

ONEG SHABBAS

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The Drunk and the Thirsty

Towards the outset of this week's Torah portion, we encounter a curious phrase, as part of a passage regarding people looking to abandon The LORD in favor of other gods (Deuteronomy 29:19-20):

When hearing these words, they may imagine a special immunity, thinking, "I shall be safe, though I follow my own willful heart"—thus adding the drunk to the thirsty. The LORD will never forgive that person. Rather, The LORD's anger and passion will rage against them, until every sanction recorded in this book comes down upon them, and The LORD blots out their name from under heaven.

וְהָיָה בְשִׁמְעוֹ אֶת־דְּבָרִי הָאֵלֶּה הָזֹאת וְהִתְבַּרְךְ בְּלִבּוֹ לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה־לִּי כִּי בִשְׂרֹת לִבִּי אֶלֶךְ לַמַּעַן סְפוֹת הָרָחֵק אֶת־הַצִּמְאָה: לֹא־יִאֱבָה ה' סֵלֶךְ לִי כִּי אֶזְעָשׁ אֶרְצָה וְקִנְאֲתוֹ בְּאִשִּׁי הֵחָא וְרִבְצָה בּוֹ כָּל־הָאֵלֶּה הַכְּתוּבִים בְּסֵפֶר הַזֶּה וּמִתָּה ה' אֶת־שְׁמוֹ מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם

Rashi's Explanation

This phrase of "adding the drunk to the thirsty" is certainly a curious one, especially as we read the explanation by Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105) (popularly known as Rashi), who wrote (ד"ה) "רש"י על דברים כ"ט:י"ח, ד"ה) (הרור):

Unintentionally - that he acts like a drunk person, who does things without awareness.

שׁוּגֵג, שְׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה כְּאִדְם שְׂכּוֹר שְׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלֵא מִדְּעַת

As to the thirsty person, Rashi describes as follows (ד"ה הצמא):

That he is doing so knowingly and with desire.

שְׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה מִדְּעַת וּבְתַאֲוָה

So, this line of adding the drunk to the thirsty, in Rashi's words, are adding those who are committing these sins accidentally [like a drunk person] to those who are committing such sins knowingly.

This imagery of this description is certainly interesting to readers of this publication to consider a drunk person in this metaphor. This fits into the broader sense of these verses in the following fashion, as described by Rashi (רש"י על דברים כ"ט:י"ח, ד"ה למען ספות הרור):

Because I will add punishments to him for what he has done until now unintentionally, and I would have otherwise passed over them; but he is now causing Me to combine them with the intentional sins, and I will exact retribution from him for everything. And so did Onkelos translate: "in order to add upon him the sins committed in error to those done intentionally" — that I will add the inadvertent sins to the deliberate ones.

לִפִּי שְׁאוּסִיף לוֹ פְּרָעֻנוֹת עַל מַה שֶּׁעָשָׂה עַד הֵנָּה בְּשׁוּגֵג, וְהָיִיתִי מַעְבִּיר עֲלֵיהֶם, וְגֹרֵם עִתָּה שְׁאֲצַרְפָּם עִם הַמְּזִיד וְאֶפְרַע מִמֶּנּוּ הַכֹּל, וְכֵן תִּרְגַּם אֶנְקֵלוֹס "בְּדִיל לְאוֹסְפָא לֵה חֲסִטִּי שְׁלוּתָא עַל זְדוֹנֵתָא" — שְׁאוּסִיף לוֹ אֲנִי הַשְּׁגָגוֹת עַל הַזְּדוֹנוֹת

Ibn Ezra's Explanation

A very different take is that articulated by Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089-1167) (popularly known as Ibn Ezra), who wrote (על) (אבן עזרא על) (דברים כ"ט:י"ח, ד"ה למען ספות):

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, may his soul be in Eden (1075-1141), said that the phrase "to sweep away" is like "to destroy" (cf. "Shall He indeed sweep away...?"). That is, the one who blesses himself imagines that he

אמר רבי יהודה הלוי נשמתו עדן לשון כריתה כמו האף תספ. כלומר שיחשוב המתברך לבטל דברי הצדיק שהוא כנוי במלת רוח עם

{continued on next page}

Rosh HaShanah Through the Drinking Glass

When it comes to considering holidays through the perspective of drinking, Rosh HaShanah sticks out quite curiously. Indeed, while the other holidays are all considered חגים (festivals), only Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur remain. However, as Yom Kippur is the only Torah-mandated day to refrain from drinking, that leaves Rosh HaShanah all alone. So how do we consider Rosh HaShanah from the perspective of drinking?

