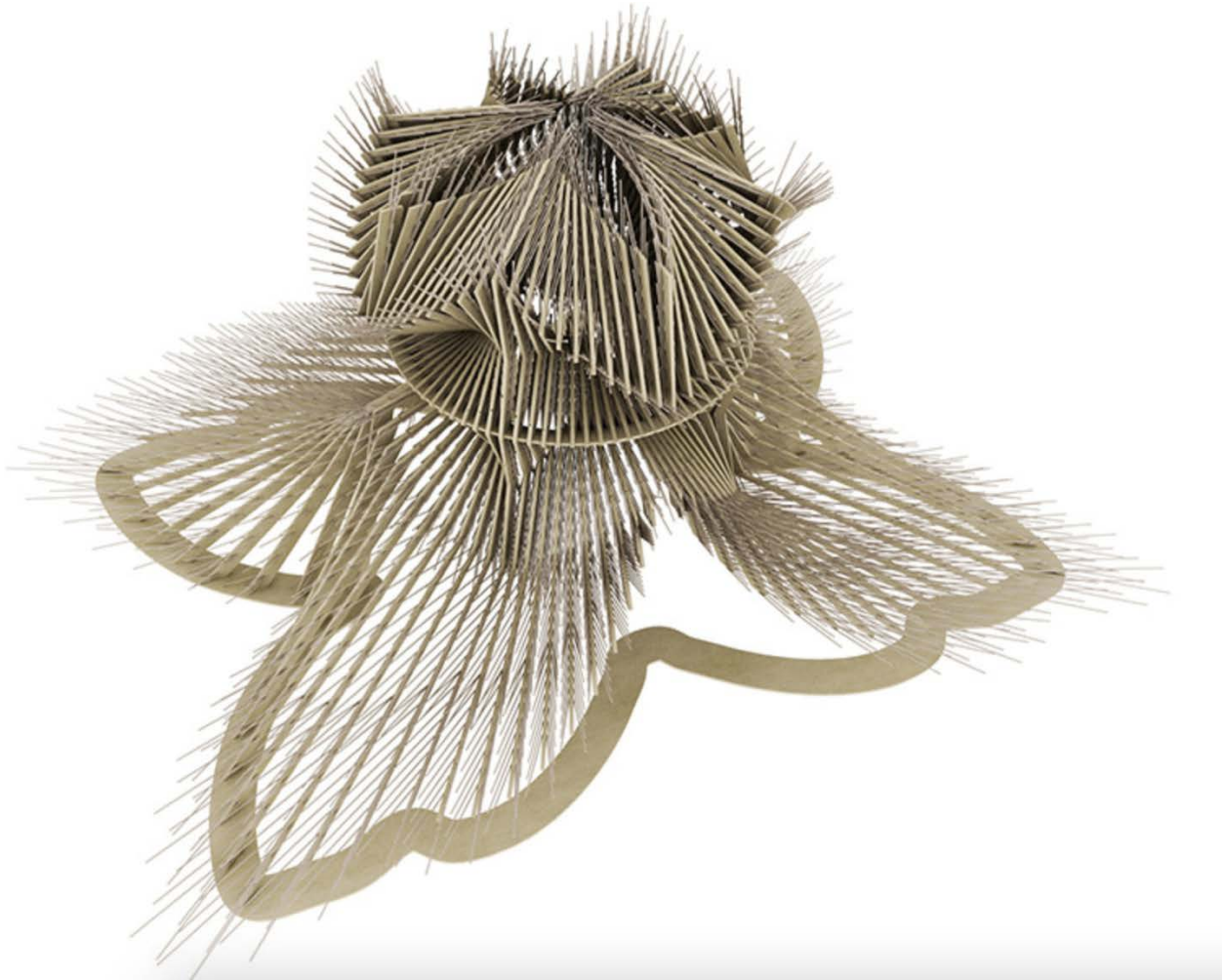


Daf Ditty Succah 16: Succah in a haystack



Haystack Succah

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¹ See my exploration of the haystack at Daf Ditty Eruvin 79:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5047de16e4b026a4c324cd81/t/5f9788103ee3212d1693e2e9/1603766293448/DD162_E079.pdf

מִירמא הנן הרוטט בגדיש לעשות לו סוכה
 אינה סוכה והא תניא הרי זו סוכה אמר רב
 הונא לא קשיא כאן בשיש שם הלל טפח
 במשך שבעה כאן בשאין שם הלל טפח
 במשך שבעה: **מתני'** *המשלשל דפנות
 מלמעלה למטה אם גבוה מן הארץ שלשה
 טפחים פסולה מלמטה למעלה אם גבוה
 עשרה טפחים כשרה רבי יוסי אומר כשם
 שמלמטה למעלה עשרה טפחים כך מלמעלה
 למטה עשרה טפחים: **גמ'** במאי קמופלגי

גָדַשׁ to heap up, to put up stacks of grain. Pes. 56^a;
 Men. 71^a גָדַשְׁוּן לְפָנֵי הַעֹמֶר they put the stacks of grain
 up before offering the Omer (v. עֹמֶר); Tosef. Pes. II

(III), 19 (corr. acc.). Tosef. B. Kam. VI, 24 הַשְׂאִילוּ
 'וכ' וְגַ' . . . לְגִדּוֹשׁ if he lent him a spot to pile wheat on it,
 and he piled barley; a. fr.—2) to give heaped measure,
 opp. מַחֵק to strike. B. Bath. V, 11 where the usage is
 'וכ' לְגִדּוֹשׁ לֹא לְמַחֵק to strike grain, one must not heap
 (even for special remuneration) &c.; a. fr.—Part. pass.
 גָדַשׁ, f. גָדַשָׁה, *brimful, overflowing, heaped*. Tam. V, 4.
 Yoma 48^a גָדַשׁוֹת לְמִשְׁכָּה I. Gen. R. s. 22 ג'
 הַמִּשְׁכָּה the measure of thy sin is heaped to excess.—
 Sabb. 153^b; Tosef. ib. I, 17; Y. ib. I, 3^c גָדַשׁוּ
 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא (אָרָה הָ) on that day (of rabbinical enactments) they
 overfilled the measure (of laws).

הַחוֹטֵט בְּגָדִישׁ. אָמַר רַב הוֹנָא: לֹא שָׁנוּ אֶלָּא שְׂאִין שָׁם חָלַל טַפַּח
 בְּמִשְׁךְ שֶׁבַע, אֲבָל יֵשׁ שָׁם חָלַל טַפַּח בְּמִשְׁךְ שֶׁבַע — הֲרִי זֶה
 סוּכָה.

The mishna states: In the case of **one who hollows out** and creates a space inside a **stack of grain**, it is not a *sukka*. **Rav Huna said:** The Sages **taught** that it is not a *sukka* **only** in a case **where**

there is not a space one handbreadth high along seven handbreadths upon which the grain was piled. However, if there is a space measuring one handbreadth high along seven handbreadths upon which the grain was piled, and now, by hollowing out the stack, one is raising the existing walls and not forming a new space, it is a fit *sukka*.

תְּנִיָּא נְמִי הָכִי: הַחוּטָט בְּגַדִּישׁ לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ סוּכָּה — הָרִי זֶה סוּכָּה.
וְהָאֵנן תִּנּוּן אֵינָה סוּכָּה! אֶלָּא לָאוּ, שְׁמַע מִינָה כְּדָרְב הוּנָא. שְׁמַע
מִינָה.



