesh la* – holy to and the second and the top containing Hashem's name, but Rabbi Eliezer the son of Rabbi Yossi says that he saw it in Rome, and it had these words written on one line.

The Gemora says that we prefer to learn the cover, which is a utensil, from the frame, which is also a utensil, rather than from the tzitz which is an adornment.

The Gemora asks why we don't learn its height from the crown of the ark, which had no minimum size, and answers that we learn the cover from the frame, which was a utensil like it, rather than from the crown, which was just a decoration of a utensil.

The Gemora challenges this, as the frame is also a decoration of the table, and answers that the frame was below the surface of the table, making it functional as a utensil, and not just a decoration.

The Gemora says that this answer is valid according to the opinion that the frame was below, but according to the one who says that it was above, it is also a decoration.

Rather, the Gemora says that we learn the cover, which has defined dimensions, from the frame, which also has defined dimensions, rather than from the tzitz or the crown, which have no defined dimensions in any verse.

Rav Huna says that we learn the height of the cover from the verse which refers to the face of the cover, and we know that a face is at least a *tefachim* wide.

The Gemora asks why we don't assume it is referring to the face of a large bird, which is larger than a *tefachim*, and answers that we can only reliably assume the smaller amount, and not the larger one.

The Gemora asks why we don't assume it is referring to the face of a small bird, which is less than a *tefachim*, and Rav Acha bar Yaakov says that Rav Huna learned the same word *penai* – the face of, used in the context of the cover, and used in the verse referring to Yitzchak's face.

The Gemora asks why we don't learn it from the verse in which Yaakov refers to the face of an angel, and answers that we can only reliably assume the smaller size. The Gemora asks why we don't learn it from the verse which refers to the faces of the keruvim, and Rav Acha bar Yaakov answers that we



know that their face was at least a *tefachim*, and Rav Huna actually learned it from that verse.

Rabbi Avahu explains that the word *keruv* means *keravia* – like a child[’s face], as in Babylonia they refer to a child as a *ravia*.

Abaye challenges this from the verse which describes the angels, saying that the face of one was like a *keruv*’s, and the face of the second was like a person’s, implying that they are not the same face, and the Gemora answers that the *keruv*’s was a small face, like a child’s, while the person’s was a larger one, like an adult’s.

Height of the keruvim

The Gemora challenges this source, since we can’t learn from there that the space inside the *sukkah* must be 10 *tefachim*, as it may be sufficient if the height to the top of the roof is 10 *tefachim*.

Rather, the Gemora says that we learn from the structure of the Bais Hamikdash. The verse says that it was 30 amos tall, and the *keruvim* were 10 amos tall. The braisa says that just as in the Bais Hamikdash, the *keruvim* extended to 1/3 of the height of their room, so the *keruvim* in the Mishkan extended to 1/3 of the height of their room. Since the Mishkan was 10 amos tall (60 *tefachim*), the *keruvim* extended to 20 *tefachim* tall. Since the ark and its cover were 10 *tefachim*, the *keruvim* were 10 *tefachim* above the cover. Since the verse says that the *keruvim* were *sochechim* – covering with their wings on the cover, we learn that a *sukkah* cover must be on top of a space of 10 *tefachim*.

The Gemora asks how we know that the wings were on top of their heads, thereby covering 10 *tefachim*, and Rav Acha bar Yaakov answers that the verse says that they were spreading their wings *l'ma'la* – on top.

The Gemora asks how we know that the wings were not even higher than the *keruvim* themselves, and answers that the verse doesn’t say *l'ma'la* twice, but only once, indicating that they were at the top of their height, but not higher.

Sizes of amos

The Gemora says that this answer is valid according to Rabbi Meir, who says that the amos used in the dimensions of the utensils were 6 *tefachim* long. However, according to Rabbi Yehuda, who says that the amos of the structure were 6 *tefachim*, but the amos of utensils were 5 *tefachim*, the ark and its cover were only 8.5 *tefachim*, making the *keruvim* 11.5 *tefachim*, which would require a larger minimum height for a *sukkah*.

