



Proper Kavanos for the Mitzvah of Eating in the Succah

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DOES ONE NEED TO HAVE FULL KAVANA WHEN PERFORMING A MITZVAH?

There is a dispute amongst the Rishonim¹ when one does a mitzvah if he is required to concentrate on the fact that he is performing a mitzvah². Some Rishonim hold that if he did a mitzvah without having intent that he is doing a mitzvah (ex; he hears someone blowing a shofar and does not have the intent to fulfill the mitzvah of listening to the shofar), he has not fulfilled his obligation (and must hear the shofar blow again). Other Rishonim disagree and hold that b'dieved he has fulfilled his obligation.

The halacha is as follows: when it comes to a mitzvah d'oraysa, (shofar blowing, kerias shema, tefillin, tzitzis, bentching, etc.) we hold strictly like the Rishonim who say that without the proper kavana he has not fulfilled his obligation. In regard to a mitzvah d'rabanen (reading of megillah, neiros Chanukah, other berachos, etc.), there is a dispute amongst the poskim if b'dieved one has fulfilled his obligation if he performed the mitzvah without kavana³. If one does a mitzvah (either d'oraysa or d'rabanen) without any explicit kavana, but from the manner in which it is being performed it is obvious that he is intending to perform a mitzvah (ex: reading kerias shema during davening, eating matzah while reclining at the seder), b'dieved he has fulfilled his obligation⁴. Lechatchilah one should always have kavana prior to doing a mitzvah, as he is performing one of the mitzvos of Hashem Yisborach.

WHAT EXTRA KAVANAH IS REQUIRED FOR THE MITZVAH OF SITTING IN SUCCAH?

All of the above is the basic kavana that one must have by all mitzvos. The Bach⁵ points out that there are three mitzvos in which the Torah adds a certain idea that one is supposed to have in mind when performing the mitzvah. These are tzitzis, tefillin, and succah. When one puts on his tzitzis or tallis he should have in mind "that Hashem commanded us to wear tzitzis so that we should remember all the mitzvos in order to perform them." When one puts on tefillin he must have in mind "that Hashem commanded us to wear tefillin in order to remind us that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with awesome miracles in which He demonstrated to the world His ongoing complete supervision over the entire universe." When one sits to eat (or sleep) in a succah he should have kavana "that Hashem commanded us to sit in a succah to commemorate Hashem taking us out of Mitzrayim." This is based on a passuk that the Torah commands us to sit in the succah "in order that all future generations know that Hashem placed us in "succos" when we left Mitzrayim." (Vayikra 23:43)

There is a dispute in the gemara as to what is meant by the term "succos" in the passuk. One opinion is that it is referring to the huts that we dwelled in when we left Mitzrayim. The other opinion is that it is referring to the ananei hakavod ("clouds of glory") that Hashem shielded us with, protecting us from the dangers of the wilderness when we left Mitzrayim. The Pri Megadim⁶ says when one sits in the succah he should be machmir like both opinions and have kavana that "Hashem commanded us to sit in the succah to remember the dwelling in huts upon leaving of Mitzrayim and to commemorate the clouds of glory that Hashem sent to protect us."

The Bikurei Yaakov⁷ (author of the Aruch L'ner) suggests that without the above kavana, perhaps one does not fulfill his obligation of sitting in the succah. The Pri Megadim holds that b'dieved one has fulfilled his obligation. This is also implied in

the wording of the Bach himself⁸, and his approach of the Mishna Berurah as well⁹. But certainly, l'chatchila one should have this kavana (in addition to the kavana that he is performing a mitzvah).

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MITZVAH ON THE FIRST NIGHT AND THE REST OF SUCCOS?

During the entire Yom Tov of Succos, one is not necessarily required to eat, but if he wishes to eat bread or any product made of the 5 grains, he must do so in the succah. On the first night of Succos (and outside of Eretz Yisroel, the second night as well) there is a special mitzvah for every Jewish male to eat a k'zayis of bread inside a succah. Chazal learn this obligation out from the first night of Pesach. Just as one is obligated to eat a k'zayis of matzah on the first night of Pesach, so too one is required to eat a k'zayis of bread in a succah on the first night of Succos. One must take care to eat his k'zayis of bread within a time frame of "Kdei Achilas Pras" (approximately 2-4 minutes) just as he would eat matzah on Pesach night.

On the first night of Pesach, we make a beracha "Al Achilas Matzah" on the mitzvah of eating matzah before we eat our first k'zayis of matzah. The poskim discuss why on Succos we don't make a special beracha before eating our first k'zayis of bread in the succah. Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l¹⁰ suggests that the beracha of "Leyshev B'succah" that we make during kiddush is also the beracha for the special mitzvah of eating bread in the succah on the first night of Succos.

Based on this, Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l holds that when one makes the beracha of "Leyshev B'succah" during kiddush, he should have in mind that it is also covering the bread that he will eat after making the beracha of Hamotzi. In addition, he was careful not to talk between the beracha of "Leyshev b'succah" made during kiddush, until after he ate a k'zayis of challah, so as not to be mafsik between the beracha and the eating. (No different than on Pesach night, where one does not talk until after a k'zayis of matzah is eaten.) However, Dayan Fuerst shlita points out that this was a personal chumrah of Rav Shlomo Zalman, and it is not found among other poskim¹¹.

Certainly, one who does speak before eating a k'zayis of bread should not make a new beracha.

In summary, on the first night (and second night outside of Eretz Yisrael) of Succos:

1. Preferably one should have kavana when making the beracha of "Leyshev b'succah" that it is also covering the special mitzvah of eating a k'zayis of bread in the succah on the first night of Succos.
2. It is best not to talk from when the beracha of Leyshev is made until after the first k'zayis is eaten.
3. One should take great care to eat a k'zayis of bread within a time span of approximately 2-4 minutes.
4. When one eats the bread, he should have in mind that he is performing a mitzvah which commemorates the leaving of Mitzrayim and the clouds that Hashem sent to protect us from the outside elements.
5. See footnote¹² for an additional Chumrah.

1. See Shulchan Aruch O.C. 60:4

2. See Minchas Shlomo siman 1:2 that it is sufficient to have kavana at the beginning of the mitzvah.

3. Shulchan Aruch and the Gra hold he has not fulfilled his obligation while the Radvaz (quoted by Magen Avraham) holds b'dieved he fulfilled his obligation.

4. Chayei Adam quoted by M.B. ibid s.k. 10

5. O.C. 625

6. Eishel Avraham ibid

7. ibid

8. ibid

9. Ibid s.k. 1

10. Halichos Shlomo ch. 9:3

11. He explained that the mitzvah of the first night is part of the mitzvah from eating in the Succah all seven days, as indicated by the fact that they share the same nusach of beracha. Rav Shlomo Zalman himself makes this point in the sefer HaSuccah (Haarah 19). Therefore, the beracha recited by kiddush will work for the general mitzvah, and once it has taken affect, the hefsek afterward will not pose any issue.

12. HaGaan R' Eliyahu Rigler (Yad Eliyahu 23:1) holds that just as on the first night(s) of Pesach one must eat his k'zayis of matzah without anything that might flavor it, so too on the first night(s) of Succos one must eat a k'zayis of challah plain (without any honey). Many disagree with R' Rugler and hold that one should eat the challah with honey as this would enhance the taste of the challah and the mitzvah would thereby become more mehudar. Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (Halichos Shlomo ch.9 Dvar Halacha 7) suggests that one first eat a kazayis with honey (which is more mehudar) and then one should eat another kazayis plain to fulfill the opinion of R' Rugler.



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