

ONEG SHABBAS

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Setting Shabbat Aside for Enjoyment

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

At the outset of our Torah portion, God commands (Ex. 35:2-3):

On six days, work may be done, but, on the seventh day, you shall have a sabbath of complete rest, holy to The LORD; whomever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the sabbath day.

ששית ימים תעשה
מלאכה וביום השביעי
ה' לכם קודש שבת
שבתון לה' כלהעשה
בו מלאכה יומת
לא תבערו אש בכל
משבתתיכם ביום השבת

While there is ostensibly nothing included in this command with regards to drinking, there is actually a curious angle to be considered. As Dr. Sarit Kattan Gribetz points out in a fascinating essay (“Shabbat with Food: From Biblical Prohibitions to Rabbinic Feasts”, *TheTorah.com* (8 March 2019)): “Though fire is useful for a number of tasks, such as heating or metal work, its most mundane and widespread use would have been for cooking. This ban on kindling a fire on Shabbat, therefore, would have affected the ability to prepare food on the day of rest and necessitated advance planning in order to avoid cooking on Shabbat.”

Dr. Kattan Gribetz notes that, in the book of Nehemiah, “we learn of a number of Shabbat infractions that the people in Judah were accused of committing: pressing wine, carrying grains and other fruits into Jerusalem, and selling food” (Neh 13:15):

At that time, I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on Shabbat, and others bringing heaps of grain and loading them onto donkeys, also wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of goods, and bringing them into Jerusalem on Shabbat. I admonished them there and then for selling provisions

בימים ההמה ראיתי
ביהודה דרכים גתות
בשבת ומביאים
הערמות ועמסים על
החמרים ואף יין ענבים
ותאנים וכל משא
ומביאים ירושלם ביום
השבת ואעיד ביום
מכרם ציד



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This is certainly an intriguing Biblical drinking text, whereby Nehemiah finds this behavior problematic on Shabbat, including, but not limited

What to Drink on Purim?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

While readers of this publication might be well aware that drinking is a felicitous and enhancing aspect of Purim, something that is not often discussed is: What are we supposed to drink on Purim?

Bible

When we read the Book of Esther on Purim about the many drinking parties and all the wine that has drunk during these stories, ultimately they are described as “ימי משתה ושמחה” days of drinking and festiveness” (Est. 9:22), but not necessarily specifically of wine-drinking. When it comes to what to drink on Purim, it might seem that the obvious choice would be wine. After all, any reader of the book of Esther sees that there are multiple references to drinking wine, especially the wine-drinking parties that Esther hosts which turns the story on its head with regards to the fate of the Jews.

Talmud

When we read of Rava’s famous statement obligating getting drunk on Purim (*Megillah 7b*), he curiously omits any reference to wine. While, on the face of it, it may seem not noteworthy, Rava turns out to be the biggest wine-lover of the Babylonian Talmud. That the Talmud’s biggest wine-lover does not obligate one’s Purim-drinking to be accomplished with wine is fascinatingly shocking. One wonders if Rava was seeking to be pluralistic with regards to one’s beverage, especially since he lived at a time and a place when beer-consumption was on the rise amongst Jews. In fact, his student, Rav Pappa, was the Babylonian Talmud’s greatest beer-brewer, which even leads to an amusing moment in the Talmud where Rava acknowledges this difference between them (*Berakhot 44b*). So, maybe Rava left open the possibility for one to get drunk on Purim off of whichever beverage one preferred.

Medieval Rabbis

While we read of rabbis describing getting drunk during the medieval

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The Jewish Drinking Show

As we continue to look forward to Purim, I am excited to share a new episode of The Jewish Drinking Show. For the fourth time in four years, Rabbi David Fried is the featured guest, as we continue to speak about rabbis on Purim-drinking through the years. The newest episode focusses on a couple of 20th century rabbis, Rav Kook and Rav Hutner. This episode is available at JewishDrinking.com/PurimRavKookRavHutner. A clip from this episode focussing on Rav Kook's approach to Purim-drinking is available at JewishDrinking.com/RavKookPurim.

Check out previous episodes featuring Rabbi Fried:

- Medieval Legal Authorities (*Rishonim*) on Purim-Drunkenness
- 16th-17th Century Rabbis on Purim-Drinking (Early *Aḥaronim*)
- 18th-19th Century Rabbis on Purim-Drinking (Later *Aḥaronim*)



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to producing and selling wine. Despite the lack of clear prohibitions against these activities prior to this incident, this is a new move to forbid these activities, seemingly in order to enable enjoyment of Shabbat.

