ONEG SHABBAS

THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

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Oneg Shabbas explores drinking in the weekly Torah portion, along with timely essays on drinking in Jewish life.

Wine-Libating Vessels?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

As humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and humans drink, so, too, God drinks, thus, we have libations in our tradition. While the first libation to God recorded in the Torah is when Jacob pours a libation to God at Beth-El (Gen. 35:14), we do not read of God commanding libations… at least until next week's Torah portion. However, in this week's Torah portion, libations might be mentioned.

The Possibility for Libating Utensils

Before we get to God commanding libations in next week's Torah portion, perhaps God commands the creation of vessels for them, as we read (Ex. 25:29): וְעָשִׂיתָ קְעָרֹתָיו וְכַפֹּתָיו וּקְשׂוֹתָיו וּמְנַקִּיֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר יֻסַּךְ בָּהֶן זָהָב טָהוֹר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם

While this verse seems in Hebrew that it might potentially speak of libating, how is it to be translated into English?

A Talmudic Description

According to a late third-century sage, this whole verse is in need of description, as Rav Ketina understands this verse to state "And you shall make its molds, its bowls, its four panels of gold, and its rods with which to cover the bread" (*Menahot* 97a). In his understanding, these utensils, as they are being mentioned with regards to the table for the showbread, are intended to be for the purposes of the showbread. Moreover, the word יסך is not about pouring/libating, but covering the showbread. According to Rabbi Shlomo Yitzḥaki (1040-1105), this covering is achieved through שעל הלחם מסככין הקנים בין חלה לחבירתה "the rods cover the bread between the ḥallah and its neighbor" (רש"י על מנחות צ"ז., ד"ה שמסככין בהן את הלחם).

Medieval Commentaries

By and large, Medieval Jewish commentaries translated יסך as covering, such as Rabbi Shlomo Yitzḥaki (1040-1105) and his grandson, Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (1085-1158) (see רש"י על שמות כ״ה:כ״ט, ד"ה and רשב"ם על שמות אשר יסך בהן, כ״ה:כ״ט, ד"ה וקשותיו ומנקיותיו, respectively). However, Rabbi Yoseph ben Yitzḥak Bekhor Shor of Orléans (12th century) understood יסך in a libational sense: קשותיו כלים שנותנים בהם מים ללוש הלחם כדכתיב ואת קשות הנסך שהיו מנסכין הימנו המים על גבי הסולת ללושו "its *keshot* are vessels into which they placed water to knead the bread, as it is written, 'and the libation jugs' (Num. 4:7), that they libated/poured water from them onto fine flour to knead it" (בכור שור, שמות כ״ה:כ״ט, ד"ה ועשית קערותיו וכפותיו וקשותיו ומנקיותיו).

While we read in his commentary that this is our first explicit articulation that יסך can be meant in the sense of libation. What is curiously ambiguous, however, is that the same verse that Rabbi Bekhor Shor used

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When to Drink on Purim?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

As Purim approaches in a couple of weeks, one matter concerns when one is supposed to eat and drink in celebration of the festival. We read in the book of Esther that Purim is characterized as "יְמֵי מִשְׁתֶּה וְשִׂמְחָה Days of drinking and celebration" (Est. 9:22), so we know that drinking is certainly a component of the day.

Talmudic Timing

The guidance we read of in the Talmud concerning the timing of one's celebratory Purim meal is the following (*Megillah* 7b):

אָמַר רָבָא: סְעוּדַת פּוּרִים שֶׁאֲכָלָהּ בַּלַּיְלָה — לֹא יָצָא יְדֵי חוֹבָתוֹ	Rava said: "One who eats the Purim meal at night has not fulfilled his obligation."

According to Rava (280 – 352 CE), there seems to be an assumption that one is enjoying a festive meal on Purim night, but that one should *also* enjoy another festive Purim meal during the daytime, owing to Purim being described as *days* of drinking and rejoicing.

The assumption that one enjoys the Purim celebratory meal at night is evidenced in this story that occurred at the turn of the fifth century CE, which illustrates some ambiguity around this question, even after Rava made his statement (*Megillah* 7b (MS Munich 95)):

רב אשי הוה יתיב קמיה דרב כהנא נגה ולא אתו רבנן	Rav Ashi was sitting before Rav Kahana and it grew dark, but the rabbis had not come.
א"ל מאי טעמא לא קאתו רבנן	He said to him, "Why have the rabbis not come?"
א"ל דילמ' טרחו בסעודת פורים	He said to him, "Maybe they are busy with the Purim meal."
א"ל לא הוה אפשר למיכלה באורתא	He said to him, "They were not able to eat it at night?"
א"ל ולא סבר לה מר להא דרבא דאמ' רבא סעודת פורים שאכלה בלילה לא יצא ידי חובתו מאי טעמ' ימי משתה ושמחה	He said to him, "Does the master not opine that of Rava's, as Rava said, 'One who eats the Purim meal at night has not fulfilled his obligation. What is the reason? "Days of drinking and celebration"'?
א"ל אמ' רבא הכי	He said to him, "Rava said that?"
א"ל אין	He said to him, "Yes."
תנא מיניה ארבעין זימנין ודמיא ליה כמאן דמנח ליה בכיסתיה	He repeated it 40 times and it became as if it rested in his pocket.

