

The Kiddush Cup

The Kiddush cup is a common symbol of Shabbat (i.e. the Jewish Sabbath). The purpose of it is connected to the recitation of Kiddush. The Hebrew word Kiddush is derived from the Hebrew word Kedushah, which means holiness, separation, or distinction. The recitation of Kiddush marks the special nature of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is considered holy or set apart from the rest of the days of the week. The Bible states "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Kiddush then is a ceremony and prayer in which the holiness of the Sabbath or of a holiday is proclaimed. According to the Talmud this means that its holiness must be recognized in speech during the day.

It is considered a positive commandment and both men and women are bound to recite it. While the recitation is the most important element, an old custom, dating from the time of the Mishnah sees the Sabbath and the holidays as being sanctified over a glass of wine before the evening meal. The drinking of the wine, with the recitation of some additional paragraphs constitutes the ceremony of Kiddush, in which husband, wife, children, take part together.

According to the Talmud, the origin of the Kiddush can be traced back to the time of the Great Synagogue and from various discussions dating from the first century of the Common Era it can be seen that the ceremony is very old.

At the beginning of Sabbath two loaves of bread are laid down in memory of the double portion of manna that was gathered on Friday, with a white cloth under and over them. There is no true Kiddush except at the place of the meal. There is a custom however among some communities to pronounce Kiddush at the end of the evening service in the synagogue.

Although the Talmud states that strong alcoholic drinks other than wine are not "ideal" for the recitation of the Kiddush, such drinks, out of necessity, once took the place of wine in some northeastern European Jewish communities. For most communities it is better if wine is not available, to pronounce the Kiddush over the Challah bread than to substitute beer or other alcoholic drink.

Before these benedictions it is customary to recite Genesis. 2: 1-3, the account of the Sabbath of Creation, in obedience to the saying of the Talmud that one who recites it makes himself, in a sense, a partner with God in the work of creation.

A Kiddush cup is used in other ceremonies where drinking wine is part of the occasion or ritual. These includes Havdalah (the ceremony demarcating the end of the Sabbath from the coming week), as well as at weddings ceremonies, and various Jewish holidays, among others.

About the Author

Jacob Lumbroso writes articles on history, foreign cultures, and Judaism. For [Silver Shabbat Kiddush Cups](#) or other Jewish culture related to the Shabbat, visit <http://www.judaicaquest.com>

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