

1. Talmud, Megilah 12b

"And the king was very angry. (Esther 1)" Why was he so upset? Rava said: Vashti sent to him, "Son of my father's stable boy! My father drank the equal of 1,000 men and was not intoxicated, and this man becomes foolish in his wine."

Story

2. Daniel 5:1-4 (adapted from JPS 1985)

King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for his thousand nobles, and in the presence of the thousand he drank wine. Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar ordered the gold and silver vessels that his father Nevuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple at Jerusalem to be brought so that the king and his nobles, his consorts, and his concubines could drink from them. The golden vessels that had been taken out of the sanctuary of the House of Gd in Jerusalem were then brought, and the king, his nobles, his consorts, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

3. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews X 11:2 (William Whiston translation)

[The throne] came to Baltasar, who by the Babylonians was called Naboandelus; against him did Cyrus, the king of Persia, and Darius, the king of Media, make war; and when he was besieged in Babylon, there happened a wonderful and prodigious vision. He was sat down at supper in a large room, and there were a great many vessels of silver, such as were made for royal entertainments, and he had with him his concubines and his friends; whereupon he came to a resolution, and commanded that those vessels of Gd which Nevuchadnezzar had plundered out of Jerusalem, and had not made use of, but had put them into his own temple, should be brought out of that temple. He also grew so haughty as to proceed to use them in the midst of his cups, drinking out of them, and blaspheming against Gd.

4. Talmud, Megilah 11b

"And it was, after 37 years from the exile of Yehoyachin, king of Yehudah [which had happened in the eighth year of Nevuchadnezzar], on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, Evil Merodach, king of Babylon, raised the head of Yehoyachin, king of Yehudah, and took him out of prison." 8 and 37 is 45 years of Nevuchadnezzar, and tradition teaches that Evil Merodach reigned for 23 years, and 2 years of Belshazzar total 70. Belshazzar said, "Now, certainly, they will not be redeemed! I will take out the implements of the Temple and use them." Thus Daniel said, "You elevated yourself over the Master of Heaven, and the implements of His house were brought before you."

5. Jeremiah 40:1-3 (adapted from JPS 1985)

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after Nevuzaradan, the chief of the guards, set him free at Ramah, to which he had taken him, chained in fetters, among those from Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

The chief of the guards took charge of Jeremiah, and he said to him, "The Lord your Gd threatened this place with this disaster; and now the Lord has brought it about. He has acted as He threatened, because you sinned against the Lord and did not obey Him. That is why this has happened to you."

6. Daniel 5:5-30 (adapted from JPS 1985)

Just then, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace opposite the lampstand, so that the king could see the hand as it wrote. The king's face darkened, and his thoughts alarmed him; the joints of his loins were loosened and his knees knocked together.

The king called loudly for the exorcists, Chaldeans, and diviners to be brought. The king addressed the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me its meaning shall be clothed in purple and wear a golden chain on his neck, and shall rule as one of three in the kingdom."

Then all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing or make known its meaning to the king. King Belshazzar grew exceedingly alarmed and his face darkened, and his nobles were dismayed.

Because of the state of the king and his nobles, the queen came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke up and said, "O king, live forever! Let your thoughts not alarm you or your face darken. There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him; in your father's time, illumination, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods were to be found in him, and your father, King Nevuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, exorcists, Chaldeans, and diviners. Seeing that there is to be found in Daniel (whom the king called Belteshazzar) extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, to explain riddles and solve problems, let Daniel now be called to tell the meaning [of the writing]."

Daniel was then brought before the king. The king addressed Daniel, "You are Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah whom my father, the king, brought from Judah. I have heard about you that you have the spirit of the gods in you, and that illumination, knowledge, and extraordinary wisdom are to be found in you. Now the wise men and exorcists have been brought before me to read this writing and to make known its meaning to me. But they could not tell what it meant. I have heard about you, that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known its meaning to me, you shall be clothed in purple and wear a golden chain on your neck and rule as one of three in the kingdom."

