In practice, some *Aharonim* ruled that it is necessary to enwrap oneself in a *tallit*, as explained below in halakha 16, but no one requires ''crowning.'' Harav HIDA (*Mahazik Berakha* 183:1) cited the *Aharonim*, including Harav Menahem Azarya of Pano, ruling that only the basic four halakhot (that the cup be rinsed, inside and outside, that the wine is *hai* and that the cup is filled to its rim) must be observed, while the other six are recommended on a voluntary basis.

The Spiritual Qualities of the *Kos shel Berakha*

Although the importance of using a cup of wine for *Birkat Hamazon* was discussed in the preface to *Siman* 182, there is much more to say about it. Our Sages taught (*Berakhot* 51a): Ribbi Yohanan said, ''Anyone who recites *Birkat Hamazon* over a full cup of wine will be granted endless bounty.'' Ribbi Yose bar Hanina said, ''He is privileged to acquire two worlds – this world and the World to Come.''

The holy *Zohar* (*parashat Teruma*) teaches that the verse, ''You will rejoice in God's Presence,'' refers to the *kos shel berakha*, for when reciting *Birkat Hamazon* over a cup of wine one must be happy and he must display happiness and show no sign of depression. When someone picks up the cup, the Blessed Holy One stands over him. Therefore, he must wrap his head in his *tallit* with great joy and recite *Birkat Hamazon* while seated in a group of three. The *kos shel berakha* becomes blessed as the person blesses the Blessed Holy One. This is the ''secret of the faith.'' It must be well-protected since it displays the King's importance and it is for His sake that the table becomes blessed while *Birkat Hamazon* is recited.

Harav Aharon Roth (*sefer Shulhan Hatahor*, page 231b) explained that through fulfilling the ten halakhot regarding *kos shel berakha* one brings God enormous joy and satisfaction. One causes great positive changes in Heaven, things that can be understood through the wisdom of Kabbalah only. The *kos shel berakha* directs Heaven's bounty toward this world, and when one fulfills this mitzvah with joy it enhances this bounty. The four basic halakhot – rinsing the cup inside and out, using wine that is not diluted and filling the cup to its rim – are ***h****adaha*, ***sh****etifa*, ***h****ai* and ***m****ale*. The initial letters of those halakhot spell the word *simha*, joy.

The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Naso*) explains that there are fifteen words in the blessing that the *kohanim* bestow on the people in the synagogue. There are fourteen segments in a person's five fingers, corresponding to fourteen of those words of blessing. Our Sages instituted the mitzvah of reciting *Birkat Hamazon* over a cup of wine so that the cup will correspond to the fifteenth word – *shalom*.

Likewise, one eats fourteen meals in the course of a week, two each day. [By reciting *Birkat Hamazon* over a cup of wine after each of these meals, we

channel Heaven's blessing onto this world. Each of these meals corresponds to a word in the blessing conferred by the *kohanim*.] On Shabbat we eat the fifteenth meal since our Sages instituted a mitzvah to eat three meals during that day. Thus, the final Shabbat meal corresponds to the fifteenth word of the *kohanim's* blessing – *shalom*. For this reason we greet people on Shabbat by saying, ''*Shabbat shalom*.'' If it would not be for Shabbat, there would be no meal corresponding to the fifteenth word of the blessing. [Thus, it is Shabbat that enables there to be a channel through which the fifteenth blessing could arrive on this world.]

This might be what our Sages alluded to with their statement (*Uktzin* 3:12), ''The Blessed Holy One found no other container to house blessings for the nation of Yisrael other than *shalom*.'' The container is represented by the cup of wine used for *Birkat Hamazon*. This is why it is called *kos shel berakha* – the cup of blessing. The blessing can be complete only through the fifteenth word – *shalom*.

This is the meaning of our Sages' teaching (*Berakhot* 64a), ''Torah Sages increase *shalom* in the world.'' Our Sages instituted the mitzvah of *kos shel berakha* for many occasions: for kiddush and *havdala* of Shabbat and *Yom Tov*, for *Birkat Hamazon*, for a couple's betrothal, for a couple's wedding, for circumcision and for the Seder night. On all these occasions the cup supplements the segments of the fingers to correspond to the word *shalom*. By instituting this mitzvah on so many occasions, our Sages made it so that this allusion to *shalom* is represented multiple times. Thus, they succeeded in ''increasing *shalom* in the world.''

The *sefer Yesh Sakhar* (new edition, page 158) explains the kabbalistic significance of each of the ten halakhot pertaining to *kos shel berakha*. He added that the halakha of wrapping oneself in a *tallit* applies in the Land of Yisrael only. Over there it is necessary for the honor of the Shekhina, God's holy Presence. In other countries there is no point in fulfilling that halakha. See the *Magen Avraham* (183:5), the *Ateret Zekenim* and the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (183:18). The latter remarked that although the *Yesh Sakhar* cited the Arizal for this teaching, it does not appear in any of the Arizal's books in our possession.

סימן קפג

דיני כוס של ברכת המזון

א. כוס של ברכה טעון הדחה מבפנים ושטיפה מבחוץ. [ש"ע סי' קפג ס"א]. והוא הדין אם קינח הכוס במפה מבפנים ומבחוץ שמועיל במקום שטיפה והדחה. [משנ"ב ס"ק א ובשעה"צ]. ואם הכוס נקי אינו צריך שטיפה והדחה.

