

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Unter Dem Tisch
September 28, 2023

Q I have little room in my sukkah. May I sleep under the table?



A The Mishnah (Sukkah 20b) records the story of Tavi, Rabban Gamliel's slave, who would sleep in the sukkah under a bed, and says that Rabban Gamliel sang Tavi's praises for knowing that slaves are exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah. The Mishnah infers from this that one who sleeps under a bed does not fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah.

The Gemara (ibid.) explains that Tavi's bed was 10 *tfachim* high, which qualifies as an *ohel* (shelter), and someone sleeping under such a bed is not considered to be in the sukkah. If it's lower, the bed is not an *ohel* but part of the sukkah, and one may sleep under it. This halacha is codified in Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 627:1).

According to R' Chaim Na'eh, 10 *tfachim* is 31.5 inches. Standard dining tables in the US are about 28-30 inches high, so most will qualify. This is so even if a tablecloth forms cloth walls around the area beneath the table (Shulchan Aruch ibid. 2).

If the table is 10 *tfachim* or higher, and your sukkah space is limited, you may put your legs under the table while your head and most of your body are under the *sechach*. You may rely on this even *lechat'chilah* (Halichos Shlomo 9:2). Though you might shift while you sleep and move further under the bed, that would be an *oness* (Chut Shani 11:15).

Several *Rishonim* say that sleeping under a 10-*tefach* bed is a problem only *mideRabanan* (Sha'ar Hatziyun ibid. 1). According to this view, if the only alternative is sleeping indoors, you should sleep under the bed, because fulfilling the mitzvah *mide'Oreisa* but not *mideRabanan* is better than not at all (Kaf Hachaim ibid. 1).