

# ONEG SHABBAS

THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

פרשת במדבר - Vol. 2, Iss. 14 - 19-20 May 2023 - כ"ט אייר תשפ"ג

## Reconsidering Nadav's & Avihu's Deaths

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

While there is no explicit mention of any drinking in this week's Torah portion, there is an oblique reference to it. I'm specifically referring to the reference to Nadav and Avihu's deaths, where our Torah portion describes them as dying "אֵשׁ זָרָה לִפְנֵי ה'" when they offered alien fire before The LORD in the wilderness of Sinai" (Num. 3:4).

Several weeks ago in *Parashat Shemini*, we discussed this intriguing juxtaposition of the prohibition against priests drinking on the job, their service, with the immediate juxtaposition being too glaring to ignore. Whether a midrash or an interpreter, it's just too immediate to ignore.

However, when we encounter this description in this week's Torah portion, we don't necessarily see any direct mention of drinking that causes their deaths.

Indeed, there are midrashim that attribute Nadav's and Avihu's deaths to other possibilities, such as the following selections from *Midrash Tanhuma (Aharei Mot 6:1)*:

תאני בשם רבי אלעזר, לא מתו נדב ואביהוא, אלא על שהורו הלכה לפני משה רבן

It was taught in a baraita in the name of R. Eliezer: "Nadab and Abihu died only because they had taught halakhah in the presence of their master, Moses."

בר קפרא בשם רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר אמר, בשביל ארבעה דברים מתו בני אהרן, על הקריבה, ועל ההקרבה, ועל אש זרה, ועל שלא נטלו עצה זה מזה. על הקריבה, שנכנסו לפני ולפניהם. ועל ההקרבה, שהקריבו קרבן מה שלא נצטוו. ועל אש זרה, שהביאו אש זרה מבית הכיורים. ועל שלא נטלו עצה זה מזה, תאני רבי חייא, איש מחמתו, איש מעצמו עשו ולא נטלו עצה זה מזה

Bar Qappara said in the name of R. Jeremiah bar Eleazar, "Aaron's sons died because of four things: For the drawing near, for the sacrificing, for alien fire, and for not taking advice from each other. For drawing near, in that they entered the innermost sanctuary. For the sacrificing, in that they offered a sacrifice, which they had not been commanded [to offer]. For alien fire, in that they had brought fire from a cookhouse (instead of from off the altar). And for not taking advice from each other."

אבא חנין אומר, שלא היה להם נשים, דתנינן תמן, וכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו, היא אשתו.

Abba Hanin says, "Because they had no wives, and it is recorded, 'and he shall make atonement for himself and for his household' (Lev. 16:6)."



רבי מני דשאב ורבי יהושע דסכנין בשם רבי לוי, בשביל ארבעה דברים מתו בניו של אהרן, ובכלל כתיב בהן מיתה. על שנכנסו בלא רחיצת ידים ורגלים, וכתוב בהן מיתה, בבאם אל אהל מועד ורחצו מים ולא ימתו (שמות ל, כ). ועל ידי שנכנסו מחסרי בגדים, דכתיב בהן מיתה, שנאמר: והיו על אהרן ועל בניו בבאם אל אהל מועד וגו' (שם כח, מג). ומה היו מחסרים. אמר רבי לוי, מעיל היו מחסרים, דכתיב ביה מיתה, שנאמר: והיה על אהרן לשרת ונשמע קולו וגו' (שם פסוק לה). ועל ידי שלא היה להם בנים, כתיב בהן מיתה, שנאמר: וימת נדב ואביהוא ובנים לא היו להם (במדבר ג, ד). ועל שנכנסו שתויי יין למקדש, (וכתיב: יין ושכר אל תשת ולא תמתו וויקרא י, ט

R. Mani of Sha'av and R. Joshua of Sikhnin said in the name of R. Levi, "Aaron's sons died because of four things, and [a sentence of] death is recorded in connection with all of them. Because they entered without washing hands and feet, and it says, 'When they come unto the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water lest they die' (Ex. 30:20); because they entered while lacking [the proper priestly] clothes, and it says, 'And they shall be upon Aaron and his sons in their coming to the tent of meeting...' (Ex. 28:43); ...because they had no children, and [a sentence of] death is recorded in connection with [that lack], where it is stated, 'But Nadab and Abihu died...and they had no children' (Num. 3:4); and because they entered and had drunk wine, and it says, 'Drink no wine or intoxicating liquor... lest you die' (Lev. 10:9)."

