

CHAPTER ONE THE USE OF WINE

The vine is one of the seven species for which the Land of Israel is praised, and it is a symbol for abundance and blessing. Wine is counted along with grain and oil as one of humanity's basic needs (*Devarim* 7:13). The vine is numbered in the seven species immediately after grain, and it is one of the fruits which is obligated in *terumah* and *maaserot*. The wine is known in Judaism as part of the service in the Temple which accompanied certain holidays and events. During this period, people would stomp the grapes in a vat or in a winery (*Yeshayahu* 16:10). They would store the wine in storehouses (*Devarim* 28:39). They would drink wine in goblets or cups (*Yirmiyahu* 35:5), and those that drank a lot would drink from fountains (*Amos* 6:6). The equipment revealed in archaeological digs teaches us about the extensiveness of wine-drinking in Israel.

Similarly, wine was used for offerings on Shabbat, on Hagim, and on Rosh Hodesh. Wine was an indispensable part of the service in the Temple—the libation of wine according to fixed measurement, the separation of *teruma*, *maser*, and *maaser sheni* from new wine (*Devarim* 12:7-8). However, in the sacrificial law of Yehezkiel, wine libations are not mentioned; it was apparently replaced by oil (*Yehezkiel* 45). The use of wine was part of kiddush on Shabbat and Hagim, in the *seudat mitzvah* of Brit Mila and weddings, and on Purim (until one does not know how to distinguish between cursed Haman and blessed Mordechai). The Tanakh mentions many different types of wine: the blood of grapes (*Bereshit* 29:11), *tirosh* (*Mikha* 6:15), *asis* (*Yoel* 1:5), *yayin helbon* (*Yehezkiel* 27:18), and there are those that say in *Shir HaShirim mazag* (7:3) and *rekah* (8:2) and perhaps even pomegranate wine and *smedar*.

רובי העבירות סיבתם היין. היין משחית את הדעות ועבודת ה'.
- אבן עזרע על במדבר ו:ב

Most transgressions are caused by wine. Wine destroys thinking and *Avodat Hashem*.
- Ibn Ezra on *Bamidbar* 6:2

According to R' Avraham Ibn Ezra, most transgressions that a person transgresses are due to exaggerated drinking of wine. In his following words, he states that wine destroys a person's thinking and *Avodat Hashem*. From this we learn that, in his opinion, the Torah discusses the topic of the Nazir as a way to avoid a habit that threatens to catch a person.

As is well known, wine influences one's consciousness and reduces a person's awareness, and thus it can be said generally that wine destroys a person's thinking and prevents *Avodat Hashem*.

For further thinking:

1. Is wine addictive like all other drugs?

2. Most people think that responsible drinking of alcohol is acceptable. When, in your opinion, should a person be concerned about becoming addicted?

<p>Sanhedrin 70:2</p> <p>'It is not for Kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes [to say,] Where is strong drink?' (Mishlei 31,4) She spoke thus to him: What hast thou to do with kings who drink wine and say, 'What need have we of God?'</p> <p>'Nor for princes to say: 'Where is strong drink?'- The one to whom all of the secrets of the world are revealed will drink wine and get drunk? There are those that say: The one to whom all of the princes of the world rise upon his entrance will drink wine and get drunk?</p> <p>R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai: This teaches that his mother thrust him against a post.</p> <p>R. Isaac said: whence do we know that Solomon repented and confessed to his mother [the correctness of her rebukes]? — From the verse (Mishle 30,2): "Surely, I am more brutish than man, and have not the understanding of a man." I am more brutish than a man — that is, than Noah, of whom it is written, And Noah began to be an husbandman; 'and have not the understanding of a man'— of Adam.</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף ע עמוד ב</p> <p>"אל למלכים למואל אל למלכים שתו יין" (משלי לא, 4) 'אל למלכים' - אמרה לו : מה לך אצל מלכים ששותים יין ומשתכרים ואומרים למה לנו אל?</p> <p>ולרוזנים אי שכר - מי שכל רזי עולם גלויים לו ישתה יין וישתכר? איכא דאמרי : מי שכל רוזני עולם משכימין לפתחו ישתה יין וישתכר? ...</p> <p>אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי : מלמד שכפאתו אמו על העמוד</p> <p>אמר רבי יצחק : מניין שחזר שלמה והודה לאמו - דכתיב (משלי ל') כי בער אנכי מאיש ולא בינת אדם לי, כי בער אנכי מאיש - מנח, דכתיב (בראשית ט') ויחל נח איש האדמה, ולא בינת אדם לי - זה אדם הראשון.</p>
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This story teaches us the following lessons:

1. One is not to drink wine without a reason and even a king is forbidden to behave in this manner.
2. Even King Solomon, the wisest of all men, thought to himself, "This will never happen to me, I will not become drunk." Then it happened to him.
3. A person who succumbs deserves a fitting punishment. King Solomon's mother tied him to a post and lashed him.

4. King Solomon confessed before his mother and accepted his punishment with understanding because he did not learn a lesson from the cases of Noah and Adam.
5. We are not wise like King Solomon. How much more so we should not experiment with drinking alcohol without supervision, without a proper reason, etc.

For further thinking:

1. A person through drinking eventually thinks: "Why do we need God?" What other negative behaviors can we expect from him?
2. Is there a distinction to be made regarding drinking between different types of people: strong vs. weak, rich vs. poor, etc.?

