

# ONEG SHABBAS

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## How Did Lot & His Daughters Have So Much Wine?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

While the Torah's first drinking story may or may not have had some sexual aspect to it, the Torah's second drinking story clearly is entirely about sex. As we read of Lot's daughters' concern for the lack of humans in the world and the need to restart humanity (Gen. 19:31-38), they seek out wine with which to ply their father to an extent that he lacks knowledge of what is taking place. Indeed, they provided so much wine that he really had no idea of what was taking place (Gen. 19:33, 35). But how did they have so much wine?

### Brought The Wine with Them

The clearest possibility is that they brought wine with them during their fleeing. Indeed, if one is fleeing, it is highly likely that one will bring supplies with them, especially food, but why not also wine? Perhaps, according to this possibility, they loaded wagons and took them with



(Gen. 19:17 & 19:26)), as they were fleeing for their lives, perhaps taking a wagon or even laden donkeys would have slowed them down too much.

Another possibility is hauling provisions in bags slung over their shoulders, which is certainly likely. However, if one is taking a sizable amount of food, how much wine could one have the strength to carry for a significant distance?

### Episodes on Lot & His Daughters

- Ep. 7 - "Lot Gets Drunk with His Daughters", featuring Aaron Roller (13 November 2019)
- Ep. 8 - "Discussing Lot's Drinking with His Daughters", featuring Rabbi Eryn London (20 November 2019)
- Ep. 49 - "Lot and His Daughters' Drinking Episode in the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabbah*)", featuring Rabbi Josh Yuter (27 Oct. 2020)
- Ep. 50 - "Lot, Lot's Daughters, and Wine", featuring Aliza Lipkin (3 November 2020)



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### A Duo of Midrashic Suggestions

Instead of perceiving Lot's family as having carried the wine with them, there are a couple of further possibilities that a midrash furnishes (בראשית (רבה נ"א):

Whence did they get wine in the cave?

Because they (the people in the area) had a preponderance of wine, they would hide it away in caves.

Rabbi Yehudah, son of Simon, said:

"Something resembling a sample of the World to Come was provided for them, just as it says: 'It will be on that day, that the mountains will drip with juice' (Joel 4:18)."

מנין היה להם יין במערה, אלא ממה שהיו הרבה להם היו מחביאין אותו במערות. אמר רבי יהודה בר סימון נעשה להם מעין דוגמא של עולם הבא, ה"ך מה דאת אמר (יואל ד, יח): והיה ביום ההוא יטפו ההרים עסיס.

These two midrashic possibilities offer us that it was not only highly unlikely that Lot's daughters had enough wine with them to get their father drunk two consecutive nights, but that they had to source the wine from the cave where they had encamped.

### A Cave Dripping with Wine

When we consider Rabbi Yehudah, son of Simon's suggesting that their cave experience was a microcosm of the World to Come is fascinating in that it certainly gets the audience of his statement to consider how wonderfully plentiful wine will be in the World to Come that even the mountains simply drip with wine, but also that it became a constant and steady supply of wine to them in a special fashion. In some sense, it could seem like an everflowing spring, yet of wine - albeit steadily dripping. In his read, Lot and his daughters chanced upon an incredibly special cave, although it is not clear exactly how that wine would be supplied to be dripping in the cave.

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### Wine Stored in the Cave

The other midrashic possibility, however, might be the likeliest of these possibilities, especially considering that there was no refrigeration back in those days. Thus, if you wanted to store away wine, caves would be a fitting location in which to store one's surplus wine. While it is possible that Lot and his daughters may "just [have] happened to come across a storage or, perhaps, they were looking for one, too," suggested Rabbi Josh Yuter on the 49th episode of The Jewish Drinking Show ("Lot and His Daughters' Drinking Episode in the Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah)"). "Meaning you think the world is destroyed and you think caves are a good repository, you're safe."

"S'dom might have been destroyed, but the caves might have been maintained from fire and brimstone raining down from heavens," continue Rabbi Yuter. Moreover, he suggests, it's not simply happenstance that they would have accidentally chanced upon a well-supplied cave. "Caves are going to be protected, so it's possible that they specifically looked for caves that already had resources in there."

### Okay to Drink?

An interesting consideration concerning their consumption of this wine is "Was it okay for them to drink?" Indeed, these containers of wine had been stored there by particular individuals. While it is possible that Lot and his daughters went to their own personally designated cave and knew what they had stored within it, in the event that they had gone to someone else's cave, was it okay for them?

Here's the thing: those people were no longer alive. Rabbi Shmuel Yaffe Ashkenazi (1525-1595) states this clearly, as he wrote in the 16th century: "They were not concerned about theft, since they believed that the entire world had been destroyed" (יפה תואר על בראשית רבה נ"א:ח"ג). This explanation gets a fuller treatment by Rabbi Enoch Zundel ben Joseph (d. 1867), who wrote (עץ יוסף על בראשית רבה נ"א:ח"ה) (cf. also Rabbi Isaac Samuel Reggio's (1784-1855) ביאור יש"ר על התורה, בראשית (י"ט:ל"ב):

These caves were those belonging to the inhabitants of S'dom and Amarah, as the mountain was close to them and since they all died, Lot and his daughters acquired this wine, as it was now ownerless, so it was not theft.

והמערות הללו היו משל אנשי סדום ועמורה כי היה ההר סמוך להם. וכאשר מתו כולם זכו בהם לוט ובנותיו מן ההפקר ולא גזל



### Conclusion

Whichever the manner in which Lot's daughters were able to procure these copious amounts of wine, it is pretty fascinating that they had so much of it. What's even further fascinating, however, is that there is neither astonishment, nor surprise in the narration of this story about how much wine was available. It seems that, in the telling of this story, there is an assumption that there should be so much wine for such purposes. Beyond this observation, there is, at no point in the story, any sense that they exhausted their wine supplies over the course of these two nights.

Indeed, it seems to us readers that, while they used copious amounts of wine these first two nights, they likely continued drinking after these two nights. While it was highly unlikely that they drank at the same rate following these two nights as they had for procreative purposes, it almost seems as if it was normal to have wine around. (Yes, I also realize there is a possibility that, despite the story leaving off after the first two nights, they may have not solely relied on these first two nights for procreative possibilities and continued their attempts at re-populating the world for further nights. Thus, they would need an even further abundance of wine to support this manner of behavior.)

Finally, while they may have found wine in one cave, it is also possible that they may have run out of wine in one cave and could have scouted out further caves for their wine storage. No matter how it took place, it is certainly fascinating how the narrative matter-of-factly assumes that wine is available.

L'chaim 🍷

## Toast to Israel at 75 Mini-Series of *The Jewish Drinking Show* Concludes



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### A Toast to Israel at 75

