

Raised in a hut-house

The Gerald & Karin Feldhamer OU Kosher Halacha Yomis

This column is dedicated in memory of:

Rav Chaim Yisroel ben Reb Dov HaLevi Belsky, zt'l

Senior OU Kosher Halachic Consultant from 1987-2016

I will be going away for the last days of Sukkos, and I do not need my Sukkah anymore. Can I take it down on Chol Hamo'ed before I leave?

The Gemara (Sukkah 9a) derives from the verse (Vayikra 23:34) "The Chag of Sukkos shall be seven days for Hashem" that just as a *Korban Chagiga* (alluded to by the word "chag" which is seemingly superfluous) is sanctified to Hashem, so too a Sukkah becomes sanctified to Hashem. Shulchan Aruch (OC 638:1) writes that the *s'chach* and walls of a Sukkah may not be used for any other purpose during the chag. For example, one may not pull a splinter from the wood of the sukkah to use as a toothpick. Even if the Sukkah fell down, one may not benefit from the wood until after Sukkos. It is not clear from Shulchan Aruch whether one may take down a Sukkah if no one will benefit from it. Sefer Ikrei HaDat (OC 2:68) discusses this question and concludes that taking down a Sukkah is "*bizui mitzvah*" (belittling of the mitzvah) and therefore it may only be taken down if there is a special necessity. Shoel Umaishiv (4:3:28) also seems to imply that this is not permitted. He writes that one may not even take *s'chach* off of one Sukkah to place on another. However, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l (Minchas Shlomo II:54) and L'horos Noson (7:47) both point out that there is a clear implication from Shulchan Aruch (666:1) that one may take down a sukkah, once it is no longer needed. The Shulchan Aruch states that in Israel, on Hoshanah Rabba, once the Sukkah is no longer needed, one may remove a large section of the *s'chach* in order to permit sitting in the Sukkah on Shmini Atzeres and not be concerned about ba'al tosif. Of course, one may not benefit from the *s'chach* until after Sukkos. (Note, dismantling a Sukkah on Chol Hamoed involves melacha. This would be permitted only for the sake of Yom Tov [if the labor is non-skilled], or to avoid a loss.)

I am visiting my parents for the first days of Sukkos and my in-laws for the last days. In my parent's Sukkah, we hung decorations that our children made in school. Can we take the decorations down and bring them with us to hang in my in-law's Sukkah?

Not only does a Sukkah have special holiness, but the decorations are infused with holiness as well. One may not remove Sukkah decorations from a Sukkah for no reason, unless they were hung before Sukkos on condition that they should not become holy. (There is a specific wording that one must say to prevent them from becoming holy.) However, if one is concerned that they will be ruined or stolen, they may be removed (Piskei Teshuvos 638:7 - citing Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l). Similarly, Tzitz Eliezer (13:67)

writes that if the intent is to hang them in another Sukkah, this too is permitted. He explains that this is not considered "*bizui mitzvah*" (belittling of the mitzvah), since the decoration is being transferred to another Sukkah. Rav Moshe Sternbuch points out that one may not decrease the level of sanctity of the decorations. If the decorations were hanging from the *s'chach*, they should be hung again on the *s'chach*, which has a higher level of holiness than the walls (Mo'adim U'zmanim 6:68).