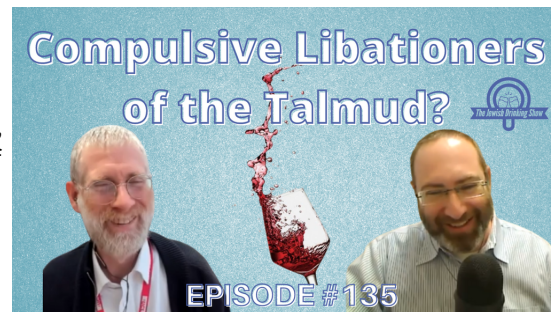
While there are certainly midrashim that attribute Nadav's and Avihu's deaths to being intoxicated while sacrificing, there are midrashim that attribute their premature deaths to other factors.

While people typically think of their deaths as being caused by drunkenness or otherwise drinking while on the job, maybe we should consider other possibilities, as raised by these rabbis. Certainly, drinking can cause problems, but it is not always the culprit. *L'chaim*

# The Jewish Drinking Show

## Newest Episode

The newest episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* features Prof. Sacha Stern, professor of Rabbinic Judaism at University College London (UCL), where he was Head of Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies from 2012 to 2022. He specializes in late antique and early medieval Jewish history, rabbinic literature, and the history of calendars, time reckoning, and astronomy. He is the editor of the *Journal of Jewish Studies*. I was fascinated to have come across Professor Sacha Stern's "Compulsive Libationers: Non-Jews and Wine in Early Rabbinic Sources", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 64.1 (2013): 19-44.



While the full episode is available on YouTube, as well as wherever you listen to podcasts, you can check out the episode at [JewishDrinking.com/LibationWine2](http://JewishDrinking.com/LibationWine2).

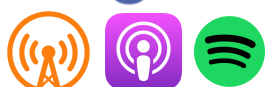
In addition to the episode, there are a couple of clips separately published from this episode on "Attitudes Towards Gentile Wine In The Talmud" and "Greco-Roman Libations".



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

## May-June Episodes

- May 2 - Yiddish Drinking Terms, featuring Dr. Jordan Finkin
- May 9 - Cincinnati Kiddush Club Scotches, featuring Yossi Francus
- May 16 - Compulsive Libationers of the Talmud?, featuring Prof. Sacha Stern
- June 13 - Prof. Phil Lieberman - Wine in Geonic Literature
- June 20 - Prof. Claudia Bergmann - Drinking in the World to Come in Second Temple Literature?



YouTube.com/  
@JewishDrinking

## Preparing For Passover Begins Now

Last month, during the course of Passover, a couple of buddies and I were reflecting upon kosher for Passover liquors, both those that others held, as well as our own modest collections. While we had modest arrays of options for consuming for the duration of the holiday, we realized preparing for Passover begins now.

While some readers of this website may greatly enjoy wine for all of Passover – and that is incredibly lovely – not all of us are cut out to drink only wine for all of Passover. Yes, we all have it for the sederim, which is great, however, there's much more to celebrate on the holiday, especially if there is a Shabbat in the middle of it. For those of us who enjoy spirits and/or cocktails, you may want to consider building up a liquor library for Passover.

While in our minds, we might think about preparations for Passover in terms of the early rabbinic passage that discusses the intellectual preparation for Passover thirty days prior to Passover (*Pesaḥim* 6a), it is hard to get ready for Passover before that, since Purim is right there. As readers of this publication, you are likely also deeply thinking about Purim, so it can be hard to get Passover in one's head with Purim before it. However, dear readers, while this is true that we should begin preparations for Passover thirty days in advance in terms of the halakhic aspects. For building up a Kosher for Passover (KFP) liquor

library, however, maybe we need to begin thinking now.

What made the group of us think about this matter in particular was that there are a very tiny amount of KFP liquor options available within driving distance for us. While those in either the greater New York City area or Los Angeles might have a wide array of options, as well as those in Israel, for those of us in the rest of the country do not have this wide of an array of options. When we asked around where people got various KFP liquors, it turns out some of us got them whether while visiting Israel, whether in duty free while traveling in various other countries, or going to New York City, Chicago, or LA, which have a greater array of kosher options.

Liquors one might think to buy that are KFP include tequila, mezcal, arak, cognac, sotol, vodka, and even some whiskey-like spirits. One particular friend said he put off buying verified KFP sotol and mezcal bottles on trips to the east coast last August and this past January, regretting it by March when local stores were out of stock.

So we realized if we want to begin to build a KFP liquor library and something that can even endure for years – as many spirits are meant for keeping for multiple years – that we need to begin now. While Passover only ended last month, the time to prepare building a kosher for Passover liquor library for next year begins now.

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](http://JewishDrinking.com/AlcoholAbuse)