ONEG SHABBAS

THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

ח׳ אדר תשפ״ה - Volume 4, Issue 20 7-8 March 2025 - פרשת תצוה

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

The First Libation Command

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

While the first libation to God recorded in the Torah is when Jacob pours a libation to God at Beth-El (Gen. 35:14), God does not command any libations until...you guessed it - this week's Torah portion! This very first divine command to offer wine to Him occurs within the procedure for offerings (Ex. 29:38-42), accompanying the lambs we are commanded to sacrifice to God, both in the morning and in the evening, with a quarter-hin of wine for each lamb (Ex. 29:40-41):

וְעִשָּׂרֹן סֹלֶת בָּלוּל	There shall be a tenth of a measure of
בְּשֶׁמֶן כָּתִית רֶבַע הַהִין	choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of
וְנֶסֶךְ רְבִיעִת הַהִין יָיִן	beaten oil mixed in, and a libation of a
לַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד: (מא)	quarter *hin* of wine for one lamb; and
וְאֵת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי	you shall offer the other lamb at
תַּעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם	twilight, repeating with it the meal
כְּמִנְחַת הַבֹּקֶר	offering of the morning with its
וּכְנִסְכָּהּ תַּעֲשֶׂה־לָּהּ	libation—an offering by fire for a
לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ אִשֶּׁה לַה׳	pleasing odor to The LORD

While this was meant for the inauguration of the tabernacle, it was also meant to serve as "עֹלַת תָּמִיד לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם a regular burnt offering throughout the generations" (Ex. 29:42). This is no small amount of wine. Indeed, in contemporary measurements, this yields nearly two bottles of wine.

For an insightful explanation of this libation, Rabbi Avraham, son of Maimonides (1186-1237) wrote ('ר' אברהם בן הרמב"ם על שמות כ"ט:מ):

היין שזורקים אותו על גבי	The wine that is thrown on top of the
המזבח עם הקרבן; נקרא	altar with the sacrifice is called
נסך מפני שהוא קרב משקה	*nesekh* because it is a drink offering
בפני עצמו ואין הקרבתו	on its own and its offering is not the
כ(הקרבת) השמן שאע"פ	same as the (offering) of the oil,
שהוא משקה [אינו] קרב	which is a liquid, [it is not] an offering
בפני עצמו אלא מעורב	on its own, but mixed with finely
בסולת ומפני זה נקרא היין	sifted flour and, for this reason, the
נסך מפני שהוא נשפך על	wine is called *nesekh* because it is
צדדי המזבח בשפיכה	poured on the sides of the altar in a
להטפיח אותו כמו שיטפיח	spilling manner to baste it as the oil
השמן את מה שיוסך בו...	would baste what is poured in it...

For Rabbi Avraham, son of Maimonides, he argues that the wine libation is not merely just a complementary part of the other items being offered, but an offering on its own. He also describes the difference of the oil versus the wine in terms of their roles with regard to the daily offering, identifying the oil as being part of an offering with the fine flour, versus the wine, which is a libation offering on its own.

As to the specialness of wine, Rabbi Yitzḥak ben Judah Abarbanel (1437–1508) wrote on what the wine uniquely brings to this daily offering ('אברבנאל על שמות כ"ט:מ):

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How Much to Drink on Purim?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

Talmudic Prescription

How much to drink on Purim has been a deeply vexing question in front of our rabbinic sages throughout the generations. It is certainly a struggle for the rabbis to consider Rava's famous declaration (*Megillah* 7b):

אָמַר רָבָא: מִיחַיַּיב	Rava said: "A person is obligated to
אִינִישׁ לְבַסּוֹמֵי	become intoxicated on Purim until
בְּפוּרְיָא עַד דְּלָא	one does not know the difference
יָדַע בֵּין אָרוּר הָמָן	between cursed is Haman and
לְבָרוּךְ מָרְדֳּכַי	blessed is Mordekhai."

While many rabbis throughout the generations have taken this practice literally, and shared it in their writings as such, including Maimonides (משנה תורה, הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ב׳:ט״ו) and Rabbi Yosef Karo (שולחן ערוך, אורח חיים תרצ״ה:ב׳), there has also been a lot of pushback against Rava's apodictic statement.

