

# Pshats for Shots

## A project of JewishDrinking.com

### Welcome

Welcome to the tenth issue of "Pshats for Shots", a one-page resource for helping providing brief, drinking-related *divrei Torah* for each parashah. Wonderful for kiddush clubs, Shabbas meals, or any other gathering in which you need to turn to *al regel ahat* parashah-related *divrei Torah*, "Pshats for Shots" is a project of [JewishDrinking.com](http://JewishDrinking.com). An archive of Pshats for Shots is available at <http://jewishdrinking.com/pshats-for-shots-parashah-sheets/>



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### Why Do Yoseph's Brothers Get Drunk in Egypt?

When attending a royal banquet or any sort of special feast, one would probably not want to get drunk. However, we see Yoseph's brothers doing exactly that (Gen. 43.34): "וַיִּשְׂתוּ וַיִּשְׁכְּרוּ עִמּוֹ" and they drank and got drunk with him."

Sure, they are all together, but they don't know that Yoseph is their brother, nor are they celebrating anything in particular, so what reason is there for them to be drinking so why are Yoseph's brothers drinking so much that they get drunk at that meal?

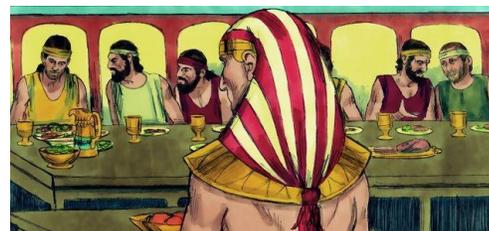
One thing to notice is that this story stands out, since we've only seen one person as being described as getting drunk in the Torah – Noah (Gen. 9.21). Furthermore, there are no other stories in the Torah describing people getting drunk (the lone exception to any further reference of getting drunk is a poetic description (Deut. 32.42)), making this scene stand out even further.

Rabbi Ovadiah ben Jacob Sforno (1475-1550) explains the brothers' drunkenness as arising from having been given really fine wine (ספורנו): "במיני יין מלכות רב שנתן"

they were being served the kind of royal wines, to which they were not accustomed." This 16th century Italian rabbi probably knew a great deal about wine, since many fine wines come out of that area. And anyone who has ever been served or consumed any beverage that is significantly of a higher quality than one typically drinks can be so utterly fascinated and taken with it that they keep consuming more and more of it, almost simply out of fascination. Whether that beverage is wine, whiskey, beer, or anything else, one can easily slip into consuming much more than they might typically consume of that beverage.

This understanding of the brothers' significant consumption of the royal wine may also connect us to Noah's drunkenness. Just as Noah would have been surprised by the effects of wine, having never drunk it before, causing him to be surprised and

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totally overtaken by the effects that it had on him, here, too, the brothers are being overtaken and surprised by the incredible quality of this wine and what it does to them.

So, it's not so much that Yoseph's brothers were celebrating anything or in a particularly celebratory mood, it could just be that they were exposed to a much higher quality of wine than they had ever had and were overtaken and surprised by how good these royal wines were, causing them to get drunk.



Shabbat shalom!

## This Week's Podcast/Video Episode



Caryn Tamber-Rosenau - Wine in Book of Judith

"Wine in the Book of Judith"  
featuring Professor Caryn Tamber-Rosenau,  
available at <http://jewishdrinking.com/other-media/video/wineinbookofjudith/>

## Drinking Halakhah of the Week

When it comes to drinking on Hanukah, does it have any special status? According to Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) in his *Shulhan Arukh*, he writes, “ריבוי הסעודות שמרבים בהם הם סעודות הרשות שלא קבעום למשתה ושמהה The making of many meals that people increase are volitional, since they did not establish them for drinking and rejoicing” (שו"ע או"ח תרע"ב). Rabbi Karo finds it okay for feasting and drinking, but these consumptive celebrations during Hanukah contain no special obligatory nor mitzvah aspects.

The Ashkenazi Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1530-1572) adds thereon: “ויש אומרים שיש קצת מצוה בריבוי הסעודות משום דבאותן הימים היה חנוכת המזבח [מהר"א מפראג] ונוהגין לומר זמירות ושבחות בסעודות שמרבים בהם ואז הוי סעודת מצוה [מנהגים] י"א שיש לאכול גבינה בחנוכה לפי שהנס נעשה בחלב שהאכילה יהודית את But there are those who say that there is somewhat of a mitzvah in adding meals, because during those days was the dedication of the altar. Some are accustomed to recite hymns and songs of praise during the feasts added on them, and then they are mitzvah meals. Some say that cheese should be eaten during Hanukkah, because a miracle was done though milk which Judith fed the enemy.”

Rabbi Isserles' addition is fascinating as this time period commemorates the altar's rededication and, therefore, there is a slight mitzvah aspect to feasting and drinking already. Moreover, it's further fascinating to have hymns and praising during the feasting and/or drinking through which one would be able to accomplish a mitzvah meal!



If you are or know of someone who struggles with alcohol abuse, alcoholism, or other substance abuse, there are resources out there to help. You can check out <http://jewishdrinking.com/alcoholabuse/>

## “Because man does not live on bread alone” (Deut. 8.3)

JewishDrinking.com is a new project, begun in the fall of 2019 to serve as the #1 resource for texts, wisdom, and more on drinking in the Jewish tradition. With source sheets, weekly parashah sheets, weekly podcast/video episodes with guests, articles, and more, JewishDrinking.com seeks to shed light on this human activity. If you have comments, questions, suggestions, on either this parashah sheet and/or the website, please email [Drew@JewishDrinking.com](mailto:Drew@JewishDrinking.com) – ideas are welcome! *לחיים!*