



Parshat Bo

No 1048:

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STARTING POINT

The Double Meaning of Passing Over - by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

In looking at the passages about the redemption from Egypt, we can see significant differences between G-d's commands to Moshe and the commands that Moshe passed on to Bnei Yisrael. The Almighty commanded, "Let them take part of the blood and place it on the two doorposts and the lintel in the houses where it will be eaten" [Shemot 12:7]. But Moshe told Bnei Yisrael, "Take a bundle of hyssop and dip it into the blood at the threshold, and you shall reach with this blood onto the lintel and onto the doorposts. And none of you shall leave the entrance of his home until morning." [12:22]. Thus, Moshe added two new elements. First, he emphasized twice that the blood should be placed on the door by dipping into the blood "at the threshold." In addition, Moshe added a new prohibition that had not been mentioned before by G-d – not leaving the house until the next morning. Evidently these two elements are linked to each other. Placing the blood at the threshold serves as a reminder not to go beyond the entrance of the house. The question still remains: Why did Moshe add these details to his commands?

It would seem that the differences are related to the different approaches to G-d's actions in Egypt that night. The Almighty said to Moshe, "And I will pass through the Land of Egypt that night and I will strike every firstborn in the Land of Egypt... And the blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and I will see the blood and pass over you. And there will be no mortal plague among you when I strike Egypt." [12:12-13]. According to this, the reason that G-d passed over Egypt was to strike the firstborn, and the blood on the houses served as a sign of someone who was not included in the decree. Moshe, on the other hand, described the events differently. "And G-d will come to strike Egypt, and if He sees the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, He will pass over the entrance and He will not allow the destructive angel to come to your houses to cause harm." [12:23]. This implies that the decree was originally meant to apply to all of Egypt, and the purpose of the blood was as a signal for the Almighty to protect the occupants of certain houses from the angel. According to Moshe's description, at first everybody was in danger and the blood would provide protection for Bnei Yisrael. It is therefore reasonable to emphasize the danger of leaving the house, which was the area that the Almighty would protect by His holy presence.

These two different approaches can be linked to two different meanings of the word "pasach," to pass over. Rashi explains, "passing over means to skip and jump across – 'I will pass over'

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means that G-d jumped from the houses of Bnei Yisrael to the houses of Egypt." This corresponds to what G-d said to Moshe, implying that the firstborn of Bnei Yisrael were not included in the original decree. However, there is another meaning to this word, in the sense of protection, as is written, "Protect and rescue, pass over and allow to escape" [Yeshayahu 31:5], as interpreted by Saadia Gaon and others. This corresponds to the words of Moshe, "He will pass over the entrance and He will not allow the destructive angel to come to your houses to cause harm."

Thus, the two descriptions, the one by the Almighty and the one by Moshe, provide an insight into the double meaning of the events of the night. It was a night when the Almighty not only struck the firstborn of Egypt but also saved the firstborn of Bnei Yisrael, thereby showing that they belong to Him: "For every firstborn is mine, on the day that I struck every firstborn in Egypt I sanctified every firstborn in Yisrael for me." [Bamidbar 3:13].

SERMON BY A GUEST

"Place Me as a Seal on Your Heart" - by Rabbi Efraim Zik, Head of Torah Mitzion Kollel and Community Rabbi, Lima, Peru

The mitzva of Tefillin is mentioned four times in the Torah: twice in this week's Torah portion ("Kadesh" and "Vehaya ki yeivi'ach") and twice in the book of Devarim ("Shema" and "Vehaya im shamo"). It is surprising to see that the Sefer Hachinuch does not list the mitzva of Tefillin in this week's portion of Bo but only in Devarim, in the portion of Va'etchanan. It is usually assumed that a mitzva should be listed the first time it appears in the Torah, and in fact the Ramban – who taught the author of the Chinuch – does indeed refer to the mitzva of Tefillin in this week's portion, while in Devarim he refers the reader back to what has already been mentioned. Why, then, did the Sefer Hachinuch delay the discussion of this mitzva?

