

ONEG SHABBAS

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Blood: A Forbidden Beverage

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

As strange as it sounds, blood is a beverage. Yes, it is not something that we typically consider when it comes to beverages, but it certainly can be drunk. In fact, you can go ahead and search online for news articles about those who drink blood, whether human or otherwise. Spoiler alert: doctors recommend against it. Nevertheless, the Mishnah includes blood as one of seven beverages that cause impurity: "dew, water, wine, oil, blood, milk, and bees' honey" (mMakhshirin 6:4). While we certainly consider wine, milk, and water as consumable beverages, others on this list may not necessarily make us consider them as such. Nevertheless, blood can certainly be a beverage.

In this week's Torah portion, we see a clear prohibition against its consumption: חֲקַת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם כָּל־חַיָּב וְכָל־דָּם. It is an enduring particular law wherever you dwell: you must not eat any fat or any blood" (Lev. 3:17). While there was a previous prohibition already mentioned against blood-consumption (Gen. 9:4), this seems to be brought up at this place in the Torah due to all of the offerings taking place in the text.

This is, in fact, not the only time this prohibition gets brought up, causing one of the greatest Talmudic sages to ask about all
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How Much Wine for the Four Cups?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

With a four-cup minimum to drink of wine at the Passover Seder, how much is necessary for each cup? When it comes to pouring the wine, there must be a minimum of a quarter-log (Pesachim 10b, SA OH 472:9). When it comes to drinking the four cups, ideally, one is to drink the entirety of the cup.

Commenting on a statement of Shmuel (165-257) that "if one gave his sons or the members of his household to drink from the [four cups], one has nevertheless fulfilled one's obligation of these cups" (Pesachim 108b), Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak (d. 356) said: "This is the case only if he himself drank the majority of the cup" (Pesachim 108b). While one can drink a majority of the cup, Tosafot comment that ideally one should drink a minimum of that quarter-log (Tosafot, Pesachim 108b, S.V. רובא דכסא).

This notion of drinking a majority of a cup of wine and sharing it with one's household members is taken to a new level, as it is stated in the Shulhan Arukh, אם יש בו הרבה רביעיות שותין ממנו כל כך, בני אדם כמנין רביעיו' שבו ויש אומרים שצריך לשתות רוב הכוס אפילו מחזיק And if there are many quarter-logs, a bunch of different people can drink from it according to the number of quarter-logs there are in the cup. And there are some who say that one needs to drink a majority of the cup, even if it contains many quarter-logs" (SA OH 472:9).

While there is no disagreement about the minimum size of how much wine to pour for each of these four cups of wine, there is a range of contemporary opinions as to exactly how many ounces there are for a quarter-log, ranging from around 3 ounces all the way up to 5 ounces....

Another matter of measurement for these cups of wine is the amount of time it takes to drink a cup. Is it an entire cup if there is too much time that passes from the beginning of one's drinking of a cup and completing it? Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (1176-1238) thought so, bringing up a concern about delaying the completion of drinking of each cup that it would not be in fulfillment of the requirement to consume these cups of wine, as quoted by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) (בית יוסף או"ח תע"ב). This then leads to Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1530-1572) commenting on the Shulhan Arukh that צריך לשתות השיעור שלא בהפסק גדול בנתיים One needs to

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 of the times this gets mentioned: "אמר רבא חמשה לאוין האמורין ו אחת לדם כיסוי ואחת לדם למה אחת לדם חולין ואחת לדם קדשים ואחת לדם כיסוי ואחת לדם התמצית Rava said: 'Why are there five prohibitions stated with regard to blood (Lev. 3:17, 7:26, 17:14; Deut. 12:16-23)? One is for the blood of non-sacred animals, and one is for the blood of sacrificial animals, and one is for the blood of covering, and one is for the blood left in the limbs of the animal, and one is for the blood of exudate'" (*Keritut* 4b).

One curiosity I had about this prohibition is why does it talk about "eating"? Isn't blood a liquid? It seems that the Talmudic rabbis understood it to encompass even if the blood was made into a non-liquid: "הקפה את הדם ואכלו או שהמחה את החלב וגמעו חייב" One who caused blood to coagulate and ate it or melted forbidden fat and swallowed it is liable" (*Hullin* 120a).

