

ONEG SHABBAS

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Punishment Through Wine

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

In the song that God had commanded Moses to למקדה את בני ישראל שימיה בפייהם למען תהיה ללית השירה הזאת לעד בבני ישראל "teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths, in order that this poem may be My witness for the people of Israel" (Deut. 31:19), we unsurprisingly read of wine, as we read of the Jews the song includes that דם ענב תשתהוהמר "Drink the blood of grapes for wine" (Deut. 32:14). While this description of the Israelites was in the good times that was, unfortunately, before them turning away, which was expected (Deut. 31:16, 31:20-21, and 31:29).



As part of the punishments, there are also punishments involving - you guessed it - wine & drinking (Deut. 32:32-33):

But their vine is from the vine of Sodom and the shoot of Gomorrah. Their grapes are poison grapes; their grape cluster is bitterness to them. Their vine is serpents' venom, like the poison of the dreadful cobra.

כי־מגפן סדום גפנם ומשדמת עמרה ענבמו ענבי־רוש אשכלת מרתת למו חמת תנינם יננם וראש פתנים אכזר



However, who will be doing this drinking? While it might be considered that it's the Israelites', since they are not properly behaving, could it, however, be the non-Israelite

nations? It turns out that both answers are reflected in midrash, as Rabbi Yehudah suggests that these verses are referring to Israel, while Rabbi Nehemiah claims it is referring to other nations (Sifrei Devarim 322:9). Indeed, even into the Medieval era, the commentators are divided, with Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (henceforth, Rashi) (1040-1105), Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1092), Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270) (henceforth, Ramban), and others following Rabbi Nehemiah, while Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (1475-1549) (henceforth, Sforno) and Hizkuni seem to follow Rabbi Yehudah.

Owing to the poetic style of the language, a lot of questions arise, first of which is why the reference to Sedom and Gemorah? According to Rashi, {continued on next page}

Yom Kippur Through the Drinking Glass

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

Amongst all the days of the year, the only one that the Torah outright forbids drinking on is that of Yom Kippur. While the language used does not specify withholding drinking - עניתם את־נפשותיכם "shall afflict yourselves" (Lev. 23:27, Lev. 23:32, & Num. 29:7), our sages make it clear that one of the key ways we afflict our bodies is through not drinking (mYoma 8:1 & tYoma 4:1). What we are seeking to accomplish is in order to atone for you in front of The LORD, your God" (Lev. 23:28). Thus, our withholding from drinking on Yom Kippur helps us atone for us.

Notably, the punishment for not doing so is being cut-off from our people (Lev. 23:29), it is that fundamental of a Jewish practice. However, the sages created a threshold for liability, such that one would need to drink a cheekful of beverages in order to be considered transgressing, although beverages do not get measured with foods (mYoma 8:2 (cf. SA OH 612:9)).

While there is a severity to our drinking even a cheekful of beverages for the duration of Yom Kippur, this day seems to stand out amongst our calendar, as it is sandwiched between drinking. Indeed, it is considered a mitzvah to eat and drink on erev yom Kippur, including eating more (SA OH 604:1). Moreover, as opposed to erev Tisha b'av, there is no prohibition against consuming alcoholic beverages (although I do not know if it is a good idea to so). Nevertheless, one should stop their eating and drinking with time to go before Yom Kippur in order to add holy time to their non-holy time (SA OH 608:2).

Furthermore, once Yom Kippur concludes, we then ritually conclude the holiday with Havdallah, with our first consumptive act to be carried out over wine (although I've seen beer used) (SA OH 624:3). Moreover, Rabbi Moshe Isserles wrote that our post-Yom Kippur behavior is אוכלים ושומחים "we eat and (drink) upon the departure of Yom Kippur, since it's sort of a holiday" (Rama on SA OH 624:5). {continued on next page}



Heimish Humor @HeimishHumor

"Jews have six fast days a year? So you must be a pretty trim and fit people."

"Ohhh, no...no no no no."

