

# ONEG SHABBAS

## THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

פרשת כי תשא - Volume 5, Issue 21 6-7 March 2026 - ו"ח אדר תשפ"ו

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

### The Golden Calf as a Biblical Drinking Story

While we do not typically think of the Sin of the Golden Calf story as a Biblical drinking story, it surprisingly is. Perhaps what makes this story in our mind to be considered as a drinking story is that the drinking happens after the sin. Indeed, after Aaron creates the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:1-5), we then read of their drinking (Ex. 32:6):

Early the next day, the nation offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; they sat down to eat and drink, and then rose to dance.	וַיִּשְׁכְּחוּ מִמִּצְוַת יְיָ וַיֵּלְכוּ עִלְתָּ וַיִּגְשׁוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיֵּשְׁבּוּ הָעָם לֵאכֹל וְשָׂנוּ וַיִּקְמְדוּ לְצַחֵק
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In considering this, one aspect that seems to be a bit different is that we do not typically have much in the way of choreographical descriptions when it comes to eating and or drinking in the Torah, yet here we read of them specifically sitting to do so, which is then followed by them then standing up to do play/dance. This activity which they stand up to do seems to have, as Dr. David Ben-Gad HaCohen described, "clear sexual overtones in Gen. 26:8, where Abimelech sees Isaac 'playing' with his wife, Rebecca, and deduces that they must be husband and wife. In short, in v. 19, Moses learns of the party's erotic nature, something God had not informed him of earlier".

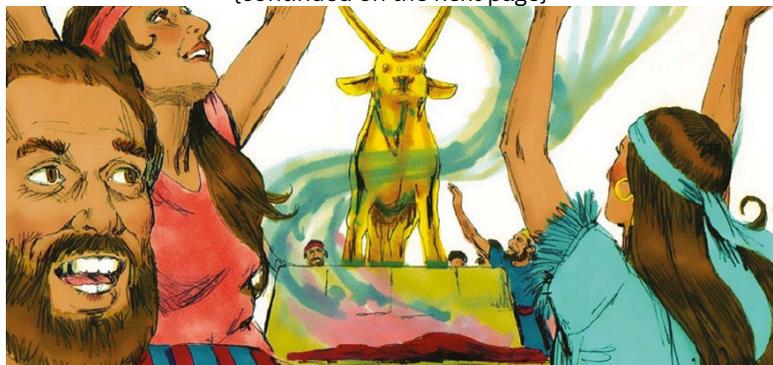
("Dancing Erotically with the Golden Calf", *TheTorah.com* (11 February 2014) <https://www.thetorah.com/article/dancing-erotically-with-the-golden-calf>).

Perhaps this erotic dancing in which they engaged had something to do with how much they drank, especially considering that they may have gotten drunk through their celebrating, as Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270) (popularly known as Ramban) described (רמב"ן על שמות ל"ב):

This means that they all sat down together to eat to satiety and drink until they got drunk, as they would do at feasts and on festivals, and, afterwards, they rose up to make merry with their idols and indulge in revelry.	וטעם וישב העם לאכול ושתו וישבו כולם כאחד לאכול לשבעה ושתה לשכרה, כאשר יעשו בחגים ובמועדים, ואחרי כן קמו לצחק בעצביהם ולשמחה
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One aspect that Ramban adds is not that they simply drank, but that they drank *and got drunk*. He is not alone in this assertion, as Rabbi Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784-1855) also commented in such a fashion (ביאור יש"ר על התורה, שמות ל"ב). While celebrating opportunities is not a wrong move, in and of itself, the Golden Calf was indeed a massive error and sin.

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### Who Drinks the Four Cups?

While the fair assumption for who is involved in consuming the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder would be simply men, what about women and children?