While Rav Kahana (who led the Pumbedita academy from 395 until 412 CE) clearly expected the opportunity to study with his fellow rabbis on Purim day, it was through the sharing of Rav Ashi (352–427 CE) with him the innovative teaching of Rava innovative teaching from the previous century that one only fulfills one's Purim-drinking and eating requirement during the daytime. It would seem that Rav Kahana assumed that everyone would be drinking at nighttime, but available during the day, but had not yet encountered Rava's teaching on this matter, only to be informed by his student, Rav Ashi, concerning this matter. This innovation to also celebrate during the daytime of Purim seems to have spread slowly throughout the rabbinic networks, but

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is the exact same verse that Rabbi Yitzḥaki used, so that verse remains unclear as to how it should be used in relation to the verse in front of us. Indeed, there seems to be some lacking in consensus amongst the commentaries as to how the terms in this verse are to be translated (see אבן עזרא על שמות כ״ה:כ״ט, ד"ה ומלת אשר יוסך בהן ורמב"ן על שמות כ״ה:כ״ט, ד"ה ועשית קערותיו, as well as the 19th century הכתב והקבלה, שמות כ״ה:כ״ט, ד"ה יסך בהן).

Contemporary Translations

With this aforementioned lack of consensus, when we look at contemporary English translations of this verse, we see translations in both directions, beginning with the non-libation understanding:

- “You shall make its dishes, its spoons, its shelving-tubes, and its pillars, with which it shall be covered; of pure gold shall you make them.” (Rabbi Nosson Scherman (Artscroll))
- "You shall make its bowls and its spoons and its tubes and its supports with which it shall be covered. From pure gold you shall make them." (Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz (Koren))
- “For [the table] make bread forms, incense bowls, and side frames, as well as the half tubes that will serve as dividers [between the loaves of bread]. All these shall be made of pure gold.” (Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (*The Living Torah*))

I must note that while Rabbi Steinsaltz’ version is actually translated by someone else, it would seem the translation of his words accurately reflect how he sees this verse, especially since both Rabbi Steinsaltz and Rabbi Kaplan were Chabad rabbis, which may also have been why they both understand אשר יסך בהן not in the sense of libational purposes (even though their translations for each of the items within the verse differ from one another).

While these aforementioned translations do not reflect anything to do with libations, there are, however, others that specifically mention libating:

- “And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and the pans thereof, and the jars thereof, and the bowls thereof, wherewith to pour out; of pure gold shalt thou make them.” (Rabbi JH Hertz (Soncino))
- “Make its bowls, ladles, jars and jugs with which to offer libations; make them of pure gold.” (NJPS)
- “You must also make, out of pure gold, its bowls, spoons, pitchers, and jars for pouring libations.” (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (Koren))

In this set of understandings, it seems that God is establishing that, before one can pour/libate, one needs the appropriate vessels to do so.

Conclusion

While up to and including our parashah, there has not yet been any divine command to libate, we do encounter a verse in this week’s Torah portion that could be interpreted/translated as using vessels for libation, as we will read in next week’s Torah portion the command to libate. Would it not make sense to provide a vessel for libation in order to then libate therewith? However, there is some ambiguity, as well as differing translations for the items in the verse, providing the opening for multiple understandings of this verse. Either way, whether these utensils are intended for libations, as it would seem, or for the showbread table where they are mentioned, they are definitely meant to be made of pure gold. If they are, indeed, meant for pouring wine for God, however, golden wine-pouring vessels are certainly a stylish and fancy way to provide wine for God. Perhaps this could inspire us, since we are made in God’s image, to use well-appointed vessels for our drinking.

L’chaim🍷

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 “יְמֵי מִשְׁתֶּה וְשִׂמְחָה 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 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 (רש"י על מגילה ז ב:ז, ד"ה 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״ו), 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.

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ultimately made it so that there would be day-drinking on Purim.