3:14 PM · 21 Sep 23

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it's on account that their behaviors are as the behaviors of Sodom and Gomorrah, which makes lovely sense. His grandson, Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (1085-1158) explained that **אם לא מפני גאות האומות שהם מגפן סדום, היה להם לשתות מן הדין שלא ישאר מהם זכר כסדום ועמורה**, שהרי חטאו כסדום ועמורה “Had it not been for the boast of the gentile nations to have accomplished this; They should have drunk from the vine of Sodom; just as there is no vestige left of the former inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, so there should have been no trace left of them, since they sinned like the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.”

As to “their grapes are poison grapes”, Sforno explains that **ומזה הגפן יצמחו אצלם ענבי רוש שהם מעשים רעים ומזיקים לבריות וזה בהשתדלם לשים עיניהם** “And from the vine will grow with them mulberries, which are bad deeds and harmful to mankind, and this is in their efforts to put their eyes and hearts on their greed and to shed innocent blood.”

There is a lot more to explore with this poetic language, but the mixing of song and wine is clearly no accident, especially since this song is meant to be in our mouths.

L'chaim 🍷

A Pre-Yom Kippur Drink

Jay Rosen recently wrote an article in the *Jerusalem Post* in which he writes, “With all the planning around Yom Kippur, researching what is best to eat before and after fasting, how to avoid the dreaded caffeine withdrawal headache, and so on, we often forget to drink lots of water. However, water alone is not enough to ensure we have both the hydration and the electrolytes needed to stay healthy through the fast. Enter the Iranian sharbat.” This drink, he writes, is actually “a class of drinks made by mixing dense, flavored syrups with water and ice, and comes in a variety of flavors.”

Amongst this group is sekanjabin, which is, he writes, “sweet and sour, and refreshing due to its use of mint. Sekanjabin can quench the thirst of drinkers and non-drinkers alike.”

Herein follows the recipe Rosen shares:

Serves 6-8.

- 1 cup honey
- ¾ cup white or apple cider vinegar
- Handful of fresh mint

For serving:

Diagonally sliced cucumbers and extra mint for garnish
Ice
Rosewater (optional)
Highball or silver cup for the alcoholic version

Combine honey with 1 cup water in a saucepan and bring to a slow boil for 10-15 minutes, skimming off any foam. Add the vinegar and simmer for another 20-25 minutes, continually skimming off any foam. Add the mint and keep simmering for a total of 30 minutes. Remove from heat, discard herbs, and let come to room temperature before refrigerating.

To serve:

Add a slice of cucumber and a few mint leaves with 60 ml. or 4 tablespoons of the sharbat in a glass or cup, and muddle. Fill the glass with cracked ice, 60 ml. or 4 tablespoons of bourbon or rye. Garnish with additional cucumber and mint.

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What this ultimately results in is this single day that is devoid of drinking (and eating), amongst other activities, yet notably bounded by drinking on both ends. Of course, there are certain exceptions, including utilizing the minimum amount of beverage loophole the rabbis created, should one need (although one should consult one's rabbis for such circumstances). All of this boils down to may we withhold our drinking on Yom Kippur to enjoy more l'chaims.

Wishing you a meaningful fast.

Texts-and-Tasting Events

Jewish Drinking's monthly Texts-and-Tasting events in Cincinnati continue. September's Text-and-Tasting event was our fifth and final Wine Wednesday event, as we explored Drinking In/Out of Sukkot, along with a few wines and even a flavorful gin from Israel. For those interested in the tasting notes video on the wines, it is available at JewishDrinking.com/Sept2023Tasting. In a first from our series, the recording from the event will be published as an episode of The Jewish Drinking Show next week (stay tuned).

Having completed our Wine Wednesdays, we return to spirits for our October and November events. Our October event, "Scotch in the Sukkah" will be taking place at 8pm on October 4th at a private residence, featuring a texts-based discussion on Drinking in the Book of Ecclesiastes (קהלת). Our November event, "Mezcal & Mourning", will take place at 8pm on November 9th at a separate private residence.

Should you have any questions regarding any of these events and/or are interested in sponsoring them, please reach out to Rabbi Drew Kaplan at Drew@JewishDrinking.com.



photo courtesy of Eric Schwartzberg

The Jewish Drinking Show

While there is no new episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* this week, a helpful past episode to check out from 2020 is “Drinking During the

Ten Days of Repentance”, as we still have a couple days left of this special time of year.

May we be inscribed in the Book of Life.