Starting with the Torah to begin considering our behavior on Rosh HaShanah, we read that *וְזָכְרוּן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרֵא־קֹדֶשׁ* "it shall be a rest day of blast-remembering, a sacred occasion" (Lev. 23:24) and *לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂוּ עֲבֹדָה* "you shall not do laborious work" (Lev. 23:25). We also similarly read *וְהָיָה לָכֶם כְּלִמְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה* "It shall be a sacred occasion for you, you shall not work at your occupations, it shall be a blasting-day for you" (Num. 29:1). From these verses, Rosh HaShanah is not marked off by being a festival, but clearly a day free from labor.

So, how do the rabbis of the Talmud frame Rosh HaShanah? While the rabbis describe festivals to have rejoicing carried out on them to be done with wine (*Pesachim* 109a), Rosh HaShanah is notably not a festival, so it has no inherent quality of rejoicing. We read that one is not supposed to fast on Rosh HaShanah, as Rabbi Akiva clearly states in the second century (*yTa'anit* 3:3):

On Rosh HaShanah, we blast, but we do not fast.

בראש השנה מתריעין אבל לא מתעבין

A more colorful description concerning the normative behavior expected on Rosh HaShanah is that described by a third-century sage, either Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina (d. 250), or Rabbi Hoshaya (*yRosh Hashanah* 1:3):

"Is there a nation like this nation? The common practice of the world is that someone who knows he is on trial wears black and wraps himself in black and lets his beard grow since he does not know how his trial will turn out. But that is not how it is with Israel. Rather, on the day of their trial, they wear white and shave their beards and eat, drink, and rejoice, for they know that the Holy One, blessed be He, does miracles for them."

אי זו אומה כאומה הזאת בנוהג שבכולם אדם יודע שיש לו דין לובש שחורים ומתעטף שחורים ומגדל זקנו שאינו יודע היאך דינו יוצא אבל ישראל אינן כן אלא לובשים לבנים ומתעטפין לבנים ומגלחין זקנם ואוכלין ושותין ושחמים יודעין שהקב"ה עושה להן ניסים

This line of drinking (as well as eating and rejoicing) for the Jewish people know that the Holy One, blessed be He, does miracles for them is certainly an intriguing approach, clearly indicating that, by all rights, we should not continue to live, owing to our faults, yet, we will still endure, thus, we should celebrate by drinking, eating, and rejoicing.

{continued on next page}



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Woman at the liquor store on Erev Rosh hashana: "Which holiday do you guys have today?"

Me: "The Jewish New Year"

Woman: "so you guys are gonna party tonight?!"

Me: "no, its actually more about introspection and repentance"

Woman (sees 2 cases of wine in my cart): "uh huh"

10:50 PM · Sep 27, 2022

{Drunk/Thirsty, continued from previous page}

can nullify the words of the righteous, who are alluded to by the term "the watered", as opposed to "the thirsty". Thus, he describes the righteous as "watered," like "a tree planted by streams of water," and the wicked as "thirsty," like "a destitute bush in the desert." He imagines that even his blessing in his heart will cut off the curse. This is a fine explanation - were it not for the fact that the word *רוה* is actually one of God's attributes. It would have been more fitting to say "the satiated with the thirsty."

...
The metaphor of the righteous is "the watered," as in "a tree planted by streams of water," while the wicked is "the thirsty," as in "a destitute bush in the desert." The proof is that at the beginning it is written: "a root that bears gall and wormwood"—which is in the place of "the thirsty."

דבר הצמא' והנה כנה
הצדיק ברוה. כמו כעץ
שתול על מים. והרשע
בצמאה כמו כערער
בערבה. ויחשוב כי גם
ברכתו בלבו תפסיק
הקללה ויפה פיר'
לולא שמלת רוה תואר
השם והיה ראוי להיות
רווי את הצמא.
...
משל הצדיק ברוה
כטעם כעץ שתול על
פלגי מים והרשע
בצמאה כטעם
כערער בערבה והעד
שכתוב בתחלה שרש
פורא ראש ולענה
והוא במקום צמא

Conclusion

This curious phrase of "adding the drunk to the thirsty" could be understood, as articulated by Rashi, who explains this metaphor as combining sins done unintentionally - like a drunk who acts without awareness - with sins done knowingly, "in thirst," with full desire. Ibn Ezra, however, understands the "watered," like a righteous tree planted by streams, versus the "thirsty," like a desolate bush, suggesting the sinner imagines he can nullify the blessings of the righteous and stave off curses. Either way one considers these perspectives, it is certainly fascinating that levels of thirstiness/drunkenness are used here.