13. The reason why the Mishnah disqualifies a succah hollowed out from a haystack is that when the straw was piled onto the stack it did not meet the definition of *s'chach* (i.e. a covering that provides shade). The upper layer of straw subsequently became *s'chach* only through an indirect action, thus failing to meet the Torah's requirement: *תַּעֲשֶׂה וְלֹא מִן הַעֲשׂוּי*, you shall make [the *s'chach*], and not use that which is already made (see 15a note 33). For the straw to meet the definition of *s'chach* it would have to cover an empty space at least one *tefach* high, for that is the minimum height of an *ohel* (i.e. a covered area), as we find in the laws of *tumah* transmission. This empty space must extend over an area of seven by seven *tefachim* to be acceptable as a succah. Consequently, if a haystack was built over a cavity of these dimensions, it would constitute *s'chach* as it was being built [provided that it was made to give shade (*Ritva*; *Ran*; *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 635; see, however, *Sfas Emes*)]. It would hence fulfill the Torah's requirement that *s'chach* be built through direct action. Although the cavity must be hollowed out further to a height of ten *tefachim*, that is necessary only to render the walls valid. [The requirement of direct installation applies only to the *s'chach*, and not the walls.] This case is akin to a succah nine *tefachim* tall, which can be rendered valid by digging in the ground to a depth of one *tefach* (see above, 4a-b). In that case, as well, although the *s'chach* was originally placed over space less than ten *tefachim* high, the succah is valid, because it is the walls, not the *s'chach*, that must be rectified (*Rashi*; see *Ran's* inference from *Rashi*).

Only the area of seven by seven *tefachim* that was originally left empty becomes valid when the cavity's height is increased to ten *tefachim*. Any area hollowed out to its sides remains invalid, since the *s'chach* above it was not created directly (*Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 635; see *Meiri*).

That is also taught in a *baraita*: One who hollows out a stack of grain to make himself a *sukka*, it is a *sukka*. The Gemara wonders: **But didn't we learn in the mishna that it is not a *sukka*? Rather, is it not correct to conclude from it, in accordance with the opinion of Rav Huna, that in certain circumstances it is possible to hollow out a stack of grain and establish a fit *sukka*?** The Gemara concludes: Indeed, **learn from it** that this is the case.

איכא דרמי ליה מירמא. תנן: החוטט בגדיש לעשות לו סוכה —
 אינה סוכה. והא תניא: הרי זו סוכה! אמר רב הונא, לא קשיא: כאן
 בשיש שם חלל טפח במשך שבעה, כאן בשאין שם חלל טפח
 במשך שבעה.

Some raised this matter as a contradiction between the mishna and the *baraita*. We learned in the mishna: **One who hollows out a stack of grain in order to make himself a *sukka*, it is not a *sukka*. But wasn't it taught in a *baraita* that this is a *sukka*? Rav Huna said: This is not difficult. Here, where it is a *sukka*, it is a case where there is a space measuring one handbreadth high along seven handbreadths, while there, where it is not a *sukka*, it is a case where there is not a space one handbreadth high along seven handbreadths.**



אמר רב הונא לא שנו אלא שאין שם חלל טפח במשך שבעה
 אבל יש שם חלל טפח במשך שבעה הרי זה סוכה
 Rav Huna says this only applies if when the haystack was
 originally piled up there was no cavity under the haystack that
 was seven by seven טפחים wide and at least one טפח high. Rashi
 explains, because in that case there is indeed a problem of תעשה
 תעשה, because the סכך was not made for the cavity, it was
 there before the cavity existed, and it became the covering of
 this hollowed out area by default. However, if there was a חלל
 to begin with, he made the סכך a covering for this cavity as
 he was piling up the haystack - and now that he hollowed it out
 more, up to ten טפחים high, it is a valid סוכה. Rashi cites the
 Gemara on ד' ד -

מתני' המשלשל דפנות מלמעלה למטה, אם גבוה מן הארץ
 שלשה טפחים — פסולה. מלמטה למעלה, אם גבוה עשרה טפחים
 — כשרה. רבי יוסי אומר: כשם שמלמטה למעלה עשרה טפחים,
 כך מלמעלה למטה עשרה טפחים.

MISHNA: One who lowers the walls of the *sukka* from up downward, if the lower edge of the wall is three handbreadths above the ground, the *sukka* is unfit. Since animals can enter through that space, it is not the wall of a fit *sukka*.

However, if one constructs the wall from **down upward**, if the wall is **ten handbreadths high**, even if it does not reach the roofing, the *sukka* is **fit**.

Rabbi Yosei says: Just as a wall built from down upward must be ten handbreadths, so too, in a case where one lowers the wall from up downward, it must be ten handbreadths in length. Regardless of its height off the ground, it is the wall of a fit *sukka*, as the legal status of a ten-handbreadth partition is that of a full-fledged partition in all areas of *halakha*.



If someone built the walls from the top down and the wall ends at three טפחים from the ground, it is פסול. If he started from the bottom and built up, once it reaches ten טפחים high, it's valid, even if there is a gap between the top of the wall and the סכך.
 רבי יוסי אומר כשם שמלמטה למעלה עשרה טפחים כך מלמעלה למטה עשרה טפחים
 ר' יוסי says that just like when he builds from the bottom up, it's as long as it's ten טפחים high, even if there is a large gap, it's also כשר from the top down if it's ten טפחים tall, even if there is a large gap between the bottom of the wall and the ground.
 The Gemara explains;
 מור סבר מחיצה תלויה מתרת
 ומר סבר מחיצה תלויה אינה מתרת
 R' Yosi holds that a suspended partition is valid to allow carrying on Shabbos, and it's a valid wall for the Sukkah.
 The Tanna Kamma holds that a suspended partition is neither valid for Shabbos, nor for Sukkah.

וְלֹא רַבִּי יוֹסֵי סָבַר לֵה כְּרַבִּי יְהוּדָה: עַד כָּאֵן לֹא קָאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי הֵכָא, אֶלָּא בְּסוּפָה דְּמִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה. אֲבָל שַׁבָּת, דְּאִיסוּר סְקִילָה — לֹא.

Nor does Rabbi Yosei hold in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, as Rabbi Yosei states his opinion that a suspended partition suffices **only here, with regard to a sukka, which is a positive mitzva. However,** in the case of carrying between courtyards on Shabbat, which is a prohibition that is punishable by stoning, **no,** a suspended partition does not suffice.

וְאִם תֹּאמַר: מַעֲשֵׂה שְׁנַעֲשֵׂה בְּצִיפּוּרֵי, עַל פִּי מִי נַעֲשֵׂה? לֹא עַל פִּי רַבִּי יוֹסֵי, אֶלָּא עַל פִּי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּרַבִּי יוֹסֵי.

The Gemara asks: **And if you say:** Since Rabbi Yosei does not hold in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda with regard to the laws of Shabbat, **according to whose** opinion was the **action that was taken in Tzipori performed,** where they relied on suspended partitions even on Shabbat? The Gemara answers: It was **not** performed **according to** the opinion of **Rabbi Yosei** but **rather on the authority of Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei.**

וּמֵאֵי מַעֲשֵׂה — דְּכִי אָתָּא רַב דִּימִי, אָמַר: פְּעַם אַחַת שָׁכְחוּ וְלֹא הֵבִיאוּ סִפֵּר תּוֹרָה מֵעֶרֶב שַׁבָּת, לְמַחֵר פִּירְסוּ סְדִינִין עַל גְּבֵי הָעַמּוּדִים, וְהֵבִיאוּ סִפֵּר תּוֹרָה וְקָרְאוּ בּוּ.

