



Alcohol: Through Noah's Glass

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Drinks Menu

- Types of Alcohol
- Effects of Alcohol
- Mitzvahs with Alcohol
- Dangers of Alcohol
- Stories of Alcohol

Tanach with Alcohol

- Wine mentioned ~200 times in Tanach
 - תירוש – 38, יין – 141,
 - חמר, עסיס, סבא, ממסר, מזג
- Beer – שֶׁכָּר (23x)

Mitzvoth that include wine

YES Wine

- נִסּוּךְ הַיַּיִן – libation of wine (~90 times)
- Kiddush
- Havdallah
- 4 cups Seder Night
- Birkat HaMazon – Benching
- Kiddushin, Chuppah, Brit Milah
- Holiday's Joy
- Purim

NO Wine

- Nazir
- Can't enter Mishkan or Beit Hamikdash (or Judge) while under the influence
 - Duchening early on Simchat Torah

What are the effects of wine?

- שמחה - Gladdens

- וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַגֶּפֶן הִחְדַּלְתִּי אֶת־תִּירוּשֵׁי הַמְּשַׁמֵּחַ אֶל־הַיַּיִם וְאֶנְשֵׁים וְהִלַּכְתִּי לְנוֹעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:

But the vine replied, ‘Have I stopped yielding my new wine, which gladdens God and men, that I should go and wave above the trees?’ (Shoftim 9:13)

- ... וַיִּין יִשְׂמַח לְבַב־אָנוּשׁ ...
wine that cheers the hearts of men...
(Tehillim 104:15)

- Comforts

- Rabbi Hanin said: Wine was created only in order to comfort mourners (Eruvin 65a)

- Wizens

- “Drinking it in measure it will improve his intellect, for a joyous heart improves the intellect, as seen in the prophets.” R’ Dovid Kimchi Tehillim 104:15 (trans. Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner)

- שכור – drunkenness - inebriation (33)

- Lower inhibitions
- Loose lips
- Reduce coordination
- Wine enters, secrets leave (Eruvin 65a)

Stories with wine in Tanach

- Negative –

- Noah (Breishit 9)
- Lot's Daughters (Breishit 19)
- Nadav and Avihu (Midrash on Vayikra 10)
- (Avshalom's assassination of Amnon)
- Criticized for Drinking improperly or being drunk (Yeshayahu, Yirmiyahu, Hoshea, Yoel, Amos...)

- Positive

- In context of feast and celebration (Avraham, Yosef and his brothers, holidays by Beit HaMikdash, many other)
- Role in Purim Story (Megillat Esther) - Midreshet Yom Rishon 2/27
- Example of happiness
- Blessing of plenty (Yehudah's Breishit 49, 2nd paragraph of Shma, etc)

Focus on Noah's Story (Breishit 9)

(18) The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth—Ham being the father of Canaan. (19) These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole world branched out. (20) Noah, the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. (21) He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent. (22) Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. (23) But Shem and Japheth took a cloth, placed it against both their backs and, walking backward, they covered their father's nakedness; their faces were turned the other way, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. (24) When Noah woke up from his wine and learned what his youngest son had done to him, (25) he said, "Cursed be Canaan; The lowest of slaves Shall he be to his brothers." (26) And he said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; Let Canaan be a slave to them. (27) May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be a slave to them." (28) Noah lived after the Flood 350 years. (29) And all the days of Noah came to 950 years; then he died. (JPS 1985)