The Gemora says that Rabbi Yehuda must say that we know the dimensions of a *sukkah* from a halachah taught directly to Moshe on Mt. Sinai, as Rabbi Chiya bar Ashi says that measurements, separations when immersing, and the details of walls were all taught directly to Moshe at Mt. Sinai.

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Descending and ascending

The Gemora says that the Divine presence never descended below 10 *tefachim*, and no person ever ascended above 10 *tefachim*. The Maharatz Chiyus explains this allegorically to mean that Hashem grants all people free will. Therefore, He does not intervene in their actions in this world, effectively “remaining” in the upper realm. Even when Moshe and Eliyahu ascended, they didn't lose their human identity. Therefore, the angels asked Hashem what a human being was doing among them, and Eliyahu would appear as a person to the Sages.

Tafasta meruba lo tafasta

In its discussion of the height of the kapores, the Gemora repeatedly rejects larger sizes, saying *tafasta meruba lo tafasta, tafasta mu'at tafasta* – if you have grabbed more, you haven't grabbed, but if you grab the minimum, you have grabbed. Rashi explains that by choosing the smaller size, we are sure to have not chosen too large, but if we choose the larger size, perhaps we were unjustified in doing so. Tosfos (5b *tafasta*) quotes those who explain that if we choose the minimum, we have a well defined value to choose, but if we choose something larger, there is no maximum. We therefore assume that an unknown quantity is something well defined, and therefore choose the minimum. Tosfos rejects this explanation, due to the following challenges:

1. In our Gemora, there is a maximum size (i.e., the size of the mishkan itself), yet the Gemora uses this statement to prove that we choose the smaller size.

2. The Gemora in Rosh Hashana (4b) uses the same statement to prove that we allocate seven days to bring the sacrifices of Shavuos, since we learn from the smaller size of Pesach, and not the larger size of Sukkos, even though there is a defined maximum of 8 days.

3. Toras Kohanim cites a dispute of Tannaim how we know the amount of days which makes a woman a zava. Rabbi Akiva says it is based on this statement, while Rabbi Yehuda ben Besaira says it is based on the fact that we choose the defined (minimum) value, and not the unbounded larger value, implying that the two statements are different.

Tosfos therefore explains the statement like Rashi, saying that we can be assured that we are justified in the minimum value, but not necessarily with any more.

Eliyahu's Locker Room

The Gemara states that the Divine Presence has never descended below to within ten *tefachim* of the physical world. Similarly, Moshe and Eliyahu never ascended to the Heavens. The Chasam Sofer explains that this statement that Eliyahu never ascended to the Heavens was only true as long as Eliyahu was encumbered by his physical body. When Eliyahu's soul was freed from his body, he was transformed into an angel and he was no longer bound by physical limitations. The Chasam Sofer posits that when Moshiach arrives, Eliyahu will reassume his physical form and he will reside amongst the great people of that generation. At that time Eliyahu will be allowed to rule on halachic

issues, which is something that is normally reserved for humans. The reason for this is because at that time Eliyahu will have reassumed a physical state. Currently, however, Eliyahu retains the status of an angel, and for this reason Eliyahu is not bound by any of the limitations imposed upon men. Given Eliyahu's current status of an angel, we can understand why Eliyahu is permitted to travel throughout the world on Shabbos to attend a circumcision ceremony. Although traveling on Shabbos normally involves walking outside of the techum, the distance of two-thousand amos from one's Shabbos residence which he is permitted to travel on Shabbos, Eliyahu is not confined to this restriction because he has the status of an angel. The Gemara records an incident where an Amora encountered Eliyahu in a graveyard. The Amora queried Eliyahu as to how he was permitted to be in a graveyard if Eliyahu is a Kohen, who is prohibited from defiling himself to a corpse. The Chasam Sofer explains that Eliyahu must have assumed a physical form at that time, as otherwise Eliyahu would have retained the status of an angel, and the Amora surely would have known that halachos that are relevant to physical beings do not apply to Eliyahu.