Medieval Opinions

In his *Beit Yosef* ("Joseph's House"), Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) rounds up a variety of Medieval considerations, beginning with the following (בית יוסף, אורח חיים תרצ"ה:ב'):

Rabbi Mordekhai ben Hillel HaKohen (1250–1298) wrote, quoting Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi of Bonn (1140–1225) that one needs to celebrate the night and the day similarly regarding reading the megillah, but the writer is baffled with his words.	כתב המרדכי בשם ראבי"ה שצריך לנהוג לילו (שבת) ויומו דומיא דקריאה והמחבר תמה עליו

This is certainly an interesting interaction, as Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi of Bonn advocates celebrating both evening and daytime of Purim, which would neatly reflect both the story in the Talmud, as well as Rava's statement. However, Rabbi Mordekhai ben Hillel HaKohen was not happy with this equivalence of both nighttime and daytime celebrating of Purim. Continuing in this vein, Rabbi Karo quotes the following (ibid.):

Rabbi Asher ben Yeḥiel (1250-1327) wrote that they were accustomed to not eat meat at Purim night, in order not to cause people to be confused and think that that meal was the main Purim celebratory meal.	כתב ה"ר אשר יש שנהגו שלא לאכול בשר בלילה ההוא כדי שלא יטעו ויחשבו שהיא סעודת פורים

From this quote, Rabbi Asher ben Yeḥiel celebrated Purim at nighttime and daytime, yet differentiated the celebration by going meatless for the night of Purim in order to ensure that people knew that the daytime meal would be the main celebratory aspect. However, what is fascinating is that it is not stated that the daytime meal is the main Purim celebratory meal, just that one has not fully fulfilled one's obligation to celebrate Purim without a daytime celebration. While all of these commentators agree that one is to have a Purim celebratory meal during the day, although the nighttime is questionable, another matter that arises is when during the day it should take place (ibid.):

Rabbi Israel Isserlin (1390-1460) wrote in his *Terumat HaDeshen* that most of the Jewish world celebrate their main Purim meal in the evening and continue until the nighttime, with most of the meal taking place in the nighttime. And he provided a reason for doing so. Nevertheless, he wrote that he and his rabbis held their main Purim celebratory meal during the morning.	כתוב בתרומת הדשן שנהגו רוב העולם לעשות עיקר סעודת פורים בערבית ונמשכים בה עד הלילה ורוב הסעודה היא בלילה ונתן טעם לדבר ומ"מ כתב שהוא ורבותיו נהגו לעשות עיקר הסעודה בשחרית

While he does not quote the reasons for doing so, it may seem to be that the common practice in the 15th century was to hold their Purim celebrating during the afternoon and on in to the evening and night was because that was when it was more normal to drink rather than daytime drinking, although perhaps Rabbi Isserlin and his rabbinic teachers wanted to make sure they got most of their drinking in while it was still actually Purim.

A contemporary of Rabbi Karo, Rabbi Moses Isserles (1530-1572) mentioned another fifteenth century rabbi, who discussed the earlier question, concerning the nighttime celebrating (דרכי משה, אורח חיים (תרצ"ה:ב':

And from a responsum of Rabbi Yaakov ben Yehudah Weil (1390-1453), it is inferable that there is an obligation to rejoice also on Purim night.	ובתשובת מהרי"ב משמע דגם בלילה חייב לשמוח

This seems to accord with what Rabbi Karo quoted of Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi of Bonn.

The Set Table

In his famous work, Set Table, Rabbi Karo mentions with brevity the matter of timing (שולחן ערוך, אורח חיים תרצ"ה:א'):

One who does the Purim meal at night does not fulfill his obligation.	סעודת פורים שעשאה בלילה לא יצא ידי חובתו

In this paraphrasing of Rava, he both ratifies Rava's innovation, as well as allowing the nighttime celebration, although not speaking directly to when during the daytime one should festively celebrate Purim.

Adding to this is Rabbi Isserles, who softly paraphrases his previous mention of Rabbi Weil (הגה לשולחן ערוך, אורח חיים תרצ"ה:א'):

Nevertheless, one should be happy and add more during his meal even at night ((Rabbi Yaakov ben Yehudah Weil (1390-1453)) *Responsa Mahariv*).	הגה ומ"מ גם בלילה ישמח וירבה קצת בסעודה (תשו' מהרי"ו)

In adding this comment, Rabbi Isserles seems to be making sure that readers don't think that it would be inappropriate to also celebrate during Purim night, but rather supply them with the support that their celebrating is very much appropriate to the day.