It seems to me that the reason is related to the root of this mitzva, as described in the Sefer Hachinuch. "Since a man is a material being he will of necessity be drawn to desires, for it is the nature of material beings to want all of these pleasures... unless the soul with which G-d graced him will help with all of its power to prevent him from sinning. But since it is far away from its natural place, the heaven, the soul will fail, and the material forces will always prevail. The soul therefore needs many guards to watch over it... And the Almighty wanted to benefit us as a holy nation, so He commanded us to surround ourselves with powerful guards, which we were given so that

we will never cease the words of Torah day or night. These are the tzitzit on the four corners of our garments, the mezuzah at the entrance to the house, and the Tefillin on our hands and our heads. And everything is to remind us to refrain from the desires of our hands and not to chase after our eyes and the lusts of our hearts." Thus, the Sefer Hachinuch lists this mitzva in close proximity to the other "guards and reminders" – the study of Torah (Mitzva 418), reciting "Shema" (419), and mezuzah (421). These are all mentioned in the portion of Va'etchanan.

The Ramban explains the mitzva of Tefillin in a different way. "You shall write on your hand and between your eyes about the redemption from Egypt and always remember it, so that G-d's Torah will always be in your mouth, in order to observe His mitzvot and His commands, for He is the master who has redeemed you from a House of Slavery." The Ramban then continues with the importance of remembering the redemption from Egypt, which was a symbol of renewal in the world and a reminder about the knowledge of G-d and His constant guidance. Thus, according to the Ramban's approach, Tefillin should be listed at this point, near the events of the redemption from Egypt and the mitzva of the Pesach sacrifice.

We also note that there are two dangers which might turn a Jew away from the proper path: doubt and routine. Doubt can chip away at the mind and cause a person to erroneously deny his own faith, while routine can lead to boredom and an increase in the power of the evil inclination, trying to turn a person towards sin. Acting as if He were a skilled physician, the Almighty provided protection in advance: Tefillin on the head to protect the mind, and Tefillin on the hand to protect the heart and physical actions. These serve on one hand as a restraint and on the other hand as a binding of love. "Place me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm" [Shir Hashirim 8:6].

TORAH, SOCIETY, AND GOVERNMENT

As a Basis for Discussion Only - by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

"This month is the first of the months for you" [Shemot 12:2]. "He showed him a new moon and He said to him, when the moon is renewed you will declare a new month" [Rashi]. The tractate of Rosh Hashanah is indeed full of descriptions of the time when witnesses would appear before the court and serve as the source for deciding when to start the new month, either 29 or 30 days in length. Now, since we no longer have a court we depend on the calendar that was established by Hillel the Second, and we pray for the day when the months will once again be set according to testimony of witnesses.

Rav Saadia Gaon did not agree with the above statement. He insists that the witnesses were never used in a practical way to establish the date. Instead, calculations and set calendars were always used. The many passages in the Talmud describing witnesses that appeared in court seem to disprove this approach, so strongly that some people claim Rav Saadia did not mean what he wrote to be taken literally (actually, what was written in his name – Rav Saadia himself did not write anything at all about this issue). It is said that he used these claims in his

arguments against the Kara'im, in his efforts to dispute their approach.

In the approach named for Rav Saadia, the calendar is based on a completely regular cycle of leap years. This consists of 13 years out of every 19; a fixed length for all months; an average length for every month (29 days + 12 hours + 793/1081 "parts" – a "part" is 3 1/3 seconds); and standard delays in the start of a year (for example, Rosh Hashanah can never start on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday). According to this, the testimony of witnesses was only used to verify the calculations. If there was a contradiction between a sighting and the calculations, the testimony was ignored or a reason was found to invalidate it.

The Kara'im insisted on following the simple words of the verse, "this month ... is for you" – as it can be seen by the eye. They kept up a stubborn controversy against Rav Saadia Gaon. Some people maintain that it is not reasonable to believe that Rav Saadia hid the truth in such a basic matter and gave the Kara'im evasive answers. On the other hand, soon after Rav Saadia's death Rav Hai Gaon claimed that this was indeed true: "He gave the apostates a straw to refute them." The Rambam also felt that it was true: "His goal in this matter was to oppose the words of his opponent in any way possible, whether with the truth or not, since he was not able to avoid arguing with them."