L'chaim 🍷

New Episode

Biblical Eschatological Abundance of Wine



EPISODE #182

The episode is available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever else you enjoy listening to podcasts, as well as at

JewishDrinking.com/BiblicalWineAbundance

The newest episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* is now out, on the Biblical Eschatological Abundance of Wine, featuring Professor John Anthony Dunne.



{Rosh HaShanah, continued from previous page}

Indeed, a millennium later, Rabbi Ya'akov ben Asher (1270-1340) wrote (Tur OH 597):

We eat, drink, and are merry [on Rosh HaShanah], and it is forbidden to fast at all. ואוכלין ושותין ושמיחין ואין להתענות בו כלל

Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) further ratified this formulation of our normative consumptive behaviors on Rosh HaShanah, when he wrote (SA OH 597:1):

We eat, drink, and are happy [on Rosh HaShanah], and we fast neither on Rosh Hashanah nor on Repentance Shabbat. However, people should not eat to the fullness of their satiety so that they do not come to levity in order that there should be awe of the Lord upon their faces. אוכלים ושותים ושמיחים ואין מתענין בראש השנה ולא בשבת שובה אמנם לא יאכלו כל שבעם למען לא יקלו ראשם ותהיה יראת ה' על פניהם

With this latter line, Rabbi Karo looks to balance this consumptive behavior, urging a limit to one's consumptive activities, but where does it come from? Elsewhere, he wrote (בית יוסף או"ח תקצ"ז):

I have found that Rabbi Alexander Süsslein HaKohen (d. 1349) wrote in his Collection Book that nonetheless, one should not eat one's fill, so that one does not act light-mindedly, and the fear of God should remain.... מצאתי כי בשם ספר אגודה אמנם האוכלים ברה"ה לא יאכלו כל שבען למען לא יקילו ראשם ותהיה יראת ה' על פניהם

Clearly, Rabbi Karo sought out a balance between acting too seriously and acting not seriously enough with one's consumptive practices on Rosh HaShanah.

Further amplifying this approach is Rabbi Yisrael Meir ha-Kohen Kagan (1838-1933), who described it as (משנה ברורה תקצ"זא):

Even though it is Judgement Day, nevertheless, there is a mitzvah of rejoicing on your holiday that is relevant to this day that it is also within the category of חג, as it is written, "Blast the horn at the new moon, at the full moon for our feast-day" (Ps. 81.4), and it is said in Nehemiah 8, "eat fatty foods and drink sweet drinks...for this day is holy unto our Lord; do not be sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8.10). אף שהוא יום הדין מכל מקום מצוה של ושמחת בחגך שייך גם בו שגם הוא בכלל חג כדכתיב תקעו בחודש שופר בכסה ליום חגנו ונאמר בנחמיה ח' אכלו משמנים ושתי ממתקים וגו' כי קדוש היום לאדונינו ואל תעצבו כי חדות ד' היא מעוזכם

While this last line is from the *hakhel* ceremony in Nehemiah, it took place on Rosh HaShanah, which helps serve as a model for drinking enjoyable beverages on Rosh HaShanah.

While Rosh HaShanah sticks out as the only non-festival holiday (aside from Yom Kippur) and it could be positioned merely as a sad day, owing to our being judged, yet, despite the medieval trend of seeking to fast, the overwhelming approach to our behavior on Rosh HaShanah has been the Talmudic approach of being different from other nations - not seeking to be sad on our judgment day, but to embrace it through eating, drinking, and enjoying what we are experiencing.

However, as opposed to a festival, such as Sukkot, in which we aspire to fully celebrate, we also should temper it with some gravitas, so as not to get carried away with levity in our consumption. Ultimately, Rosh HaShanah is a day of balance: just as our lives are hanging in the balance, so, too, we should approach our consumption in a balanced fashion.

L'chaim 🍷



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