

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 Manna?

While we typically think of manna (Hebrew: *man* (the English word *manna* does not denote a direct transliteration of the Hebrew word מן, but rather takes its transliteration from the Septuagint, which rendered it μάννα (*manna*)), which we will use subsequently hereafter) as a food item to consume, there seems to be the possibility that it might be somewhat drinkable, when we read of its description in this week's Torah portion (Num. 11:7-8):

Now the <i>man</i> was like coriander seed, and in color it was like bdellium. The people would go about and gather it, grind it between millstones or pound it in a mortar, boil it in a pot, and make it into cakes. It tasted like rich cream.	וְהָמָן כְּצִרְעֵי־גַד הָיָא וְעֵינָיו כְּעֵינֵי הַבְּדֵלְיָהּ: שְׁטוֹ הָעֵמֶם וְלִקְטוּ וְנָחְנוּ בְרִתִּים אִין דְּכוּ בְמִדְכָה וּבְשִׁלוּ בְפִירוֹר וְעָשׂוּ אֲתוֹ עֲגוֹת וְהָיָה טַעְמוֹ כְּטַעַם לֶשֶׁד הַשְּׁמָן:
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Man would seem to taste like rich cream, but was it **drinkable**?

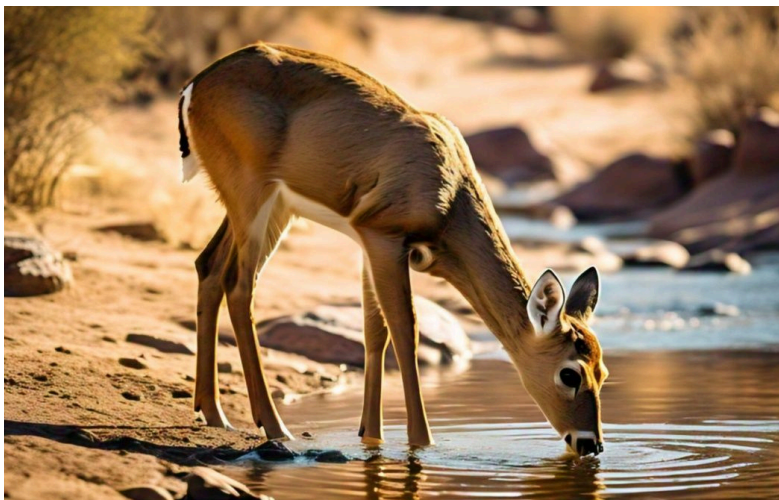


Midrash on Drinkability

According to one midrashic description, it would seem that *man* was indeed drinkable (*Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber) *Beshallah* 22:1):

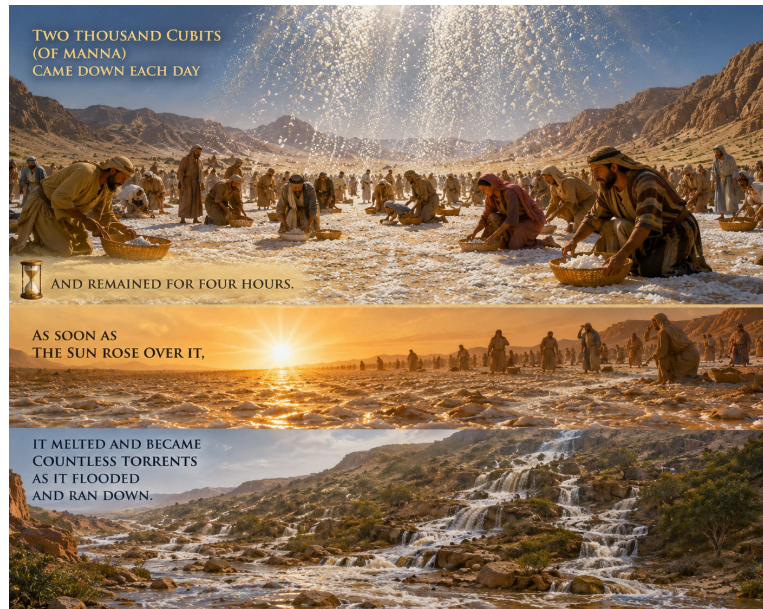
The peoples of the world were not able to taste it because in their mouths it became like bitter wormwood. What did they do? They caught a deer that had drunk of it, and they took from it a taste of <i>man</i> . Then they said: "Blessed be the nation which has this."	אומות העולם לא היו יכולין לטעום מנו, שהיה בפייהם כגידין מרין, ומה היו עושים, היו צדין צבי שהיה שותה ממנו, וטועמין ממנו מטעמו של מן, והיו אומרים אשרי הגוי שככה לו.
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This differentiation between the ability to consume this item sounds similar to the waters in Egypt being consumable by the Israelites, while the Egyptians could not drink it, as it was blood (Exodus 7:21 & 7:24). Furthermore, why is it described as bitter wormwood to their tastes? It certainly seems as if the midrash is trying to position the *man* as being potentially consumable, yet, only in their mouths did it become so disgusting to eat. Another curious aspect about this midrash is where are these gentiles such that they are encountering the *man*? Are they finding the Israelites in the desert specifically, or did they just happen to be wandering travellers, perhaps like bedouins? Also: what is driving these gentiles to seek out these deer? How did they think to track them down to eat of them that reminded them of what *man* is meant to taste like?



