

{*ma'aser sheni* continued from previous page}

you may desire. And you shall feast there, in the presence of The LORD, your God, and rejoice with your household" (Deut. 14:26).

Either way, this secondary tithing about which we read [twice] in this week's Torah portion is clearly a Jewish drinking topic: whether one is able to take one's grape juice and drink it in Jerusalem or sell it locally to take the money to purchase either beer or wine in Jerusalem to drink, this is definitely a Jewish drinking topic.

{Torah drunkenness continued from previous page}

did not know what to expect.

Conversely, the next time we read of drunkenness, it does not even get described as drunkenness, since it is so obvious (cf. Rabbi Hanina's statement that references Lot's drunkenness (Eruvin 65a)), that of Lot and his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38). I say that it is so obvious, since the text describes him as "ולא ידע בשכרה וברקומה" he did not know when she lay down or when she rose" (Gen. 19:33 & 19:35), so clearly the wine had a massive effect on him. While this is a Biblical story, this story does not require us to use our imaginations much to try to figure out how it could happen today, as people continue to use alcohol until this day for such access. As starkly contrasted against Noah, where he was blindsided by the effect that wine would have upon him, Lot's daughters clearly are intentionally using the alcohol to incapacitate their father for sexual access. So, by this time, it was known to be able to be used for such matters.

The final occurrence of drunkenness in the Torah is when Yosef's

While I have a lot further to learn on this topic, I will share with you one Talmudic tidbit with you on this topic. When it comes to purchasing wine in Jerusalem, is that money restricted only for the purchase of wine, or can it be used for drinking accoutrements also? In a *beraita*, Ben Bag Bag (yes, the same Ben Bag Bag of which we read at the end of *Avot* 5), explains that "ובין מלמד שלוקחין יין על גב קנקנו 'On wine' teaches that one may buy wine and include in its price payment for its jug" (*Eruvin* 27b).

L'chaim 🍷

brothers drink with him (although they do not yet know that his is their brother) in the royal palace, as "ושתו וישכרו עמו" they drank with him and they got drunk with him" (Gen. 43:34).



The most remarkable aspect to this final story of drunkenness in the Torah is that nothing remarkable happens. There is no shocking aftermath or tragic fallout. In fact, it is simply understood to be a normal occurrence.

Perhaps this is the trajectory in the Torah of drunkenness: what started out as a blindsided surprise in incapacitation became to be understood to be used for incapacitating for sexual purposes, but, ultimately, something to simply enjoy in the company of others.

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Wine Wednesday Events

Jewish Drinking recently held its monthly Texts-and-Tasting event last week, featuring an exploration of drunkenness in Judaism.

Led by Rabbi Drew, this exploration of all mentions of drunkenness in Tanakh/Bible then continued on to considering all of the mentions of drunkenness in the Mishnah and Tosefta, two early rabbinic texts.



Part of the Wine Wednesdays mini-series, this event also featured wines from Israel, two courtesy of KosherWine.com and one courtesy of Jezreel Valley Winery, along with a few fascinating beers from Israel.

Our next Wine Wednesday event will be taking place on September 13th at 8pm, where we will continue enjoying Israeli wines from KosherWine.com, along with an Israeli gin. Stay tuned!



photo courtesy of Eric Schwartzberg

Kiddush Clubs Observe Siyum HaShots

Written by Yo Robbins

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On Saturday morning in synagogues around the world, Kiddush club members celebrated the completion of a seven-and-a-half-month cycle of weekly drinking.

The celebration, called *Siyum HaShots*, was marked by the downing of various whiskeys, bourbons, ryes, rums, and brandies until every bottle was empty. "Shots in shul are a time-honored tradition," said *siyum*-organizer Ben Shikker. "We all know that wherever four Jews gather, there's always a fifth."

The *siyum* (Hebrew for conclusion) is held every seven-and-a-half months because it takes that

long for the average kiddush club to polish off all its liquors and begin new bottles.

Shikker concedes that pressure is now being placed on synagogues to abolish their kiddush clubs and the *Siyum HaShots*. "It's shameful," said Shikker. "The OU is waging a whole campaign against us, called 'Now You Siyum, Now You Don't.' But we won't be intimidated."

Shikker asserts that being part of a kiddush club actually improves the fervency of one's davening. "You can't spell spirituality without spirits," he noted.

He added that men who partake in a private kiddush during the haftarah "shokkel more during Musaf."

Some rabbis see it differently, however. "They shuckel because they can't stand straight after all that schnapps," said Rabbi Nofun Ahlout. "Or even worse, they desperately need the bathroom."

Despite the current protests, Shikker vows that shul kiddush clubs and the *Siyum HaShots* will continue. Furthermore, he advocates bringing the tradition into one's home.

"When my wife asks me to buy her a dozen roses, I give her three bottles of Four Roses," said Shikker. "I'm very proud of that."