Later Consideration

In the late 19th century, Rabbi Yeḥiel Mikhel HaLevi Epstein (1829-1908) wrote, regarding the timing (ערוך השולחן, אורח חיים תרצ"ה:א'):

One has fulfilled one's duty by eating one meal during the day of Purim, while one need not add on to one's nighttime meal. And the nighttime meal that one ate on Purim, whether on the night of the 14th or on the night of the 15th, one has not fully fulfilled one's obligation with it, as it is written, "Days of drinking" - days and not nights. Nevertheless, one should rejoice also at nighttime and increase one's meal a bit after hearing the megillah. And even if it occurred on Saturday night, when one is satiated from Shabbat, nevertheless, it is appropriate to rejoice a bit with their meal.	ובסעודה אחת ביום – יצא ידי חובתו, ובלילה אינו צריך להרבות בסעודה. וסעודת פורים שאכל בלילה, בין ליל ארבעה עשר בין ליל חמישה עשר – לא יצא ידי חובתו, דכתיב: "ימי משתה" – ימים ולא לילות. ומכל מקום גם בלילה ישמח, וירבה קצת בסעודה לאחר המגילה. ואפילו חל במוצאי שבת, שהוא שבע משבת, מכל מקום נכון לשמח בקצת סעודה.

In this writing, Rabbi Epstein also ratifies the appropriateness of daytime Purim drinking, while saying that one does not fully fulfill the

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obligation of celebrating Purim with nighttime drinking. Yet, just like Rabbi Isserles, encourages nighttime drinking on Purim (and even nighttime drinking on Shushan Purim). This seems to be the consensus, which yields enjoying day-drinking on Purim day, in addition to living it up also at nighttime.

This Year

In addition to all of the aforementioned considerations concerning timing, this year (2025/תשפ״ה) presents an additional factor: Purim day occurs on a Friday, which will be the day leading up to Shabbat. What's at stake is articulated simply and straightforwardly by Rabbi Isserles (מפה לשו"ע, או"ח תרצ״ה:ב׳):

> When Purim occurs on a Friday, they should have the meal in the morning because of honor for the Sabbath.
>
> כשחל פורים ביום ששי יעשו הסעודה בשחרית משום כבוד שבת

This custom mentioned by Rabbi Isserles is to advance the timingi of the meal up into the late morning, so that, at the very least ,one is beginning the meal early enough (and perhaps even finishing it(?)) with enough time in the day to prepare for Shabbat and have them as distinct, separate experiences.

Alternatively, a common practice many follow when Purim occurs on a Friday is to do what is known as *pores mapah umekadesh*, whereby one who is already engaged in a meal with bread, simply covers up the bread, makes kiddush, and then returns to one's meal (see שו"ע או"ח תרע"ד:א'). While a notable disadvantage to this practice is the potential to lose out on having distinct experiences for Purim and for Shabbat, there are two advantages to this model: easier way to celebrate Purim (especially being able to get everything done for both Purim *and* Shabbat before being engaged with these matters) and it may end up providing a more focussed and heightened Purim meal experience.

While this matter deserves an entirely separate treatment, one may encounter both those who quite specifically aspire to enjoy their meal and drinking in the late morning, while also encountering those who are looking to kick off a late afternoon celebration that runs on into Shabbat, providing an incredibly joyous and celebratory experience.

Conclusion

While there is certainly a requirement dating back to Rava's articulation of the need to enjoy oneself through day-drinking on Purim day, there seems to be an implicit assumption that one will also celebrate Purim at nighttime, as well. However, inasmuch as the nighttime drinking is taken for granted, that should not be understood as belittling this nighttime drinking. Moreover, there have been rabbis who sought to clarify that the nighttime drinking that will likely occur as part of one's celebrating and enjoying Purim is not only great, but should not be understood as the *only* celebrating of enjoying and drinking on Purim. There are also rabbis who were concerned about those whose main celebrating and drinking actually occurs on the night following Purim - Shushan Purim - which, while acceptable, one should really strive to enjoy their enjoying of Purim *actually* on Purim day, rather than the subsequent night following Purim. Of course, drinking on Shushan Purim is entirely acceptable, especially since the Biblical verse states that they are "days of drinking and celebrating", but one should not lose sight of making sure they actually drink on Purim day, itself.

Finally, owing to the calendrical occurrence of Purim taking place on the day leading up to Shabbat this year, one may choose to engage in the custom of starting one's meal earlier out of deference to the honor of Shabbat, or perhaps kicking off a late afternoon meal that runs on into Shabbat. Either way, I hope you have a wonderfully enjoyable Purim!

L'chaim🍷

New Episode

The 171st episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* is now out, on the topic of wine and drinking in the biblical book of Daniel. This episode features Professor Caryn Tamber-Rosenau, her second time appearing on the show.

The episode is available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever else you enjoy listening to podcasts, as well as at **JewishDrinking.com/DanielDrinking**

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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

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 *Ḥayyei 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 Mikhel 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🍷

Jewish Drinking

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