

ONEG SHABBAS

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

The First Commanded Libation

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

Having previously read of the first commandment regarding libation two parashiyot ago (Ex. 29:40-41), who might perform this first commanded libation? While our Torah portion does not specifically mention anything regarding libations, we do read the following (Exodus 40:29):

At the entrance of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, he placed the altar of burnt-offering. On it, he offered up the burnt-offering and the meal-offering, as The LORD had commanded Moses.	וְאֵת מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה שָׁם פָּתַח מִשְׁכַּן אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְעַל עֲלִיו אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה
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Rashi Introducing the Notion of Libating in This Verse

Ostensibly, this initial burnt-offering and meal-offering is momentous enough, however, was that all? Indeed, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105) (popularly known as Rashi) wrote (ד"ה ואת המנחה ואת המנחה):

The meal-offering of the daily burnt-offering libations, as it is said: "shall be brought a tenth deal of flour mingled with ... oil..." (Exodus 29:40).	מנחת נסכים של תמיד, כמו שנאמר ועשרן סלת בלול בשמן וגומר (שמות כ"ט)
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While there seems to be some ambiguity concerning what this meal-offering of the daily burnt-offering libations is, Rabbi Elijah Mizrahi (1455-1526) commented on this comment (מזרחי, שמות מ"כ"ט, ד"ה ואת המנחה מנחת):

This refers to the meal-offering of the libations that accompanies the daily burnt offering....	שהיה בכלל עולת התמיד....
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This Libation As a First

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (1816-1893) (popularly known as Netziv) {continued on next page}

How Quickly to Drink the Four Cups?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

Following-up from last week's column on how much wine to drink from each of the four cups, there is another aspect to consider related to how much wine to drink - that of how quickly to drink the minimum amount of wine.

Medieval Introduction of Consideration of Limiting

The notion of an upper limit of how much time it takes to drink each of the four cups of wine was introduced in the early 13th century. Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (1176-1238) was the first to introduce a concern about delaying the completion of drinking of each cup that it would not be in fulfillment of the requirement to consume these cups of wine, as quoted by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) (בית יוסף או"ח תע"ב):

Rabbi Eleazar of Worms wrote in \$283 "the Tosefta states: 'One who drank them in פוסין has not fulfilled [one's obligation]', explaining that one who delays a long time between them [has not fulfilled one's obligation]."	כתב הרוקח בסימן רפ"ג בתוספתא שתאן בפוסין לא יצא פי' ששהה שעה גדולה ביניהם
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While this statement does not appear in the Tosefta, perhaps it may have been in a version of the Talmud Yerushalmi, which states (*yShekalim* 3:2):

May one drink them with interruptions? They said that he should drink to feel differently, not that he should get drunk. If he drinks them with interruptions, he will not become drunk.	מהו לשתותן בפיסקין. כלום אמרו שישתו לו כדי שישתנה ולא ישתכר. אם שתה בפסקין אף הוא אינו משתכר
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While our version of the Talmud Yerushalmi may differ from what Rabbi Eleazar of Worms had in front of him, perhaps there, nevertheless, remains a concern for taking too long to consume an individual cup of wine at the Seder.

16th & 17th Century Rabbis

Following Rabbi Karo's publishing of quoting Rabbi Eleazar of Worms' understanding of that text, this then leads to Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1530-1572) (popularly known as the Rema) writing (מפה לשו"ע או"ח) (תע"ב:ט):

One needs to drink the amount of wine [whether a quarter-log or a majority of a quarter-log] without a big delay between sips.	צריך לשתות היעור שלא בהפסק גדול בנתיים
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In the subsequent century, Rabbi Abraham Abele Gombiner (1635-1682) (popularly known as the author of the *Magen Avraham*) commented on that (מגן אברהם או"ח תע"ב:י"ב):

...It seems to me that if one delayed more than the amount of time it takes to eat a half-loaf of bread, one has not	וני"ל דאם שהא יותר מאכילת פרס אפי' בדיעבד לא יצא ...
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{Four Cups, continued from previous page}

fulfilled one's obligation of drinking that cup of wine, even after the fact, and one needs to re-drink that cup, even for the latter cups. And, if one delayed in enough time that it takes to drink a quarter-log, then, it would be questionable with the first two cups, then one should re-drink.... Ideally, one should drink a majority of a quarter-log in one gulp....

וצריך לחזור ולשתות אפילו בכוסות אחרונות ואם שהה כדי שתית רביעית א"כ הוי ספיקא בשני כוסות ראשונות יחזור וישתה וע"ש מ"ש ס"ז בהג"ה ולכתחלה ישתה רוב רביעית בבת אחת



What's fascinating about what Rabbi Gombiner introduces here is that these are pre-existing amounts of time for consumption in halakhah. However, it is not particularly clear how long they are. While the amount of time to eat a half-loaf is typically considered around four minutes, that would mean that the amount of time it takes to drink a quarter-log (discussed last week to be roughly 3-5 ounces). This does not sound particularly crazy, but it does create a question: is this meant to be a regular drinking of this quantity of wine or is it meant to be how quickly one can throw it all down one's throat.

While there is clearly an advantage to using these pre-existing measurements of time in that they already exist, do these actually constitute "a long amount of time"?