ולדעת הזוהר והמקובלים צריך הכוס שטיפה והדחה אפילו הוא נקי. [כה"ח ס"ק ד]. ובשעת הדחק שאין לו מים סגי לקנחו במפה מבית ומחוץ. [כה"ח ס"ק ה]

ב. צריך לתת את היין לתוך הכוס של ברכה כשהוא "חי" [ש"ע ס"ב], דהיינו כמות שהוא בלא מזיגה, אף שאין ראוי לשתותו כך כמות שהוא לרוב חריפותו [משנ"ב ס"ק ד], וכשמגיע לברכת הארץ באומרו "וברכת את", בתיבת "את" ימזגנו במים. [בא"ח שלח הכ"ב, כה"ח סק"י]

Siman 183

The Cup Used for *Birkat Hamazon*

Rinsing the cup before filling it

1) The cup used as *kos shel berakha* must be first rinsed, inside and out. Wiping the cup with a cloth can suffice for this purpose. If the cup is perfectly clean, no rinsing is necessary, technically. According to the *Zohar* and the kabbalists, it is always necessary to rinse the cup inside and out, even if it is already perfectly clean.[167] If there is no water available for this purpose, then one may wipe the cup, inside and out, with a clean cloth.

Undiluted wine poured into the cup

2) The wine must be undiluted when pouring it into the cup. Even if the wine is too strong for anyone to drink it without diluting it, one must still pour the proper amount of undiluted wine in the cup leaving enough room to dilute it to the proper strength with water. Upon reciting the word *et* toward the end of the second blessing of *Birkat Hamazon*, one should pour in the water necessary to dilute it.[168]

---

167. The *Hesed La'alafim* (183:2) states, "It is recommended to rinse the cup inside and out even if it is already perfectly clean. Any instructions given by our Sages are more significant than their simple meaning; certainly these simple acts have great affects in Heaven. Every detail of our Sages' words bears fruit somewhere in the upper realm."

168. Why during the second blessing?

Rabbenu Yona explained that we dilute the wine while reciting the second blessing since this blessing specifically thanks God for giving us the Land of Yisrael. We wish to demonstrate that the grapevines grown in the Land are special, that they produce such good and strong wine that it must be heavily diluted to enable people to drink it.

Maran commented in the *Bet Yosef* that it is proper to postpone diluting the wine until reciting the second blessing even in other countries, since this demonstrates our regard for the Land of Yisrael that we mention at that time. Even though one is holding wine that was produced in other countries, since we are mentioning the Land of Yisrael at

ואף ביינות שלנו שאינם חזקים כל כך, צריך למזוג היין במעט יין. וכן דעת המקובלים. [ראה ב"י, כה"ח ס"ק ו].
ויטיל בכוס ג' טיפות בזה אחר זה. [ראה פתה"ד אות א', בא"ח שלח הכ"א, כה"ח שם]

ג. אף אם היה היין חזק, שצריך הרבה מים למוזגו, ימזגנו בברכת הארץ. ואף על פי שצריך היין מים הרבה, ומוכרח שיהיה [הכוס] חסר בתחלת הברכה חסרון הניכר לעין, לית לן בה, מאחר שבברכת הארץ מוזגו ונעשה מלא, מיהו על כל פנים צריך שיהיה בו בתחלת הברכה שיעור רביעית. [בא"ח פ' שלח הכ"א, כה"ח ס"ק יא]

ואם רצה למוזגו תחלה קודם ברכת המזון [כדי שיהיה מלא], ושוב חוזר ומוזגו בברכת הארץ [במעט מים], הרשות בידו. [הליכו"ע ח"ב עמ' מז]

The wines we use nowadays are not too strong to be imbibed without diluting them. Even so, one should add a bit of water to it for the sake of the mitzvah as taught by the kabbalists. One should pour three drops of water into the wine, one after the other.

Add water while reciting 2nd blessing

3) Even if it will be necessary to add a considerable amount of water to the wine since it has such a strong flavor, one should add the water only while reciting the second blessing of *Birkat Hamazon*. Although the cup remains only half full or even two-thirds empty until the water is added, this is the proper way to fulfill this mitzvah as long as the cup contains at least *revi'it* of wine when one begins the second blessing. The cup needs to be full only after reciting the second blessing.

Alternatively, one may dilute the wine before beginning *Birkat Hamazon* and then add a few drops of water while reciting the second blessing. Yet another option is to fill the cup entirely with undiluted wine and while reciting the second blessing to pour out some

Day 9

this moment we demonstrate that the wine produced in the Land of Yisrael is special and needs to be diluted. Harav Zalman and the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (183:7) both cited this passage.

When reciting the word *et*

Rabbenu Yona, cited in the *Bet Yosef*, ruled that one should dilute the wine when beginning to describe the richness of the Land of Yisrael so that one demonstrates its richness. Rabbenu Yona cited his father claiming that those people who dilute the wine only at the end of the blessing have no basis upon which to rely. It appears that Rambam concurred with this ruling to dilute the wine when starting the second blessing, and this is the ruling of the *Mishna Berura* (183:5).

The Arizal (*Sha'ar Hamitzvot*), however, taught that one must dilute the wine when reaching the word *et* at the end of the second blessing, explaining that this corresponds to a deep kabbalistic teaching. This is the ruling of the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Shelah* halakha 21) and the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (183:6). Harav Avraham Azulai (comment on *Levush* 183:3) claimed that the Arizal taught that one should dilute the wine when reciting the words *eretz hemda* near the beginning of the blessing. Nevertheless, the common custom is as stated by the *Ben Ish Hai* and *Kaf Hahayim*. This is likewise the ruling of the *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 109).

Looking at the water

The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Shelah* halakha 22) taught that one should look directly at the water being poured into the wine to dilute it, following the instructions of the Arizal in *Sha'ar Ta'ame Hamitzvot* (*parashat Ekev*).