



Parshat Korach

No 1072:

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STARTING POINT

Aharon Was Chosen Twice - by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

One of the complaints of Korach's group had its source in the fact that Aharon was chosen for the role of the priesthood. Moshe proposes a way to prove that this choice was correct. "Take pans, Korach, for you and all your community. Put a flame on them, and place incense on them tomorrow. And the one that G-d picks is the holy one." [Bamidbar 16:6-7]. And so, Aharon and Korach's group each came forward with their pans in their hands. The choice was clear. "A flame came from G-d and devoured the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense" [16:35]. However, in view of this clear choice, what happens afterwards, choosing a tribe, seems superfluous. Once again, a miraculous test is performed with the objective of proving who is "the man I will choose" [17:20]. This again ends with the choice of Aharon. "Behold, the staff which grew flowers was that of Aharon, from the tribe of Levi. It grew a blossom, brought forth a bud, and almonds grew on it." [17:23]. Why was it necessary to have two miracles? Wasn't the test of the pans enough to prove that Aharon was chosen by G-d?

Evidently, the two events were different in nature. The affair of the pans showed less about Aharon's greatness than it did about the defective nature of Korach's community. When Moshe introduced the test, at the start of the passage, he did not even mention Aharon. Rather, what he said was, "The one that G-d will pick is the holy one." Only later in the passage Moshe notes that Aharon will also join the test. "Let you and your entire community come before G-d, you and they, and Aharon, tomorrow" [16:16]. Thus, the choice of Aharon is in effect a process of elimination. Aharon's pan is not even mentioned, and evidently nothing at all happened to it. Two hundred and fifty people who offered incense were devoured by a Divine flame, and the fact that Aharon was not harmed showed that he was the chosen one.

However, a choice of this type has an inherent defect. It might emphasize the sin of the others and show that Aharon did not join them, but it does not publicly show that Aharon was picked because of his elevated status. And that is the reason for the second test, using the staff representing each tribe. In this case, it is the other staffs which do not participate in the miracle, while Aharon's staff undergoes a change in essence, a change for the better. It blossoms and fruit grows on it.

This dual nature can be seen symbolically in Aharon's staff, the physical object which was used for the test. Up to that point, the staff was mainly used as a means of punishment, for

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example, in the plagues in Egypt. It might have been possible to think that the staff can only be an instrument of harm. Now it could be seen that the staff can also be an expression of flowering and growth. The owner of the staff, who is capable of having "a flower bud ('vayatzetz tzitz')" [17:23], is worthy of being the one who represents the nation of Yisrael and asks for mercy for them. "And you shall make a headband ('tzitz') of pure gold... And it will be on Aharon's forehead, and Aharon will atone for the sins of the holy sacrifices that Bnei Yisrael offer, for all their sacred donations. Let it be on his head always, according to the will of G-d" [Shemot 28:36-38].

POINT OF VIEW

Are We Required to Listen to a Secular Government? - by Rabbi Yisrael Rozen

Has everything already been written about the subject of insubordination as opposed to following orders? It seems to me that there are some issues that can still be discussed.

Civil Disobedience

In the past, I differentiated in this column between insubordination in the face of an enemy and "civil disobedience," even if both cases refer to one who is wearing a uniform. To refuse to drop a bomb or to enter the city of Beirut in time of war cannot be compared to a refusal to do maintenance work on a tank, to paint trees, to clear the rubble of a house that has collapsed or to disperse a crowd of people who have blocked a road. It is true that from a purely legal point of view and from the effect on the individual there is no difference: An order is an order, and one who refuses to obey it will have to pay the price. But there is a difference from the point of view of ethics, conscience, and education. Not every case of insubordination can rightfully be greeted with the cry, "Where will things end if everybody is willing to refuse a command (and is willing to accept the consequences)?"