Further Second Temple Texts

Dr. Kattan Gribetz also points out that subsequent second Temple texts also push against any food or beverage preparation on Shabbat, enabling one to enjoy one's consumption on Shabbat (CD-A X.22-XI.2 and Jubilees 2:17-18, 2:21, 2:29, and 50:9). Despite the book of Jubilees not being a canonical work, it still provides a fascinating connection, as seen towards the end of the book (Jub. 50:9): "You shall not do any work upon the day of the Sabbath except what you prepared for yourself on the sixth day to eat and to rest and to drink and to observe a Sabbath from all work of that day and to bless the Lord your God... For great is the honor which the Lord gave to Israel to eat and drink and to be satisfied on this day of festival and to rest in it."

Despite this non-canonical source, it is certainly helpful to consider the notion of not only food preparations, as we read this parashah, but also including those of beverages. There is certainly something about pulling back from preparations for food and beverage on Shabbat in order to better enjoy them, perhaps something along the lines of Isaiah 58:13-14, where we get to enjoy Shabbat. Indeed, as Dr. Kattan Gribetz points out in that essay, Rabbinic sources are also the first to introduce wine and bread as ritual Shabbat foods, sanctified through blessing" (n. 12). Clearly, the rabbis saw the wisdom in incorporating not only good food experiences on Shabbat, but also good drinking experiences on Shabbat.

Wishing you an enjoyable and delightful Shabbat. L'chaim 🍷

If you are, or know of someone, who struggles with alcohol abuse, alcoholism, or other substance abuse, there are resources out there to help: JewishDrinking.com/AlcoholAbuse

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era, none of them seem to specify that this getting drunk be done with wine. Sure, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzḥaki (1040-1105) describes the Talmudic passage as being done with wine (ד"ה, ב"ד, רש"י על מגילה ז' ב"ד, לאבסומי), but that seems to be helping us understand what is going on in the text, while Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1138-1204) may have only mentioned wine (משנה תורה, הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ב"ט"ז), so as to clarify that one is getting drunk on Purim, but not necessarily to exclude other beverages.

Indeed, Rava's statement gets quoted verbatim by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) in his Set Table (SA OH §695:2), lacking any specificity for having to drink wine on Purim, allowing for other beverages to be consumed on Purim. Moreover, the rabbis of the 16th-17th centuries seem to also not particularly discuss what one is to drink on Purim, seemingly being okay with whichever beverages one would like to drink.

18th-19th Centuries

However, that all changed for the 18th-19th centuries, as Rabbi Elijah Spira (1660-1712) wrote (אליה רבה על שלחן ערוך אורח חיים תרצ"ה:א):

The matter of Haman's downfall occurred through a wine-drinking party; therefore, the sages obligated to get drunk in order to remember the great miracle through wine-drinking.	ענין המן ומפלתו על ידי משתה היין, ולכן חייבו חכמים להשתכר עד כדי שיהא נזכר הנס הגדול בשתיית היין
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His innovative approach to privileging wine over other beverages on Purim then influenced later rabbis with significant works, such as Rabbi Avraham Danzig (1748-1820) in his *Hayyei Adam* (155:30), Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1804-1886) in his *Kitzur Shulḥan Arukh* (142:6), and Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933) in his *Bi'ur Halakhah* (695:2:2).

(Perhaps we could consider this approach being very similar to Hanukkah in that even though one can use various methods of lighting a menorah, since the miracle was achieved through the use of olive oil, there is a special meaning to be carried out through the use of olive oil. So, too, with Purim, since the miracle took place through Esther's deployment of wine, causing Haman's downfall, thereby preventing the annihilation of the Jewish people, so, too, we should drink wine to commemorate our having been saved from destruction.)

Whiskey?

One wonders if Rabbi Spira and those rabbis who followed in his footsteps made it a specific point to privilege wine, as they witnessed not only the introduction of whiskey, but also a rise in whiskey-consumption, that they sought a return to drinking wine for Purim. In fact, it got to the point in the 19th century that Rabbi Yeḥiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908) wrote in his *Arukh HaShulḥan* (OH 695:5) that whiskey causes vomiting, so he even sought to provide a reason to avoid whiskey. Perhaps for these rabbis, there is something traditional, simple, or even more elegant of choosing wine over whiskey.

Conclusion

Despite these rabbis advocating highly for wine, even though there is no absolute requirement of drinking wine on Purim, perhaps another way of perceiving the story is that it wasn't so much wine-drinking that caused the Jewish people to be saved, but simply drinking. And since the Jewish people were saved through drinking parties, it's ultimately more important that drinking and being felicitously enjoyed, than necessarily what specific beverage(s) is to be enjoyed. Either way, wishing you a joyous Purim!

L'chaim 🍷