ONEG SHABBAS

THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

י"ד ניסן תשפ"ה - Volume 4, Issue 25 11-12 April 2025 - פרשת צו

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

Libations As An Exception

Rashi's Take

Commenting on the opening of this week's Torah portion (Lev. 6:2), Rabbi Shlomo Yitzḥaki (1040-1105) (popularly known as Rashi) wrote (רש"י על ויקרא ו׳:ב׳, ד"ה זאת תורת העלה וגו'):

One law applies to all offerings, even disqualified ones — that if these have once been brought up on the altar, they shall not be taken down again.	תּוֹרָה אַחַת לְכָל הָעוֹלִים, וַאֲפִלּוּ פְּסוּלִין, שֶׁאִם עָלוּ לֹא יֵרְדוּ

Ramban's Criticism of Rashi's Take

Is it true that everything offered - even disqualified ones - cannot be taken down? Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman (1194-1270) (popularly known as Ramban) contended in sharp response to Rashi regarding libations (רמב"ן על ויקרא ו׳:ב׳, ד"ה זֹאת תּוֹרַת הָעוֹלָה):

But this law does not apply to everything that has already been brought up on to the altar, but only to all offerings proper, for if libations are brought on to the altar [when they are not supposed to be], they must be taken down; and even if the libations are correctly offered up and the offering is disqualified, or the offering is correctly offered up and the libations disqualified, and definitely where both are disqualified — in all these cases, the offering itself is not to be taken down again, and the libations are to be taken down!	וְאֵין הַתּוֹרָה הַזּוֹ לְכָל הָעוֹלִים אֶלָּא לְכָל הָעוֹלוֹת, שֶׁהַנְּסָכִים אִם עָלוּ יֵרְדוּ, וַאֲפִילּוּ נְסָכִים כְּשֵׁרִים וְהַזֶּבַח פָּסוּל אוֹ הַזֶּבַח כָּשֵׁר וּנְסָכִים פְּסוּלִים וְכָל שֶׁכֵּן שְׁנֵיהֶם פְּסוּלִים, בְּכֻלָּן הַזֶּבַח לֹא יֵרֵד וּנְסָכִים יֵרְדוּ

According to Ramban, his criticism of Rashi is that libations - yes, *libations* - according to halakhic midrashim that correspond to these verses, are actually taken down.

Providing a Resolution

Taking into consideration Ramban's criticism of Rashi, as well as seeking to provide a justification for Rashi's take on this matter, Rabbi Yehudah Loew ben Bezalel (1512-1609) commented on all of this, writing (גור אריה על ויקרא ו׳:ב׳, ד"ה תורה אחת לכל העולין):

Rather, it must be that the verse says "olah" (burnt offering), and we derive through "mah matzinu" to all offerings. And it can be said that Rashi holds that the meaning of the verse "This is the law of the burnt offering" is as if it were written: "This is the law of the olah"—which is called olah because it ascends to God, and it is entirely consumed (as stated above, Leviticus 1:9). And the verse says "This is the law of the olah" to include all offerings that are brought up (on the altar), even though they are not entirely burned.	אלא על כרחך דבקרא כתיב "עולה", וילפינן במה מצינו לכל הקרבנות: ויש לומר, דרש"י סבירא ליה דפירוש הכתוב "זאת תורת העולה" כאילו כתב "זאת תורת העולה" – שנקראת "עולה" על שהיא עולה לגבוה והיא כולה כליל (לעיל א, ט), וכתיב "זאת תורת העולה" לרבות כל העולים אף על גב שאינם כליל

Conclusion

While Ramban offered the exception of libations to Rashi's notion of everything that ascends cannot be brought down, it could be understood that Rashi simply means offerings, but not libations.

L'chaim

Drinking Between the 4 Cups?

When we think of the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder, we typically think of just that: four cups of wine. However, even the Mishnah mentions that these four cups are a minimum (*Mishnah Pesaḥim* 10:1):

...and [the poorest Jews shall be provided] no fewer than four cups of wine [for the Passover Seder], even from the public communal funds.	וְלֹא יִפָּחֲתוּ לוֹ מֵאַרְבַּע כּוֹסוֹת שֶׁל יַיִן, וַאֲפִלּוּ מִן הַתְּמְחוּי

In fact, later in that same chapter, we read (*Mishnah Pesaḥim* 10:7):

If one wants to drink between these cups, one may drink, but not between the third and fourth cups.	בֵּין הַכּוֹסוֹת הַלָּלוּ, אִם רוֹצֶה לִשְׁתּוֹת, יִשְׁתֶּה. בֵּין שְׁלִישִׁי לְרְבִיעִי, לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה

Clearly, there's the understanding that both before the meal and during the meal, one may drink further glasses of wine beyond the minimum four glasses of wine, but not between the third and fourth glasses.

