



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Last time on Shabbat Shorts we learned about when we say Kiddush on Friday night, namely as soon as possible after davening.

But the question of 'when' does not end here. Once we get home and are ready to say Kiddush around our tables, when exactly should it be said? Very often, I find myself at meals where people ask, 'Why can't we wash first and then say Kiddush and Motzi back to back? Wouldn't that be more convenient?'

It turns out that this question is more nuanced-- and spot on-- than we may have thought.

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 271:12) says that lechatchilah (ideally) a person should recite Kiddush and then wash and make Motzi. The Mishnah Berurah explains that this is in order to prevent any hefsek (interruption/distraction) between washing and Motzi. But if a person unthinkingly washed before saying Kiddush, what happens? The Shulchan Aruch answers that he should recite Kiddush on challah (since he must be hungry and prefer the challah over the wine, given that he did wash first), whereas the Rema holds that Kiddush is still said over the wine, followed by Motzi.

The Rema's answer here is particularly fascinating because he presents it not just as a bedieved (after the fact) response, but as the ideal practice from the outset. The Rema codifies the practice of washing first and then reciting Kiddush on wine and Motzi on challah immediately after, and even advises that no one deviate from it (אין לישנות)! This is because he views Kiddush not as a hefsek (a division) between washing and Motzi, but instead as a requirement of the meal itself. Because Kiddush is צורך סעודה (a staple of the Shabbat meal), it is not a distraction that takes away from our focus between washing and Motzi, but instead enhances it.

In the end, many Achronim deviated from the Rema's practice and favored that of the Shulchan Aruch because it covers all bases (since if Kiddush is recited before washing, both those who view Kiddush as a hefsek and those who do not will still fulfill their obligation). And so, most of us recite Kiddush before washing and Motzi.

I believe that pondering this halachic process makes us hone in on the role and purpose of Kiddush in a way that can ultimately deepen our connection to it. Do we view Kiddush as a distinct Mitzvah that stands on its own at the meal (as the Shulchan Aruch does) or do we see it as part of the greater Mitzvah of having a meal (like the Rema)? More broadly, how can we give honor to each detail at our Shabbat tables while also remaining aware of the experience as a whole?

Stay tuned for next time on Shabbat Shorts as we unpack this greater purpose of Kiddush...

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