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סימן רצ"ח סעיף ט"ו

Halacha Highlight

Reciting בורא מאורי האש on light bulbs

Shulchan Aruch Siman 298 Seif 15
או בתוך אספקלריא
Or inside of glass

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ט"ו) rules that one who can see the flame but cannot benefit from the light, e.g., one is at a distance so that he cannot distinguish between one coin and another (מ"ב ס"ק ל"ח), may not recite the beracha of בורא מאורי האש. Similarly, if one can benefit from the light but cannot see the flame, e.g. the flame is to his side (מ"ב ס"ק ל"ט), he may also not recite the beracha. One of the cases that Shulchan Aruch mentions is a case in which a flame is covered with glass and he rules that since one sees the flame covered rather than directly one may not recite the beracha. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ל"ז) cites Magen Avrohom who rules that if one can see a flame through glass it is comparable to seeing it directly and one may recite the beracha on such a flame. He then notes that in Biur Halacha he cites many Poskim who subscribe to Shulchan Aruch's position and as such one should l'chatchila not recite the beracha on a flame that is covered by glass. Poskim note that those who wear glasses wear their glasses when they recite the beracha without concern for Shulchan Aruch. However, one who wears tinted glasses or is wearing sunglasses should remove them when looking at the flame since one should see the actual color of the flame (פסקי תשובות אות י"א והע' 80).

Regarding the use of electric lights, there are many issues. One primary issue is whether the burning filament is considered a flame as far as this halacha is concerned. Even if one accepts that a burning filament is considered a flame there is an issue of the fact that the flame is covered by glass and l'chatchila one should not use a flame that is covered. Therefore, if one could obtain an exposed flame, even a single candle, match or lighter, one should not recite the beracha on a light bulb. When there is no alternative, one may use a light bulb but the glass must be clear. White or other colors are not acceptable and certainly fluorescent bulbs may not be used since all opinions agree that there is no fire in a fluorescent bulb (פסקי תשובות אות י').

Overview

Siman 298 Seif 15:

If there is a lamp in one's lap, in a lantern (Meaning a utensil into which a lamp is placed so that it does not go out), **behind glass or if one can see the flame but cannot use its light or if one can use the light but cannot see the flame, the beracha may not be recited until one sees the flame and can benefit from the light.**

- In other words it is in one's lap in a manner that one cannot see the flame nor can one benefit from the light and the case of the lantern is similar. In the case where the flame is behind glass, although one can see the flame in order to recite the beracha one must be able to see the flame directly. Magen Avrohom and others maintain that the restriction is limited to a metal lantern that has holes in it but if it is made from glass it is considered as though one can see the flame. Biur Halacha notes that many Poskim agree with Shulchan Aruch so one should not l'chatchila be lenient about this matter. (M.B. 37)