ONEG SHABBAS

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

Drinking Between the 4 Cups?

Between the Cups in Rabbinic Literature

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 יִפְחֲתוּ לוֹ מֵאַרְבַּע כּוֹסוֹת שֶׁל יַיִן, וַאֲפִלּוּ מִן הַתַּמְחוּי

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 לָרְבִיעִי, 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.	לָמָּה. בְּשֶׁבִּיל שֶׁלֹּא יִשְׁתַּכֵּר.
Is he not already drunk? What is the difference between wine with the meal and wine after the meal?	כְּבָר מְשׁוּכָּר הוּא. מַה בֵּין יַיִן שֶׁבְּתוֹךְ הַמָּזוֹן מַה בֵּין יַיִן שֶׁלְּאַחַר הַמָּזוֹן.
Wine after the meal intoxicates, wine with the meal does not intoxicate.	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 in Post-Talmudic Literature

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.

Largely Libationless in Leviticus?

As we have begun the book of Leviticus in our Torah-readings, I have shared with people in recent weeks that it is difficult to find drinking or drink references in the book of Leviticus. Several times, people have responded to me, "With all of the offerings being discussed, aren't there plenty of libations taking place?" Actually, there are not.

Yes, it is true there are a lot of offerings made throughout the book of Leviticus and certainly our Torah portion, yet there are almost no libations mentioned. While libations are mentioned a few times in chapter 23 of Leviticus (sheaf of the firstfruits to be waved (23:13), Shavuot (23:18), as well as a general mention of libations (23:37)), there are no other libations mentioned throughout the entirety of the rest of the book. Almost libationless in Leviticus.

As a perfect example of this phenomenon, we can turn to this week's Torah portion, which is pretty similar to last week's Torah portion, in that they both discuss a variety of offerings, with nary a mention of any libations. Libationless.

While we can speculate as to the absence of libations in the early part of Leviticus, despite their receiving plentiful amounts of discussion in the book of Numbers, perhaps it's simply enough for us to consider these sacrifices without the context of libations. Either way, these are certainly dry Torah portions, leading up to our next Torah portion, in which the kohanim are forbidden from drinking on the job. Stay tuned....

L'chaim🍷

Between the 3rd & 4th Cups in Post-Talmudic Literature

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

This is certainly an interesting loophole to continue one's drinking of the third cup(!), even though one is not supposed to drink between the third and fourth cups. Commenting on this statement, Rabbi Abraham Gombiner (1633-1683) wrote (מגן אברהם או"ח תע"ט:א, ד"ה כמה פעמים):

When one had their mind to do so at the time of their blessing.	כשהיה דעתו על זה בשעת ברכה

Commenting upon that, Rabbi Jacob ben Joseph Reischer (1661–1733) commented (חוק יעקב או"ח תע"ט, ד"ה יכול לשתות כמה פעמים):

And, by default, when one recites a blessing over the cup, one's intention is upon all of it. However, if the cup is large and holds a great amount, one should not drink much from it, so that one does not become intoxicated.	וסתמא דמילתא כשיברך על הכוס דעתו על כולו ואם הכוס גדיל ומחזיק הרבה לא ישתה הרבה ממנו כדי שלא ישכר

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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

If you are, or know of someone, who struggles with alcohol abuse, alcoholism, or other substance abuse, there are resources out there to help: JewishDrinking.com/AlcoholAbuse

New Episode

The newest episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* is now out, on the Fifth Cup of the Passover Seder in the Talmud.

The episode is available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever else you enjoy listening to podcasts, as well as at **JewishDrinking.com/Talmud5thCup**

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A different approach to what Rabbi Isserles wrote is described by Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan (1838-1933) (popularly known as the Chofetz Chaim) who wrote (ביאור הלכה תע"ט:א'):

ומש"כ הרמ"א והכל מחשב שתיה אחת ר"ל אפי' היה בהנשאר שיעור רביעית וצ"ע

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.

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 in Post-Talmudic Literature

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'):

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

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.

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'):

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

And if one wants to drink, one can drink even many, one has permission to do so, which derives from a mishnah that between these cups if one wants to drink, one can drink between the third and the fourth, one 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."

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

As to what 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 anonymously composed *Kol Bo*.

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).

Even considering this notion about the potential for getting drunk while drinking between the first and second cups, Rabbi Reischer wrote (חוק יעקב או"ח תע"ג, ד"ה כדי שלא ישתכר):

ולפ"ז משמע דשאר משקין שאינם משכרין מותר לשתות אכן לפמ"ש המרדכי הטעם דבין ראשון לשני מותר לשתות דחמרא מגריר גריר ויאכל מצה לתיאבון אפשר דשאר משקים אסור לשתות בין ראשון לשני כיון שאינם גוררים אכן לא מצינו לשום פוסק חשש איסור בזה רק ביין הוצרך להתירו שלא יהא כמוסיף על הכוסות וגם שלא תימא חמרא מסעיד סעיד

And according to this, it implies that other beverages that are not intoxicating are permitted to drink. However, according to what Rabbi Mordekhai ben Hillel HaKohen wrote—that the reason one may drink between the first and second (cups) is because wine 'stimulates the appetite,' and thus one will eat matzah with appetite—it is possible that other drinks would be forbidden to drink between the first and second, since they do not stimulate (the appetite). Nevertheless, we do not find that any halachic authority expressed concern for such a prohibition; only regarding wine was it necessary to permit it, so that it should not appear as if one is adding to the (obligatory) cups, and also so that you should not say that wine is filling/satiating.

A separate issue with drinking between these two cups is: Can one even do so? Rabbi Kagan provides both sides of this debate (ביאור הלכה תע"ג:ג'):

...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 ....

...one is not permitted to interrupt in the middle of the Haggadah, 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. ...

Conclusion

As we look forward to drinking our four cups of wine at the Passover Seder, there is room for drinking between these statutorily minimum cups, especially between cups one and two, as well as two and three, although there are opinions urging not to drink between one and two. 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

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