#### Children Drinking Wine?

There is actually a very clear early text including them (*Pesachim* 108b):

All are obligated in these four cups, including men, women, and children.	הכל חייבין בארבעה כוסות הללו, אחד אנשים, ואחד נשים, ואחד תינוקות
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However, Rabbi Yehudah (2nd c.) immediately questions the wisdom of providing four cups of wine to children (*Pesachim* 108b-109a):

Rabbi Yehudah said: "What benefit do children receive from wine? Rather, one distributes roasted grains and nuts to them on Passover eve, so that they will not sleep and they will ask."	אמר רבי יהודה: וְכִי מַה תְּנוּעָתָא יֵשׁ לְתִינוּקוֹת בְּיַיִן? אֵלֹא מִחֻלְקִין לֵהוֹן קְלִיּוֹת וְאִגְזִיזִין בְּעֶרְבַּי פֶּסַח כְּדִי שְׁלֵא יִשְׁנוּ, וְיִשְׁאַלוּ
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Writing in his notable work, Rabbi Ya'akov ben Asher (1270-1340), nevertheless, mentioned giving children wine (טור, אורח חיים תע"ב):

Even the children - it is good to give each one his own cup placed before him. And it is a mitzvah to distribute to them roasted grains and nuts so that they will notice a change and ask questions.	וגם התינוקות טוב ליתן לכל אחד כוסו לפניו ומצוה לחלק להם קליות ואגוזים כדי שיראו שנוי וישאלו
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In explaining this age of children, Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) explained (ב"י או"ח תע"ב, ד"ה ומ"ש וגם התינוקות):

...so wrote there Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel (1250-1327) (popularly known as "The Rosh") — and Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel HaKohen (1250-1298). And the Rosh wrote in a responsum that this refers to children who have reached the age of education.	כן כתב שם הרא"ש והמרדכי וכתב הרא"ש בתשובה דהיינו בתינוקות שהגיעו לחינוך
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Subsequently, Rabbi Karo summarized this as the following practice (שו"ע (תע"ב):

It is a mitzvah to place a cup [of wine] in front of each child who has reached the age of education.	תינוקות שהגיעו לחינוך מצוה ליתן לכל אחד כוסו לפניו
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However, the need to provide each and every child a glass of wine for the four cups of wine is not necessarily universal, as Rabbi Eliyahu Spira (1660-1712) points out (אליהו רבה על שלחן ערוך אורח חיים תע"ב:י"ח):

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{Golden Calf, continued from previous page}

### Drinking the Golden Calf?

While one might think that this is the only drinking element of the story, there's actually more. Indeed, we read of Moshe doing the following (Ex. 32:20):

He took the calf that they had made	וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַעֲגֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ
and burned it; he ground it to powder	וַיִּשְׂרֹף בְּאֵשׁ וַיִּטְחֶן עַד אֲשֶׁר
and strewed it upon the water and so	דָּק וַיִּזְרֶה עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם וַיִּשְׁקַךְ
made the Israelites drink it.	אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל



This drinking that the Israelites then do seems almost like the suspected adulteress ritual (cf. Num. 5), which the second-century sage Rabbi Yossi (d. 160) articulated (AZ 44a), followed by many Medieval commentators.

### Some Possibilities

As to the mechanics of this gold being made drinkable in the water, Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089-1167) wrote (ד"ה) "אבן עזרא על שמות ליב:כ, ד"ה) (ויזר על פני המים):

The reference is to the water from the brook that descended out of the mountain. Moses commanded all of Israel to drink from these waters. ...	הם מי נחל יורד מן ההר וצוה שישתו כל ישראל מאלה המים.... והנה המים חדשו אות בעובדי העגל בפניהם או שצבתה בטנם
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Rabbi ibn Ezra is clearly influenced by Rabbi Yossi's connecting this story with the suspected adulteress ceremony in mentioning the bellies swelling up (see Num. 5:21-22 & 5:27), although there is nothing written in this story concerning physical consequences of drinking the golden-laced water.

Rabbi Moses ben Nahman continued to consider how the golden calf would have made it into the water to be drinkable (ד"ה) "רמב"ן על שמות ליב:כ, ד"ה) (ויזר על פני המים וישק את בני ישראל):

After grinding the golden calf to a fine powder, he scattered it on the surface of the stream which came down from the mountain, and made the people drink of those waters. It is possible that gold burnt in fire does not melt, but instead when placed therein is charred and can be ground to powder, as Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra mentioned. This powder was light upon the face of the waters, and therefore it floated, and he made them drink of it. Or it may be that he scattered it upon the stream in small quantities, and then drew the water and made them drink it before the gold powder sank in the stream. Or perhaps it was a miraculous event. Thus he wanted to disgrace their deeds by grinding their god to powder and bringing it into their bellies to issue as excrement.	אחרי שהיה דק לעפר זרקו על פני מי הנחל היורד מן ההר והשקה אותן מאותן המים. ואפשר כי הזהב השרוף שאיננו נתר, אבל הוא שרוף, ונטחן עד אשר דק, כאשר הזכיר ר"א, קל הוא על פני המים, על כן היה צף והשקהו להם. או היה זורה אותו על הנחל מעט מעט, ושואב ומשקה להם טרם ישקע. או שהיה ממעשה הנסים. והנה רצה לזכות מעשיהם, טחן האלוה שלהם והכניסו בבטנם שיוציאוהו ברעי ובצואה
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Following the articulations of these possibilities, Rabbi Moses ben Nahman explicitly liked Rabbi Yossi's idea of connecting this experience with that of the suspected adulteress.

