

# ONEG SHABBAS

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## Malkitzedek's Bringing of Wine & Bread to Avram

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

Following Avram's involvement in the war between the four kings vs the five kings, when Avram rescued Lot (Gen. 14:14-16), we read of the king of S'dom coming out to meet Avram (Gen. 14:17). However, before the king of S'dom speaks with Avram (Gen. 14:21-24), there is a brief narrative interruption where Malkitzedek, the king of Shalem, comes out to Avram and blesses him (Gen. 14:18-20):

And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was a priest of God Above. He blessed him, saying, "Blessed be Abram of God Above, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Above, Who has delivered your foes into your hand." And [Abram] gave him a tenth of everything.

ומלכי־צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וַיָּבֵן כֶּהֵן לְאֵל עֲלִיּוֹן וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרֹחַ אַבְרָם לְאֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ וּבְרוּךְ אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר־מָגַן צְרַרְךָ בַּיַּד וַיִּתְּרֵלָהּ מֵעֵשֶׂר מִכָּל

What stands out here, in addition to the interruption of the king of S'dom approaching Avram, is that Malkitzedek brings forth bread and wine to Avram. This is the first time in the book of Genesis that we've seen wine appear since Noah got drunk in chapter 9. While we can understand that bread will help his hunger, why does he bring wine out to him?

### Midrash: Allegoric Approach & Metaphoric Approach

One approach is to suggest that bread and wine are not significant in and of themselves, as we read in this midrash (בראשית רבה מ"ג:ו):

...Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman and the Rabbis:

Rabbi Shmuel said: "He revealed to him the laws of the High Priesthood. 'Bread' – this alludes to the showbread; 'and wine' – this alludes to the libations."

The Rabbis say: "He revealed Torah [precepts] to him, as it is stated: 'Come, partake of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mixed' (Proverbs 9:5)."

... רבי שמואל בר נחמן ורבנן, רבי שמואל אמר הלכות קהנה גדולה גלה לו, לחם, זה לחם הפנים. ויין, אלו הנסכים. ורבנן אמרי תורה גלה לו, שנאמר (משלי ט, ה): לכו לחמו בלחמי ושתינו ביינן מסכתא. ...



Whereas Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman advocates for the bread and wine serving as allegories, his late third century rabbinic contemporaries advocate that they merely serve as metaphors for what Malkitzedek served him. Either way, the point of this midrash is to look beyond the physical aspects of what he served him and looking for something more Godly.

While do read of subsequent medieval commentators who shared Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman's perspective, such as Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105) (herein referred acronymally as Rashi), it does not quite gain a lot of traction.

### Feeding The Battle-Wearied

While Rashi wrote about that idea, he creates a different idea that gains more traction amongst medieval commentators: כך עושים ליגיעי מלחמה, "Thus is done for those wearied through battle and he showed him (Avram) that he bore him no malice for killing his descendants."

This idea gained traction amongst subsequent medieval commentators, such as Rabbi David Kimhi (1160-1235) (Radak) and Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (1475-1549) (Sforno)).

In considering Rashi's suggestion that this was for the battle-wearied, Rabbi Mordecai ben Avraham Yoffe (1530-1612) suggests that maybe Malkitzedek brought it out for the soldiers to have a drinking party:

It seems to me that a question for Rashi is if he did this for Avraham's honor or if he was passing by on his return from war that he would be bringing it to his house and they would make a drinking party.

Therefore, Rashi wrote "this is what they do for those wearied from battle", that they would be tired, wearied, and famished, so he provided for them dry bread and wine that was better than any other delicacies that they could not wait until the food would be cooked because of hunger, and he passed by suddenly and it is possible that it was not Avram's path to pass there, so Malkitzedek would not have known beforehand; therefore, he brought it close to his city. ....

