

Pshats for Shots

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Ya'akov's Vinous Blessing to Yehudah

When Ya'akov is blessing his sons, his speaking to Yehudah (Gen. 49.8-12) includes this wine-related comment, "אָסְרִי לִגְפֵן עֵירוֹ וְלִשְׂרָקָה בְּנֵי אֶתְנֶה כִּבְסֵי בֵּינָם לְבִשּׁוֹ וְיָבִדִם - He tethers his donkey to a vine, his colt to a choice vine; He washes his garment in wine, His robe in blood of grapes" (Gen. 49.11) and "חֻלְיֵי עֵינָיִם מִיַּיִן וְלֶבָן - His eyes are darker than wine; His teeth are whiter than milk" (Gen. 49.12). What's going on here?



There's a lot going on here, poetically, although Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105) simplifies what's going on for us: "כָּל זֶה לְשׁוֹן" all of this is an expression of abundance of wine" (רש"י ד"ה כבס). An interesting comment on the first word in 49.12 of Rashi's is that it is "לְשׁוֹן אֲדָם" a phrasing of redness" and that "שָׁכַן דְּרָהּ שׁוֹתֵי יַיִן" such is the way with those who drink wine: their eyes redder" (רש"י ד"ה חלילי).

Rabbi David Kimhi (1160-1235) understands this poetic blessing as about the land's bounty: "וּבְזֵה סֵפֶר הַכְּתוּב שֶׁבַח אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה שֶׁתְּהִיָּה טוֹבָה וְדַשִּׁינָה עַד שֶׁכֵּל אֶחָד מֵהֶם יֵאָסֵר חֲמוּרוֹ לִגְפֵן אֶחָד שִׂיאֲכַל מִמֶּנּוּ וְאִינוֹ חוֹשֵׁשׁ כָּל כֶּךָ יִהְיֶה עֲנָבִים רַבִּים בְּגִפֵּן The entire verse is a praise of the quality of the land apportioned to the tribe of Yehudah which yields such



bountiful harvests that the farmer can tie his donkey to the vine after having eaten from its grapes, without much worry as there are a lot of grapes on the vine" (רד"ק ד"ה אסרי לגפן). He continues: "ויש מפרשים שיתעון חמורו ויש מגפן אחד, וכן מרוב היין אם ירצה יכבס בגדיו ביין And there are those who explain that one would need a donkey from one vine. And similarly, from the abundance of wine, if one wanted to launder his garments in wine, [he would not run out of wine]."

Clearly, Yehudah's meant to have a lot of wine in his offspring's lands.

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Pshats for Shots

Welcome to the newest issue of "Pshats for Shots", a one-page resource for helping providing brief, drinking-related *divrei Torah* for each parashah, along with a Drinking Halakhah of the Week.

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.

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Drinking Halakhah of the Week

Having discussed last week Rabbi Yosef Karo's (1488-1575) statement in his *Shulhan Arukh* that "one need not bless following the meal's wine, since the *Birkat HaMazon* covers it" (שו"ע או"ח קע"ד:ו), the section continues, "וכן פוטר יין שלפני המזון ואפילו לא היה לו יין" And it also covers the pre-meal wine consumed, even if one hadn't drunk the wine amidst the meal."

Providing an explanation for this halakhah, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1839-1933) writes that "דכיון שבאים לפתוח המעיין להמשיך האדם לתאות המאכל הוי ג"כ כדברים הבאים מחמת הסעודה ופשוט דזה דוקא אם שותה סמוך למזון עכ"פ דהוי כאתחלתא דסעודה אבל בלאו הכי לא Since they come to open up one's stomach for a person to cause a person to whet one's appetite, it is also considered as things which come about on account of the meal. And it is clear that this is specifically if one drinks close to the meal. Nevertheless, since it's like the beginning of the meal, but, without this aspect, it doesn't work" (משנה דברורה קע"ד:כ"ד).

This expansion of allowing for the *Birkat HaMazon* to cover the wine that was not only consumed within the meal, but even the wine consumed before the meal [and not with it], is fascinating, but that's not all. Rabbi



Kagan further writes, "ולענין מים ושאר משקין ששותה קודם המזון ואינו שותה בתוך המזון דעת הרבה אחרונים דצריך לברך עליהם ברכה אחרונה שאין בהמ"ז פוטרן דמכיון ששתה אותם קודם המוציא אינם שייכים לסעודה כלל לבד יי"ש שזה ליינ דהוא מעורר Regarding water and other beverages that one drinks prior to the meal, but not within the meal, the opinion of many post-*Shulhan Arukh* commentators is that one needs to bless a post-consumption blessing upon them, since the *Birkat HaMazon* does not cover them, since drinking them prior to *HaMotzi* is not connected to the meal at all, aside from whiskey, since it's similar to wine, in that it whets one's appetite" (משנה ברורה קע"ד:כ"ה).

So, whiskey and wine are fine to consume prior to one's meal and not within it to have their post-consumption blessing covered under the *Birkat HaMazon*, but other beverages consumed prior to the meal and not within the meal require a separate post-consumption blessing, according to many of these halakhic authorities.

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"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 – ideas are welcome! לחיים!