Pushback Owing to Talmudic Story

One aspect of pushback has been considered as a result of the story that occurred on the page of Talmud following Rava's statement (*Megillah* 7b):

רבה ורבי זירא עבדו	Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira made a Purim
סעודת פורים בהדי	feast with each other, and they
הדדי איבסום קם רבה	became intoxicated and Rabbah arose
שחטיה לרבי זירא	and slew Rabbi Zeira. The next day, he
למחר בעי רחמי ואחייה	asked for mercy, and revived him.
לשנה אמר ליה ניתי מר	The next year, he said to him, "Let the
ונעביד סעודת פורים	Master come and let us prepare the
בהדי הדדי אמר ליה לא	Purim feast with each other."
בכל שעתא ושעתא	He said to him: "Miracles do not
מתרחיש ניסא	happen each and every hour."

While the story took place before Rava stated it, as Rabbah (270-330) was the teacher of Rava (280-352), the literary arrangement could be understood as negating Rava's statement. Indeed, this is articulated by Rabbi Ephraim ben Yitzḥak ben Abraham of Regensburg (1110-1175), as

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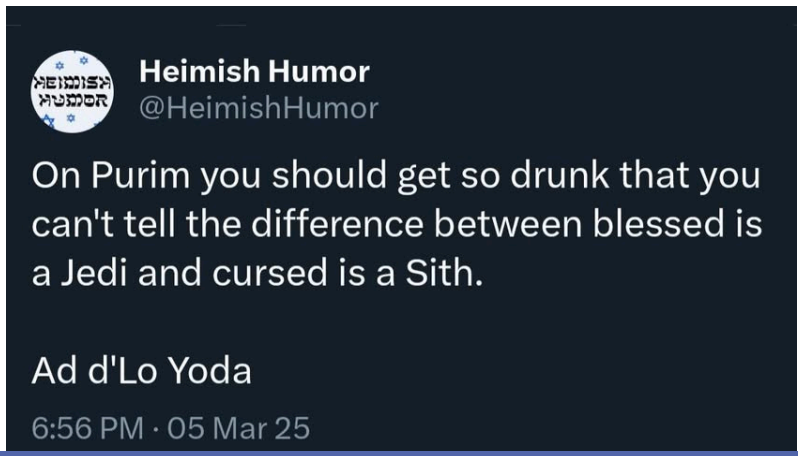

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If you have any comments, compliments, or suggestions, feel free to reach out at Drew@JewishDrinking.com

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...He commanded that wine be poured upon it as a remembrance of its joy (the reception of the Torah) because "wine makes human hearts happy" (Ps. 104:15) and commanded that it be a quarter of a *hin* because it is the amount that will be enough to enjoy, yet not approach getting drunk.	...צוה שינסך עליה יין לזכרון שמחתה כי היין ישמח לבב אנוש. וצוה שיהיה רביעית ההין כי הוא הכמות שיספיק לשמוח ולא יגיע לשכר

What Rabbi Abarbanel adds here is speaking to what wine uniquely brings to the offering, although what is curious is that, while he is correct in that wine makes human hearts happy, it is actually meant not for human consumption, but rather meant for the Divine.

However, perhaps he means that, just as wine makes human hearts happy (Ps. 104:15), and humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), then the wine that God commands to be libated to Him is in order for Him to enjoy and become happy through it, yet not so much that He gets drunk via this wine.

While I would be hard pressed to advocate drinking both in the morning and in the evening, as God commands Himself to be poured, nevertheless, there is certainly a fascinating wisdom to drinking wine with one's meals to elevate one's life experience. Indeed, as one kosher vintner commented on one of Jewish Drinking's videos last year, "Every lunch and every dinner (but not breakfast) should be a drinking party. Those who don't drink wine every day are not only missing out on one of the great joys of life, but also are just missing the boat." While I only ever drink at lunch on Shabbat and I do not drink everyday, I cannot claim to achieve this aspiration.

However, his words do remind me of God commanding twice-daily wine with His meals. Certainly, we should strive to elevate our lives through joy.

L'chaim🍷

Purim Resources

While I am happy to provide a couple of essays in this issue of *Oneg Shabbas* regarding Purim-drinking (as well as last issue also containing a couple of essays), if you're looking for more in-depth discussion of Purim-drinking matters, Jewish Drinking is proud to share a one-stop page with not only video clips, but also episodes of *The Jewish Drinking Show* on various aspects of Purim-drinking. In addition to these helpful assets, there are also a essays available there for your reading enjoyment.

JewishDrinking.com/Purim

Who is to Drink on Purim?

Rabbi Drew Kaplan

Following-up from last week's discussion of When to drink on Purim, a further matter to consider is Who is supposed to drink on Purim?