During this time of year, the notion of blood-drinking is particularly uncomfortable, owing to the pernicious and false blood libels made against Jews for centuries. This ultimately came along with terrible anti-Semitic notions of Jews as blood-sucking vampires, especially in the 19th and early 20th century up until the Holocaust. For readers of this publication, you will have noticed what Rabbi David HaLevy Segal wrote that, in his time in Poland, Jews did not drink red wine at the Passover Seder for fear of the blood libels, preferring to stick to white wine for the Four Cups of Wine at the Seder.

While these deeply unfortunate and false blood libels against the Jewish people have not been prevalent enough to get in our way of consuming red wine at the Passover Seder these days, ultimately, Jews never consumed blood, it has never been part of our tradition in any which way, and we should be fortunate to celebrate our Passover Seders with red wine this year. L'chaim

New Episode

The newest episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* features Rabbi Zac Kamenetz, as he explores a teaching of Rav Nahman of Breslov on the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder expanding one's consciousness, energizing the drinkers to fulfill mitzvot. Rabbi Kamenetz is the founder and CEO of Shefa, pioneering a movement to integrate safe and supported psychedelic use into the Jewish spiritual tradition, advocate for individuals and communities to heal individual and inherited trauma.

The Jewish Drinking Show is available on YouTube, as well as wherever you listen to podcasts



Four Cups at the Seder and Consciousness



{ "How Much Wine?" continued from previous page}
 drink the amount of wine (whether a quarter-log or a majority of a quarter-log) without a big delay between drinkings (רמ"א לשו"ט) (או"ח תע"ב:ט).

This then causes Rabbi Abraham Abele Gombiner (1635-1682) to write, "ונ"ל דאם שהא יותר מאכילת פרס אפי' בדיעבד לא יצא" It seems to me that if one delayed more than the amount of time it takes to eat a half-loaf of bread (about 3-5 minutes), one has not fulfilled one's obligation of drinking that cup of wine, even *ex post facto*" and that, "אחת רוב רביעית בבת אחת, Ideally, one should drink a majority of a quarter-log in one gulp" (מגן (אברהם או"ח תע"ב:י"ב).

This idea of gulping down one's glass of wine is echoed by Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908): "וצריך לשתות השיעור בבת אחת, ולכל הפחות שלא בהפסק גדול. וישתה כדרך שתיית רביעית. ובדיעבד יצא כששתה בהפסק עד כדי אכילת פרס. ואם שהה יותר משיעור זה - לא יצא, One needs to drink the amount (whether a quarter-log or a majority of a quarter-log) in one gulp, but, at the very least, without a major interruption. And one should drink in the manner of drinking a quarter-log. *Ex post facto*, one has fulfilled one's obligation if they drank with an interruption/delay of up to the amount of time it takes to eat a half-loaf of bread. But if one delayed beyond this amount of time, one has not fulfilled one's obligation. If one drank it within the amount of time, one has fulfilled one's obligation" (ערן (השלחן או"ח תע"ב:י"ג).

While gulping down one's wine does not seem the way of free people, a simpler take is shared by Rabbi Yisrael Meir ha-Kohen Kagan (1838-1933): "יש לזוהר שלא לשהות בשתיית רוב הכוס" Ideally, one should be careful to not delay drinking a majority of the cup more than the time it takes to drink a quarter-log" (מ"ב תע"ב:ל"ד).

Of course, the question is how long does that take? Perhaps Rabbi Kagan means that one should not delay it with such effort or show a lackadaisical approach to wine-drinking on Seder night, since it is an important aspect of the Seder.

I am a big believer in enjoying one's drinking. I also believe that, while we begin the Seder as seeing ourselves as slaves, we ultimately turn to see ourselves as if we have departed from Egypt and no longer are enslaved. We are בני חורין, freefolk.

While people can certainly gulp down wine if they choose, there is also something to be said for taking a leisurely approach to drinking the four cups of wine at the Seder. When we consider the typical amount of time it takes to drink a few ounces of wine, how long does it normally take? Perhaps one way of considering this aspect is take one's time, enjoy the glasses of wine, and appreciate the freedom to do so, as we are not enslaved. Conversely, if we take too much time to do so, there is also a concern that it does not seem to be part of the same experience in one cup.

L'chaim!

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