While this midrash does not depict a *person* drinking the *man*, it still is depicted as drinkable, albeit by an animal. While it is unclear where this deer chanced upon this *man* - perhaps some excess *man*? - this midrash positions these gentile nations as seeking to taste some of this *man* from the deer somehow (maybe by eating of the deer's meat or even from its stomach?). Curiously, the unmediated *man* is described as very bitter for the gentiles, yet, through the deer's drinking of the *man*, they are able to consume the deer through which they are able to enjoy the taste of *man*. Through this tasting, they realize how much of a delicacy it is.

One question that remains, though, is how did this deer drink the *man*?



Midrash on *Man* as a Beverage

I was thinking the manna that the deer drank had been some leftover *man* from some of our ancestors that they had melted down, yet, there is another midrash that describes the provision of *man* in drinkable form (*Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber) *Beshallah* 21:1):

Zavdi ben Levi said: "Two thousand cubits (of <i>man</i>) came down each day and remained for four hours. As soon as the sun rose over it, it melted and became countless torrents as it flooded and ran down. For whom is it destined now? For the righteous in the world to come. Whoever believes has the right to eat of it, but whoever does not believe, 'may not look upon the streams, [the torrential rivers of honey and cream]' (Job 20.17).	זבדי בן לוי אמר שני אלפים אמה היה יורד המן בכל יום, והיה עומד עד ארבע שעות, כיון שהיה השמש באה עליו היה נימוק ונעשה נחלים נחלים ויורד, ולמי היה מתוקן עכשיו, לצדיקים לעולם הבא, מי שהוא מאמין זוכה ואוכל ממנו, ומי שאינו מאמין אל ירא בפלגות וגו' (איוב כ"ז),
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As soon as it ran down in rivers, the peoples of the world came to drink from it; but it became wormwood and gall in their mouths, as stated, 'Now the *man* was like bitter seed' (Num. 11.7). For Israel, however, the *man* became honey within their mouths, just as it says, '[and its taste was] like wafers in honey' (Ex. 16.31)."

As Zavdi ben Levi describes it, the *man* was provided in a solid form, yet the sun melted it in such a massive quantity that there were **man rivers coursing through the desert(!)**, thus enabling deer to then drink from this *man* river.

Also, as he describes it, instead of the gentiles eating the *man*, they,



of the *man* into honey in the Israelites' mouths, which is quasi-drinkable.

ויכון שהיה יורד בנחלים היו אומות העולם באין לשתות ממנו, והוא נעשה בפיהם גד ולענה, שנאמר והמן כרע גד הוא וגו' (במדבר יא ז). אבל לישראל נעשה בתוך פיהם דבש, כשם שאומר וטעמו כצפיחית דבש (שמות טז לא).

too, drank from this *man* river. However, whereas the deer drank from it without problem, when the peoples of the world drank from this *man* river, it was not only the bitterness of the wormwood they tasted, but also bile, both of which are not enjoyable to taste.

Another drinkable aspect of this *man*, according to Zavdi ben Levi is the turning

Midrash on *Man* Tasting Differently According to Age

This difference in taste of the *man* according to identity is not unique to Zavdi ben Levi, as we read of yet another midrash, this time by a third-century sage (*Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber) *Beshallah* 22:1):

Rabbi Yossi bar Hanina said: "The babies who tasted it were not like the old people who tasted it. How?