When we consider the phrasing of the original statement by Rava (280–352), the "who" is to drink seems to be a person, although potentially a man (*Megillah* 7b):

Rava said: "A person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until one does not know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordekhai."	אָמַר רָבָא: מִיחַיַּיב אִינִישׁ לְבַסּוֹמֵי בְּפוּרַיָּא עַד דְּלָא יָדַע בֵּין אֲרוּר הָמָן לְבָרוּךְ מָרְדֳּכַי

We later read that this statement is repeated verbatim by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) in his *Shulḥan Arukh* (OH §695:2). But is getting drunk on Purim really for everyone?

While this term literally means a human being, it seems reasonable to understand it meaning within this context to be speaking of Jews. But is this really to mean all Jews? Could it mean men, but not boys? Could it mean men, but not women? Seemingly, these distinctions seem to be absent from writings on this matter throughout halakhic history (unless they do, indeed, exist and I have yet to encounter them).

Are Women Included?

Does איניש also include women? Perhaps, although there does not seem to be [much/any] pre-20th century rabbinic writings on the matter, as Rabbanit Debbie Zimmerman has pointed out, this is a rather recent phenomenon ("Purim – Women and Alcohol", *Matan* (Adar 5579/March 2019)):

> In the last century or so, several prominent *poskim* (rabbinic decisors) have questioned whether women are included in this obligation.
>
> For example, Rav Wosner rules that a woman is not obligated to get drunk based on a *gemara* in *Ketubot* that warns that too much wine causes women to behave lewdly....
>
> Similarly, Rav Shternbuch rules that women are not obligated because they do not regularly get drunk and drunkenness could lead to serious sins. ...
>
> While some may balk at a double standard for man and women, it is inappropriate to dismiss opinions of such *poskim* without a second thought. In this case, it seems reasonable to entertain the possibility that this distinction between men and women is at least partially based on physiological differences that still exist today. There are a plethora of studies indicating that women have a lower alcohol tolerance than men – meaning that the average woman gets drunk twice as fast as the average man, and overindulgence can pose a more significant threat to women's health. Additionally, it would be irresponsible to ignore the fact that inebriation makes a person even more vulnerable than usual, so a woman who chooses to drink on Purim should be careful to do so in a safe environment.

Indeed, there seem to be numerous 20th century Haredi halakhic decisors who articulated that women are not obligated within this category (Rabbi Ephraim Greenblatt (1932–2014)'s *Rivevos Ephraim* 1:458, 4:173:10, 53, *Mekadesh Yisroel Purim* 334, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch (1926-)'s *Moadim V'zemanim* 2:190, Rabbi Gavriel Zinner's

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quoted by Rabbi Karo (בית יוסף, אורח חיים תרצ"ה:א'):

Rabbi Nissim ben Reuven (1290-1376) wrote in the name of Rabbi Ephraim ben Yitzḥak ben Abraham of Regensburg (1110-1175) that, from this incident where Rabbah slew Rabbi Zera at their Purim meal, it contradicts Rava's statement and it is not appropriate to act this way.	וכתב הר"ן בשם רבינו אפרים דמההוא עובדא דקם רבה בסעודת פורים ושחטיה לר' זירא כדאיתא בגמרא אידחי ליה מימרא דרבא ולא שפיר דמי למעבד הכי

Perspectives on the Juxtaposition of The Story and Statement in the Talmud

There are four different ways of reading the juxtaposition of both Rava's apodictic statement, as well as the third-century Purim incident:

1) As Rava was one of Rabbah's students, Rava learned from this incident incident regarding Purim-drinking and realized there had been no formal declaration about drinking on Purim (beyond the words of the book of Esther that they were days of drinking and rejoicing (Est. 9:22)), so he was inspired to articulate the normativity of this practice.

2) Despite the incident occurring in the generation prior to Rava's statement, the arrangers of the Talmud decided to place the incident following Rava's statement to contradict the expectation of Purim-drunkenness, as Rabbi Ephraim ben Yitzḥak ben Abraham of Regensburg articulated.

3) As Rabbi David Fried pointed out in episode 61 of *The Jewish Drinking Show*, "stories usually push back on a law rather than reinforcing it" such that, instead of saying that the incident negates Rava's statement, it actually pushes back against it, perhaps in the sense of seeing it as a cautionary tale, but not fully negating Rava's statement.

4) Another chronological perspective, similar to the first one above, is that, despite one reading Rava and being utterly astonished, thinking that it is mere hyperbole, the arrangers of the Talmudic section actually provided the story in order to demonstrate how far one might (or, perhaps, even should) take their Purim-drinking regarding inebriation.