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ל"ד

הרב ישעיהו יצחק בן ישראל הלוי ושיינדעל יהודית

ע"ה **Rabbi Shaia Blatt**

I have stated on many occasions, both in writing and orally, that the cries of a disaster to be caused by "a rift in the nation as a result of insubordination" and "a crisis in religious Zionism" are not relevant to the disengagement plan, since the main task of the IDF is not to be involved in setting policies but to guard over security matters. In support, I will bring a proof from an unexpected source. This is a proposed "agreed constitution" that has been circulated by the Israeli Institute for Democracy, a forum which certainly cannot be suspected of supporting insubordination in any form. Here is what they write: "A law, with the approval of the government, is able to give the IDF the authority to act in a way that will achieve vital national-government goals. These actions will be carried out by people who agree to do them." [Section: Army, Chapter 2b].

Blind Obedience

This time I would like to take a look from a different angle, from the point of view of one who gives a command. We start with a question: Is there an obligation (or is it at least recommended) for a commander in the IDF to explain the order that he gives, noting the background, circumstances, and goals of the operation? Answer: I looked at the ethical code of the IDF, at the goals of the combat doctrine and at other documents in the official IDF website. I tried as best I could but there was no answer to this. This is hard to believe! According to the official doctrine of the IDF, a soldier is evidently expected to obey a command blindly. Is this really the official doctrine of the IDF?

There has been a thundering silence with respect to "Disengagement Day." The commanders of the IDF are completely silent about their obligation (at least in ethical terms) to discuss the background and to explain the goals of the expulsion and its objectives. The "Order of the Day" contains only two words: Obey blindly! Have the commanders forgotten the principles taught in every officer's training course, from the lowest to the highest, insisting that the goals and objectives of an operation must be presented before outlining the alternative ways of accomplishing the mission? Motivation is related to marking the target, if it is close by or far away, and only afterwards demanding complete obedience, whether the soldier fully accepts the background information or not.

However, the IDF has never revealed to its soldiers or to its commanders, and certainly not to the people in the country or abroad, what exactly are the goals of this expulsion from the area of Gush Katif. I have not seen or heard about any "Order of the Day for Uprooting" written by the chief of education in the IDF, or any of his assistants. I have not heard of any national broadcast by the government which gave an official explanation of the goals and objectives to be achieved by this difficult national mission. Would any commander in the IDF have considered ordering his soldiers not to spare any effort in trying to cross the Suez Canal during the Yom Kippur War without first instilling in them motivation and a fighting spirit?

Possible Goals

Since I have not been able to find any official explanations for "Operation Katif," I will try to make my own summary of all

the possible "goals" that I have heard from the analysts in the press, and from my own reasoning. Here they are: (1) A security goal – There will be a decrease in terror activity as a result of destroying the settlements (this is the opposite of the predictions of all the security experts and the generals); (2) A demographic goal – This implies that as a result of abandoning such places as Neve Dekalim and Nisanit there will be less Palestinians between the sea and the Jordan River. Did I understand this point correctly? Could it be that this means to accept the illusion that the Europeans will no longer consider us responsible for the fate of the large population of Azza? (3) A Zionist goal – This was pulled out of the hat by the Prime Minister in a recent lecture. At long last we will free the resources to settle the Negev and the Gallil. Is anybody convinced by this idea? (4) A political goal – By surrendering to the United States, we will receive economic aid and sympathy from them. (5) A legal and family goal – No comment. (6) A "religious" goal – This is in response to the "religion of disengagement" that is so very powerful. This new religion has one main commandment: cutting off the arms of the settlers and shattering their dreams. (7) A goal of self punishment – The Palestinian claim is right. Zionism should disappear!

As I stated above, I have searched high and low but I did not find any of these or other objectives in official documents meant for the IDF or for the nation as a whole. Note that the first three goals above are simply not true. The next three are nothing less than shameful. The only goal that remains is the last one, which can only provide a negative contribution to the motivation. What it really means is that the enemy is right!

One might well wonder what the author meant in the words of the hymn of the Palmach, the early fighting force which grew into one arm of the IDF: "We always follow the command, we are always, always, the Palmach!" (Words: Zerubavel Gilad; Music: David Zahavi). Was he referring to blind obedience? Was the "Silver Tray" of the dream of the Palmach a plan to establish a "foreign legion," hired soldiers who acted as robots? The answer is of course in the negative. This is not what was intended!