Then Daniel said in reply to the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself, and give your presents to others. But I will read the writing for the king, and make its meaning known to him. O king, the Most High Gd bestowed kingship, grandeur, glory, and majesty upon your father Nevuchadnezzar. And because of the grandeur that He bestowed upon him, all the peoples and nations of every language trembled in fear of him. He put to death whom he wished, and whom he wished he let live; he raised high whom he wished and whom he wished he brought low. But when he grew haughty and willfully presumptuous, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was removed from him. He was driven away from men, and his mind made like that of a beast, and his habitation was with wild asses. He was fed grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he came to know that the Most High Gd is sovereign over the realm of man, and sets over it whom He wishes. But you, Belshazzar his son, did not humble yourself although you knew all this. You exalted yourself against the Lord of Heaven, and had the vessels of His temple brought to you. You and your nobles, your consorts, and your concubines drank wine from them and praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear, or understand; but the Gd who controls your lifebreath and every move you make—Him you did not glorify! He therefore made the hand appear, and caused the writing to be inscribed.

This is the writing that is inscribed: mene tekel upharsin. And this is its meaning:

mene—Gd has numbered [the days of] your kingdom and brought it to an end;

tekela—you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting;

peres—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians."

Then, at Belshazzar's command, they clothed Daniel in purple, placed a golden chain on his neck, and proclaimed that he should rule as one of three in the kingdom. That very night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed,

7. Talmud, Sanhedrin 22a

אמר רב בגימטריא איכתיב להון ישת ישת אידך פוגחמט... ושמואל אמר ממתוס ננקפי אאלרן ורבי יוחנן אמר אנב אנב לקת ניסרפו רב אשי אמר נמא נמא קתל פורסין

8. At Bash

כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א
ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת

9. Shemuel's approach

ט	ו	ת	נ	נ
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ן	ר	ל	א	א

The Lesson

10. Talmud, Berachot 57a

Dreams of all kinds of beverages are good signs, except wine... Some drink it and it's good for them, as in, "And wine which gladdens the heart of man." And some drink it and it's bad for them, as in Proverbs 31:6, "Give intoxicating drink to the doomed, and wine to those of bitter spirit."

11. Talmud, Yoma 76b

Why is [wine] called both *yayin* and *tirosh*? *Yayin* because it brings wailing [*yelalah*] to the world, and *tirosh* because one who starts with it becomes poor [*rosh*]... Tehillim 104:15 is written *yishmach* and pronounced *yisamach* – if one merits, it gladdens him [*yisamach*]; if one does not merit, it destroys him [*yishmah*].

12. Likutei haPardes of Rashi's school (11th century France), Inyan haBerachot

Or: Because wine causes shame, bringing people to intoxication and foolishness and ruin, and the text says, "And wine is *mesameiach* the heart of man" and they said, "if one merits, it gladdens him [*misamcho*]; if one does not merit, it destroys him [*mishamimo*]." Therefore one says, "Think, my masters," as if to say, "Set your minds to drink wine." He says it out of fear, lest they come to corruption. And this is why he says "L'Chaim," meaning, "We wish and plan to drink to life." Lest they come to corruption, they answer, "Amen, L'Chaim."

13. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deiot 5:3

When a wise person drinks wine, he drinks only enough to irrigate the food in his innards. Anyone who becomes intoxicated is a sinner, degraded, and destructive to his own wisdom. Becoming intoxicated in front of laity desecrates Gd's Name...

14. Daniel 1:1-2

In the third year of the reign of Yehoyakim, King of Judea, Nevuchadnezzar King of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and besieged her. And Gd gave Yehoyakim, King of Judea, into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of Gd. And he brought them to Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the store of his god.

15. Deuteronomy 32:21

They outraged me with a non-Gd, causing Me 'anger' with their emptiness. I will outrage them with a non-nation; with a disgusting nation I will anger them.

16. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 7:1

Without his gifts, Daniel was ready to serve him and perform his will. Also, Daniel said this because he wished to rebuke him openly.