In sum, it's not entirely clear from reading these two texts how the narrative incident necessarily interfaces with Rava's apodictic statement. Nevertheless, rabbis throughout the generations were influenced by Rabbi Ephraim ben Yitzḥak ben Abraham of Regensburg's perspective.

Is Drunkenness Even Allowed?

In addition to quoting Rabbi Ephraim of Regensburg, Rabbi Karo also quotes another earlier rabbinic author who wrote (בית יוסף, אורח חיים תרצ"ה:א'):

"a person is obligated to get drunk on Purim" - not that one should get drunk, since drunkenness is a serious prohibition and there is no greater transgression than this, since it leads to sexual immorality, murder, and many other transgressions aside from these. However, one should drink more than they are used to drinking.	כתוב בא"ח חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא לא שישתכר שהשכרות איסור גמור ואין לך עבירה גדולה מזו שהוא גורם לג"ע וש"ד וכמה עבירות זולתן אך שישת' יותר מלימודו מעט

While a prohibition exists in neither the Bible nor the Talmud against drunkenness (for more on drunkenness, see episode #162 of *The Jewish Drinking Show* on drunkenness in the Bible, and episodes #163-166 of *The Jewish Drinking Show* on drunkenness in rabbinic literature), that rabbinic author clearly considered actions undertaken drunkenly to be deeply problematic. Despite Rabbi Karo quoting these medieval rabbis who clearly saw the story as problematic, he, nevertheless, quotes Rava verbatim in his *Set Table*.

Drinking, But Not Getting Drunk

One strategy that Rabbi Yaakov ben Moshe Levi Moelin (1365-1427) devised was to drink some, but not get drunk, as referenced by Rabbi Moses Isserles (1530-1572) (מפה על שולחן ערוך, אורח חיים תרצ"ה:ב'):

Some say it is not necessary to become drunk so much, but rather to drink more than he is used to (Kol Bo), and to fall asleep, and, while he sleeps, he does not know [the difference] between "accursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai".	וי"א דא"צ להשתכר כל כך אלא שישתה יותר מלימודו ויישן ומתוך שישן אינו יודע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי

By engaging in one's Purim celebration in this fashion demonstrates that one is still taking part in the pleasure of the day, drinking more than they are used to, but not actually getting drunk. This creatively lenient perspective found favor amongst rabbis in subsequent generations, including, but in no way limited to Rabbi Elazar Rokeach (1665–1742) (מעשה רקח על הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ב:ט"ו:א'), Rabbi Joseph ben Meir Teomim (1727–1792) (פרי מגדים - משבצות זהב), Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1804-1886) (קיצור שלחן ערוך קמ"ב:ו'), and Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838–1933) (משנה ברורה תרצ"ה:ד').

How Does One Know if They Drank Enough?

How much is enough, even if one is drinking a lot? Does one have to drink until they really cannot make the moral distinction between Haman and Mordechai, or is it just a clever turn of phrase? One suggestion referenced a poem/song that had these words and, if one slurred their words while reciting it, then they have achieved this requisite state. Another employs a type of gematria, or Hebraic numerical equivalency, in which one fails to do the proper math. Another idea is to sing a certain song with specific words.

One articulation of both of these was described by Rabbi Eliyahu Spira (1660–1712) who mentioned that that some say there is a song that

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With Purim around the corner (and Passover to follow), you may be looking to get ready by purchasing wines. If you shop at KosherWine.com, you can get a **5% discount** by using the **RABBIDREW** discount code.
(Disclosure: Jewish Drinking, Inc. may receive affiliate commission on qualifying purchases.)

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Nitei Gavriel Purim 73:4, Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi Wosner (1913-2015)'s *Shevet HaLevi* 10:18:2, and *Shulḥan Arukh Hamekutzar* 123, n. 19 (Credit goes to Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits for compiling this list ("Drinking on Purim", *Halakhically Speaking* 10:3 (2014), 12, n. 7).)).

However, while women seem to be halakhically exempt from getting drunk on Purim, that does not mean that it is necessarily inappropriate for them to get drunk on Purim. For more on this topic, see the 172nd episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show*, featuring Rabbanit Zimmerman in conversation with Rabbi Drew Kaplan about these considerations.

What About Those Who are Not Yet Men?

While we read of Jewesses being exempted from getting drunk on Purim, what about males under a certain age? In recent decades, there have been dozens of publications in the Jewish world advocating not only against, but quite strongly and harshly against teenagers drinking, whether in general, or on Purim, in particular.