To the babies, it had the taste of milk, as stated, 'And it tasted like rich cream' (Num. 11.8); to the youths, it tasted like honey, as stated, 'and its taste was like wafers in honey' (Ex. 16.31); to the old people, it tasted like bread, as stated, 'Behold, I will rain down bread from the heavens for you' (Ex. 16.4); to the sick, it tasted like fine flour mixed with oil and honey, like barley grits, which they make for one who is sick, as it is said, 'They boiled it in a pot' (Num. 11.8).

While this midrash does not describe *man* as drinkable or necessarily as a beverage, it does seem that Rabbi Yossi bar Hanina is describing the *man* as tasting like honey for the youth and like milk for babies, so, perhaps, it may have been consumed in drinkable form.

A similar midrash concerning *man* in somewhat a manner of drinking is described by a turn-of-the-4th century sage in the Talmud, working off the word לשד (Num. 11:8) and שד, which means breast (*Yoma* 75a):



Rabbi Abbahu said: "Do not read it as '*lashad*' (for nourishment), but rather as '*shad*' (breast): just as a baby tastes many flavors, so, too, a person tastes many flavors from the *man*." אמר רבי אבהו: אל תיקרי לשד אלא שד מה שזו תינוק טועם בו כמה טעמים אף מן אדם טועם בו כמה טעמים

(This text is as displayed in MS Munich 6, as all of the manuscripts have a similar language, whereas the printed versions seemed to have gone in a different direction than the manuscripts in simplifying the language used in his statement.)

What does this mean that a baby tastes many flavors? Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105) (popularly known as Rashi) suggested an intriguing possibility (רש"י על יומא עה, ד"ה שד זה תינוק מוצא בו כל מיני טעמים):

That the mother eats. שהאם אוכלת This is also a curious statement; what might it mean? Rabbi Yosef Hayyim (1835-1909) describes this as the following (בניהו על יומא עה):

If the mother eats a cooked dish that includes meat, rice, vegetables, and wine mixed together, this dish becomes milk in her breasts. Thus, the infant is nursing from all these mixed components at once. Therefore, with the nipple, it is said that one "finds several flavors" – meaning the taste of meat, rice, vegetables, and produce of the ground. אכלה האם תבשיל שיש בו בשר ואורז וירקות ויין מעורב ביחד, וזה התבשיל נעשה חלב בדדיה, נמצא יונק מכל התערובת האלה ביחד ולכן בדרך נקיט 'מוצא כמה טעמים' דהיינו טעם בשר טעם אורז טעם ירקות טעם פרי אדמה

Conclusion

While we don't typically consider *man* to be related to drinking, rabbis midrashically described *man* as not only meltable, but drinkable in this melted form. While our ancestors could melt down the *man*, it was also meltable in the sun and in such volume that, through the bountifulness of these *man* rivers, even animals drank from them. One wonders, based on this midrash, if there were ancestors of ours who preferred consuming the *man* at times versus eating it. After all, it sounds as if it were quite tasty to drink! Of course, we also encountered a rabbinic perspective that *man* continued manifold flavors, as well as beverages. Wishing you a Shabbat of enjoyable drinking!

L'chaim 🍷

New Review

Jewish Drinking recently reviewed a trio of products of Weldon Mills Distillery, all of which were kosher-certified by OK Kosher. Here are some highlights from our published video review of these three products:



- Weldon Mills Reserve Barrel-proof Straight Bourbon Whiskey: "I like the flavor; I find it interesting. It is hot, it is young, but I quite enjoy it."
- Weldon Mills Weldon Orchards Peach Elderflower Flavored Whiskey: "I'm all over this one." & "It's reminiscent of summer: I just want to hang out, relax by the pool. Whether you want to have it on its own - with an ice cube or not - or you put it in some sort of beverage, it's just incredible."
- Dray 25 Lavender Lime Flavored Vodka: "There is no astringent burn at all, it sips really smoothly, and it has a really cool Fruit Loop flavor."

(Disclosure: This trio of products was provided to Jewish Drinking for review purposes.)

The full video review is viewable at JewishDrinking.com/wm2026review

