י. כוס של ברכת המזון יש ליטלו ביד ימין. ולפי דעת רבותינו המקובלים, אף איטר יד אוחז הכוס ביד ימין של כל אדם. ואם חושש שמא מחמת שהיא יד כהה ישפך היין מידו, יאחז הכוס ביד שמאל של כל אדם. [הליכו"ע ח"ב עמ' מז]

יא. לא יטול הכוס עם כפפות, ויש לו להסירם קודם שנוטל הכוס. [משנ"ב ס"ק טו, כה"ח ס"ק כא], שזהו גנאי לכוס כאלו אינו רוצה לאוחזו ביד עצמו. [ערוה"ש ס"ה]

יב. יש אומרים שע"פ הקבלה נכון שיעמיד הכוס על כף ימינו, והאצבעות יהיו זקופים סביב. [שלי"ה, הובא במג"א סקי"ו, ובמשנ"ב ס"ק טו]

אולם אנו נוהגים כדעת האר"י בזה, שלא יתן הכוס בכף היד, אלא על גבי חמשת האצבעות. ויש בדברי האר"י ב' שיטות בזה. **א.** להעמיד הכוס על ה' האצבעות הימניים כשהם זקופים, על גביהן ממש (ואפשר שיתפוס קצת בשולי התחתית באצבעות). **ב.** שמעמיד הכוס על גובהן של

Left-handed person

10) According to the kabbalists, even a left-handed person must hold the *kos shel berakha* with his right hand. If he is liable to spill the wine since he is unable to hold the cup steady with his right hand, he may hold it with his left hand.[179]

Wearing gloves

11) If the leader of the *zimun* is wearing gloves, he should take them off before receiving the *kos shel berakha*. If he would leave his gloves on, it would appear that he is loathe to hold the cup.

How to hold the cup

12) Some authorities claimed that according to the Kabbalah one should hold the base of the *kos shel berakha* in one's palm while one's fingers hold the sides of the cup. We follow the opinion of the Arizal, however, and that is to hold the cup up with one's fingers only and not rest it on one's palm.

There are two explanations of the Arizal's instructions about how to hold the cup. One opinion is to hold the very bottom of the cup with one's five fingertips so that the entire

179. The *Ben Ish Ḥai* (*parashat Shelaḥ* halakha 19) wrote that according to the Talmudic *Poskim* a left-handed person should hold the cup in his left hand, but according to the Kabbalah everyone must hold it with his right hand. This halakha does not depend on which hand is stronger or more adept.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. II, page 47) ruled that we should follow the kabbalists in this matter since Maran contradicted himself regarding this. Although he ruled here (183:5) that a left-handed person should hold the cup in his left hand unlike a right-handed person, later (651:3) he ruled that a left-handed person should hold his *lulav* in his left hand just like a right-handed person. Since Maran's view is unclear, the opinion of the kabbalists holds sway. The *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (183:29) wrote likewise, explaining that the *Arba'a Turim* and the holy *Zohar* both ruled that it makes no difference whether one is right-handed or left-handed.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon suggested a resolution of Maran's rulings. Regarding the mitzvah of *kos shel berakha*, it is difficult for a left-handed person to hold a cup filled to the brim throughout *Birkat Hamazon* without spilling it. He would have to concentrate fully on holding the cup, and thus be unable to concentrate properly on the words of *Birkat Hamazon*. Therefore, if the person is capable of holding the cup in his right hand and still concentrate properly on *Birkat Hamazon* he should do that. Otherwise, it is better that he hold it with his left hand. The responsa *Divre Mordekhai* Friedberg (#15) offered a similar resolution.

האצבעות והיינו שהאצבעות זקופות, והכוס מוקף מסביב בגובהן של אצבעות, וחצי הכוס מגולה למעלה מראשי אצבעות. [כה"ח ס"ק כ לדעת האר"י, וראה בשו"ת יצחק ירנן ח"א סי' לה]

cup is above the fingers. The second opinion is to place the cup down between one's fingers, holding the sides of the cup so that its base is suspended above one's palm. In this way, part of the cup is surrounded by the fingers and part of it is held above the fingertips. According to both opinions the hand is held with the palm horizontal and the fingers pointed up like a tulip's petals.[180]

180. The first opinion cited here is that of the *Shene Luhot Haberit*, cited by a number of *Aharonim*. The *Magen Avraham* (183:6) criticized this opinion. Nevertheless, this ruling was followed by the *Hesed La'alafim*, *sefer Shetile Zetim*, Harav Matzli'ah Mazuz and Harav Mansour ben Shim'on. This is likewise the practice of Harav Moshe Tzadka. See *sefer Likrat Shabbat* (page 298).

