

## A finger and a half for this wall

## אצבע ומחצה לכותל זה –

### OVERVIEW

According to יהודה ר' the ארון (which was two and a half אמות long) was twelve and a half טפחים long (based on an אמה being five טפחים). The לוחות were a total of twelve טפחים in length, leaving half a טפה, which comprised (partly) the thickness of the walls of the ארון. There was a גירסא that each wall was a fingerbreadth and a half thick. A טפה is the equivalent of four אגודלין (thumb), five אצבעות (forefinger), or six זרתיים ('pinkie').<sup>1</sup>

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נראה לרבינו תם שלא גרס ומחצה<sup>2</sup> אלא אצבע לכותל זה –

It is the view of the ר"ת that the text does not read אצבע ומחצה, but rather the text reads אצבע לכותל זה (one fingerbreadth for this wall (of the ארון) -

דאי גרס ומחצה תיקשי שנים עשר<sup>3</sup> היכי יתבי כדפריך לקמן<sup>4</sup> –

For if the גירסא is אצבע ומחצה there will be the difficulty of how can the לוחות which are twelve טפחים long fit [into the cavity of the ארון which is twelve טפחים long] as the גמרא asks later -

אלא אצבע גרס וזוטרתי<sup>5</sup> דהויין ששה בטפח:

But rather the גירסא is (only) אצבע (but not אצבע ומחצה) and it means a small טפה of which there are six (of these small אצבעות) in a טפה.

### SUMMARY

The thickness of the ארון wall was one small אצבע.

### THINKING IT OVER

Why is it necessary for תוספות to state that we are discussing זוטרתי אצבעות (meaning a זרת);<sup>6</sup> even if we are discussing a regular אצבע there will still be a remaining space of half an אצבע (since a טפה is five אצבעות; half is two and half אצבעות and the walls together take up only two אצבעות)?

<sup>1</sup> רש"י ד"ה אצבע.

<sup>2</sup> We would then be forced to say that אצבע refers to a זרת, of which there are three in half-a-טפה (for three אצבעות are more than half a טפה; see previous footnote # 1).

<sup>3</sup> The עשר בי"ב היכי אמנות הגהות הב"ח amends this to read עשר בי"ב היכי.

<sup>4</sup> See ד"ה אצבע (here) רש"י. See however תרי בתרי היכי יתבי (ס"ת) גמרא asks (regarding the עמוד ב' where).

<sup>5</sup> See 'Thinking it over'.

<sup>6</sup> See footnote # 5.