



ONEG SHABBAS



THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

פרשת תצוה - 3-4 Mar. 2023 - Vol. 2, Iss. 6 - י"א אדר תשפ"ג

God Command Libations

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

Having mentioned last week that humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and humans drink, so, too, God drinks, thus, we have libations in our tradition. While the first libation to God recorded in the Torah is when Jacob pours a libation to God at Beth-El (Gen. 35:14), God does not command any libations until...you guessed it - this week's Torah portion!

This very first divine command to offer wine to Him occurs within the procedure for offerings (Ex. 29:38-42), more specifically to offer wine to accompany the lambs we are sacrificing to God in both the morning and in the evening, with a quarter-*hin* of wine for each lamb (Ex. 29:40-41). While this was meant for the inauguration of the tabernacle, it was also meant to serve as "עֲלֹתָ תְּמִיד לְדֹרֹתֶיכֶם a regular burnt offering throughout the generations" (Ex. 29:42).

As pointed out recently ("Libations In The Bible: Top Ten Mentions of Libations In Books Of The Bible" - JewishDrinking.com/LibationBibleBooks), libations are found the fourth-most amongst the books in the Bible in Exodus. However, the number one Biblical book in which libations are found in the Bible is Numbers.

It is there, however, that we see a seeming contradiction for which beverage we are to provide God: "וְנִסְכּוֹ רְבִיעֵת הַהִין לְכַבֵּשׂ" וְהֶאֱחָד בַּקֹּדֶשׁ הַסֵּךְ נֶסֶךְ שֶׁכֶר לַיהוָה And its libation is a quarter-*hin* for each sheep to be poured in the sacred precinct as a beer-libation for The LORD" (Num. 28:7).

{continued on page 2}



With Passover on the horizon, you may be looking for wines for the Sedarim. If you ever need a discount on wines, go to JewishDrinking.com and click on the K kosherWine.com discount logo and you get \$15 off orders of \$200 or more.

Disclosure: Jewish Drinking, Inc. may receive affiliate commission on qualifying purchases.

How Much to Drink on Purim?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

In our fourth (and final) week in a row discussing Purim-drinking practices, I wanted to take a look at how much to drink on Purim.

How much to drink on Purim has been a deeply vexing question in front of our rabbinic sages throughout the generations. It is certainly a struggle for the rabbis to consider Rava's famous declaration that "מִיֵּחֵיב אִינִישׁ לְבִסּוּמִי" וְאִשׁוּרָא עַד דְּלֵא יָדַע בֵּין אֲרֻרָה הֵמֶן לְבְרוּךְ מְרַדְּכֵי A person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until one does not know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordecai" (*Megillah* 7b).

While many rabbis throughout the generations have taken this practice literally, and shared it in their writings as such, including Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah* and Rabbi Yosef Karo in his *Shulhan Arukh*.

However, more rabbis struggled with this on a number of fronts: 1) How could rabbis obligate drunkenness? 2) Should anyone get drunk ever, since it can lead to terrible transgressions? 3) What about those for whom drinking creates headaches or other physical maladies? 4) Won't drunkenness prevent one from accomplishing mitzvot and other Jewish practices? And there are others.

A common way of wiggling out of this conundrum was to suggest drinking a little bit more than one is used to drinking, that way they are demonstrating they are taking part in the pleasure of the day, demonstrating they are engaging in a behavior that is outside of their normal consumption.

And then there's the question of how much is enough, even if one is drinking a lot? Does one have to drink until they really cannot make the moral distinction between Haman and Mordechai, or is it just a clever turn of phrase? One suggestion referenced a poem/song that had these words and, if one slurred their words while reciting it, then they have achieved this requisite state.

{continued on page 2}

The question that arises for anyone concerned about which beverage to provide to God for His drinking is: are we supposed to provide Him beer or wine on a twice-daily basis?