SERMON BY A GUEST

A Disagreement for an Unholy Reason - by Aviad Tavory, Shaliach of the Jewish Agency to Bnei Akiva, Great Britain

There is a familiar Mishna in Avot that describes the argument by Korach and his community as "a disagreement which is not in the name of heaven" [Avot 5:21]. Who are the people that were involved in this disagreement? We know that some of them were prominent in the nation, but what kind of people were they? Were they evil or were they righteous?

The Midrash tells how the wife of On Ben Pelet rescued him from Korach's supporters. "She sat at the entrance of her home with her hair scattered, and when the men came to call for On and saw her that way they turned back. She sat this way at the entrance, until her husband was saved and the others were swallowed up in the earth. When he woke up, they were all swallowed up and burned, and he had been rescued from both."

This Midrash implies that Korach's colleagues were indeed righteous. After all, they did not dare to enter a place if the woman of the house did not have her hair covered! It is interesting that their righteousness did not prevent these people from disagreeing with the greatest leader that Yisrael ever had, in an unholy argument. Evidently, the point of the Midrash is to emphasize that even great and righteous men may sin by participating in an unholy disagreement.

This brings to mind the words of the Chatam Sofer, who warned rabbis to be wary of those who want to start arguments by making false accusations. "You should know that I have encountered such people many times, and I warn you to be wary of them and to make the twisted approach into a straight one. When I tried to avoid their minor intrigues, I was trapped by greater ones. And this is true not only for simple folk and the majority of the people but also for Torah scholars and even rabbis. You should stay as far away as possible from anybody who does not speak the truth and who does not base his actions on integrity and righteousness."

TORAH, SOCIETY, AND GOVERNMENT

Taking on a Leadership Role - by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

Two antagonists plead their case in court. Specifically, a school claims that a teacher is not doing his job properly, and that he was therefore fired. The teacher claims that the school does not have the authority to fire him, but that only the management of the chain of schools can do this. Thus, the decision will depend on who has the authority to fire a teacher. And then the school makes a new claim, that for the good of the school itself and the entire community this man should not continue working, since he is a bad teacher. This forces the court to discuss the quality of the teaching, even though this is clearly something that is within the exclusive responsibility of the management of the chain of schools, which usually consults with rabbis and halachic decision-makers who are in the same sector as the school itself.

And then one of the judges reasons as follows: Our job is to judge between the two antagonists and not to take on public roles for which we were never given authority. The court performs its duties within a vacuum, and in our case there is another authority which has responsibility for the quality of the teachers. As an example, if a man appoints his wife as executor of his estate, the community has no say in her decisions as to how his money is to be contributed to various holy causes. The court cannot claim that it is an expert in all issues. Perhaps the managers of the schools know more about educational matters than the learned judges. What the court must decide in this case is whether the management of the school has the authority to fire the teacher or not. It cannot get involved in the quality of the teacher, his abilities, and his talents.

However, another judge claims that this is not true! The halacha is full of criteria for hiring a teacher and conditions for firing him. The authority of the management of the chain is limited to establishing general principles and to be involved in the teaching programs. However, with respect to firing a

teacher there are also personal questions which must be taken into account (for example, the teacher's age, how long he has worked in the past, how easy it will be for him to get another job). These issues cannot be separated from other questions about the quality of his teaching and the level of education that he manages to transfer to his students. As far as this judge is concerned, the court plays the role of a father figure for the entire nation and not only for the two antagonists before the court.

Reference: Rabbis A.C. Sherman, S. Daichovsky, "Techumin," volume 25, pages 243-248

MOUNT MORIAH

The Tabernacle and Private Altars - by Rabbi Yitzchak Levy, Yeshivat Har Etzion

In previous articles we have discussed various issues about the Tabernacle, such as its construction and the services performed there. We will now look at some issues related to the events surrounding the Tabernacle and the Temple. Today we will discuss the relationship between the Temple and private altars that could be built during some of the early time periods.