(יח) וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־נֹחַ הַיֹּצְאִים מִן־הַתְּבֹה
שֵׁם וְחָם וַיִּפֹּת וְחָם הוּא אָבִי כְנַעַן:
(יט) שְׁלֹשָׁה אֱלֹהֵי בְנֵי־נֹחַ וּמֵאלֹהֵי
נִפְצָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: (כ) וַיַּחֲלֵל נֹחַ אִישׁ
הָאָדָמָה וַיִּטֶּע כָּרֶם: (כא) וַיִּשְׁתַּ
מִן־הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אֹהֶל־הָ:
(כב) וַיֵּרָא חָם אָבִי כְנַעַן אֶת עֶרְוַת
אָבִיו וַיַּגִּד לְשְׁנֵי־אָחָיו בַּחוּץ: (כג) וַיִּקַּח
שֵׁם וַיִּפֹּת אֶת־הַשְּׂמֹלָה וַיִּשְׁימוּ
עַל־שִׁכְמָם שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרָיִת וַיִּכְסּוּ
אֶת עֶרְוַת אָבִיהֶם וּפְנֵיהֶם אַחֲרָיִת
וְעֶרְוַת אָבִיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ: (כד) וַיִּיקֹץ נֹחַ
מִיֵּינוֹ וַיֵּדַע אֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה־לּוֹ בְּנוֹ
הַקָּטָן: (כה) וַיֹּאמֶר אַרוּר כְּנַעַן עֶבֶד
עֲבָדִים יִהְיֶה לְאָחָיו: (כו) וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ
יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנַעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ:
(כז) יִפְתַּח אֱלֹהִים לְיִפְתָּח וַיִּשְׁכַּן
בְּאַהֲלֵי־שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנַעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ: (כח)
וַיְחִי־נֹחַ אַחֲרַי הַמַּבּוּל שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה
וְחַמְשִׁים שָׁנָה: (כט) וַיְהִיו כָּל־יְמֵי־נֹחַ
תְּשַׁע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וְחַמְשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת:

Drunkenness of Noah

- Italian artist [Giovanni Bellini](#) (1515)



How to read the story

~ Drinking to excess is bad – Noah curses grandkids, fades into history

Change the drinking

- He drank like a wise man – Philo of Alexandria
- He didn't drink at all – it was a prophecy – (Genesis Apocryphon, Dead Sea Scrolls)

Change context

- First offers libation, drinking at a celebratory feast, continues doing good deeds after - Jubilees
- Noah didn't know what wine was – saves Noah not wine

Drunk Like Lot (Breishit 19)

(29) And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt. (30) And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar; and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. (31) And the first-born said unto the younger: 'Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth. (32) Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.' (33) And they made their father drink wine that night. And the first-born went in, and lay with her father; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. (34) And it came to pass on the morrow, that the first-born said unto the younger: 'Behold, I lay yesternight with my father. Let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.' (35) And they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose, and lay with him; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. (36) Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. (37) And the first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab—the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. (38) And the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi—the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day. (JPS 1985)

(כט) וַיְהִי בַשַּׁחַת אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עָרֵי הַכְּפֹר וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהִפְכָּה בַּהִפְךָ אֶת־הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־יָשָׁב בָּהֶן לוֹט: (ל) וַיַּעַל לוֹט מִצּוֹעַר וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּהָר וּשְׁתֵי בְנֹתָיו עִמּוֹ כִּי יָרָא לָשֶׁבֶת בַּצּוֹעַר וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמְעָרָה הַזֹּאת וּשְׁתֵי בְנֹתָיו: (לא) וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה אַבְיָנוּ זָקֵן וְאִישׁ אֵין בָּאָרֶץ לְבוֹא עֲלֵינוּ כְּדָרָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: (לב) לָכֵן נִשְׁקֶה אֶת־אַבְיָנוּ יַיִן וְנִשְׁכְּבָה עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאַבְיָנוּ זָרַע: (לג) וַתִּשְׁקִין אֶת־אַבְיָהּן יַיִן בְּלֵילָה הַזֶּה וַתָּבֹא הַבְּכִירָה וַתִּשְׁכַּב אֶת־אַבְיָהּ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ וּבְקוּמָהּ: (לד) וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֶת וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה הֲנִי־שִׁכַבְתִּי אִמֶּשׁ אֶת־אַבִּי וְנִשְׁקַנּוּ יַיִן גַּם־הַלַּיְלָה וּבֹאִי שִׁכְבִּי עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאַבְיָנוּ זָרַע: (לה) וַתִּשְׁקִין גַּם בְּלֵילָה הַזֶּה וַיְהִי אֶת־אַבְיָהּן יַיִן וַתִּקַּם הַצְעִירָה וַתִּשְׁכַּב עִמּוֹ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ וּבְקוּמָהּ: (לו) וַתִּהְרֶן שְׁתֵּי בְנֹת־לוֹט מֵאַבְיָהּן: (לז) וַתֵּלֶד הַבְּכִירָה בֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מוֹאָב הוּא אֲבִי־מוֹאָב עַד־הַיּוֹם: (לח) וַהַצְעִירָה גַם־הִיא יָלְדָה בֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְנִי־עַמּוֹן עַד־הַיּוֹם:

Drunk Serving G-d?

Sefer HaChinukh Mitzvah 152

To not enter the Temple intoxicated, and likewise to not give a ruling intoxicated:

The root of the commandment is well known - that it is only fitting to be involved in extremely precious things, like matters of the Temple and words of Torah, at the time that a man is settled in his thoughts and focused in all of his actions. There is no need to write at length about obvious things. (translated by R. Francis Nataf, Sefaria 2018)

שלא להכנס שתויי יין במקדש וכן שלא יורה שתוי

שורש המצוה ידוע, שאין ראוי להתעסק בדברים היקרים בתכלית היקר כמו עניני המקדש ודברי התורה רק בעת שיהיה האדם מישב בדעתו ומכון בכל מעשיו, אין להאריך בדברים פשוטים.

Too drunk to decide Eruvin 64a

However, Rav Naḥman did not give his approval to all of Rav Yehuda's rulings, as **Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: If one drank a quarter-log of wine, he may not issue a halakhic ruling**, as the wine is liable to confuse his thinking. With regard to this second statement, **Rav Naḥman said: This *halakha* is not excellent, as concerning myself, as long as I have not drunk a quarter-log of wine, my mind is not clear.** It is only after drinking wine that I can issue appropriate rulings.

Rava said to Rav Naḥman: What is the reason that the Master said this, making a statement that praises one *halakha* and disparages another? **Didn't Rabbi Aḥa bar Hanina say: What is the meaning of that which is written: "But he who keeps company with prostitutes [*zonot*] wastes his fortune" (Proverbs 29:3)?** It alludes to the following: **Anyone who says: This teaching is pleasant [*zo na'a*] but this is not pleasant, loses the fortune of Torah.** It is not in keeping with the honor of Torah to make such evaluations. **Rav Naḥman said to him: I retract**, and I will no longer make such comments concerning words of Torah. (William Davidson Translation)

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: שְׂתֵה רְבִיעִית יַיִן — אֶל יוֹרֵה. אָמַר רַב נַחְמָן: לֹא מְעֻלִּיא הָא שְׁמַעְתָּא, דְּהָא אָנָּא כָּל כַּמָּה דְּלֹא שְׂתִינָא רְבִיעֵתָא דְּחַמְרָא — לֹא צִילָא דַּעְתָּאִי.

אָמַר לִיה רַבָּא: מַאי טַעְמָא אָמַר מַר הַכִּי? הָאָמַר רַבִּי אַחָא בְּרַ חֲנִינָא: מַאי דְּכָתִיב "וְרוּעָה זֹנוֹת יֶאֱבֹד הוֹן" — כָּל הָאוֹמֵר שְׁמוּעָה זוֹ נָאָה, וְזוֹ אֵינָה נָאָה — מְאֵבֵד הוֹנָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה! אָמַר לִיה: הֲדַרִּי בִּי.

Too drunk to pray?