Reference: Rabbi Shai Valter, "Mipeirot Hakerem," pages 118-128

MOUNT MORIAH

The Binding of Yitzchak and Mount Moriah - by Rabbi Yitzchak Levy, Yeshivat Har Etzion

The Binding of Yitzchak and the Temple

The affair of the binding of Yitzchak is the first place in the Torah which gives an indication of the essence of the Temple, following the well known principle that "the actions of the forefathers provide a sign for the descendents." Avraham was commanded to go to a specific place that G-d showed him, and there he prepared to offer his son as a sacrifice. This is the place of the first altar whose site was explicitly specified. "Being seen" is one of the central points of the binding, and this also remains part of the essence of the link to the Temple for all generations. The verse, "as it is described today, on the mountain where G-d will be seen" [Bereishit 22:14], implies a relationship to the future role of the Temple, as a site to be visited on the holidays.

In addition, the sages found in the events of the binding a source for various practices in the Temple. The direction of prayer in the Temple (towards the west) was established by Avraham (based on the principle that the Divine presence is in the west). The way that a lamb is bound for a sacrifice, a front and a back leg in pairs, is the same way as was done in the binding. Finally, the arrangement of the wood on the Alter is derived from Avraham's practice at the time of the binding.

The Binding and the Revelation at Aravna's Granary

There are many similarities between the affair of the binding and the way that G-d was revealed in the granary of Aravna, the Yevusite. The site is the same, an altar is built and a sacrifice is prepared, it is G-d who chooses the site, total dedication is revealed, and in the end an angel intervenes in the process. On the other hand, there are some significant differences between the two events. The binding is an event which provides a test of Avraham, while the revelation of the granary is related to the sin of taking a census of Bnei Yisrael. In the binding, the role of the angel is to prevent the final sacrifice, while the angel in the granary strikes the nation. Finally, Avraham is given a blessing that he will have children, while David was punished with a relatively small number of children.

The fact that there are similarities between the two events indicates that in their activities both Avraham and David laid the foundations for the establishment of the Temple. The differences between the two are in the way they approach the event. Avraham rises to spiritual heights out of a feeling of great fear and love combined with total humility, resulting in a Divine oath promising that Avraham will have many offspring and will rule over his enemies. This leads to a blessing for "all the nations of the earth" [Bereishit 22:18]. With respect to David, on the other hand, the site is revealed as a result of a sin which stemmed from pride over the great army. It is only because of the tragic plague that broke out among the people that David achieves the total dedication which leads to repentance and complete humility before G-d.

This interpretation corresponds to the Ramban's understanding of the events. His approach is that the reason for the plague was that the nation did not demand that the Temple be built. There is one path to holiness that begins with inspiration, love, fear, humility, and total negation of the self, and this is the path that Avraham took. There is another path, based on a supreme effort of repentance, and this is the path taken by David.

Choosing a Sacrifice and Choosing a Site

There is a similarity between the choice of a site and the choice of which specific sacrifice to bring. With respect to the sacrifice, "G-d will see which lamb will suit Him for an Olah sacrifice" [Bereishit 22:8], and then Avraham sees the ram. With respect to the site, Avraham predicts that "G-d will see" [22:14], after he sees the site from far away. The Almighty chooses the sacrifice itself and the site, and as a result of the Divine choices man sees the site and the ram.

The Divine choice is the opposite of idol worship, where the participants choose their own sacrifices, even going so far as to burn their own sons, and also choose the site of their rituals, "On high mountains and on hills, and beneath every fresh tree" [Devarim 12:2]. This provides another lesson for all generations, that the site of the Temple and which sacrifices will be offered are choices that the Almighty will make.

The Binding and the Molech Sacrifice

The lesson of the binding is that G-d does not want human sacrifices but only a ram. If this is so, why did the Almighty first tell Avraham to bring his son as an Olah?

Possibly, the answer to the above question is that on the first occasion a sacrifice was to be offered on Mount Moriah the Almighty wanted to have a willingness for real self sacrifice. From that point on it remains clear that the Almighty demands absolute devotion, even including the possibility of sacrificing a son. Once Avraham's complete dedication was demonstrated, G-d sent an angel to stop him and replace the sacrifice by a ram. This is the opposite of idolatrous sacrifices, whose goal is to present the deity with the most precious thing possible in order to appease him. The goals of a sacrifice in the Torah are love and not fear, allegiance and not terror, a supreme act of direct approach and not estrangement. These priorities can be learned as lessons for all generations from the binding of Yitzchak. A man who offers a sacrifice should keep in mind that in truth he himself should have been brought as a sacrifice on the Altar, but the Almighty gave him the opportunity to replace the original sacrifice with an animal.