No Dates Today

The Gemara states that the source for any measurements, interpositions and partitions are all Halacha LeMoshe MiSinai, oral laws given to Moshe at Sinai that have no Scriptural basis. Rashi cites two examples of measurements, one being the olive-measure for most forbidden foods, and

second, the date-measure for eating on Yom Kippur. There is an interesting discussion regarding the definition of the prohibition to eat on Yom Kippur. The question raised is as follows: Is the prohibition defined as eating per se, and the minimum measure that was established was the equivalent of the size of a date because that is what alleviates the hunger, or perhaps the prohibition is that one cannot alleviate his hunger, which is generally accomplished by eating a food that is the size of a date. Although this may seem to be a question of semantics, this query actually has some serious halachic implications. Let us consider the following scenario: What would happen if one ate slightly less than the equivalent of a date right before Yom Kippur and he is still somewhat hungry. After Yom Kippur begins, he eats a little bit more and that eating combines with what he ate before Yom Kippur to alleviate his hunger. This person has alleviated his hunger on Yom Kippur, but he has done so without eating the entire forbidden measurement of food. The Ksav Sofer writes that in such a situation, one has indeed transgressed Yom Kippur. It is clear that the Ksav Sofer maintains that the prohibition is that one cannot alleviate his hunger and the prohibition is not the eating per se. In a similar vein, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, in his sefer *Achiezer*, discusses intravenous feeding on Yom Kippur. If the prohibition is eating per se, then feeding intravenously would be permitted. If the prohibition is that one cannot alleviate his hunger, then feeding intravenously may be prohibited as well.

The Wings of the Keruvim –

Straight Ahead or at an Angle?

The Gemara cites a source as proof that a Sukkah must be at least ten *tefachim* high. The Keruvim that were on top of the kapores were ten *tefachim* high and regarding the wings of the Keruvim it is said the Cherubim shall be with wings spread above, sheltering the Cover with their wings. The word for spread is *sochechim*, which has the same root word as *s'chach*. Thus we have proof that a valid Sukkah must have an interior space ten *tefachim* high, exclusive of the *s'chach*. Harav Dovid Meyers in his sefer *Melech HaMishkan Vkeilav* notes that it would seem that the universally accepted drawing of the Keruvim's wings as extending from their heads at an upward angle would be inaccurate according to our Gemara. If the wings truly had extended upward on a diagonal, then the area underneath the wings did not have a uniform height. The area that was underneath the tips of the wings was certainly ten *tefachim*, but the area closer to the head was lower. If this is so, why did the Gemara arbitrarily pick the height of ten *tefachim*? HaRav Meyers therefore suggests that it is more likely that the wings extended straight ahead horizontally from their heads to the point where their tips met, and indeed the whole area under the wings was ten *tefachim* high. HaRav Meyers presented his thesis to HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, and Harav Chaim acknowledged that Harav Meyers was correct in his assessment.

The Kapores – Solid or Hollow?

HaRav Dovid Meyers, in his sefer *Melech HaMishkan Vkeilav*, wonders if the kapores was actually a solid *tefachim* thick, or was it merely a hollow box. HaRav Meyers notes that the Gemara in Yoma 55a that uses the term "the thickness of the kapores," seems to imply that the kapores was not only a *tefachim* high but also a *tefachim* thick. Rabbeinu Chananel, however, has a different version of that Gemara in Yoma which reads "the *tefachim* of the kapores," instead of the thickness of the kapores. For further discussion on this matter, see page 74 of sefer *Melech HaMishkan Vkeilav*.

DAILY MASHAL

Flames in Heaven

The Gemara states that Moshe and Eliyahu never ascended to Heaven. Although Scripture seems to indicate that Moshe ascended to Heaven, the Gemara explains that Moshe always remained below ten *tefachim* from the Heavens. There is a halacha regarding lighting Chanukah Menorah that the candles should be within ten *tefachim* of the ground. Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch in his sefer *Moadim Uzmanim* wonders if the flames themselves are required to be within ten *tefachim* of the ground or is it sufficient that the wicks are within the *tefachim* of the ground. Based on our Gemara we can suggest that one has to light the candles within ten *tefachim* of the ground, i.e. within the human domain. The flames, however, which are completely spiritual and are unmarred by any physical element, can be above ten *tefachim*.