And what was that incident? When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, he said: One time they forgot and did not bring a Torah scroll to the synagogue on Shabbat eve prior to the onset of Shabbat. The next day, on Shabbat, to avoid violating the prohibition against carrying, they spread and suspended sheets on posts that were fixed along the path from the house in which the Torah scroll was stored to the synagogue, establishing partitions. And they brought a Torah scroll along that path and read from it.

פִּרְסוּ סֵלֶקָא דְעֵתָךְ? מֵהֵיכָן הֵבִיאוּם בְּשַׁבָּת! אֲלָא, מִצָּאוּ סְדִינִין
פְּרוֹסִין עַל גְּבֵי הָעֲמוּדִים וְהֵבִיאוּ סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה וְקָרְאוּ בוֹ.

The Gemara asks: **Does it enter your mind that they spread** the sheets on Shabbat? Carrying before the partitions were established was prohibited. **From where did they bring** these sheets on Shabbat? **Rather, they found sheets already spread on the posts, and they brought a Torah scroll and read from it.** They relied on a suspended partition even in this matter related to Torah law. They relied neither on the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda nor on the opinion of Rabbi Yosei; rather, they relied on the authority of a third *tanna*.

Summary

3) Carving out a pile of hay

R' Huna qualifies the Mishnah's ruling that a pile of hay carved out to be a sukkah is invalid. He submits that if it originally had a space of a tefach it is valid.

A Baraisa is cited that supports this ruling.

4) **MISHNAH:** The Mishnah records a dispute regarding the minimum size of the wall when making the wall from the top towards the ground or from the bottom towards the סִכַּךְ.

5) Clarifying the dispute

The Gemara explains that Tanna Kamma and R' Yosi dispute whether a suspended partition is valid.

Another Mishnah is cited in which R' Yehudah rules that a hanging partition is valid, similar to R' Yosi's ruling in our Mishnah.

The Gemara explains that R' Yosi and R' Yehudah do not necessarily agree with each other's position.

An incident is cited which indicates that R' Yosi does, in fact, accept the principle of suspended partitions for use on Shabbos.

The Gemara explains that the Tanna of that incident was R' Yishmael the son of R' Yosi rather than R' Yosi.

Can part of a bed become ritually impure? If so, which parts? What are the essential parts of a

bed frame, anyhow? And how are bed frames used? We learn that bed frames included long and short boards, four legs, and a number of holes or pegs used to secure ropes upon which the bedding was placed. Sometimes the bed frame was made up of only two of these boards and the bed was supported by a wall.²

We are reminded that a sukka's roof cannot be made of anything that can become ritually impure. This includes worn vessels, mats of reeds or grasses, or large mats. In addition, a sukka must be planned in advance. It cannot be carved into a haystack or another pile of grain, for it was not made with the intention of filling the mitzvah. In addition, the roof will be too thick.

We come to a new Mishna that describes the walls of the sukka. The rabbis repeat that sukkot require 10 handbreadths of height. However, what if the bottom of the wall ends before the floor? If the wall is built from the top down, does it require less than three handbreadths of distance to the floor to be fit? How would that change if the wall begins at the ground and is measured upward?

The Gemara introduces concepts taken from Eruvin to discuss this quandary. The rabbis turn to questions of a different nature: carrying on Shabbat. Partitions are built into cisterns placed between two courtyards, one above and one below the water line. Somehow these partitions help people to know the origin of their water and thus whether it is permitted to carry that water on Shabbat.

Transferring this concept to the sukka is problematic. The sukka is built according to Torah law but the partitions in a cistern are built according to rabbinic law. Leniencies might not apply to the construction of a sukka.

The rabbis tell a story of sheets placed over partitions in Tzipori. They have different ideas about whether those partitions were partial partitions or full partitions, whether the sheets were carried to the partitions on Shabbat or already placed there, whether there were one or two rows of posts lined up as partitions... and so on.

At the end of the daf the rabbis teach us about the concept of *lavud*, the joining of adjacent objects under certain circumstances, and how it might apply to the sukka walls. We know that a wall must begin within three handbreadths from the ground. At its height, the wall does not have to reach the sukka's roof. Thus, if a mat were placed across side of the sukka, the principle of *lavud* would allow the wall to 'stretch' both down to the ground and up to the roof of the sukka.

In one daf, we move from furniture to roofs and then to walls. We hear about baraitot, mishnayot; ancient disputes and 'new' debates. The rabbis quote numerous principles. And still I find it

² <https://dafyomibeginner.blogspot.com/2014/02/>

difficult to understand some of the most basic facts of the daf. Hopefully tomorrow will help to clarify some of the more challenging passages.

Rav Avrohom Adler writes:³

The Mishna ruled that if one burrowed an opening inside a haystack, it is not a valid Sukkah because the s'chach was not placed there with the intention of being used for shade. Rav Huna qualifies this ruling and maintains that if previously there would have been a space of a tefach high and seven squared tefachim and then one would place the haystack on top of this space and subsequently he would burrow out a space, the Sukkah would be valid because it would be deemed to be as if he had extended the existing walls.

The Gemara cites a Mishna in Eruvin regarding a well of water that is situated between two courtyards and one cannot draw water from the well because there is a concern that the water is coming from the other courtyard. There is a dispute in Eruvin as to how to remedy the situation. Some opinions maintain that a barrier must be set up inside the well and other opinions maintain that it is sufficient if the barrier is erected at the top of the well. This dispute is also predicated on whether a suspended wall is deemed to be a proper wall.

The Gemara cites an incident that occurred in Tzipori where the people forgot to bring the Sefer Torah to the shul before Shabbos and they transported the Sefer Torah on Shabbos, relying on sheets that had been spread out on posts prior to Shabbos.

Rav Chisda stated in the name of Avimi: A mat slightly more than four tefachim wide is permitted as a Sukkah wall. How does one place it? One suspends it in the middle less than three tefachim from the ground and less than three from the top, and whatever space is less than three tefachim is regarded as closed thru the principle of lavud.

The Gemora asks: But is not this obvious? The Gemora answers: One might have thought that we apply the principle of lavud (to the same wall) once, but we do not apply lavud twice, therefore he informed us of this. The Gemora asked from a braisa: A mat slightly more than seven tefachim is permitted as a Sukkah wall! [Evidently, we only apply the principle of lavud once, and not twice!]? The Gemora answers: With reference to what was this taught? It was with reference to a large Sukkah; and what does it inform us? It teaches us that walls may be suspended from above downwards in agreement with Rabbi Yosi.

Rabbi Ammi said: A board which is slightly more than four tefachim wide is permitted for a Sukkah wall when he places it less than three tefachim from the termination of the adjacent wall, since a space less than three tefachim is regarded as closed thru the principle of lavud. The Gemora asks: What does he inform us? The Gemora answers: He informs us that the minimum extent of a small Sukkah is seven tefachim.

³ http://dafnotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Sukkah_16.pdf

Keeping the Torah “Safe” from Impurity

The Gemara explains the dispute cited in the Mishna regarding a wall of a Sukkah that starts more than three tefachim above the ground. This dispute is parallel to the laws of Shabbos where there is a dispute if a suspended wall is deemed to be a wall and would thus create a private domain with regard to carrying on Shabbos.