A LESSON FOR THE CHILDREN

The Kassam Rocket that was Blocked - by Rabbi Yikhat Rozen, Merkaz Neria, Kiryat Malachi

It was still dark, the first rays of dawn had just appeared on the horizon, and in the town of Netzarim the people were beginning to open their eyes at the start of a new day. Yitzchak, who was twelve years old, also hurried to rise from his bed, dress quickly, and join the dozens of people who already filled the local synagogue.

Suddenly, the relative quiet was shattered by a loud whistle. This was not the first time that the inhabitants of Netzarim had heard this whistle. Everybody already knew the terrifying significance of the sound. It was a Kassam rocket or an artillery shell, on its way to the center of the town.

But what was going on? This time, it sounded closer than ever before! The sound increased, and within a few seconds a loud bang was heard. The building, which was completely full with people praying, shook. Yitzchak felt that in just a short moment the ceiling would fall in on them all, and the shrapnel from the murderous shell would cut into his body. Who could tell if he would ever live to see the light of the next day?

The sound of an explosion filled the air, and the entire synagogue became filled with smoke and soot. The glorious synagogue building was transformed within seconds into a whirlpool of glass shards and pieces of concrete. Many of the people were thrown to the ground by the blast, prayer books fell, and the furniture was thrown from place to place.

At first, Yitzchak was afraid to open his eyes, for fear that he would see tragic scenes of people who had fainted or were bleeding, or worse. However, Yitzchak was among the first to recover from the blast, and he went from place to place to see what had happened, to look for anybody who needed help.

And only then was the wonderful miracle revealed. In spite of the great damage, not a single person was hurt! Everybody was alive, safe and sound, and not one person was hurt! The missile had scored a direct hit on the roof of the synagogue, but it slid down the dome of the roof and exploded at the edge. Further tests showed that this was a type of missile that does not break up into many small pieces but causes a single explosion. Thus, all those who had come to pray that morning were saved from the terrible damage of shrapnel.

"Father," Yitzchak asked, "what would have happened if the missile had struck at a slightly different angle, G-d forbid, and had penetrated into the synagogue? And what if the terrorists had used a different type of missile, one that broke up into thousands of pieces of shrapnel? We might have had a much more serious result! What would we have done then?"

"Don't worry, Yitzchak. You can see for yourself what happened. The missile hit at a bad angle, and it was not the most deadly type. Who arranged matters that this would happen? Is this what the terrorists wanted? Is this the first time that a missile or a shell has been fired in our direction? No, thousands of missiles have been fired, and with G-d's mercy there has been very little damage so far. The truth is that every missile has the power to cause great harm to people and to property, and all that we can do is to pray to G-d that He will continue to protect us in His mercy, as we were privileged to see today."

After they managed to calm down a bit, the people took their siddurim in hand in order to continue the prayers. After a moment, they all saw the verse at which they had been interrupted: "For G-d is good, His mercy lasts forever" [Tehillim 100:5].

(Thanks to Yitzchak's father, who wrote us about this story, which happened a few weeks ago.)

Correction: In recent weeks, we have told the story of the "Platoon of Thirty Five" in Gush Etzion. Recently discovered historical evidence shows that the soldiers were discovered by two women and not by an old shepherd. We thank Yochanan Ben Yaacov for giving us this information.

THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS (Pirkei Avot)

Chapter 5 Mishna 15 - by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv

"There are four types of pupils: One who learns quickly and then forgets quickly – his gain is offset by his loss; One who has difficulty learning but is slow to forget – his loss is offset by his gain; One who learns quickly and is slow to forget – this is a wise man; One who finds it difficult to learn and forgets quickly – this is a bad practice."

This Mishna continues the lists comparing four human traits. Once again, as in the preceding Mishna, the first two traits are discussed in terms of gain and loss. The term "kasheh" – with difficulty – once again appears in the second trait of the Mishna.

Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel finds a greater parallelism than the simple one given above. "Just as the previous Mishna noted that there are four traits of anger, made up of two extremes and two average traits in between, so there are four traits among students, two extremes and two closer to the average."

In most texts, the wording of the first two traits is the same in this Mishna and the previous one. However, according to the Rambam, the sequence is different: In the previous Mishna, the reaction to the first trait is that the loss is offset by the gain, and the reaction to the second is that the gain is offset by the loss. The current Mishna is opposite in sequence.