The first interpretation of the Arizal's teaching

The second opinion cited here is that of the Arizal as it appears in the *Sha'ar Hamitzvot* (*parashat Ekev*). It states there: "Take the cup with your right hand. Stand it directly above the five fingers of your right hand." Many *Aharonim* understood this literally – to balance the cup above one's fingertips. For example, the *Hesed La'alafim* (183:3) ruled that one should rest the cup on one's palm following the instructions of the *Shene Luhot Haberit* since "if one suspends the cup above one's fingertips it is likely to fall and one will not be able to concentrate on the words of *Birkat Hamazon*." The *Nezirut Shimshon* likewise explained that according to the Arizal one must balance the cup on top of one's fingertips. This interpretation follows the text "on top of them [the fingertips]" appearing in the *Sha'ar Hamitzvot*. The *sefer Divre Shalom* Apjin (Vol. III, page 245) testified that this was the practice of the famed kabbalist Harav Salman Mussafi.

The *Shemen Sasson's* interpretation of the Arizal

The *Shemen Sasson* argued that the correct text in the *Sha'ar Hamitzvot* is not "on top of them" but rather "with the higher parts of them." He explained that this means that the person should hold his hand with his fingers pointed upward and place the cup between them so that the bottom section of the cup is held by the upper segments of the fingers and the rest of the cup is higher than the fingers. This appears to be the interpretation preferred by the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (183:20).

The responsa *Yitzhak Yeranen* (Vol. I, #35) dealt with this issue at length. He explained that his custom originally followed the opinion of the *Shene Luhot Haberit* like Harav Matzli'ah Mazuz but he later found proof for the *Shemen Sasson's* version of the *Sha'ar Hamitzvot*. He discussed the issue with Harav Meir Mazuz, and the latter agreed with him. The *sefer Likrat Shabbat* (page 298) testifies that Harav Hayim Sha'ul Dweck practiced according to the interpretation of the *Shemen Sasson*. Rav Dweck did not hold his fingers straight upward; he bent them so that the sides of the cup were held by his fingertips only. The *sefer Divre Shalom* Apjin (Vol. III, page 244) testified that this was also the opinion of Harav Mordekhai ben Shim'on.

The *Divre Shalom* pointed out that the Arizal taught (*Sha'ar Hakavanot*, *Pesah* page 82a) that "when grasping the cup with one's hand, one should have in mind that the fingers of the right hand on which the cup sits...." These words seem to contradict themselves, for he states at first that the fingers are grasping the cup and then he states that the cup is resting on the finger[tip]s.

Actually, this passage does not contradict itself or either of the two opinions cited above. According to the first interpretation, it is true that the cup sits above the fingers but this still allows for the person to hold onto the cup with his fingertips around the rim of the cup's base. According to the second interpretation, one holds the middle of the cup but the cup is resting on one's fingers. Thus, this passage fits both interpretations.

Harav Yaakov Hillel (*Siddur Kavanot Ahavat Shalom Base'uda*, *Berakhot*) suggested support for the opinion of the *Shemen Sasson* since the *Sha'ar Hakavanot* (page 70d and page 71a) states that one should grasp the cup with one's right hand. If the cup is only sitting on top of one's fingertips, he concluded, the person is not grasping the cup at all. According to the explanation given in the previous paragraph, even when the cup is held above the fingers the person is holding the cup around its bottom rim. Since it might be difficult for people to hold the cup steady in that position, however, the *Hesed La'alafim* complained that it is difficult to recite *Birkat Hamazon* properly while holding it in that way. See a full description of all the various opinions in *sefer Minhage Hakiddush Belel Shabbat* (pages 9-14).