נ"ל שקשה לרש"י אם לכבוד אברהם היה עושה מפני שעבר עליו בשובו מהמלחמה היה לו להביאו אל ביתו והיה לו לעשות משתה לכך אמר כך עושין ליגיעי מלחמה שהם עיפים ויגיעים ורעבים וערב להם לחם יבש ויין יותר מכל מעדנים שאינם יכולים להמתין עד שיתבשלו המאכלים מפני הרעב והוא שעבר עליו פתאום ואפשר שלא היה זה במהלכו של אברהם לעבור שם ומלכי צדק לא ידע קודם לכן שיבא כ"כ קרוב לעירו

While the idea of the soldiers throwing a post-war drinking party is certainly an intriguing one, another question to ask is maybe they were

{continued on next page}

{continued from previous page}

simply exhausted, hungry, and in need of food, as Rabbi Elijah Mizrahi (1455-1525) suggests:

He only needed to mention the bread, since that is the behavior of people everywhere: "And let me fetch a morsel of bread" (Gen. 18:5) and "And Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread" (Ex. 18:12). If you were to say that wine was necessary for those coming from battle, but not because he did not take out meat and fowl and fish and the like according to the way of the kings. There is to say that bread and wine contains all foods and beverages, such as the words of the Rabbis that the blessing of bread and the blessing of wine can encompass the consumption of consumables.

לא היה צריך להזכיר אלא  
 הלחם שכן דרך בכל מקו'  
 ואקחה פת לחם ויבא  
 אהרן וכל זקני ישראל  
 לאכל לחם מת"ל ויין אלא  
 שהם צריכי' ליגיעי מלחמה  
 אבל לא מפני שלא הוציא  
 בשר ועופות ודגים וכיוצא  
 בהם כדרך המלכים דאיכא  
 למימר שלחם ויין כוללים  
 כל מיני המאכלות  
 והמשקים כמאמר רז"ל  
 חוץ מברכת הלחם וברכת  
 היין שכל מיני ההנאות  
 נכללים בהם



### Wine for Honor

While the bread is certainly something helpful for those hungry and exhausted, I cannot help but perceive the addition of wine in his gifting as a sign of respect. While one can demonstrate hosting guests, the movement of Malkitzedek to come out and greet seems like he may have gone out of his way to show respect. As Malkitzedek is described as a priest of God Above, he may be demonstrating that it's a Godly act to provide not just food, but wine, as well.

### Honorable Entourage?

Yet, it is hard to ignore that Avram was not alone. Indeed, he was no ordinary passerby, but someone who had taken a few hundred men with him and carried out a successful military operation, so Malkitzedek wanted to get on Avram's good side. Nevertheless, it would seem to be that both the bread and wine are shown to be a maximal expression of Malkitzedek's providing honor to Avram and his battle-hardened entourage.

L'chaim 🍷

# Toast to Israel at 75 Mini-Series Resumes on *The Jewish Drinking Show*, featuring Craft Beer *Creating a Brewery in Jerusalem*

Despite the situation in Israel, *The Jewish Drinking Show's* Toast to Israel at 75 mini-series continues to shed a light on the wine, whiskey, and beer scenes in Israel. Having published the first three episodes prior to the holidays, the two newest episodes have been published this week and last on beer.

These two episodes were recorded at Hatch Brewery in Jerusalem with founder and owner Ephraim Greenblatt, as well as the master brewer, Shmuel Naky. The first of these, focussing on Hatch Brewery, is available at [JewishDrinking.com/JLemBrewery](http://JewishDrinking.com/JLemBrewery), while the latter of these focusses on Naky's Schmulz brand, which is available at [JewishDrinking.com/Schmulz](http://JewishDrinking.com/Schmulz).

## Creative Brewing in



## in Jerusalem



In addition to discussing these two brands, the conversation also covers trends in the craft beer scene in Israel, one clip of which is available at [JewishDrinking.com/CraftBeerIsraelChanges](http://JewishDrinking.com/CraftBeerIsraelChanges).

The next episode in this mini-series will be publishing this upcoming week, focussing on the first-ever and only distillery in Jerusalem.

For a listing of all episodes, as well as video clips, in this mini-series, you can see them all at [JewishDrinking.com/IsraelToast75](http://JewishDrinking.com/IsraelToast75)