As opposed to the previous Mishna, the titles "righteous person" and "evil person" are not used to describe the last two traits, and they are replaced in this Mishna with the terms "wise" and a "bad practice." This is because in this case the judgment is not in terms of intrinsic value but in terms of physical benefit. This has been explained in detail by the Rambam: "Note that it is not written that one who has a good memory and understands easily is called pious. This is because the person deserves logical praise, and he is therefore called 'wise.' And one who finds it difficult to learn and forgets easily is not called 'evil' since the matter is not in his own hands and cannot be acquired by diligence."

HOLY AND SECULAR

"Let Slavery Be Renewed" - by Rabbi Amichai Gordin

Rabbi Yehoshua said to him, "They are wise men, very wise. The problem is that they are extremely poor. They do not have enough money to buy food, and they have no clothing to wear." "Who are these people?," asked Rabban Gamliel, the Nassi. The reply was, "Rabbi Elazar Chassma and Rabbi Yochanan Gudgoda."

On the spot Rabban Gamliel decided to offer them a job. He invited them to meet with him. The two students, who evidently understood the purpose of the meeting, simply did not show up at the appointed time. Rabban Gamliel called them a second time, and he explained to them the true role of a leader. "You may think that I am offering you the position of a ruler, I am really making you an offer of slavery!"

The students of Rabban Gamliel were whispering among themselves. "Did you hear what the Nassi wants us to do? He asks that he be buried in the simplest possible garment." The students could not believe this was true. "What about the respect for the Torah? What will people say?" The reaction of the elder students was, "We must speak to him about this."

"Honored rabbi," one of the students said with great hesitation, "We have heard that you have asked to be buried in a white garment. We ask that the rabbi should take into account the respect due to the Torah. Is it reasonable that every rich man will be buried in splendor while you, the Nassi, will be buried in simple clothing? We ask for permission to bury the rabbi in

glorious clothing, as is the custom for respected and honorable people."

Rabban Gamliel stood to his full height. "Do not even think of doing this. It is not to be considered. Do you know how much money people spend on clothes for burying the dead? There are people who hesitate to bury their loved ones in order to avoid going into debt. Nobody has the courage to be buried in simple clothing. If I will be buried in simple clothes, perhaps the situation will change. Are you really worried about respect for the Torah? The highest respect for the Torah requires that I be buried in simple white cloth."

Rabban Gamliel succeeded. Following his lead, most of the people were buried in simple cloth. The terrible waste came to an end. Rabban Gamliel learned to care about the poor people from his father, Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel. One time, the prices of the sacrifices in Jerusalem rose. Women who had given birth and were therefore required to bring a sacrifice were put in a very difficult position. The price was exorbitant, and very few women were able to afford the cost of a sacrifice.

Rabban Shimon was not afraid of a confrontation with the merchants. He made a vow, "I will not go to sleep tonight until the prices decrease to one quarter of what they are now." He entered the Beit Midrash and issued a ruling that decreased the number of sacrifices that a woman was required to bring. When the demand decreased so did the price. It went down not to one quarter of the previous price, as Rabban Shimon had wanted, but to one eighth of the original price.

Recently, suspicions have been published about a rabbi who holds an important position, claiming that during the holidays he stayed in a luxury hotel for a token price. I personally hope and believe that these charges are not true. However, one aspect of this affair troubles me deeply.

I am upset in general that leaders of the people spend their time in luxury resorts. A leader should descend to the level of the people and live among them. The heads of the army spend the night of the Seder, the first night of Pesach, on an army base, and the rabbis of the country could spend their holiday in development towns. It is true that rich people also have a right to enjoy the company of the rabbis, but the poor people deserve this even more. I am sure that the words of the rabbis are very important to the highest levels of society. But the opportunity to have the rabbis by their side is even more important to the lowest levels of the people.

I have nothing against rich people who spend their time in extravagant hotels, it is their right and privilege to do so. Rather, my words are meant for the leaders of the community, and especially for the religious leaders. In days when many people do not receive any salaries, including the workers of the local religious councils, the leaders of the people should make it their business to show greater empathy.