19th Century Rabbis

A simpler take is shared by Rabbi Yisrael Meir ha-Kohen Kagan (1838-1933) (popularly known as the author of the *Chofetz Chaim*) (תע"ב"ד):

Ideally, one should be careful to not delay the drinking of the majority of a cup in more time than it takes to drink a quarter-log.... Nevertheless, after the fact, if one delayed [too much time] amidst the latter two cups, one should not re-drink them..., but with the first two cups, one should re-drink them. Ideally, it is proper to drink the majority of a quarter-log in one gulp.

לכתחלה יש לזרז שלא לשהות בשתיית רוב הכוס יותר מכדי שתיית רביעית לחוש לדעה ראשונה המבואר בסימן תר"ב ע"ש ומ"מ בדיעבד אם שהה בשתי כוסות אחרונות לא יחזור וישתה וכעין המבואר לעיל בס"ז בהג"ה ע"ש. ובשתי כוסות ראשונות יחזור וישתה. ולכתחלה נכון לשתות רוב הרביעית בבת אחת

This idea of gulping down one's glass of wine is echoed by Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908) (popularly known as the author of the *Arukh HaShulhan*), who wrote (ערוך השלחן או"ח תע"ב"ג):

One needs to drink the amount (whether a quarter-log or a majority of a quarter-log) in one gulp, but, at the very least, without a major interruption. And one should drink in the manner of drinking a quarter-log. After the fact, one has fulfilled one's obligation if they drank with an interruption/delay of up to the amount of time it takes to eat a half-loaf of bread. But if one delayed beyond this amount of time, one has not fulfilled one's obligation. If one drank it within the amount of time, one has fulfilled one's obligation.

וצריך לשתות השיעור בבת אחת, ולכל הפחות שלא בהפסק גדול. וישתה כדרך שתיית רביעית. ובדיעבד יצא כשתה בהפסק עד כדי אכילת פרס. ואם שהה יותר משיעור זה – לא יצא, וצריך לשתות כוס אחר. אב"ב בפחות מזה – יצא

According to 20th century measurements, the amount of time it takes to eat a half-loaf of bread is roughly 4 minutes; the amount of time it takes to drink a quarter-log is roughly a minute (halachipedia.org).

{Libation, continued from previous page}

commented on the historicity of this libation (העמק דבר על שמות מ:כ"ט, ד"ה) ואת המנחה:



This refers to the meal offering of the libations. Until now, when offerings were brought on a private altar, they did not include libations, since neither a meal-offering nor libations were offered on a *bamah*.

זו מנחת נסכים. ועד כה שהיה במת יחיד לא הקריבו עליו נסכים דאין מנחה ונסכים בבמה

Who Libated?

As we read of this libation and offering, who might have performed it, since the pronoun is in the singular third-person masculine? Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270) (popularly known as Ramban) offers a clear possibility (רמב"ן על שמות מ:כ"ז, ד"ה ויקטר עליו קטרות סמים):

It was Moses who offered them, as he had been commanded, "This is what you shall offer upon the altar" (Exodus 29:38), meaning that he himself was to begin performing these services during the days of inauguration, for all the commands there (starting from Exodus 29:1) relate to Moses' service. And afterward, it states, "A continual burnt-offering throughout your generations" (Exodus 40:42), indicating that, from then on, the priests would perform these services for all generations.

משה הוא המעלה, שכן נצטוה (שמות כ"ט:ל"ח) "וזה אשר תעשה על המזבח", שיתחיל הוא לעשות כן בעבדו בימי המלואים, כי הצואות כלן שם (מפסוק א ואילך) על עבודת משה. ואמר אחר כך (שמות מ:מ"ב) "עולת תמיד לדורותיכם", שיעשו כן הכהנים לדורות

So, according to Ramban, it was none other than Moses who offered the first-ever commanded libation in the Torah(!).

Conclusion

Having read of the first libation to God in the Torah by Jacob (Gen. 35:14), this second libation performed would seem to have been performed by Moses, even if not specified as such directly in the text of the Torah. Of course, as Ramban points out, that was only for this inauguration period; subsequent to that, these libations were to be carried out by the priests. As we read of our providing God with wine for what seems to be Divine drinking, it helps us hopefully understand more about this aspect of drinking in the Torah, specifically, and our tradition, generally.

L'chaim

Different Rates of Drinking

How much time should one consider that it would take to drink several ounces? Is it really only a minute? Is it the amount of time one chugs it down, or is it how long it takes to drink it in the normal manner of drinking? Also: what is going on when one is delaying a long time while drinking an individual cup? Is it that one doesn't remember they are drinking wine? Also, how much does it differ from cup to cup? Another consideration is that there may be drinking really quickly, drinking in a reasonable time frame, drinking in a leisurely time frame, and then there's taking a long, casual time to drink down a full wine cup.

Conclusion

While we begin the Seder as seeing ourselves as slaves, we ultimately turn to see ourselves as if we have departed from Egypt and no longer are enslaved. We are בני חורין, freefolk. While people can certainly gulp down wine if they choose, there is also something to be said for taking a leisurely approach to drinking the four cups of wine at the Seder. When we consider the typical amount of time it takes to drink a few ounces of wine, how long does it normally take? Perhaps one way of considering this aspect is take one's time, enjoy the glasses of wine, and appreciate the freedom to do so, as we are not enslaved. Conversely, if we take too much time to do so, there is also a concern that it does not seem to be part of the same experience in one cup.

L'chaim