After Bnei Yisrael left Mount Sinai, the Tabernacle moved together with the nation, stopping at the camps in the desert. When the nation entered Eretz Yisrael, the Tabernacle was moved to Gilgal, Shiloh, Nov, Givon, and then Jerusalem. The rules pertaining to the various stations of the Tabernacle are described in the Mishna. In the desert, after the Tabernacle was built, private altars were forbidden, in the time of Gilgal they were permitted, during the time of Shiloh they were once again forbidden, at the time of Nov and Givon they were permitted, and from the time of Jerusalem they have been forbidden for all time to come.

The Position of the Ark and Private Altars

Based on the Talmud Yerushalmi and the Tosefta, the Meshech Chochma suggests an interesting principle to explain the differences between the places where the Ark rested. He explains that whether private altars were permitted or not stems from the relationship between the Ark and the public Altar.

We have discussed in the past that there were two main focal points in the Tabernacle. On one hand, it is the site where the Shechina is revealed – the main expression of this principle is the Ark and the Keruvim on the cover. On the other hand, the Tabernacle is the site where man serves G-d – this is expressed mainly by the large external Altar and the sacrifices brought there. Any time that there is a link between the Ark and the Altar, that is, between the place of G-d's revelation and the site of man's worship, private altars are forbidden. This corresponds to the fact that G-d has chosen a specific place for His dwelling, and this is the only place where He can be served. This was the situation in the times of Shiloh and Jerusalem. However, when the Altar and the Ark were not linked together but were separated for some reason, there was no single place that the Shechina rested, and it was permitted to build a private altar and offer individual sacrifices. This happened in Gilgal

when the Ark was taken out to war and in the time of Nov and Givon, when the main Altar was in the Tabernacle but the Ark was in Kiryat Ye'arim.

What is the Ideal Situation?

Sforno implies that the ideal situation is the way things were before the sin of the Golden Calf, when the Shechina appeared everywhere. "At every site where I mention my name, I will come to you and bless you" [Shemot 20:21]. Then, the service of G-d was performed by the firstborns. As a result of the sin of the Calf, the appearance of the Shechina was limited to a specific area and the service was limited to a single tribe. As far as Sforno is concerned, the possibility to worship G-d everywhere is to be preferred to worshipping only at one central site. This is more pluralistic, it lets all the families engage in the worship, and it means that the Divine presence can be felt everywhere.

Similar reasoning can be found in the writing of the Natziv. In several places, he explains that in the times of Shiloh and Jerusalem, when private altars were forbidden, idol worship was more prominent than in the times of Gilgal, Nov, and Givon. People found it difficult to travel to Shiloh or Jerusalem and they therefore turned to other gods. He also explains that Shlomo began building the Temple only in the fourth year of his reign because he felt that this would cause the people to stop sacrificing on their private altars, leading to a decrease in the love of G-d. The ability to offer a sacrifice increases the opportunity for love and being attached to G-d, while the need to travel to Jerusalem in order to worship G-d limits the opportunity for a close approach to G-d and for loving Him.

The RADAK takes the opposite approach. He feels that the private altars encouraged people to turn to idol worship, because that is the way that the other nations acted. They would build an altar on every available hill and under every tree. The availability of a large number of sites for worship can cause us to be similar to the other nations and their idol worship, in that in essence this denies the unified approach to G-d's revelation in the world.

In any case, after the Temple was built in Jerusalem private altars were forbidden forever. This means that Jerusalem is the only place that allows the eternal revelation of the Shechina in the world. The site where G-d chose to begin the creation of the world is what provides the expression of the meeting point between the Almighty and the world for all generations to come. This is a meeting between physical and spiritual, between finite and infinite. It is the site where the Shechina will rest for eternity. Let us hope and pray that the Temple will be built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem quickly, in our time.

