

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Above Board

October 9, 2025

Q Are lumber (e.g., two-by-fours) and engineered wood (e.g., plywood or particle board) valid for *sechach*?



A Most of these products (not the plywood; see below) certainly meet the *deOreisa* requirement for *sechach*, as they are *gidulei karka* (grown from the ground) and not susceptible to *tumah*. But Chazal (Mishnah, Sukkah 14a) enacted *gzeiras tikrah*, prohibiting cuts of wood that are more than four *tfachim* (about 14 inches) wide and long, because a roof built with them resembles that of a house (O.C. 629:18). Two-by-fours, which are smaller, are kosher, even if sanded smooth (O.C. *ibid.*).

Still, the Shulchan Aruch (*ibid.*) says that the minhag is not to use sanded wood. The Mishnah Brurah (*ibid.* 49) offers two reasons: a) Because sanded pieces can be fitted tightly together, they may form a sealed roof, and a roof that is impermeable to rain is akin to a house roof and *pasul mideOreisa*. b) Even pieces smaller than four *tfachim* are commonly used in roof construction today, so *gzeiras tikrah* applies to them, too.

The minhag cited by the Shulchan Aruch only applies to pieces at least one *tefach* wide (Piskei Teshuvos *ibid.* 15), so a two-by-two is kosher *lechat'chilah*.

The use of plywood and particle board is debated among contemporary *poskim*, as the glue is made of materials unfit for *sechach*, so these should be avoided (see discussion in Piskei Teshuvos *ibid.* 16).

Many people use rough wood slats, even those sold in fixed sizes (see list of *poskim* in Piskei Teshuvos *ibid.* n. 72). The justification for this is that the Mishnah Brurah's concerns don't apply: These slats cannot form a watertight seal due to their rough surface, and they are not typically used in roofs.

In a *she'as hadchak* (difficult circumstance), where regular *sechach* is unavailable, one may use sawn-and-sanded wood, even larger than four *tfachim* (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 50), and even make a *leisheiv basukkah* (*ibid.*).