Harav Shalom Cohen, Rosh Yeshivat Porat Yosef, testified that although he saw that many of the *hakhamim* who arrived from Baghdad had the practice of holding the cup on their fingertips, his father, the kabbalist Harav

יג. מגביה הכוס של ברכה, טפח (שמונה ס"מ) מעל השלחן. [ש"ע ס"ד], כדי שיהא נראה הכוס לכל המסובין, ויסתכלו בו [טור]. ובברכות (נא ע"ב) הסמיכוהו על הפסוק: "כוס ישועות אשא ובשם ה' אקרא". [משנ"ב ס"ק טז]

יד. המברך צריך שיתן עיניו בכוס של ברכה, כדי שלא יסיח דעתו [ש"ע שם] מן הברכה [על הכוס].

Raising the cup

13) One must raise the *kos shel berakha* at least a *tefah* (8 centimeters/3 inches) above the surface of the table so that all those seated at the table can see the cup. Our Sages (*Berakhot* 51b) suggested that this is hinted to by the verse (*Tehillim* 116:13), "כוֹס יְשׁוּעוֹת אֶשָּׂא וּבְשֵׁם ה' אֶקְרָא – I lift the cup of salvation and I call in the Name of God."[181]

Watching the cup

14) The leader of the *zimun* must watch the *kos shel berakha* throughout *Birkat Hamazon* so that he does not forget about reciting the blessing over it.[182]

Efrayim Hakohen, held the *kos shel berakha* in the same manner that anyone would hold a cup of water, ignoring all these teachings. Apparently, he followed the opinion of the *Magen Avraham* (183:6) who argued that as long as one's fingers surround the cup in any manner one fulfills the teaching of the *Zohar*. It is strange, however, that he chose to practice in this way and not like the teaching of the Arizal. Interestingly enough, the *Ben Ish Hai* did not mention this halakha at all. This matter needs more research.

181. The *Arba'a Turim* and the *Shulhan Arukh* both state that the cup must be raised a *tefah* above the ground. This is because in the Talmudic era it was common to eat meals on the floor while reclining on pillows and mattresses. When people are seated at a table, it is necessary to raise the cup a *tefah* above the table. The Ritba (commentary to *Berakhot* 8:3) wrote that it is unclear to him whether or not it is necessary to raise the cup at all when seated at a table. See the *Yafe Lalev* (183:4).

The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Shelah* halakha 18) wrote that one must raise the cup "at least" a *tefah* above the table. This means that it is permissible to raise it more than a *tefah* above the table.

How to measure the *tefah*

The *Av Bet Din* of the city of Mir (*sefer Shulhan Shelomo*) wrote that if the cup one uses has a tall stem, it is not necessary to raise the cup so that the bottom of the stem is a *tefah* above the table. It is necessary only that the basin of the cup is a *tefah* above the table.

The *Tehilla leDavid* (183:3) wrote that only the cup needs to rise a *tefah* above the table; the hand holding it can be within a *tefah* of the table. The *Halakha Berura* (page 352) pointed out that Harav Elazar Azkari (*Haredim* commentary on the Talmud Yerushalmi) explained that the cup must be raised until it is obvious that it has been raised. According to the rulings of the *Shulhan Shelomo* and the *Tehilla leDavid*, however, one needs to raise it just a bit.

The explanation of the *Haredim* does not contradict that of the *Arba'a Turim*. It is necessary to raise the cup so that it is obviously raised and visible to everyone at the table.

Must one raise the cup or simply hold it high?

The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (183:23) wrote that if the cup is handed to the leader of the *zimun* at a height that is more than a *tefah* above the table, that is sufficient. It is not necessary for him to raise it any higher. The halakha discussed here is about the level at which the cup is held, but it does not demand that one raise the cup from a low level to a higher level.

182. The spiritual gains of staring at the *kos shel berakha*

The holy *Zohar* (*parashat Teruma*, cited by the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 183:24) states that "one must keep one's eyes on the *kos shel berakha*, based on the verse (*Devarim* 11:12), 'the Eyes of God your Master are on it.' One must not take one's eyes off the cup, but rather he must watch it carefully. The *kos shel berakha* is blessed through the act of man's blessing the Blessed Holy One. This is the secret of faith and it must be guarded carefully for it parallel's one's regard for the King. It is because of this that one's table is blessed while one recites *Birkat Hamazon*."

The *sefer Kav Hayashar* (chapter 64) states that one must watch the *kos shel berakha* and have in mind that God will watch over the holy nation of Yisrael constantly as a result, fulfilling the verse, "the Eyes of God your Master are on it from the beginning of the year till its end."