A LESSON FOR THE CHILDREN

The Advisor - by Rabbi Yikhat Rozen, Merkaz Neria, Kiryat Malachi

This is a story of what happened about five hundred years ago. In the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Yosef Taitachek in Salonika (Greece), the wise men of the city gathered on the eve of

Shavuot, getting ready to study all night. The gathering included Rabbi Yosef Karo (the author of the Shulchan Aruch) and Rabbi Shlomo Elkavetz (who wrote "Lecha Dodi"), and others. They started with Bereishit and studied the Torah, and they continued with the Haftrot, psalms, Shir Hashirim, Ruth, and the final verses of Divrei Hayamim. They then turned to the Mishna and studied all the tractates of Zera'im. The atmosphere was one of absolute holiness. The wisest men of the generation were together in the Beit Midrash, delving deeply into the Torah. After they finished studying two tractates of the Talmud, a voice was suddenly heard, coming straight from heaven. The sound became stronger and stronger. The men were gripped by fear, but they listened attentively to the voice. Here is what it said, in a loud and clear voice:

"My beloved friends, I greet you, happy are you and happy are those who gave birth to you. You deserve joy in this world and in the next. Have strength, my friends, have courage, my loved ones. Be happy, know that you are on a high spiritual level, you have been privileged to join the Torah palace of the Almighty, blessed be He. The sound of your Torah study has reached the Almighty, crashing through several levels of heaven on its way. The angels were silent, the holy animals stood, and the entire heavenly court stood aside – and the Holy, Blessed be He, hears your voices..."

The voice continued, finally commanding all of the men gathered there to stand up and call out: "Blessed is the glorious name of His kingdom forever." The men called out in a loud voice, and when they finished the voice said to them: "Good for you, return to your studies and do not stop even for a moment."

They continued studying the Mishna and the once again heard the voice talking to them: "Go to Eretz Yisrael, for now is the time that is right for you. You will be well and your homes will be well, and everything that you have will be well." After this first time, the voice returned to talk to the men several more times, and the words were clear and inspiring. In particular, the voice was often revealed to Rabbi Yosef Karo. He called it the "Magid" – the advisor – because it would tell Rabbi Yosef the secrets of the Torah, answer his questions, and predict the future of what would happen to him and to the Jews.

After a while, Rabbi Yosef Karo indeed moved to Eretz Yisrael and settled in the city of Tzefat. There he wrote the great book that we all know, the Shulchan Aruch, and his halachic decisions in the book were accepted by all of the sectors of the Jewish nation. All the time, the "Magid" continued to appear to Rabbi Yosef and teach him the secrets of the Torah. Rabbi Yosef wrote everything down and wrote a book based on these heavenly revelations. It is called "Magid Meisharim," and it contains the most important things that Rabbi Yosef Karo learned from the "Magid."

As is written, "G-d's secrets are revealed to those who fear Him" [Tehillim 25:14].

(Source: Y. Even Chen, "Maran Rabbi Yosef Karo")

THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS (Pirkei Avot)

Chapter 3 Mishna 1 - by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv

(NOTE: Now that we have finished looking at the entire tractate of Avot in sequence, we will return to an in depth study of a Mishna from the chapter being studied every week.)

"Look at three things and you will not turn to sin." That is how Akavia Ben Mahalalel opens this chapter. Rabbi used the same phrase at the beginning of Chapter 2, but the look offered by Rabbi is different from that recommended by Akavia. Rabbi was concerned with looking upwards, towards heaven. "Know what lies above you." Akavia teaches us to look in the opposite direction, not upwards but downwards. It is not the greatness of the Almighty who looks down on us from above that is meant to deter us from evil but rather the insignificance of mankind – which begins as an odorous drop and ends with worms in the grave – that will keep man away from sin.

However, just such an approach can be a catalyst for increased sin, as is written, "Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" [Yeshayahu 22:13]. If man is indeed so insignificant and worthless, why should he struggle against his nature and refrain from every passing enjoyment. In the end, however, even Akavia's approach turns towards the heavens. "Know before whom you will have to give a reckoning in the future... It will be to the King of Kings, the Almighty."

It may be that the sin that is to be avoided in Chapter 2 is a sin of temptation, while the sin referred to in Chapter 3 is one of spite. Looking from above can give a person the strength to fight against evil desires, while looking at the insignificance of man can dull any anger and the will to cause anger.