While the Babylonian Talmud does not address this line in the Mishnah, the Yerushalmi does (Jerusalem Talmud *Pesaḥim* 10:6):

Why? So that he should not get drunk. Is he not already drunk? What is the difference between wine with the meal and wine after the meal? Wine after the meal intoxicates, wine with the meal does not intoxicate.	לָמָּה. בְּשֶׁבִּיל שֶׁלֹּא יִשְׁתַּכֵּר. כְּבָר מְשׁוּכָּר הוּא. מַה בֵּין יַיִן שֶׁבְּתוֹךְ הַמָּזוֹן מַה בֵּין יַיִן שֶׁלְּאַחַר הַמָּזוֹן. יַיִן שֶׁלְּאַחַר הַמָּזוֹן מְשַׁכֵּר. שֶׁבְּתוֹךְ הַמָּזוֹן אֵינוֹ מְשַׁכֵּר

This is a helpful understanding between those first two gaps as opposed to this final gap between the third and fourth cups - the concern is getting drunk. Of course, it is not quite clear as to what is problematic about getting drunk at this moment: is it a concern for simply getting drunk, is it a concern for not being able to carry out one's full liturgical duties for the fourth cup, or perhaps something else?

Between the 2nd & 3rd Cups

Throughout Jewish tradition, the greatest leeway for drinking between cups would be that of the gap between the second and third cups; after all, this is the meal. Not only is drinking a common activity amidst meals, but the eating helps absorb one's drinking, so it is perceived as less of a concern. Nevertheless, Rabbi Moses Isserles (1530-1572), basing himself off of what Rabbi Yaakov ben Moshe Levi Moelin (1365-1427) (popularly known as the Maharil) wrote (מפה לשו"ע או"ח תע"ו:א'):

One should neither eat more than sufficiently, nor drink more than appropriately, so that one should not eat the afikoman with coarse eating or even to get drunk and sleep immediately.	ולא יאכל ולא ישתה הרבה יותר מדאי שלא יאכל האפיקומן על אכילה גסה או ישתכר וישן מיד

As Rabbi Isserles expresses, the concern with heavy drinking amidst the meal is causing one to get drunk, which would cause sleep, which would get in the way of fulfilling one's duties for the post-meal blessings and liturgical aspects.

{continued on the next page}

An archive of this publication is available at JewishDrinking.com/Parashah-Sheets

Oneg Shabbas is composed by, edited by, and published by Rabbi Drew Kaplan. If you have any comments, compliments, or suggestions, he may be reached at Drew@JewishDrinking.com

{4 cups-drinking from previous page}

Between the 3rd & 4th Cups

While the Mishnah clearly stated that there was a proscription against drinking between the third and fourth cups, Rabbi Isserles references a few medieval rabbinic authorities, including Rabbi Moelin, that while this proscription remains intact, maybe this third cup is not as fixed as one would expect (מפה לשו"ע או"ח תע"ט:א'):

However, one is able to drink many times from the third cup and all of it is considered as one drinking, even though one interrupts between these drinkings.	מיהו מכוס שלישי יכול לשתות כמה פעמים והכל מחשב שתייה אחת אע"ג דהפסיק בנתיים

In describing this, Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan (1838-1933) (popularly known as the Chofetz Chaim) wrote (ביאור הלכה תע"ט:א'):

What Rabbi Moshe Isserles wrote that everything is considered as one drinking means to say even if there was still a quarter-log remaining [in one's cup]. But this requires further inquiry.	ומש"כ הרמ"א והכל מחשב שתיה אחת ר"ל אפי' היה בהנשאר שיעור רביעית וצ"ע

Rabbi Kagan is not really sure how to consider this: can one continue to keep cup three rolling? Perhaps, it would seem, albeit inconclusively.

Between the 1st & 2nd Cups

Perhaps the most curious discussions concern drinking between the first two cups; after all, they should be totally in the clear for drinking, right? Well, not according to Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575), who wrote (שו"ע או"ח תע"ג:ג'):

If one wants to drink many cups, he has permission to do so. Nevertheless, it's not appropriate to drink between the first and second cups, if there's no great need, so that he won't get drunk and be prevented from performing the Seder and the reading of the Hagada.	אם ירצה לשתות כמה כוסות הרשו' בידו ומ"מ ראוי ליזהר שלא לשתות בין ראשון לשני אם לא לצורך גדול כדי שלא ישתכר וימנע מלעשו' הסדר וקריאת ההגדה

This assertion that it is not appropriate to drink between these first two cups is interesting, although he qualifies this assertion by saying "unless there is a great need" - what constitutes a great need is unclear. However, what is clear is the reasoning he provides, which is in order to not get drunk, which would prevent one from accomplishing the prime elements of the Seder, which is the whole reason for the occasion.