The Gemara cites an incident that occurred in Tzipori where the people forgot to bring the Sefer Torah to the shul prior to Shabbos and they carried it on Shabbos, relying on sheets that were spread on posts prior to Shabbos. The Aruch LaNer wonders why they did not have a gentile carry the Sefer Torah. The Aruch LaNer answers that they did not employ a gentile because it is degrading to have a Sefer Torah carried by a gentile.

The question of the Aruch LaNer, however, is difficult to understand, as Rashi writes that the reason the Sefer Torah was in the house was because the people sought to protect the Sefer Torah from the gentiles. This would imply that the Jews did not wish to make it known to the gentiles that they were in possession of a Sefer Torah (See Shearim Mitzuyanim B’Halacha who mentions this.)

The Rambam in Hilchos Sefer Torah (10:8) rules that any person who is tamei, such as a niddah (a woman who has menstruated) or a gentile is permitted to touch a Sefer Torah as we have a principle that Torah cannot contract tumah. Sefer Otzar HaYedios cites a responsa from the Divrei Hillel who rules based on the words of the Rambam that if a gentile was in shul on Simchas Torah, he should be allowed to hold the Sefer Torah because it may otherwise cause the gentiles to hate the Jews.

The Rema in Orach Chaim 88 quotes sources who maintain that a woman should not enter a shul while she is a niddah. Furthermore, a woman who is a niddah should not pray, mention the Name of Hashem or even touch a sefer. The Rema also quotes sources who disagree with this ruling. The Rema concludes that the custom is in accordance with the first opinion. However, the Rema limits this restriction to a woman who is still menstruating whereas a woman who has ceased to see a flow but is in the stage of becoming pure is not restricted from entering a shul, praying, reciting the Name of HaShem or from touching a sefer.

Together for Purity

The Gemara quotes a Mishnah in Keilim as proof that materials with disparate minimum measurements can combine with each other. The Gemara states that the reason that they can combine with each other is because each material can contract tumah when a zav sits on the material. Perhaps this idea is analogous to the nation’s hatred for the Jewish People. The Medrash states that Midyan and Moav were always enemies, but they united to cause harm to the Jewish People. The converse should also be true. Even if Jews do not see eye to eye on all issues, we should at least unite for matters of purity and sanctity, and when HaShem sees that we can demonstrate signs of friendship, He will likewise nullify the plans of the gentiles and redeem us from the exile.

Daf Sh’vui writes:⁴

Today’s sugya deals with the next clause in the mishnah, concerning one who hollows out a haystack to make a sukkah. Is such a sukkah always disqualified?

R. Huna says that the sukkah is invalid only if there is not an empty space of at least one handbreadth high by seven handbreadths wide. But if the empty space is of this minimum size, the sukkah is valid because it is wide enough.

The Talmud finds support for R. Huna’s position in the contradiction between a baraita that says that such a sukkah is valid and the mishnah says that it is not a valid sukkah. The resolution is that the baraita refers to a case where the empty space is one handbreadth by seven handbreadths whereas the mishnah refers to a case without such an empty space.

This section is the same as the previous one just structured differently. This section begins by noting the contradiction between the baraita and the mishnah. R. Huna’s statement resolves this difficulty. This is different from the previous version where R. Huna’s statement was independently corroborated by the baraita and the mishnah.

Today’s section starts with another new mishnah.

The walls of the sukkah must be ten handbreadths high. However, there is a special rule according to which a gap of less than three handbreadths is not considered sufficient to render a sukkah invalid. Therefore, if he suspends the walls on a pole above the ground and the walls do not fully reach the ground but they are less than three handbreadths from the ground, the sukkah is valid. In other words, we look at those three handbreadths as if they don’t exist. Of course, the total height of the walls must be ten handbreadths, as we learn in the next section. But if the gap is larger than three handbreadths, then we can’t count the walls as having reached the ground. If he raises the walls from the ground upwards, the walls do not have to go all the way up to reach the s’khakh. It is sufficient for the walls to be ten handbreadths high, when measured from the ground. Ten handbreadths is about one meter high. This is the standard minimum height for matters which require a wall.

Rabbi Yose disagrees with the opinion in section one. He says that the same rule concerning raising the walls from the floor to the s’khakh applies if he suspends the walls from the s’khakh. As long as the walls are ten handbreadths they are valid, even if they don’t reach within three handbreadths of the ground. To reiterate: the debate between Rabbi Yose and the other sages is with regard to a ten handbreadth wall hanging down from the s’khakh (assumedly from a pole upon which the s’khakh rests) which does not reach to within three handbreadths of the ground. Rabbi Yose says

⁴ https://www.sefaria.org/Sukkah.16a.6?lang=bi&p2=Daf_Shevui_to_Sukkah.16a.6-11&lang2=bi

this is valid whereas the other sages say it is not. According to the sages it must reach within three handbreadths of the ground.

The first opinion in the mishnah holds that a hanging partition, one that doesn't reach within three handbreadths of the ground, does not render the sukkah valid. R. Yose holds that it does. This is the Talmud's way of basically creating an abstract principle from the concrete debate in the mishnah. It is also the way of segueing to the next section, where we will see tannaim who dispute the same issue.

A DISMANTLED BED

Rav Mordechai Kornfeld writes:⁵

The Gemara quotes the Mishnah in Kelim (18:9) in which the Chachamim teach that a slat and two legs of a bed are Mekabel Tum'ah, according to the interpretation of Rabbi Chanan in the name of Rabbi. In the Mishnah there, Rabbi Eliezer states that a bed becomes Tamei only when it is a "Chavilah," completely assembled into one unit. Similarly, Rabbi Eliezer maintains that in order to be Metaher the bed from its Tum'ah, the entire bed must be immersed in a Mikvah as one unit.

RASHI explains that the bed can become Tamei only when it is whole. If the bed is dismantled into parts, those parts cannot become Tamei. Even if a slat remains with two legs attached to it, which is a significant part of the bed and can be used on its own by leaning it against a wall, nevertheless it is not considered a complete Kli with a normal use and it cannot be Mekabel Tum'ah. When Rabbi Eliezer says that a bed can become *Tahor* only as a "Chavilah," he means that if a bed that became Tamei is dismantled and then immersed, it does not become Tahor. Rashi's words are unclear. If, according to Rabbi Eliezer, a bed that is dismantled into separate parts is no longer considered a Kli, it should lose its Tum'ah just as any Kli loses its Tum'ah when it is broken (because it is no longer a Kli). Why does Rabbi Eliezer say that the separate pieces of a dismantled bed must be reassembled and then immersed in order to become Tahor?

(a) **TOSFOS**, the **ROSH**, and the **RASH** (in Kelim) explain that, indeed, Rabbi Eliezer maintains that a bed that is Tamei becomes Tahor when it is dismantled. Nevertheless, when the bed is reassembled, it *returns* to its state of Tum'ah and needs Tevilah. Tevilah is not effective while the bed is dismantled, because the Tum'ah does not return until it is reassembled.

This answer is problematic for two reasons. First, as the **RASH** himself asks, the beginning of the Mishnah in Kelim explicitly says that if half of a bed was stolen, when one recovers the stolen part and reassembles the bed, it does not return to its previous state of Tum'ah.