On the topic of drinking wine, **Rabba bar Rav Huna** said: **One who has drunk wine must not pray, but if he nonetheless prayed, his prayer is a prayer**, i.e., he has fulfilled his obligation. On the other hand, **one who is intoxicated with wine must not pray, and if he prayed, his prayer is an abomination.**

One of them opened the discussion and said: What are the circumstances where a person is considered one who has drunk wine, and what are the circumstances where a person is considered one who is intoxicated with wine? One who has drunk wine refers to anyone who has drunk wine but whose mind remains clear enough that he is able to talk in the presence of a king. One who is intoxicated refers to anyone who is so disoriented by the wine he has drunk that he is not able to talk in the presence of a king.

אָמַר רַבָּה בַּר רַב
הוֹנָא: שְׁתוּי אֶל
יִתְפַּלֵּל, וְאִם הִתְפַּלֵּל
— תְּפִלָּתוֹ תִּפְלָה.
שִׂיכּוֹר אֶל יִתְפַּלֵּל,
וְאִם הִתְפַּלֵּל —
תְּפִלָּתוֹ תוֹעֵבָה ...

פְּתַח חַד וְאָמַר: הֵיכִי
דְּמִי שְׁתוּי, וְהֵיכִי דְּמִי
שִׂיכּוֹר? שְׁתוּי — כֹּל
שִׂיכּוֹל לְדַבֵּר לְפָנֵי
הַמֶּלֶךְ. שִׂיכּוֹר — כֹּל
שִׂאִינוּ יְכוֹל לְדַבֵּר
לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ.

When is too much?

Rabbi Ḥanina said: They taught that an intoxicated person is responsible for all his actions **only** in a case where **he did not reach the state of intoxication of Lot; however, if he reached the state of intoxication of Lot**, so that he is altogether unaware of his actions, **he is exempt from all** liability.

• אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: לֹא שָׁנוּ אֶלָּא שְׁלֹא הִגִּיעַ לְשִׁכְרוּתוֹ שֶׁל לֹט, אֲבָל הִגִּיעַ לְשִׁכְרוּתוֹ שֶׁל לֹט — פְּטוֹר מִכּוֹלָם.

Levels of Drunkenness

- None – Sober
- Drank & Able to stand before a king
- Drank & Unable to stand before a king – prayer becomes abomination
- Drunk Like Lot - not even present

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein

Beyond representing physical pleasure in general, wine has a special nature. On the one hand, it can help bring about a raising of spirits. There are many contexts in which wine expresses joy, and enhances it as well. This holds true on the objective halakhic level, as expressed by the halakhic principle that the joyful songs sung at the offering of sacrifices in the Mikdash are accompanied by wine - "Ein shira ela be-yayin." It is also true on the more subjective level - as expressed by the verse (recited every Rosh Chodesh): "Wine gladdens the heart of man" ([Tehillim 104:15](#)). It is for these reasons that wine is present at most happy occasions, such as a wedding and Berit Mila. On the communal and personal levels, wine can be a means to enhance man's feelings.

On the other hand, wine can also be the cause of drunkenness. If it is not controlled, drinking can bring about a loss of control, and even a deterioration of man's nature. When a person allows himself to lose some control in this area, he will very often be dragged along to a total loss of control. If he allows his drinking to overcome him, the results can be disastrous. It can even lead to the tearing apart of families. Can the same be said for chocolate, movies, or Coca Cola? Do they bring a person to such great heights or terrible traumas?! Wine is more significant than other pleasures in this regard - it has the potential to raise a person up, or to destroy him.

What determines which of these two extreme results wine will bring about? The answer is control. If the person remains in control of his drinking, the wine can bring him joy. If, however, the person becomes enslaved to his drinking, it can have horrific results. It is critical for a person to remain in control of his drinking.

Conclusion

- Different types of drinking
 - Depends on timing
 - Context
 - People, place,
 - Quantity
- Drink responsibly
 - Not during prayers

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