



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

CONTROVERSY!! Who doesn't love a juicy controversy? It's actually one of the reasons that people come to shul on Friday nights. For as the Aruch HaShulchan writes, "[the matter of reciting Kiddush in shul at the close of davening on Friday nights is] an ancient controversy among the fathers of the world, including Rav Hai Gaon among those who forbid, and Rav Natronai Gaon among those who permit." Following them, the Tosafists ruled that this Kiddush in shul ought not be recited, with Rambam insisting that it should be! Whichever practice is current in your shul, you have solid ground on which to self-righteously criticize it!

What's it all about? We know that the practice almost certainly derives from Talmudic times, when wayfarers were routinely housed and fed in the shul over Shabbat. Kiddush would be recited for their benefit at the end of davening on Friday night, and they would then proceed to "hamotzi" and to their meal right there in shul. As the shul was their "place of dining", the shul was also the appropriate venue for their Kiddush.

But by the time of the Gaonim though, this was no longer the means through which wayfarers were lodged over Shabbat, rendering the Kiddush in shul a relic of bygone days and - more to the point - an obvious case of a *ברכה לבטלה*, a bracha recited for no reason! The position of Rav Hai Gaon and the Tosafists is then readily understandable, and we wonder how Rambam could have defended the practice to continue to recite this Kiddush!

Fortunately, we gain insight into Rambam's reasoning from a responsum he wrote to a questioner who asked whether it was necessary to recite the חזרת השך (the repetition of the Amida by the chazzan) "in a place where all in the congregation are proficient in the Amida", and no one is dependent on the chazzan's recitation. Rambam replied that the חזרת השך was instituted by our Sages, and is thus to be regarded as a fixed part of the davening, to be retained even when its historical origins are no longer pertinent. And Rambam **cites as his proof for this contention** the ongoing practice of reciting Kiddush in shul, despite the absence of wayfarers who are eating there! The Kiddush in shul on Friday night is, for Rambam, a paradigmatic example of a "fixed part of the davening", rendering any question of ברכה לבטלה completely moot.

A question DOES arise however, as to whether the chazzan should drink the wine after this "relic" Kiddush. After all, since he is not dining in shul, he cannot be fulfilling his mitzva of Kiddush in shul, for Kiddush can only be fulfilled "in the place of dining". And if he is not fulfilling the mitzva of Kiddush, then it is forbidden for him to drink, for one may not eat or drink on Friday night prior to fulfilling the mitzva of Kiddush! So what will become of the wine? This certainly creates an awkward situation!

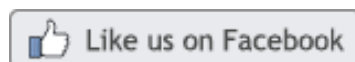
This and more, on the next "Shabbat Shorts"!

(Please forgive the funky appearance of the Hebrew. The email program was particularly squirrely today.)

I love feedback!
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