Second, the Mishnah earlier in Kelim (11:1) says that the only type of Kli which returns to its old Tum'ah when it is repaired is a *metal* Kli. All other types of Kelim become Tahor when they are

⁵ <https://www.dafyomi.co.il/sukah/insites/su-dt-016.htm>

taken apart and remain Tahor when reassembled. A wooden bed, therefore, should also remain Tahor when reassembled. (**VILNA GA'ON** to Kelim 18:7)

To answer the first question, the **RASH** says that when half a bed is *stolen*, the owner despairs of ever recovering that half and reassembling his bed. Therefore, the bed is considered as though it is irrevocably destroyed. Consequently, even if one eventually does put it back together, it does not return to its old Tum'ah. In contrast, when the owner of the bed disassembles the bed himself, all of the pieces are available, and the owner does not despair of reassembling it. Accordingly, it returns to its old Tum'ah when reassembled.

The Rash's explanation may also answer the second question. Although broken Kelim (that are not made of metal) normally do not become Tamei when they are reassembled, a wooden bed is different. Since it is common to dismantle and reassemble a bed, it is not considered a broken Kli when it is dismantled, and thus it returns to its Tum'ah when it is reassembled. Why, though, does the bed not become Tamei when it is dismantled, if it is not considered broken? Rebbi Eliezer teaches that in order for a Kli to become Tamei, not only must it not be broken, but it must also be *usable*. Even though a dismantled bed is not considered broken, it does not become Tamei because it is not usable in its present state.

(b) The **VILNA GA'ON** (Kelim 18:7 and 9) explains that when Rebbi Eliezer says that the bed becomes Tamei only when it is complete, he does not mean that when it is dismantled it becomes Tahor. Rather, if it was already Tamei before it was dismantled, its parts *remain* Tamei when dismantled, because it is not considered to be a broken Kli. However, if the bed was *Tahor* when it was dismantled, and now a part of the bed touches something that is Tamei, it cannot become Tamei. The parts of a dismantled bed cannot acquire new Tum'ah.

Rebbi Eliezer's statement that the bed becomes Tahor only when it is whole means that it becomes Tahor only when it is reassembled, but until then it remains Tamei. (The bed cannot be immersed in its disassembled state, because it is Tamei only due to what it used to be (a usable bed); it can become Tahor only when it is in the same state that it was in when it became Tamei.)

(c) **TOSFOS** and the **RASH** cite sources from the Tosefta for an entirely different way to understand Rebbi Eliezer's statement. Rebbi Eliezer does not mean that a bed becomes Tamei *only* when it is assembled. Rather, he means that it becomes Tamei *even* when it is assembled. "Chavilah" does not mean that the bed is completely assembled; rather, it means that as little as one slat and two legs ("Aruchah u'Shnei Kera'ayim") are assembled. Rebbi Eliezer maintains that any part of a bed that is dismantled not only remains Tamei, but even can become Tamei. When the parts of the bed are attached to each other and a Tamei person touches one part of the bed, that part becomes Tamei and spreads Tum'ah to the entire bundle of pieces.

The Chachamim argue and say that *only* the parts that were touched become Tamei. Those parts do not transfer the Tum'ah to other pieces attached to them. Since the bed is not whole, it is not considered a single, cohesive unit that can spread Tum'ah to all of its parts. Only when the bed is completely assembled can the entire bed become Tamei when any part of it is touched by a person who is Tamei.

When Rebbi Eliezer says that a bed becomes Tahor only when it is a "Chavilah," he means that since an "Aruchah u'Shnei Kera'ayim" are considered a cohesive unit, one may immerse the bundle together, and the point at which they are connected is not considered a Chatzitzah, an intervention that invalidates the Tevilah. The Chachamim argue and say that each part of the Tamei bed must be immersed separately, because the points at which they are connected are considered Chatzitzos. Only when all the parts are assembled into a complete bed is the entire bed viewed as a single unit and may be immersed as one. When the parts are not completely assembled into one complete bed, each piece is viewed as a separate part and must be immersed by itself.

Steinzaltz (OBM) writes:⁶

One of the cases that the Mishnah (15a) rules is not a good *sukkah* is when someone hollows out a stack of grain to create a space for sleeping or eating. Even though the roof is made out of materials that ordinarily can be used for *sechach*, a *sukkah* cannot be made this way.

The Gemara on our *daf* quotes a *baraita* that seems, however, to teach the opposite. According to the *baraita*, someone who burrows into a stack of grain and creates an area large enough for a *sukkah* can succeed in establishing a kosher *sukkah*.

To solve this apparent contradiction, Rav Huna distinguishes between a situation where there was an already existing space within the mound that was a *tefach* high and seven *tefachim* in width and length, and one where no such space existed. In the event that there was an already existing space, it can be enlarged to create a *sukkah*. The teaching in our Mishnah was that in a case where the mound was solid, a person cannot dig out the space for a *sukkah*.

The logic behind Rav Huna's distinction is that, in the case where there was already an existing space of appropriate size, even if it could not be a *sukkah*, it still had the halakhic designation of an *ohel* – an enclosed area. All that needs to be done is to widen the space – that is already acknowledged as being significant in the eyes of the *halakha* – so that it will be appropriate for use as a *sukkah*. If there is no existing space, however, the *sukkah* is not seen as having been made properly since the *sechach* is in place even before the *ohel* inside exists – referred to as *ta'eseh velo min ha-asuy*, meaning that the *sechach* must be actively “made” and cannot just passively “happen.”

The *rishonim* discuss whether the direction in which one digs will make a difference in Rav Huna's case. The Tosafot Ri”D and the Rosh, for example, argue that when enlarging the existing space so that it will be big enough for a *sukkah*, one can only dig downwards, since all of the grain above the existing space has been established as the *sechach* over the existing *ohel*. From the Ran, however, it appears that one can extend upwards, as well; because we have perceived it as *sechach* all along, we view this as simply thinning it out rather than turning it into *sechach*.

⁶ https://www.ou.org/life/torah/masechet_sukkah1319/

Bringing a Sefer Torah to be read for a shut-in

פעם אחת שכחו ולא הביאו ספר תורה מערב שבת למחר פרסו ע"ג
העמודים והביאו ספר תורה וקראו בו

Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 135) rules that we do not bring a Sefer Torah to read for Jewish prisoners who are incarcerated. We do not even make this dispensation to facilitate reading of the Torah for these shut-ins for Rosh HaShana.⁷

The source cited for this halachah is the Mordechai (end of Rosh HaShanah, Ch. 1, from Yerushalmi Yoma Ch. 7): We always require people to go to the reading of the Torah, and we do not bring the Torah to the people.

שו"ת נשאל דוד (או"ח סי' ג') questions the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch. In our Gemara we find that the custom was that the Sefer Torah was indeed brought to the shul where the people had gathered to hear it read.

Nevertheless, there is a clear difference to be noted. Our Gemara discusses a case where the Sefer Torah was not stored in the shul due to security concerns. The Torah was routinely taken from its secure location when needed, and it was then brought to the shul. This scenario is described in Shulchan Aruch O.C. 148 and 149.

However, where the Sefer Torah is kept in an Aron Kodesh in shul, it should not be removed to be brought to shut-ins. Furthermore, the only prohibition of transporting a Sefer Torah is to bring it out for the sake of someone who is ill or in confinement. If, however, the Torah is being moved for its own sake, and it is being carried by a messenger, it can be used while in transit.

Transporting a Sefer Torah

פעם אחת שכחו ולא הביאו ספר תורה מע"ש למחר פירסו סדינין על גבי
העמודים והביאו ספר תורה וקראו בו

One time they forgot and did not bring the Sefer Torah on Erev Shabbos. The next day they spread sheets on posts [to enclose the area] and brought the Sefer Torah and read from it.