Perhaps Akavia's advice is to look at all three elements together. That is, if at the same time that a man keeps his insignificance in mind he is aware that he will be called to account for his actions by the Master of the Universe, he will avoid sin. For he will feel the power of G-d's mercy – even though the man's body will eventually be turned to worms, he will in the future stand before the Almighty. This is similar to the ideas expressed in the most exalted prayer of the year, Ne'ila, on Yom Kippur. First, "You know that our end leads to worms... What are we, what are our lives? ... Man has no advantage over the animals, all is vain." But then, immediately, "You have separated humanity and recognized it to stand before you."

Akavia not only spoke well but also observed what he taught. In the Mishna (Eidiyot 5:6), we are taught that he testified to four things that were the opposite of accepted norms. He was told, "Change your mind about these four things, and we will appoint you as the head of the courts," but he refused to accept the offer. What helped him to hold his opinions so strongly? "He said to them: I would prefer to be called a fool all my life rather than to do evil before G-d, even for one hour. Let it never be said that I changed my mind in order to become a leader."

HOLY AND SECULAR

Gematria and Halacha - by Rabbi Amichai Gordin

As a child, I was privileged to know a very impressive man, the late Dr. Yaacov Orbach. He had broad knowledge in the fields of Torah texts and language. But the subject that fascinated me most was an enchanted box that he had.

One day when I visited him he asked me what words have the same numerical value as the letters of my name. When he saw my perplexed expression, he smiled, took out a small card, and started to give me answers: "He creates mountains with His strength" [Tehillim 65:7]; "The fear of G-d is in his eyes" [36:2]; "In G-d's eyes, that is what he desires" [Malachi 2:17]; "To visit His palace" [Tehillim 27:4]; and many other phrases from holy verses. When I asked him how he could retrieve so many phrases so quickly, he smiled and gave me a small and very old cardboard box where he had arranged hundreds of cards in sequence. At the top of every card there was a number, followed by many phrases with the same numerical value. He explained, "I have been working on this for years, it comes in very handy during joyous celebrations."

Today, with the advances of computers, there is no longer any need for Dr. Orbach's box. The modern Torah data bases can be used today to obtain better results than the box could give, and much more quickly. What took Dr. Orbach years to do can be achieved by any child today with the click of a single button.

The computerized Responsa projects provide a huge improvement in efficiency not only for those who are interested in "gematria" - numerical values – but mainly for those who are studying Torah. Nowadays, it is no longer necessary to have the phenomenal memory of somebody like Rabbi Ovadia Yosef to find a number of rulings about any subject. It is enough to enter the right key words, and the answers are available within seconds. There can be no doubt that this provides a tremendous improvement for the world of Torah. The ability to easily find references to a given subject is a big step forward for everybody who studies Torah, no matter what his level of knowledge. Both young students and veteran scholars can benefit from this modern innovation.

However, it seems that every advance carries with it the possibility of bad consequences. The fact that there is no minimum need of any previous knowledge in order to nonchalantly find, for example, some replies by the early sages of Spain about the faith of a Gentile or a group of rulings by the elders of Province about a daughter's inheritance, provides an opportunity for many people to become instant experts in wide ranging fields.

Actually, the "Torah sages of the Responsa projects" are just one example of a broader group of modern instant "experts." These people tend to spend a single afternoon studying an issue in the Talmud, combining this with the contents of an important article that they read in a Torah bulletin during the morning prayers. The common trait of all these "experts" is that even though they have not sat and studied Torah comprehensively for many years, they are sure that they know the precise "Torah opinion" about every subject, including an exact understanding of the mistakes made by all the prominent rabbis. They are firmly convinced that in many cases the

existing halachic rulings are archaic and not up-to-date. They are also firm in the knowledge that the Torah does not want us to suffer, and they therefore have no doubt at all that their solution to our problems is the only Torah-true solution that exists.