The Talmud relates that one day Rabban Gamliel's students discovered that his eyelashes had fallen off. When they

investigated the matter, they found an amazing story. A lonely bereft woman lived near Rabban Gamliel's home. Every night, when the woman wept about her dead son, Rabban Gamliel would join in her weeping. And this caused his eyelashes to fall off. Rabban Gamliel's identification with the general public was deep and internal.

THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Year of Charity - by the Department of Education, World Mizrahi

The Authority for Religious Education has chosen the concept of charity as its annual theme, to be taught and discussed in the religious school system during the current school year. This interest in charity corresponds to a desire to improve the difficult social situation that exists in the country, and to renew the roots of charity and kindness.

The Chemdat system, together with Michlelet Lifshitz and the world council of Torah education, recently published a workbook on this subject, discussing the value of kindness and charity and illustrating how to implement this objective in everyday life. The publication is meant to provide support for teachers and young women who serve in Sheirut Leumi. It serves as the basis of a program taught by the women of Sheirut Leumi in Chemdat Midrashot all around the country.

The workbook has about 250 pages, with a wide variety of activities and suggestions for projects on a class or school level on the subject of charity. The first chapter presents nine different projects that can be used either in a single class or at the level of an entire school. The second chapter is a collection of games, stories and legends, Midrash and suggestions for activities, and lists of organizations involved in charity work. To order a copy of the workbook, contact Dalia at phone 02-6209027.

THE CHAIN OF HALACHA

Where is the Best Place to Put the Shabbat Candles? - by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, Rabbi of Southern Alon Shevut and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion

The RAMA writes (in the name of Or Zarua) that Shabbat candles should be placed on the table: "The main candle lighting is related to the candles that are on the table and not to the other lights in the house."

Can the candles be placed on a shelf in the room where one eats? According to "Ketzot Hashulchan," by Rabbi Chaim Na'eh, it is not necessary to place the candles on the table itself, "since the need is not for candles on the table but to eat by the light of the candles." In "Kaf Hachaim" it is written that according to mystic reasoning it is best to place the candles next to the table and not on it, just as the Menorah in the Temple was placed next to the table and not on it.

Evidently in order to fulfill the need for joy of Shabbat the candles should be placed on the table itself, so that the food will have as much light on it as possible. However, for the

reason of honoring Shabbat, the candles can be placed on a shelf, since this provides the same level of respect and honor as the table.

Nowadays, the custom of many people is to place the candles on a shelf for reasons of convenience, for safety reasons (for example, so that children will not overturn them), or in order that it will be possible to replace the tablecloth on Shabbat. It would seem that this approach can be accepted these days without any hesitation. As we have seen in previous articles, there are two main reasons given for lighting candles: providing honor and respect, and the joy of Shabbat. Today, the main honor and joy are related to electric lights, and the respect and joy that is added by lighting candles is the same whether they are placed on the table or on a shelf.

In "Maaseh Rav" by the GRA (113) it is written that candles should not be placed on the table so that it will be possible to move the table later on. Our usual practice to avoid a problem with this is to place the Chalot on the table before the start of Shabbat, so that the table will not become a "basis for a forbidden object," something that cannot be moved on Shabbat. When we reach the laws of "muktzeh" in this series, we hope to discuss this matter in more detail.

Candles in a Room with an Electric Light

How can we light candles in a dining room which is lit by electric lights in any case? Evidently, the dual requirement of respect for Shabbat and the joy of Shabbat is fulfilled when candles are lit even if there are also electric lights in the room. Quite often candles are lit today at important events, and such candles add a respectable atmosphere. This also corresponds to the words of the Mishna Berura (263:40), who writes that even one who accepts Shabbat early and begins to eat in daylight should light candles. "For even if it is still light, he derives pleasure and has joy from the candles during the meal."

In addition to the above, today, when it is the accepted custom to light candles in all Jewish homes, the candles are clearly part of the respect and joy shown to Shabbat, and forgetting to light them would certainly cause the people to be upset, even if the room is adequately lit by electricity. Thus, even if there is a strong electric light, lighting candles for Shabbat brings an additional atmosphere of respect and joy.

Because of this reason, there is no need to turn the electric lights off before lighting Shabbat candles. However, since it is possible to fulfill the obligation using electric lights, and since the most benefit and joy stems from the stronger electric lighting, one should have the electric lights in mind when reciting the blessing. Some people keep the needs of Shabbat in mind when they turn on the electric lights in a room.



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