Rav Yosef Karo (1) rules that it is not permitted to transport a Sefer Torah to prison to read for the prisoners who cannot come to shul even on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. The reason (2) is that it is disrespectful to the Sefer Torah for it to be carried around; proper respect dictates that one should go to the Sefer rather than the Sefer coming to him.

Rav Moshe Isserles (3) qualifies this ruling and writes that if the Sefer Torah was brought to the alternative location a day or two ahead of when it will be used for reading it is permitted. Mishnah

⁷ <https://www.dafdigest.org/masechtos/Sukkah%20016.pdf>

Berurah4 adds that it is also permitted to move the Sefer Torah on the day it will be read, as long as it will remain there for a day or two after the reading.

Rav Dovid HaLevi (5) writes that he does not know the source for Rav Isserles' lenient ruling. The Gaon Chida (6) writes that he never felt comfortable enough to issue a lenient ruling consistent with the ruling of Rav Isserles. Although he would not protest against those who conducted themselves like the lenient opinion, nonetheless, he would not issue such a ruling.

Authorities (7) cite our Gemara as proof to the lenient ruling of Rema. Our Gemara relates that when the residents of Tzipori forgot to bring the Sefer Torah to shul before Shabbos they transported it to shul on Shabbos.

Why were they permitted to transport the Sefer Torah in order to read from it, doesn't this violate the above cited ruling of Shulchan Aruch? It must be that it was permitted because once it was brought to the shul it remained there for a day or two. Thus, the Sefer Torah was not transported for reading, rather it was moved to its "new" location which is permitted.

1. שו"ע או"ח סי' קל"ה סע' י"ח
2. מ"ב שם ס"ק מ"ז שכתב, "שזלזול הוא לס"ת להוליכה אל אנשים וכך"
3. רמ"א שם
4. מ"ב שם ס"ק מ"ט
5. ט"ז שם ס"ק י"ב
6. שו"ת טוב עין סי' י"ח לסי' קלה דין יד
7. ע' דעת תורה סי' קל"ה סע' י"ד ד"ה בנ"א החבושים בשם הגהות ציון ירושלים ■

The shade of Gan Eden

יש שם חלל טפח במשך שבעה הרי זה סוכה

To be kosher, סכך must be laid in place for the purpose of providing shade. As we see on today's daf, burrowing a sukkah of any size into a haystack is invalid. Although hay itself is a kosher material, since the walls of the sukkah were generated by burrowing away from the thatch on top, the entire structure is not kosher.

There is one way in which such a sukkah could be used, however. If one made sure to leave a cavity one tefach deep by 7x7 tefachim square when the hay was originally laid in the stack, the "ohel" can later be enlarged and made fit for use. One may then burrow another three tefachim to complete sukkah his (עי' ביאור הלכה תשל"ה ד"ה אבל)

The Mekor Chaim, zt"l, explains that the סכך represents connection to Gan Eden, where we ultimately dwell under the protective shade of the Shechinah. One who is truly connected to Gan Eden can exude the scent of paradise even in this world.

We see this regarding Yaakov Avinu, who bore with him the fragrance of Gan Eden when he approached his father for the blessing. This connection must be laid over a foundation that is at least “a tefach deep”—the minimum dimension of an ohel, which represents a measure of permanence. Whatever one’s level of connection to Gan Eden, the bond needs to be maintained and strengthened throughout one’s lifetime. This is symbolized by the minimum length and width of the ohel—“seven squared”—alluding to the average human lifespan of seventy years. But just as the connection to Gan Eden is built up over a lifetime, when a person makes choices that take him in the opposite direction, they radiate from him in this world as well.

In Kelm there lived a certain elderly man who was infamously ill-tempered. If someone accidentally brushed against him in the street, the man would take offense. He would shout, “How dare you!” and launch into a tirade at the slightest provocation. The townspeople all knew about him and avoided him because of his terrible middos. In the yeshiva, they would say: “You see what seventy years of bad middos can do to a person!”



The haystack by Camille Pissarro

Mark Kerzner writes:⁸

⁸ <http://talmudilluminated.com/sukkah/sukkah16.html>

If one took his bed apart and then used the sides of the bed frame to cover his sukkah, this sukkah is not valid. Even though these boards are not utensils, and therefore do not accept impurity and should be valid, yet, since they originate from a utensil (bed), the Sages decreed not to use them.

If one hollows up a cavity under a haystack, to use it as a sukkah, it is not valid, because this hay was already there from before, and not he did not make for the sukkah. However, if initially someone left even a small opening under the hay, then he can dig some more and live there: the initial opening qualified as a sukkah – if it was constructed for shade – and he just completed the necessary height.

If one left his wall hanging and not reaching the ground, this is OK, provided that they are within the three handbreadths from the ground, so that small goats cannot enter his sukkah. In fact, if his sukkah is only 10 handbreadths high, he can use such a hanging wall that is only slightly more than four handbreadths, right in mid-air. If it is closer than three handbreadths to both the floor and the ceiling, we apply the principle of “connect” (“lavud”) and consider the missing three handbreadths both above and below as if they were present.

Sara Ronis writes:⁹

Those of us who are into interior design hang all sorts of things in our living spaces to personalize them. We hang pictures on our walls. We hang curtains in our windows. We hang plants in our windows and on our patios. Today’s daf asks about hanging something else — the wall itself!

Most of our homes have walls that stretch from floor to ceiling (or in the case of a **sukkah**, from ground to *s’chach*). But what if that isn’t what your wall looks like? What if it’s a partition hanging off the roof that doesn’t stretch all the way to the ground? Or a partial wall (like a pony wall) that rises up from the ground but doesn’t meet the ceiling?

One who lowers the walls of the sukkah from up downward (i.e. has hanging walls), if the lower edge of the wall is three handbreadths above the ground, the sukkah is unfit. From down upward, if the wall is ten handbreadths high, the sukkah is fit.

According to the first opinion in today’s mishnah, to be a true wall, a wall must hang all the way down until it is less than three handbreadths (about nine inches) above the ground. Anything that leaves more space at the bottom is not a true wall. And a wall that rises up from the floor doesn’t have to reach all the way to the ceiling of the sukkah — as long as it is ten handbreadths high, it is considered acceptable.

In true mishnaic form, the mishnah then offers a second opinion:

⁹ Myjewishlearning.com

Rabbi Yosei says: Just as a wall built from down upward must be ten handbreadths, so too, in a case where one lowers the wall from up downward, it must be ten handbreadths.

When Rabbi Yosei's opinion is juxtaposed with the first opinion of the mishnah, it seems that he is being read as saying that what matters is the height of the wall, not how far it is from either the roof or the ground.

The Gemara then tries to figure out which *halakhic* principle is at the root of this mishnaic dispute. The rabbis look to our old friend **Eruvin** (you may have joined us to learn this tractate nearly a year ago!) and a **parallel debate** about whether a hanging wall can permit one to carry within it on **Shabbat**. But ultimately, they decide that this parallel is not actually relevant to Rabbi Yosei's opinion.

So, what's going on? What are the first anonymous opinion of the mishnah and Rabbi Yosei really disagreeing about? At this point in our journey through **Tractate Sukkah**, we have learned multiple times that a sukkah is meant to be somewhat porous. The dispute in this mishnah raises the question: porous to who?

