

ONEG SHABBAS

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Fetal Drinking?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

While we typically think of Jewish drinking in our own lives and experiences we can remember, one aspect of drinking we have not previously discussed is fetal drinking. No, I do not mean getting drunk and ending up in a fetal position; I mean drinking while being a fetus. As our Torah portion opens up about pregnancy (Lev. 12:1-8), there are some rabbinic midrashim that discuss this aspect of drinking.

As part of his description of the fetal experience, one of the Talmud's most famous expounders shared (*Niddah* 30b):

דרש רבי שמלאי למה הולד דומה במעי אמו לפנקס שמקופל ומונח ידיו על שתי צדעיו שתי אציליו על ב' ארכובותיו וב' עקביו על ב' עגבותיו וראשו מונח לו בין ברכיו ופיו סתום וטבורו פתוח ואוכל ממה שאמו אוכלת ושותה ממה שאמו שותה ואינו מוציא רעי שמא יהרוג את אמו וכיון שיצא לאויר העולם נפתח הסתום ונסתם הפתוח שאלמלא כן אינו יכול לחיות אפילו שעה אחת

Rabbi Simlai expounded: "To what is a fetus in its mother's womb comparable? To a folded notebook. And it rests with its hands on its two sides, its two arms on its two knees, and its two heels on its two buttocks, and its head rests between its knees, and its mouth is closed, and its umbilicus is open. And it eats from what its mother eats, and it drinks from what its mother drinks, and it does not emit excrement lest it kill its mother. But once it emerges into the airspace of the world, the closed limb, i.e., its mouth, opens, and the open limb, its umbilicus, closes, as otherwise it cannot live for even one hour...."

As a fetus already begins drinking what its mother drinks while in its mother's belly, it is also impressive that it is able to remain in her belly (*Vayikra Rabbah* 14:3):

אמר רבי תחליפא דקסריא אם אכל אדם פרוסה אחר פרוסה לא שניה דוחה את הראשונה, האשה הזו כמה מאכל היא אוכלת וכמה משקים היא שותה ואינו דוחה הולד, אין זה חיים והסד

Rabbi Tahlfifa of Caesarea said: "If a person eats one portion of food after another portion of food, does not the second portion expel the first? But no matter how much food a woman eats or how many beverages she drinks, the fetus is not expelled - is this not 'life and lovingkindness'?"

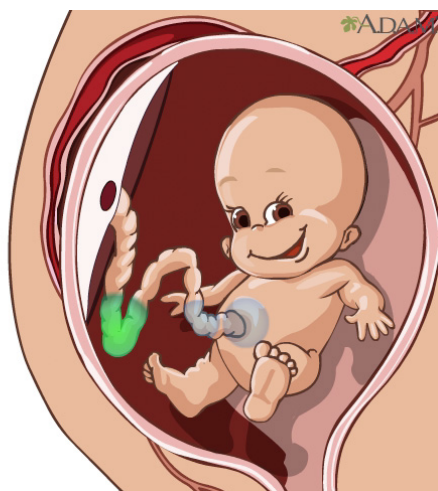
Yet another midrash discusses the preparation during gestation for the post-fetal drinking experience (*Vayikra Rabbah* 14:3):

אמר רבי מאיר כל תשעה חודשים שאין האשה רואה דם בדין הוא שתהא רואה, מה הקדוש ברוך הוא עושה מסלקו למעלה לדדיה ועושהו חלב, כדי שיצא הולד ויהיה לו מזון לאכל, וביותר אם היה זכר, שנאמר: אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר

Rabbi Meir said: "All nine months that a woman does not see blood, she really should have seen it. What did The Holy Blessed One do? He removed (the blood) upward to her breasts and made it milk, so that when the baby was born there would be food for him to eat. Even more if it was a male child, as it says: 'When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male.'"

Taken together, these rabbinic midrashim point to not only drinking as a something that happens ex utero, but even in utero, thus, it seems that the rabbis are pointing out drinking as a continual life-giving behavior, especially as we are developing in utero, preparing us for the post-fetal world.

May all of our drinking provide us nourishment and life. L'chaim



With Passover now in our rearview mirror, you may have used up a lot of wines and might be looking to restock your wine supply. If you need a discount on wines, go to JewishDrinking.com and click on the 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.

Oneg Shabbas is a project of Jewish Drinking, Inc., a 501(c)3 initiative to educate about drinking in Jewish wisdom, tradition, history, practice, and more in order to enrich people's lives. This publication is composed by, edited by, and published by Rabbi Drew Kaplan. If you have any comments, compliments, or suggestions, he can be reached at

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The Jewish Drinking Show

Newest Episode

The most recent episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* published right before Passover on April 4th features Professor Samuel Levine, professor of law and director of the Jewish Law Institute at Touro Law Center, discussing a rabbinic responsum during the Holocaust concerning the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder, despite the inability to procure any wine. Based on his "Jewish Law From out of the Depths: Tragic Choices in the Holocaust" article, *The Jewish Drinking Show's* first Holocaust episode welcomes Professor Levine to discuss this matter on the 131st episode of the show. While Passover has just concluded, the discussion is timely, as *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) took place just this week. The episode, in both video and podcast format, is available on YouTube, as well as wherever you listen to podcasts at JewishDrinking.com/Holocaust4Cups.



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



 [YouTube.com/@JewishDrinking](https://www.youtube.com/@JewishDrinking)

Upcoming Episodes

- April 25 – Rabbi Zachary Goodman – Reform Responses to Prohibition
- May 2 – Prof. Jordan Finkin – Yiddish Drinking Terms
- May 9 - Yossi Francus - Scotches
- May 16 - Prof. Sacha Stern - Compulsive Libationers in the Talmud?

Wine Wednesday Events



Building on recent Texts-and-Tasting Events in Cincinnati led by Rabbi Drew in February and March (see below for a picture from the March tasting on the topic of the possibility of blessing *HaTov veHaMeitiv* at the Seder), Rabbi Drew will be leading Texts-and-Tasting Events in both April and May. Featuring a wine-tasting of six different wines, Texts-And-Tasting led by Rabbi Drew Kaplan.

This Wednesday's event, taking place at 8pm on April 26th, will be a wonderful way to close out Yom Ha'Atzma'ut, as we drink wines from Israel and discuss wine in connection to Israel.

Special for these two Wine Wednesday events, Jewish Drinking has been provided wines for review from KosherWine.com, as they are the exclusive distributor for these wines in America. For those interested, we will also shoot a review video for those who would like to be included.

These events will be taking place on Wednesday 26 April at 8pm and Wednesday 3 May at 8pm, at private residences in Amberley Village in Cincinnati to be provided. While there is no charge to attend these events, donations are encouraged and wonderfully welcomed to both express appreciation for such Torah being shared and to support the work of Jewish Drinking. To do so, you can visit either JewishDrinking.com/Donate or PayPal.me/JewishDrinking.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please reach out to Rabbi Drew Kaplan at Drew@JewishDrinking.com



photo courtesy of Eric Schwartzberg

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