ONEG SHABBAS

THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

כ"ז מרחשון תשפ"ז - Volume 6, Issue 5 6-7 November 2026 - פרשת חיי שרה

Preponderance of Providing Drink

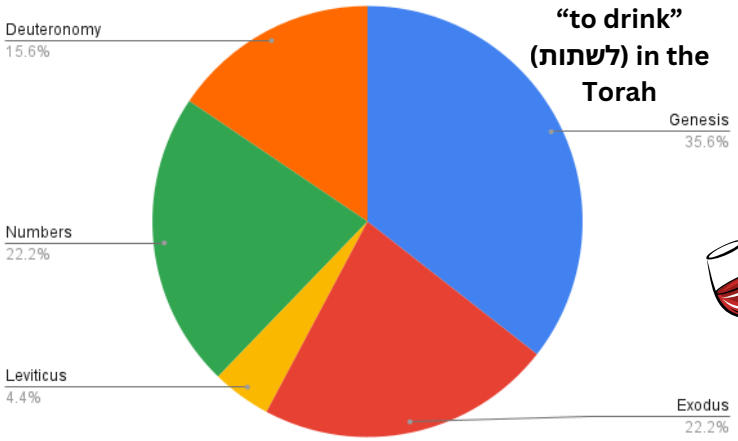
A Bonanza of Drinking...Water

In this week's Torah portion, we see a lot of drinking, all of which occurs in chapter 24, most of which appears in two separate sections: the first chunk is verses 11-27 when Avraham's servant encounters Rebecca by the well and she provides him water for both him and his camels, then we later read of Avraham's servant recounting the story to Lavan in verses 34-48. Within these two chunks of verses, we see the phrases drinking (שתייה) and giving drink (השקאה) eight times each, so there is a lot of drinking, even if it's of the non-alcoholic variety. Yet, strikingly, there is a moment when we would expect drinking to appear, yet it is conspicuously absent.



Preponderance of Appearances

To gain an appreciation of just how abundant the language of drinking and to provide drink within our parashah is, we need to understand that more than one-third of all appearances of the verb "to drink" (לשתות) in the Torah appear in the book of Genesis, with most of those appearing in chapter 24, as we see below:



Even the verb "to provide drink" (להשקות) mostly appears in the Torah in the book of Genesis, with nearly half of these appearances in chapter 24. Thus, even a cursory read of this chapter and parashah reveals a lot of the language of drinking.

{continued on the next page}

Why Didn't Lavan Provide Beverages Initially?

Drinking Missing?

At the outset of the meal in which Lavan hosts Avraham's servant, we read of them sitting down to eat (Genesis 24:33):

And when food was set before him, he said, "I will not eat until I have spoken my words." He said, "Speak."	וַיּוּשַׂם לְפָנָיו לֶאֱכֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֹכַל עַד אִם־דִּבַּרְתִּי דְּבָרָי וַיֹּאמֶר דַּבֵּר

Where is the hospitality to offer drinks? In a chapter that is chock-full of drinking references, it is peculiar to read of them only sitting down to eat, yet not drinking. It is not as if there is a stunningly abrupt inability to express drinking. Why would they not be drinking?

Is it really a lack of expression? What if the story accurately depicts this interaction and Lavan did not offer drink to Avraham's servant? While we have seen beverages previously offered to guests (Gen. 18:8 & 14:18), was Lavan being stingy with serving wine and/or water to his guest?

Giving Lavan the benefit of the doubt, though, we read what Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (1085-1158) (popularly known as Rashbam) wrote (רשב"ם על כ"ד:ל"ג, ד"ה עד אם דברתי דברי):

After seeing that God agreed with his handling of the matter, he realized that he should get involved with neither eating nor drinking first.	אחרי שראה שהסכים הקב"ה על ידו, לא היה לו להתעסק באכילה ושתיה תחילה

Perhaps taking into account Rashbam's comment, when Avraham's servant declined food, he also declined to drink, stopping Lavan from such an offer.

Finally Drinking

Once they come to an agreement and material goods are exchanged (Gen. 24:53), we finally read of their drinking [and eating] (Gen. 24:54):

Then he and the entourage under him ate and drank, and they spent the night. When they arose the next morning, he said, "Give me leave to go to my master."	וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ הוּא וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־עִמּוֹ וַיָּלִינוּ וַיָּקוּמוּ בַבֹּקֶר וַיֹּאמֶר שַׁלְּחֻנִי לַאדֹנִי

So why is that only now that they drink? One possibility was simply that they now drank, on account of celebrating Rebecca's betrothal, as Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (1816-1893) suggested (העמק דבר על בראשית כ"ד:נ"ד):