Let's think about this practically: If the walls of a sukkah are high off the ground, then all kinds of creatures can just walk right in: **dogs**, cats, raccoons and — for those living in more rural settings — chickens, goats, and maybe even cows! If the walls of a sukkah are rooted in the ground but don't reach the *s'chach*, then along with cool breeze, birds and bugs can get in. According to the first opinion in the mishnah, in order for a sukkah wall to function as a true wall, it must exclude creatures that walk on the ground. Rabbi Yosei, on the other hand, seems to think that a wall is defined by a strict measurement — ten handbreadths, regardless of how it functions to make a space exclusive to the natural world.

While later *halakhic* deciders like **Maimonides** side with the first opinion, this dispute points to one of my favorite things about the rabbis — their boundless curiosity and eagerness to question everything around them. I mean, what even *is* a wall? How should it function? And what kinds of ritual implications (for sukkah, for carrying on Shabbat) do those answers have?

Rabbi Johnny Solomon writes:¹⁰

Every family and every community have their stories about 'the time when...[an unusual halachic situation arose and a creative halachic solution was found]', but as we learn from today's daf (Sukkah 16b), great care must be taken to accurately share the details of those stories so as to avoid confusion and perhaps even future halachic errors.

We are told about *מעשה שנעשה בצ'פורי* – 'an incident which occurred in Tzipori' during the period when Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi was the religious leader where the community Sefer Torah had not been brought to the shul on Erev Shabbat (*nb. some suggest that it was kept in a home overnight for reasons of security*) and was, instead, located in a house situated within the

¹⁰ www.rabbijohnnysolomon.com

same courtyard as the shul. Given this halachic problem, we are told that on Shabbat morning ‘they spread sheets on top of posts [to create a narrow corridor between the house and the shul] and they brought the Sefer Torah [to the shul]’.

However, the Gemara asks: ‘*Can it enter your mind that they [brought and] spread [these sheets on Shabbat]? How could they have brought them [to these posts] on Shabbat?!*’, to which the Gemara responds that, in fact, the sheets were already on these posts from Erev Shabbat. Consequently, what was actually done to solve this halachic problem was to acknowledge that these sheets on poles could be used as a partition on Shabbat, after which the Sefer Torah was carried between these partitions to the shul.

But why was the story first told so ‘badly’ such that a valid conclusion from the first rendition of the story was that the sheets had been brought on Shabbat to create the partitions? The answer – both in this instance and in so many others – is that storytellers are often more driven to tell their listeners about ‘what’ happened than about ‘how’ those things happened, and storytellers are often more inspired by the drama in a story, than by the technical elements of that story.

The problem, however, is that when halacha is told through stories, the ‘how’ counts as much - and often even more - than the ‘what’, which creates an inherent tension between the power of storytelling and the halachic conclusions that people draw from stories. In fact, given this risk it would have been understandable had Chazal made the decision to avoid teaching halacha through stories.

But they didn’t, and I think that the reason for this is because stories encourage engagement - such as asking follow-up questions. What this means is that while someone may not ask a question about a dry halachic analysis which they don’t fully understand, if there is something in a story that doesn’t quite make sense to them, they will ask.

Understood this way, it is clear that a story doesn’t end at the end of the story. Instead, it ends at the end of the listeners engagement and their questions on a story which subsequently sharpen their understanding of the story. And this is why stories are so powerful in the art of halachic education, because they encourage listeners to think, to engage and to ask questions.



***Bacchus and Ariadne* by Titian: Dionysus discovers Ariadne on the shore of Naxos. The painting also depicts the constellation named after Ariadne.**

Ariadne's Thread: The Needle, The Haystack, The Thread

Stephanie Cristello writes:¹¹

Theseus, Prince of Athens, having conquered the minotaur by the means of Ariadne, Daughter to King Minos, who fell in love with him, escaped out of the Labyrinth.

Argument for Ariadne: An Opera (1721)

¹¹ *the needle, the haystack, the thread* ran at The Arts Club of Chicago from March 15–May 19, 2018.
<https://thesejournal.org/ariadnes-thread/>

Two lovers enter a vista—it is a vast plane, like a monochromatic desert, grey and barren—and are confronted by a curved expanse of milk-white stone. The scale of the wall to their bodies is towering: its vertical height extends far beyond their sightlines, while its bowed curve vanishes almost imperceptibly in the distance. In the center of this immense, earth-like span is a singular passage, a thin and narrow gateway: the entrance into the labyrinth.

As she steps forward (left foot first, then right), the rock turns from pale, unblemished marble to the opacity of a translucent veil. This transformation exalts them both, for through the phantom of complex lines, which weave and double back on themselves (like the interior of a seashell), they can see into the heart of the maze in the distance.

There ahead lies the minotaur, which her lover must face. Yet, as she walks by his side to approach the entry, she sees the how the patterns of walls shift, almost glittering, and knows that the illusion is a trick—the ghostly interior is a luminous simulation, one that deceives and regresses, as if a hall of mirrors. The question is not at all about getting into the labyrinth; but getting out again. She gazes at her robe and notices a single fray near her ankle—reaching down, she plucks the red silk thread between her fingers and, drawing it delicately towards her, unravels her garment in a single string. Standing there, stripped bare, she looks to her lover, lacing one end of the crimson strand into a bow on her finger, and hands him the thread.

The myth of Ariadne is one based on cunning intelligence: throughout history, the ‘red thread’ has come to represent a pattern, or underlying current, that connects seemingly disparate thoughts to reveal a larger narrative woven just beneath the surface. Indeed, while the goddess indeed provides a path to escape the labyrinth, the formal quality of her solution can be imagined through the image of red thread itself, as well as the myriad pattern ultimately drawn by Theseus’ navigation of the ancient Grecian maze.

Dependent on neither linear thought, nor linear navigation, the red thread functions as an elegant solution—yet its image is tangled, ensnarled, and intertwined. As such, its form acts as both a symbol of, and opposition to, a comparison of directness. In a word, it is psychological.

What is the labyrinth if not a metaphor for the mind?

It is this same quality of line that is demarcated within Monika Szewczyk’s curatorial proposition in *the needle, the haystack, the thread*, which featured works by four artists— Britta Marakatt-Labba, Lala Meredith-Vula, Aboubakar Fofana, and Maria Lai—installed at The Arts Club of Chicago earlier this year. The exhibition observed pre-industrial techniques as a means of confronting contemporary life, largely grounded in the materiality of textiles through works that employed spinning, stitching, weaving, and dyeing, among other methods. Born out of research conducted by Szewczyk for documenta 14, the pairing of artists invokes a turn toward the past as a proposition for a radical future— privileging works that engage with rural, Indigenous, and geographically constructed approaches to image making and practice.

We begin with the thread: it will be our guide and conductor. The history of the thread as a vehicle for narrative pre-dates the written word. Before text, there was textile. As Liliane Weissberg writes on the origins of German literature, “Male poets may sing, but women storytellers weave. Their

stories have a material presence that needs to be deciphered, and told not just in words, but in images, too.”¹ Of the artists included in The Arts Club exhibition, none come so close to this concept of a visual essay as Britta Marakatt-Labba—an artist of Sami descent. The Sami are a nomadic reindeer-herding people, which today geographically encompasses large parts of Norway and Sweden, northern parts of Finland, and the Murmansk Oblast of Russia; in 1979, Marakatt-Labba co-founded the Sami Artist Group, formed to broadly defend the self-determination and sovereignty of the Sami people.²

For Marakatt-Labba, the visuality of her works, which are largely fashioned out of an improvisatory technique to depict both mythic and quotidian facets of everyday Sami life, is also synaesthetic. Working over a period of various seasons, and often years, the artist speaks of how her senses are imbued within the composition for each singular weaving. She runs her hand near a passage and explains the scent of April in her village. “Embroidery is also a season,”³ the artist said to me at The Arts Club, on the morning of the opening for the needle, the haystack, the thread, in the deep cold of March.