The attitude of such people is outrageous and insulting. They would not come to a physician who has studied for many years and explain to him that his methods are out-dated. They would never sign a contract for purchasing a home without first consulting with an expert lawyer. In such fields, they show great respect for people who have spent years studying the subject. In such fields, they would not presume to know everything without expending any effort. It is only those people whose "profession" is the Torah who come under their scrutiny. Such real experts, who have spent years researching the topics seriously and in detail, are required to overcome partial claims based on distorted quotes of sources. For these "experts," it is only in the area of Torah that broad knowledge and experience are not to be honored and respected.

Unfortunately, we do not have a Sanhedrin today. This often leads us to feel that some of the laws of the Torah might be distorted and out of date. However, there is a great distance between a gut feeling, no matter how justified, and making definite halachic statements. In order to make a halachic ruling, it is necessary to have broad knowledge. Every person has the right to ask questions, every person has the right to offer suggestions. What is necessary is not to forget to apply the same modest approach to the Torah as we give to every form of wisdom. Real Torah is not simply gematria.

THE CHAIN OF HALACHA

The Kiddush Cup - by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, Rabbi of Southern Alon Shevut and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion

It is written, "One recites Kiddush over a full cup of wine, using a cup that is not damaged, with the rules the same as for the cup of the Grace After Meals" [Shulchan Aruch 271:10].

The Talmud gives ten requirements for the cup of wine of the Grace After Meals (Berachot 51a), but only eight of them are listed in the Shulchan Aruch (183:1-4): It must be washed on the inside, washed on the outside, the raw wine should be diluted with water, the cup should be filled, it should be picked up in both hands and transferred to the right hand, it should be lifted one tefach above the table (8 cm), and it should be looked at during Kiddush.

If the cup has been washed, it is not necessary to wash it again. The RAMA writes that it is not necessary to dilute modern wines, which are not as strong as they used to be in the past. Some people preserve the old custom by adding a bit of water to the wine.

How Full Should the Cup Be?

The RAMA writes, "The cup should be filled to the top" [183:2], that is, up to the brim. The Mishna Berura (183:9)

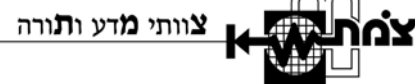
quotes from the TAZ that some people do not fill the cup to the top so that no wine will be spilled. Rabbi S.Z. Auerbach has been quoted as saying that the cup should be filled in the same way that a cup would be filled for a prominent person. "With respect to the custom in Kiddush... to completely fill the cup, this is not right... After all, it is not customary to give a prominent person such a full cup." (As opposed to this, note that the custom is to fill a cup for Havdalla to overflowing, to symbolize a blessing.)

A Disposable Cup

The Shuchan Aruch rules that the Kiddush cup should be whole. This led Rabbi Moshe Feinstein to conclude that a disposable cup is not suitable for Kiddush, since it is of low quality and cannot be considered a "whole" cup. "A paper cup that is meant for temporary use... is of very low quality, since it is not considered important at all, and it is definitely not proper for the Grace After Meals and for Kiddush. However, if there is no other cup available, perhaps one may be lenient."

In Responsa Tzitz Eliezer, the author disagrees with this, for two reasons: (1) A disposable cup is not something that was whole at first and was then damaged. It was made in this way, and it should therefore not be considered broken or damaged. (2) Most disposable cups are of relatively good quality and can be used more than once. (Volume 2, Chapter 23). The reason that such cups are thrown away after use is that they are cheap and in order to avoid the trouble of washing them, but this does not mean that they are of low quality.

In practice, if there is a regular cup available it should be preferred, to take Rabbi Feinstein's opinion into account. When no such cup is available, a disposable cup can be used, since even Rabbi Feinstein considered this a possibility. Some people use two disposable cups, one inside the other, but it is not easy to understand the logic of this practice. If a disposable cup is considered to be whole, there is no need for a second cup, and if it is not whole, using two cups makes no difference. Just the opposite: It is not respectable to give somebody two cups, one inside the other. In summary, if no regular cup or glass is available, a disposable cup can be used both for Kiddush and for washing the hands.



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