



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Last time on Shabbat Shorts:

The unusual sequencing of lighting first and blessing only afterwards, is what gave rise to the tradition of holding one's hands over one's eyes while reciting the bracha.

How so? And what are some of this custom's other halachic traveling partners?

The covering-one's-eyes custom is based on the interesting argument that while the mitzva's *technical act* is the act of kindling, its *ultimate fulfillment* comes through the derivation of benefit from the light. Thus, in a situation in which blessing in advance of the technical act is deemed problematic (per the previous "Shabbat Short"), the next best thing would be to bless before the ultimate fulfillment. By covering her eyes, the candle-lighter is deliberately depriving herself of any benefit from the lit candles until after she has had a chance to recite the bracha, thus properly placing the bracha *before* the mitzvah in this sense. (The fact that this moment of eye-covering has also become an intense moment of prayer, makes the whole thing even richer and more wonderful.)

Now that we understand this, we can also understand a lengthy discussion found here in the Mishna Brurah. It was common for Jewish Eastern European weddings to be held on Fridays, with the "chuppah" taking place in the late afternoon, and the Friday night meal doubling as both the Shabbat meal and the wedding reception. This set-up, while economical, invariably created a dilemma for the

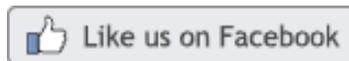
mother of the bride, who didn't want to light candles before the chuppah, lest she discover that there is yet one more wedding-related melacha that she still needs to do. The problem was that by the time the chuppah was over, sundown had invariably already occurred! Many Halachic solutions were offered to address the mother's situation, including - quite remarkably - the proposal that before the chuppah she light the candles without reciting the bracha (and without accepting Shabbat), and that she recite the bracha over the candles later on, after the chuppah is over (and Shabbat has begun). This Halachic solution is based on this same idea, that if need be the bracha can be divorced from the act of kindling, and can be recited upon the derivation of benefit from the light!

In a more practical vein, this idea can be employed during those long Fridays of summer when the earliest time one can light ("plag HaMincha") is *later* than 6:30, and Mincha at Bnai David is AT 6:30! The only thing to do in this situation (if everyone wants to daven in shul) is to light without a bracha before going to shul, and then to recite the bracha over the derivation of benefit upon returning home!

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