The work is entitled *We are still here* (2017), and is one of the wider panoramas in the exhibition. The narrow expanse of canvas is comprised of mostly negative space, embroidered with figures of herds, groupings of trees, and swaths of water and smoke that punctuate the white field. We speak about the similarities between this and her work *Historjá* (2003–07), the artist’s twenty-four-meter-long masterwork, which traces the history of two ancient Sami traditions that have lasted centuries despite the region’s contestation—embroidery and yoik, a narrative and ritualistic singing—that was installed in Kassel at the documenta Halle in 2017.⁴

In both cases, Marakatt-Labba’s approach to figuration exists contrary to the naïve, or sleek style, often used in contemporary painting to depict figures floating in space. Instead, the whiteness she employs exists as a type of figuration itself; it points to an Arctic blankness, to blankets of snow, to Northern vastness.



Britta Marakatt-Labba, *Guolásteapmi (Fishing)*, 1979. Wool embroidery on linen. Image courtesy of the artist and The Arts Club of Chicago.

This Baudelairean correspondence of senses across sight and scent, but surely touch and taste as well, is the score to Marakatt-Labba's nearly filmic process. Just as tapestry has conventionally held the power to weave history through image, Marakatt-Labba's work within The Arts Club space adopts a sequential and time-based quality. For these reasons alone, and there are many more, it would be incorrect to label her approach as a 'chronicle' or describe her practice as either 'traditional' or 'domestic,' though it does incorporate these methods, thus relegating her critical compositions to mere craft. Her practice is more subversive.

As Anders Kreuger states in his essay on the artist in a recent issue of *Afterall*, "The land is a sensitive issue in any artwork that can be described as a 'landscape.'"⁵ This is doubly true of artists whose work invokes indigeneity. If we return to text, the role of thread within Marakatt-Labba's works is one that embroiders an essay to be read not from left to right, but dialectically, in circles—a roundabout process as complex and multivalent as the labyrinth itself.

This method of viewing is one that extends to the entire premise of the needle the haystack, the thread—as well as of documenta 14, held between Athens and Kassel in 2017—as nearly all of the selected works hinge upon techniques and traditions that are not readily apparent within the gallery, taking place just beyond the frame of the exhibition.



Work by Aboubakar Fofana. Image courtesy of the artist and The Arts Club of Chicago.

In preparing to view the exhibition, I revisited my documenta 14 catalogue—a tome of monochromatic texts—and motioned to remove the page marker, a strand of a thick but tightly woven brilliant and deep blue thread. The thread has weaved in and out of the texts since I acquired it in Athens last April, and will rest between words again soon. I learn the bookmark is a piece by Malian artist Aboubakar Fofana, whose textile works, dyed by the same harvested indigo the artist grows on his compound near Bamako, in West Africa, are installed within the main floor galleries.

In a film entitled *don o don tulo bè ta kalanso* (each day the ear goes to school), which chronicles his three works commissioned by documenta 14, including *Ka Touba Farafina Yé (Africa Blessing)* (2017), screened as part of The Arts Club programming, aerial views of a farm site, turned studio, in the heart of Athens depict a herd of sheep—their wool dyed the same vibrant indigo as Fofana’s textile works. Fields of sapphire and cobalt blue flash across the screen as the animals scatter across the frame. Their multihued fleece appears unnatural, almost synthetic—yet the process is entirely organic. Shots cut to scenes of Fofana boiling the green leaves, which nearly alchemically transform the shallow vats of liquid into a blue of the deepest seas, as the artist begins treating the fabrics that will become the material of his sculptures.

For Marakatt-Labba and Fofana, geography makes identity and identity makes geography. Indeed, each of the artist’s practices make use of the physical world, “It is not an accident of birth that makes you belong to a place,” says Szewczyk. “I think you have to do something with it. You must photograph it, embroider it.” In the case of the recently deceased Maria Lai, we begin with the literal act of tying oneself to the landscape; to place.

In yet another allusion to Ariadne’s thread, Lai’s black and white photographs *Legarsi alla montagna (To Tie Oneself to the Mountain)* (1981), a series of images that feature a colored ribbon amid a sequence of vernacular images; children playing in a village; Sardinian women smiling in black long-sleeved dresses—bridging the archaic as means of contemporary art. The thread travels to the top of the impending mountain, as if an ancient folk tale, yet is one of the first of the artist’s ‘social sculptures,’ which followed in Aggius, Camerino, Orotelli, Siliqua, and Villasimius.⁶

We end, or perhaps begin, with Lala Meredith-Vula’s *Haystacks*, a series of large scale black and white photographs shot in the countryside of Albanian-speaking parts of the Balkans. Born in Sarajevo in 1966, in the former Yugoslavia, the UK-based artist’s work documents an affinity toward indexing ‘place’—contested place, impermanent place, persistent place—that is shared among each of the artists. As one of the namesakes of the exhibition, through the collection of compositions—readymade arrangements made by farmers in the region (the series began as the Republic of Kosovo declared independence from Serbia)⁷—photography becomes a tool to personify the landscape, to analyze its resilience.



Aboubakar Fofana, *Ka Touba Farafina Yé (Africa Blessing)*, 2017. Commissioned by documenta 14 (Athens, Greece). Image courtesy of the artist and The Arts Club of Chicago.

As a proposal against accelerationism, through which contemporary images and artworks are more rapidly generated and consumed, the needle, the haystack, the thread motions toward a redefinition, if not eradication of, Western progress that weaves and traverses through time. As Szewczyk states, “I am hesitant of terming ‘tradition’ as a ‘past.’ I think it is continuous. Tradition is very renewable. I feel this is a more futuristic proportion. Every time you go deep into the past, you are also thinking about the future.”

Thread the eye.

Approach the haystack and bury the needle between its straws.

You will find it again.

1. Liliane Weissberg. “Ariadne’s Thread.” *MLN* 125, no. 3 (2010): 661-681.
2. Marakatt-Labba is based in Sweden; the ideological takeover of Sami land began in 1606, with the construction of ‘church sites,’ and in 1685 traditional Sami religion was outlawed. Derived from early shamanism (under the term šaman), handheld divination devices covered in images of human and animal

spirits were confiscated and burned, holy figures were destroyed, and ritualistic song (yoik) was outlawed. Taken from: Kreuger, Anders. "Britta Marakatt-Labba: 'Images Are Always Stories'." *Afterall*, Spring / Summer 2018, 10-11.

3. Unless otherwise stated, all quotes in first person were conducted in conversation with the author, February 2018.
4. The work was accompanied by a yoik performance by Simon Issát Maranien and Axel Andersson.
5. Kreuger, Anders. "Britta Marakatt-Labba: 'Images Are Always Stories'." *Afterall*, Spring / Summer 2018, 10-11.
6. Casavecchia, Barbara. "Maria Lai (1919–2013)." *documenta 14*. April 18, 2017. Accessed September 06, 2018.
7. Szewczyk, Monika. "Lala Meredith-Vula." *documenta 14*. Accessed September 06, 2018.