In America, usually a large focus of attention in popular discourse is against underage drinking, which would be anyone under the age of 21, as that is the current minimum legal age for the purchasing of alcohol in this country. I suspect the discourse in any country is largely going to follow along the lines of minimum legal age, although another variable to consider are the varying cultural norms from one country to another.

While underage drinking, in general, and Purim, in particular, continues to occur, whether only in small numbers or otherwise, it is certainly concerning. According to various 20th century Haredi halakhic decisors, children are not included in Purim-drinking (*Moadim V'zemanim* 2:190, *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 3:229, and *Nitei Gavriel Purim* 73:4, n. 10 (Credit for this list goes once again to Rabbi Lebovits (Ibid., 13, n. 79).)).

Furthermore, there are many, many dangers associated with under-age drinking, as can be seen from the deeply unfortunate number of teenagers who end up in hospitals on Purim.

Further Demographic Consideration

These considerations concerning demographics also make me think about another aspect of drinking. As Rava was arguably the Talmud's most notable wine-drinker, one wonders if he was used to having others around him who also were experienced drinkers, and perhaps even finding themselves happily inebriated on occasion. If so, perhaps he made his statement in the sense of "If you're going to drink and get drunk on any number of occasions throughout the year, make sure to do so on Purim." That way, one demonstrates that it is certainly the drinkingest day par excellence on the Jewish calendar and full of merriment. However, perhaps, for those not accustomed to drinking, much less getting drunk, perhaps the obligation to get drunk is certainly less necessary.

Conclusion

While the language used both by Rava in the Talmud, as well as in subsequent halakhic literature, including Rabbi Karo in his *Shulḥan Arukh*, seems to be broadly inclusive of people to get drunk on Purim, it seems inappropriate for underage people (particularly teenagers) to drink, whereas women are exempted from this inclusion. While this seems to limit the drinking to men, one also wonders about those who are not used to getting drunk. Certainly, however, for those used to drinking and/or getting drunk, Purim is a wondrously festive and very appropriate day for doing so.

L'chaim🍷

New Episode

The 172nd episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* is now out, on the topic of women drinking on Purim. This episode features Rabbanit Debbie Zimmerman, who wrote a teshuvah on the topic of women drinking on Purim.

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

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had a refrain of "cursed is Haman" and the next refrain was "blessed is Mordechai" and one needs to sing this song without any errors (אליה רבה על שלחן ערוך אורח חיים תרצ"ה:ב'). Whether one employs the simple need to not be able to differentiate between these two or an advanced distinction, such as either mathematical or in song, there are certainly some interesting considerations on this front.

A Creative Understanding

A fascinatingly creative understanding of Rava's statement was considered by Rabbi David HaLevi Segal (1586-1667) (טורי זהב על שולחן ערוך אורח חיים תרצ"ה:א'), a helpful description of which was provided by Rabbi David Fried on the 94th episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show*:

> He develops this idea that there were two great acts of kindness that God performed in the Purim story: one was the downfall of Haman, which obviously entailed the rescue of Jewish people and two was after all that and promotes Mordechai and gives him Haman's house and makes him this great person throughout all the Persian Empire. "Cursed is Haman" refers to God's kindness to us in foiling haman's plan and "blessed is Mordechai" refers to God's kindness in allowing all the greatness that happened to Mordechai and the Jewish people afterwards. "Until one doesn't know" means you're at the point where you couldn't have a theological discussion about which kindness from God is greater.

What's striking about this explanation is that he ties all of the aspects of Rava's prescription together in a meaningful way.

Conclusion

While this prescriptive statement of Rava's to get drunk on Purim has received a lot of pushback over the years from rabbis, there exists both the ability to fulfill his prescription, as well as to wiggle out of it merely by drinking a little bit more than one is accustomed to drinking. Nevertheless, there is something to be said for Rava's articulation of celebrating Purim, which could get away from us by performing the various mitzvot of the day, but not actually seeking to enjoy the day. Having shared in the other column in this issue ("Who is to Drink on Purim?") that Rava is the Talmud's greatest wine-drinker, he may have made this statement in the sense of "If you're going to drink and get drunk on any number of occasions throughout the year, you have got to make sure to do so on Purim" (otherwise, you would be missing out). However, perhaps those who are less familiar with drinking or getting drunk may be content to do as Rabbi Isserles and others wrote, simply to drink a bit to enjoy the day, but not needing to get drunk.

However you celebrate Purim, I am wishing you a healthy, happy, enjoyable, and responsible Purim😃

L'chaim🍷

Jewish Drinking

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