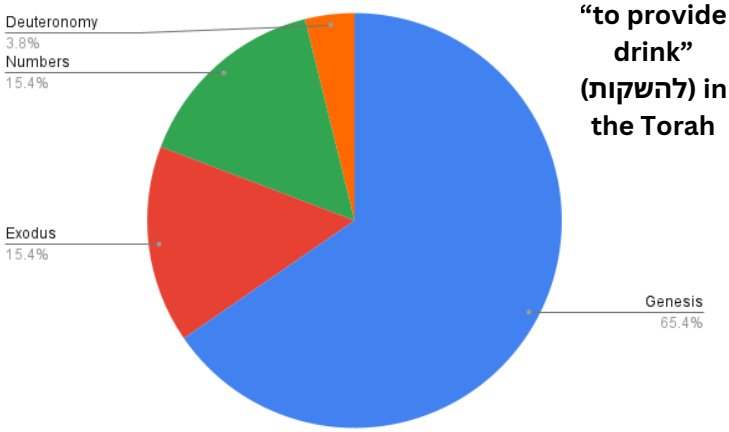
The verse is telling us that they rejoiced as one does at a wedding. ... And there is no true joy except when accompanied by friendship and being together with others in fellowship.	מספר הכתוב דשמחו כעל נשואין. ... ואין שמחה כ"א במריעות יחד עם אחרים בצוותא

Indeed, this may have marked the successful conclusion of this negotiation. Moreover, read later on that Lavan throws a drinking party for the first time he marries off one of his daughters to Jacob (Genesis 29:22-23), although that increased level of drinking may have been for the actual wedding, whereas here we read only of the proposed engagement.

{continued on the next page}

Oneg Shabbas is composed by, edited by, and published by Rabbi Drew Kaplan.
If you have any comments, compliments, or suggestions, feel free to reach out at Drew@JewishDrinking.com

{"Preponderance", continued from previous page}



"to provide drink" (להשקות) in the Torah

Breakdown of Verbs for Drinking

With all of this language of drinking taking place in our Torah portion, this week is an opportune moment to consider these terms. In order to better understand these drinking-related verbs, a helpful breakdown was provided by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein, wherein he wrote ("*Chayei Sarah*: Take A Drink", *The Jewish Press* (16 November 2022)):

> In some cases, it uses cognates of *lishtot*, whether to denote the servant himself drinking (Genesis 24:14, 24:18, 24:44, 24:46) or his camels drinking (24:19, 24:22). In other cases, it uses cognates of *lehashkot*, again whether to denote the servant himself drinking (24:18, 24:19, 24:43, 24:45) or his camels drinking (24:14, 24:46). Finally, in one instance, the servant himself uses the word *hagmi'ini* ("allow me to drink") (24:17).
>
> What, if anything, are the differences between these terms?
>
> Inflections of the infinitive verb *lehashkot* appear over 60 times in the Bible, and not only in reference to humans and animals drinking, but also to the watering of the land. Moreover, *lehashkot* does not actually refer to the act of drinking itself, but to the act of providing water for another to drink. In contrast, inflections of the infinitive verb *lishtot* appear over 220 times in the Bible, referring exclusively to humans and animals drinking. Moreover, *lishtot* always refers to the act of drinking, not the act of providing another with something to drink.
>
> The verb *lehashkot* cognates with the noun *mashkeh* ("beverage," sometimes with the implication of an alcoholic drink).

Conclusion

In this week's parashah, we're swimming in drinking language, though admittedly the action primarily is of the watery variety. Remarkably, more than a third of all occurrences of לשתות ("to drink") in the entire Torah show up in Genesis, and nearly half of all biblical instances of להשקות ("to provide drink") appear there as well, with this week's Torah portion, especially chapter 24, serving as the epicenter of this liquid lexicon. Between the servant's encounter with Rebecca at the well and his retelling of the story to Lavan, we get a fascinating back-and-forth of eight usages each of שתייה (drinking) and השקאה (providing drink), a veritable bonanza of hydration verbs. With all of this language of drinking and providing drink to others, may we all be blessed to have both actions in our vocabulary and in our lives.

L'chaim

New Episode

The newest episode of *The Jewish Drinking Show* is now out, on the Chabad farbrengens in the Soviet Union, featuring Nuchie Schapiro.

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



JewishDrinking.com/USSRfarbies

{"Lavan", continued from previous page}

Stinginess of Lavan?

However, could there be yet another possibility?

Whether or not Lavan was being stingy or otherwise not fully hospitable to Avraham's servant, it could also be that Avraham's servant's recounting of Rebecca's hospitality in providing both him and his camels water to drink made Lavan reconsider providing drink to to his guest. Whether it appealed to his sense of hospitality in realizing that a guest



traveling through a desert might be thirsty or simply that, after hearing about all that water-drinking, he, himself, got thirsty and decided to share drinks with his guest, either way, Lavan finally drinks with Avraham's servant.

Conclusion

In a chapter overflowing with drinking language, one of the most curious moments comes when Lavan seats Avraham's servant to eat, but no beverages are offered. Is Lavan suddenly stingy with his hospitality, withholding even water in a parashah where everyone seems to be drinking nonstop? Rashbam helps us read the scene differently: once the servant insists on speaking before touching food, he effectively blocks the whole eating-and-drinking ritual from beginning, leaving Lavan no opening to pour anything. Only after the successful negotiation, gifts exchanged, and Rebecca's betrothal secured do they finally break out the drinks, a celebratory moment the Netziv reads as akin to the joy of a wedding feast. And perhaps, after hearing the servant recount Rebecca's generous hospitality by the well, even Lavan realizes it's time to hydrate, whether inspired by her kindness or just plain thirsty from all that talk of water, finally raising cups with his guests.

L'chaim

Jewish Drinking

Jewish Drinking, Inc. is 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