



# Ask The Rabbi...

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Mike Laitner of Leeds, England.  
<IIS4MJL@ARTS-01.NOVELL.LEEDS.AC.UK> wrote:

*Is a Jew allowed to be an astronaut?*

Dear Mike Laitner,

Whether a Jew may "take up space" would take up too much space to answer definitively. However, Dr. Gerald Wittenstein, a 20-yr. veteran of NASA, and currently CEO of International Space Systems, Inc., has researched this question. Dr. Wittenstein graciously submitted the following at our request:

Regarding davening, it is my understanding that when orbiting the earth the "home base" is Houston, Mission Control. You would pray according to the time in Mission Control. The food would need *Kashrut* supervision. I spoke to a dietician on Space Lab, who did not think this was impossible to overcome, if NASA would approve additional cost.

Another consideration is *Tzniut* (modesty). Usually crews are composed of men and women in various stages of dress, and situations of physical contact. The spacecraft would need separate showers and toilet accommodations.

Manned space flight currently does not have safety as a primary concern, and there have been losses of crew in flight and on the ground. The technology is quite exotic, with many possible sources of failure. This danger factor would have to be weighed against the commandment "be very careful to guard your life."

As far as learning Torah, there are allocations for private time to allow one to continue one's learning.

Thank you, Dr. Wittenstein. Of course, anyone actually planning a trip to Pluto should consult his local Orthodox Rabbi before blastoff. Which reminds me: A man returning from the world's first *Bar Mitzva* on Pluto seemed disappointed.

"What's wrong?" asked his friend, "the band was no good?"

"The band was very good," he answered.

"The food was no good?" asked his friend.

"Out of this world!"

"Nu! So, what was the problem?" asked his friend.

"There was no atmosphere."

Karen Willcox from <kwilcox@brynmawr.edu> wrote:

*Could a roofless shed be made into a sukkah by adding an appropriate roof? Thanks for your help!*

Dear Karen,

*Schach* — The **roof** of a *Sukkah* — must be something that grew from the ground but is no longer attached to the ground. Also, it may not be made from food (like sugar cane) or from an implement (like wood broken from a chair or bed).

These limitations apply only to the *schach*, but not to the **walls**. Therefore, a roofless shed can be made into a *Sukkah* by adding a "*kosher*" roof — such as bamboo canes, wooden slats, or as the widespread custom in Israel — palm fronds. It's preferable that the material **directly supporting** the roof **also** be suitable for *schach*. Therefore if the shed is metal you should put a piece of wood on top of the metal surface, and put the banches on the wood.

Source:

- *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 629:1,7.

## Answer to Yiddle Riddle:

**Question:** One day *every* year, the *Halachot* of Shabbat are different than the rest of the year. What day is it?

**Answer:** The Shabbat during *Sukkot*. On Shabbat it is forbidden to carry from a "private domain" to a "public domain." Usually, a private domain must have at least three walls. On the Shabbat of *Sukkot*, however, a private domain can have less. Why? A *Sukka* is valid with as few as two walls, plus a post as the third wall. Since such a structure is a valid *Sukka*, therefore, it's also considered a private domain.

This is the ruling of the *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 630). However, the *Beit Yosef* quotes the dissenting opinion of the *Rif*. The Chayei Adam (146:3) rules that one may rely on the *Tur* only in extenuating circumstances.)

The Rabbis of "Ask the Rabbi" wish all their readers a  
*Shana Tova u'Mtuka - A Good and Sweet Year!*

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