However this gold made it into the water to be consumed, it is certainly a colorful conclusion to this Biblical drinking story!

L'chaim 🍷

{4 Cups, continued from previous page}

Rabbi Zedekiah ben Abraham Anaw (13th century) wrote in his <i>Shibbolei HaLeket</i> ("Ears of Gleaning") that "one should drink the majority of one's cup with his children and other younger members of his house drinking from his cup a little bit, but not that everyone needs to have a cup." And similarly Rabbi David Abudarham (14th century) wrote upon this matter.	ושבלי' הלקט כתב דישתה רוב הכוס ובניו ובני ביתו הקטנים שותין הימנו מעט, אבל אין צריך כוס לכל אחד ואחד וכן כתב ר' דוד אבודרם
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### What about Women?

As to women, there is a very explicit third century explication making sure they are included (*Pesahim* 108a-108b):

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: "Women are obligated in the four cups since even they were part of that miracle."	אמר ר' יהושע בן לוי נשים חייבות בארבעה כוסות הללו שאף הן היו באותו הנס
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This is a standard for his way of thinking, as he also included women in Hanukah candle-lighting (*Shabbat* 23a) and Megillah-reading (*Megillah* 4a). Rabbi Karo quotes his statement (שו"ע תע"ב:י"ד) and it seems to have been accepted without dissent.

### Others?

However, women and children are not the only demographic to consider as potentially drinking or not drinking the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder, as Rabbi Karo considers (בית יוסף, אורח חיים תע"ב:ט"ו):

...Rabbi Shlomo ben Avraham ibn Aderet (1235-1310) wrote "The question of a person who does not drink wine all year long because it harms or he hates it - what should this person do; can he make the seder upon the matzah? He responded that it is logical that everyone who has wine needs to force himself [to drink wine at the Seder] and to do as Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Ilai who said, 'I never taste any wine, except for that of kiddush, havdalah, and the four cups of Passover; and I tie my temples from Passover to Shavuot [in recovering from the pain]' ( <i>Nedarim</i> 49b)..."	וצריך כל אדם לשתות ד' כוסות על הסדר שנפרש וכו' שם במשנה כתב הרשב"א שאלת מי שאינו שותה יין כל השנה כולה מפני שמזיקו או שונאו מהו שיעשה כל הסדר על הפת תשובה מסתברא שכל שיש לו יין צריך לדחוק עצמו ולעשות כר"י ב"ר אלעאי דלא הוה שתי חמרא ושתי ד' כוסות ואמר חוגרני צידעי מפסחא ועד עצרת
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In quoting Rabbi ibn Aderet, he then goes on to write that one should indeed force oneself to drink wine for the four cups even if it will give this person a headache ('שו"ע או"ח תע"ב:י'). In providing an explanation of this, Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan (1838-1933) articulated (משנה ברורה):

He means to say that it pains one to drink and results in a headache from this wine-drinking, but it is not within the category of causing one to be temporarily bedridden.	מפני שמזיקו - ר"ל שמצטער בשתייתו וכואב בראשו מזה ואין בכלל זה כשיפול למשכב מזה
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Rabbi Kagan also provides a helpful mitigation strategy in consuming wine for people who get headaches from wine-drinking (משנה ברורה תע"ב:ל"ז):

But one is able to dilute this wine a lot as long as it is still fitting to make Kiddush.	ארבע כוסות - ויכול למזוג היטב אכן בעינין שיהא עדיין ראוי לקידוש
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### Conclusion

Both men and women are to drink wine for the four statutory minimum cups at the Seder, although kids do not seem to be included so much. Even one who yields headaches from drinking wine should, nevertheless, drink wine.

L'chaim 🍷