<p>Sanhedrin 70:1</p> <p>And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard, — R. Hisda said in R. Ukba's name, and others state, Mar Ukba said in R. Zakkai's name: The Holy One, blessed be He, said unto Noah: 'Noah, shouldst thou not have taken a warning from Adam, whose transgression was caused by wine?' This agrees with the view that the [forbidden] tree from which Adam ate was a vine. For it has been taught: R. Meir said: That [forbidden] tree from which Adam ate was a vine, for nothing else but wine brings woe to man.</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף ע עמוד א</p> <p>”ויחל נח איש האדמה ויטע כרם” (בר' ח, 9-10). אמר רב חסדא אמר רב עוקבא, ואמרי לה מר עוקבא אמר רבי זכאי: אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא לנח: נח, לא היה לך ללמוד מאדם הראשון, שלא גרם לו אלא יין. כמאן דאמר אותו אילן שאכל ממנו אדם הראשון גפן היה. דתניא, רבי מאיר אומר: אותו אילן שאכל אדם הראשון ממנו גפן היה, שאין לך דבר שמביא יללה לאדם אלא יין.</p>
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The Gemara teaches us that Noah should have learned from Adam whose banishment from the Garden of Eden was because of the vine, and he should have stopped himself from planting vines. It brings a proof from a *Beraita* that the tree which Adam ate from was a vine and nothing brings more woe (*yelala*) to a person than wine. (From *Alcoholism and Drugs in Judaism* by A. Zalmanovitch, 1981 [Hebrew]).

For further thinking:

1. What is the secret power of drugs and wine that it can affect every person?
2. What is the moral of the stories in the Tanakh?

”הכונני בל חליתי הלמוני בל ידעתי מתי אקיץ אוסיף אבקשנו עוד”
-משלי כ”ג, ל”ה

“They struck me, but I felt no pain; They beat me but I was unaware; When I wake up, I go after it again...”

- *Mishlei* 23: 35

King Solomon states in *Mishlei*, “They struck me, but I felt no pain; They beat me but I was unaware; When I wake up, I go after it again...” A person in his deep drunkenness does not feel thrashings that land on him and he declares, “When I wake up, I will drink more wine.” A person who is enslaved to alcohol clings to a bottle like a breathing tube, yet all the while inhaling poison.

King Solomon describes his feelings “They beat me but I was unaware”, meaning he didn’t notice that he was hurting himself.

A person’s perceptions are distorted and deceptive under the influence of wine and alcohol, but only temporarily.

From here we understand why there is no point in trying to convince an addicted person to quit while he is under the influence of the drug. His perceptions are reduced and he does not understand what people are telling him. King Solomon also describes what passes through the mind of a drunkard, “When I wake up, I’ll go after it again.” When an addict comes to his senses from his drinking, the only thing that interests him is where can he acquire more alcohol. Obviously in a case like this there is a need to abstain from alcohol and begin treatment.

Further Thinking:

1. In your opinion, how did King Solomon quit drinking alcohol?
2. Why does King Solomon relate this story about himself and other similar stories about things that he shouldn't have done?
3. Why was Hazal's approach and that of Israeli Civil Law towards drugs completely negative even though they tolerate and permit alcohol?
4. The Israeli Civil Law forbids the sale of alcohol under the age of 21, but does not forbid its use. Why?
5. The Israeli army forbids sale of alcohol on military property to all ages. Why?

”יתהלך במישרים” (משלי כג,31), ר' יצחק בר רדיפא בשם רבי אמי אומר: סוף שהוא מוכר את כלי ביתו ושותה בהן יין.
- ויקרא רבה, שמיני, י”ב.

“As it flows smoothly...” (Mishle 23,31) - R' Yitzhak bar Radifa stated in the name of Rabbi Ami: In the end he will sell all of the objects in his house and in their place drink wine.

- *Vayikra Rabba*, Shemini 12

The *midrash* relates an additional story about a man who would customarily drink twelve measures, and one day he drank only 11 measures and didn't manage to fall asleep. He arose at night and walked to the storeowner and asked from him to sell him wine. The storeowner refused to open the door because he feared the guardians of the city. The buyer noticed a hole in the door and requested from the storeowner to give him wine through the hole, "Pour it from the inside and I will drink from the outside." He drank and passed out next to the door. The guards passed by and mistook the sleeping man for a thief and beat him. Regarding him, people quoted the passage (*Mishlei* 23: 29), "To who that is injured for nothing..." (*Vayikra Rabba*, Shmini 12).

The two sections from the *midrash* describe alcohol drinking in the forms of total addiction and the loss of the image of man. The first section discusses a familiar occurrence among addicted people who sell the entire contents of their house in order to finance the drugs and alcohol. The second story describes the degradation and the willingness of the drunkard to do anything in order to acquire alcohol, even sleeping in the street like an animal. So too, the degrading treatment of the representatives of society, the guardians of the city, who beat the drunken man in their mistaken assumption that he is a thief who fell asleep amidst his work and lacks a home.

The beatings that the drunken man received from the guardians of the city are obviously unjustified, but a sober person should take into consideration such possibilities before turning to drink alcohol.

The beatings and degradation of the person who has become addicted to drugs or alcohol are the direct results of the behavior of the drinker and his lack of foresight.

Further Thinking:

1. Does this drunken person have a legal claim against the guardians of the city who beat him?
2. Define the concept “tragedy”.
3. How many tragedies are you aware of?