Who better to deal with this seeming contradiction than our sages? While the Sages understand שכר to be beer in their parlance, they are uncomfortable with translating it as beer in the three primary appearances in the books of Leviticus and Numbers (specifically, Lev. 10:9, Num. 6:3 (2x), and Num. 28:7). So how do they use/translate it in those instances? They prefer using the term שכר to be something that is משכר/intoxicating, thus they are more concerned with the intoxicating aspect of the wine, rather than seeking to include beer in these matters (cf. *Sifrei Bamidbar* 23:1 and *Sifra Shemini* 1:1-2).

Thus, this yields that our sages understand the regular burnt offering to always be accompanied by a quarter-*hin* of intoxicating wine, not fresh from the winepress. While I would be hard pressed to advocate drinking both in the morning and in the evening, as God commands himself to be poured, nevertheless, there is certainly a fascinating wisdom to drink intoxicating wine. L’chaim!

Having mentioned earlier that there are potential dangers with great drinking, one should know oneself and take care to neither harm oneself nor others. Indeed, perhaps one of the most famous Talmudic drinking stories occurs on Purim, including one of Rava’s teachers, wherein one of them seems to have slain the other (Megillah 7b), so mortal danger and drinking are something about which we ought to be cautious. While this is true, in general, a fascinating invention that has elevated our lives is that of the automobile, which can aid us in our *mishloach manot*, yet can also be deadly. I highly advise those imbibing on Purim to give the keys to someone else or put them away entirely.

Ultimately, Purim is meant to be “ימי משתה ושמחה” days of drinking and festiveness” (Esther 9:22) and, therefore, part and parcel of celebrating the day. While we strive for merriment through drinking, we should also be concerned with joy for all. L’chaim!

Another employs a type of gematria, or Hebraic numerical equivalency, in which one fails to do the proper math.

Perhaps a famous version of lacking the ability to make this distinction is novelly suggested by Rabbi Moshe Isserles that one should drink a little and then take a nap; thus, while one is asleep, they cannot discern between good and bad.

Ultimately, there is, fortunately, a lot of wiggle room in case people do not want to fulfill Rava’s statement of getting drunk.

Having shared a couple of weeks ago in this space that Rava is the Talmud’s greatest wine-drinker, a fan of imbibing wine and clearly experienced at doing so and that he may have made this statement in the sense of “If you’re going to drink and get drunk on any number of occasions throughout the year, you have got to make sure to do so on Purim” (otherwise, you would be missing out). However, perhaps, for those not used to drinking, much less getting drunk, perhaps the obligation to get drunk is certainly less necessary.

Another aspect to consider is that Rava was an experienced drinker and may have made this statement with other experienced drinkers in mind. However, for those who are not as familiar with alcohol, nor with how their body handles alcohol, perhaps he, too, would urge caution. Indeed, another matter I mentioned two weeks ago is that caution should be urged with teenagers.

Purim Episodes

As Purim is just days away, this week's episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* features Rabbi David Fried, as we discuss 18th and 19th century rabbis on Purim-drinking (אחרונים), following-up from last year's episode on 16th and 17th century rabbis on Purim-drinking (אחרונים), which, in turn, follows-up from the previous year's episode on Medieval rabbis on Purim-drinking (ראשונים).

Other Purim episodes:

Ep. #126: "Massekhet Purim: An 18th Century Talmudic Parody" with Prof. Richard Sarason

Ep. #95: "14th Century Purim Parodies" with Rabbi Adam Rosenthal

Ep. #60: "Drinking Parties In The Book Of Esther" with Professor Joshua Joel Spoelstra

Ep. #59: "A Kabbalistic Approach to Purim-Drinking" with Professor Vadim Putzu

Ep. #22: "Drinking on Purim in The Talmud" with Prof. Jordan Rosenblum

Ep. #21: "Rava, Mordechai, and Purim-Drinking" with Rabbi Ayalon Eliach

Ep. #20: "Purim-Drinking in [Lubavitcher] Hasidic Thought" with Rabbi Eli Simpson



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



If you are interested in checking-out Purim episodes from previous years, you can visit JewishDrinking.com/Purim

If you are, or know of someone, who struggles with alcohol abuse, alcoholism, or other substance abuse, there are resources out there to help, which are available at JewishDrinking.com/AlcoholAbuse