



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Welcome to Shabbat Shorts, our new e-learning initiative for this year (taking the place of Prayer Pings, which had a wonderful 3-year run). Each Shabbat Short will cover a halachik point concerning our observance of Shabbat, with the hope that we'll discover interesting points and ideas that we did not know before. Rabbanit Alissa and I planning on two Shabbat Shorts per week. We're sending the first few to everyone. After that (or right now!), you can subscribe for the rest of the year by emailing bdj@bnaidavid.com with the subject "Shabbat Shorts". If you are on the Prayer Pings list, you're already covered!



When we think about the lighting of Shabbat candles, we think about a very discrete action, typically involving 2 (or more) candlesticks, perhaps on a silver tray, probably somewhere in the dining room. We'd be surprised by the Mishna Brurah's comment (263:2) that "the lighting of the candles should be done in every room that anyone will be entering ... though the blessing should be recited over the candle in the dining room". Really?! When we unpack the Mishna Brurah's statement though, we gain insight into the origins and purposes of the Mitzvah.

The Talmud ascribes two different functions to the Shabbat candles. One is to honor the Friday night meal through illuminating the space where it will be eaten. This function is regarded as a fulfillment of "honoring Shabbat" (כבוד שבת). Since honoring Shabbat is regarded

as the primary function of the lighting, this is the light over which the blessing is preferably recited.

The other function of the candles is to enhance "peace in the home" through preventing people from stumbling and tripping in the dark! This is regarded as a fulfillment of the mitzvah "to delight in Shabbat" (עונג שבת), and applies in every room that we will be using on Friday night. It's interesting to realize that in reality, all the lights we leave on in other rooms (including lights on timers) are part and parcel of the mitzvah!

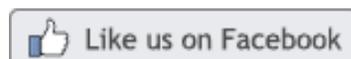
Because of this dual function of the Mitzvah, even if we happen to not be eating at home on a particular Friday night, we nonetheless light and recite the blessing, as we will still be fulfilling the "delight" aspect of the mitzvah, that of bringing peace to the house. One potential challenge may arise however in this scenario. In order for the "delight" function to be fulfilled, it is necessary that some member(s) of the household actually derive some "peace in the home" benefit from the candles. If the candles are lit when the house is still enjoying plentiful natural light, and then everyone leaves, not to return until after the candles have gone out, then the candles have fulfilled neither the "honoring" nor the "delighting" function!

What do we do when we are facing exactly that prospect? Several possible solutions. Stay tuned for the next Shabbat Short!

I love feedback!
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