Seemingly pushing back on Rabbi Karo, albeit without naming him, Rabbi Yoel Sirkis (1561-1640) wrote (ב"ח, אורח חיים תע"ג:ו':א'):

And if he wants to drink, he can drink even many, he has permission to do so, which derives from a mishnah that between these cups if one wants to drink, he can drink between the third and the fourth, he shall not drink, etc. And Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (1085-1158) wrote that "in the Yerushalmi that between the third and fourth cups, one should not drink in order not to get drunk, since one would not be able to say Hallel, since post-meal wine intoxicates, but what one drinks prior to the meal does not intoxicate; therefore, even between the first two cups, one can drink." As to what	ואם ירצה לשתות אפי' כמה הרשות בידו משנה שם בין הכוסות הללו אם רצה לשתות ישתה בין שלישי לרביעי לא ישתה וכו' וכתב רשב"ם דאיתא בירושלמי דבין ג' לרביעי לא ישתה כדי שלא ישתכר דתו לא מצי למימר הלל דיין שלאחר המזון משכר אבל מה ששתה קודם זה בתוך המזון או לפני המזון אינו משכר הלכך אף בין ראשון

Rabbi Ya'akov ben Asher (1270-1340) wrote [in the Tur] that "one can drink, even many, since it will not intoxicate." And similarly has Rabbi Mordekhai ben Hillel HaKohen (1250–1298) written. And he wrote further that, between the first and second cups, there is a mitzvah aspect to such drinking a lot, since it generates hunger and one may enjoyably eat matzah, which is not as is written in the Kol Bo.

לב' ישתה ומש"ה כתב רבינו דיכול לשתות אפילו כמה מאחר שאינו משכר וכ"כ במרדכי וכתב עוד דבין א' לב' מצוה נמי איכא לשתות הרבה דמיגרר גריר ויאכל מצה לתיאבון ודלא כמ"ש בכל בו

This is such a fascinating response by Rabbi Sirkis, who not only martials multiple medieval rabbis to support his position, but even provides the brilliant opinion of Rabbi HaKohen (popularly known as the Mordekhai) that, based upon a statement of Rava (280-352) that drinking wine boosts his appetite (*Pesaḥim* 107b).

Another aspect to consider regarding not drinking between these cups is the liturgical issue, as Rabbi Kagan summarizes (ביאור הלכה תע"ג:ג'):

If he poured the cup and began to expound upon the haggadah, one is not permitted to interrupt in the middle of it, which is what Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman (1194-1270) wrote; and similarly wrote Rabbi Nissim ben Reuven of Girona (1290-1376). And it's further inferable from his words that even if one had not yet begun the haggadah, just simply that they had poured the cup and prepared to say the haggadah, that would also be forbidden. But Rabbi Zeraḥiah ben Isaac ha-Levi Gerondi (1115-1186) permitted in all of these situations. And similarly have the Tosafists written that it is specifically with Hallel or the blessing of asher ga'alnu that it is prohibited (Pes. 103b). But Rabbi Karo categorically writes according to what Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman wrote, even for a mitzvah cup....	אם מזג הכוס והתחיל לדרוש עליו בהגדה אינו רשאי להפסיק באמצע כ"כ הרמב"ן בהשגותיו וכ"כ הר"ן. ומשמע מדבריו עוד יותר דאפילו לא התחיל עדיין בהגדה רק שמזג הכוס והכין עצמו לאמירת הגדה ג"כ אסור ובעל המאור מתיר בכל גווני וכ"כ התוס' בדף ק"ג דדוקא בהלל או בברכת אשר גאלנו אסור והמחבר סתם בסעיף א' כדעת הרמב"ן ואפילו לענין כוס של מצוה

Seemingly, Rabbi Karo was concerned, both for the intoxication aspect, but also for interrupting a liturgical aspect. It seems that Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman and Rabbi Karo viewed Maggid as an entire section to itself that needs to be devoid of interruptions from a liturgical standpoint. However, the other viewpoint on this matter, as articulated by the Tosafists pointed out, is that we are concerned with the blessings being interrupted, but not the storytelling. Even further, it should be pointed out, this evening is one of storytelling over wine - how could we best engage with storytelling over wine if we are not drinking wine during the storytelling?

Conclusion

As we look forward to drinking our four cups of wine at the Passover Seder, there is also room for drinking between these statutorily minimum cups, especially between cups one and two, as well as two and three. While we are not supposed to drink between cups three and four, there is the possibility that one could extend one's drinking of the third cups. Either way, I am wishing you a joyous and celebratory Passover.

L'chaim🍷

HAPPY PASSOVER

For Passover resources, including episodes and video clips:

JewishDrinking.com/Passover

Oneg Shabbas is a project of Jewish Drinking, Inc., a 501(c)3 initiative to educate about drinking in Jewish wisdom, tradition, history, practice, and more in order to enrich people's lives.
Tax-deductible donations made be contributed at JewishDrinking.com/Donate