



Parshat Balak

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STARTING POINT

Bilam's Three Speeches - by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

Three times Balak asks Bilam to curse Yisrael, and each time he is disappointed. However, Bilam's first three declarations are not simple repetitions but rather are aimed at three different segments of the population. And this explains the differences among Bilam's statements.

Bilam's first speech in essence centers on himself (Bamidbar 23:7-10). It describes Bilam and his actions – "I have been brought... How can I curse... How can I be angry... I will see them... My soul... After I die..." The main message is Bilam's wonder about the very idea of cursing Bnei Yisrael. "How can I curse, if G-d has not cursed, how can I be angry, if G-d is not angry?" [23:8]. At this point, Bilam does not explicitly intend to bless Yisrael – in fact, his two references to Yisrael are connected to Bilam himself. First, he describes the nation: "I see it from the tops of the mountains, and I look at it from the hills. They are a nation which dwells alone and does not pay attention to other nations. Who can count the dust of Yaacov or the multitudes of Yisrael?" [23:9-10]. The purpose of this description is to increase the amazement at how he could even consider cursing Yisrael, a great nation that dwells alone (see Rashbam). The blessing at the end of this first speech is also centered on Bilam and on his desire to come to the same end as Yisrael does. "Let me die a death of the righteous, and let what is left after me be like him" [23:10].

The next declaration is centered on Balak (23:18-24). "Rise, Balak, and listen, hear to me, son of Tzipor" [23:18]. It includes a reprimand of Balak for not understanding that the will of G-d cannot be changed. "G-d is not a man who will be untrue or a human being who will change his mind" [23:19]. He again explains why it is impossible to curse Yisrael, this time telling Balak. "There is no sorcery in Yaacov and no magic in Yisrael" [23:23]. He ends with a veiled threat. "This is a nation that will rise as a lion cub and will lift itself up as a lion. It will not lie down until it eats prey and drinks the blood of its victims." [23:24].

Before his third speech (24:3-9), Bilam changes his tactics. "Bilam saw that it was good in G-d's eyes to bless Yisrael, so he did not try as he had before with sorcery. And he turned towards the desert." [24:1]. Then he turned to Yisrael. "How good are your tents, Yaacov, your dwelling places, Yisrael" [24:5]. He gives them a direct blessing. "Water will drip from its pail and it will plant in an abundance of water, and it will rise over the king of Agag and take over his kingdom" [24:6-7]. He once again brings up a comparison to a young and an elderly lion, this time not as a threat to the other nations, a lion ready for battle, but rather as a blessing for Yisrael, resting securely

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after the end of a battle. "It has kneeled like a lion, who can make a lion cub rise?" [24:9]. "Yisrael will conquer the land of Caanan, and then the land will be peaceful" [Ibn Ezra].

Only now, after Balak hears an explicit blessing of Yisrael, does he come to the correct conclusion. "And Balak became angry with Bilam, and he clapped his hands. And Balak said to Bilam, I called on you to curse my enemies, but behold you have blessed them three times. Now flee to your place." [24:10-11].

POINT OF VIEW

The Orange-Colored Length of Thread - by Rabbi Yisrael Rozen

"Tie this length of purple string in the window" [Yehoshua 2:18]. "Your lips are like a length of purple thread and your words are pleasant" [Shir Hashirim 4:3].

Just like everybody else, for a long time I have had a heavy heart, and my unease grows steadily as the day of destruction and exile approaches. Just like everybody else, I am searching for a sliver of hope on which to depend, but we can ultimately only put our trust in our Father in Heaven. Evidently, the only way to stop the expulsion naturally will be if our enemies make a mistake and not by having our Prime Minister, the democratic dictator, come to his senses.

"Tie it in the Window" and "Tie it on Your Hand"

Three weeks ago, in the Haftara of the portion of Shelach, we read about the preparations of the scouts when they entered Jericho, which is the entry point into Eretz Yisrael (see Midrash Rabba 15:15 – "Nagra", meaning the bolt at the entrance gate to the land). One verse stood out and gave me some hope: "Tie this length of purple string in the window." I saw the word "tikvat" in the verse as a symbol of salvation. The classic commentators interpret the word "tikvat" as a straight line, referring to a cord. I see in the word the more common meaning, a hope, thin as a cord but still a hope. In his commentary Daat Mikra, Rabbi Yehuda Kiel compares this verse to the optimistic prophesy of the transformation of "a murky valley into an opening of hope – Petach Tikvah"

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מרת הנא בת ר' מרדכי מנדל אלינער

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[Hoshaya 2:17]. I note also that Yehoshua's original name was Hoshaya.

In a flash, I suddenly began to understand the deeper meaning of the orange-colored bands that can be seen in many windows, on car antennas, and on any free rod.

I do not know who chose the color orange as a symbol. Was this simply a random choice, or did he have in his unconscious mind a desire to dilute the purple with a hint of gold? The purple string is related to the "shining band" that was tied on the head of the goat sent to Azazel on Yom Kippur. (See the Mishna, Yoma 4:2, and 6:8, where the band is linked to the verse, "If your sins will be red – like the purple string – they will become white as snow" [Yeshayahu 1:18].)

The purple string is also linked to a bracelet, in a verse in the Torah. "And she tied a purple string on his hand, to signal that he is the one who came out first... And he called him Zerach" [Bereishit 38:28-30]. (Note that the word Zerach is related to a shine or a glow.) I suggest that the color of a shining band of purple is what we call orange. I wonder exactly what the source of the Hebrew word is for this color, "katom." Perhaps the answer is related to the verse, "His head is the color of gold – 'ketem paz'" [Shir Hashirim 5:11]. Could this be the orange color of a redhead?

A Hope that Remains Forever

"The string of purple" is tied to the home of Rachav in Jericho and is a sign for a section of the wall that will not fall down ("Her home was in the wall" [Yehoshua 2:15]). The sound of "tikvah," hope, is permanent, and it is a thread in our hopes for heritage of the land. Let this be a symbol for all our coming generations. I have another question for my readers: There is a Hebrew expression, "k'chut hashani," literally, "like the string of purple" – meaning something that is clearly marked from end to end. The image would be of a purple thread, shining and prominent, woven into a cloth from one end to the next.

The "purple thread" appears in another surprising context, quoted above. The lover is praised with the words "your lips are like a length of purple thread." Lips are clearly associated with prayer. Hope is embedded in the prayers related to the purple thread, reminiscent of tightly held lips. Prayer is an element that has flown through all our hopes, "k'chut hashani," from the earliest generations to the present. (From the mystical point of view, the Zohar (Vayechi 241:2) sees the lips as a hint of a thread of purple reminiscent of the moon, which is linked to Yehoshua – "Moshe's face is like the sun, Yehoshua's face is like the moon" [Rashi, Bamidbar 27:20].)

The Destruction of the Temple is Linked to the Walls of Jericho

And we will not avoid the frightening part of this analysis. In the minds of the sages, the "thread of purple" has come to be seen as a symbol of destruction of the Temple and exile. We are taught that "Rachav converted and married Yehoshua, as is written, 'Rachav was kept alive by Yehoshua' [Yehoshua 6:25] – for himself" [Megilla 14b]. Her offspring included "Neria,

Baruch, Sheria, Mechasiya, Yirmiyahu, Chilkiyah, Chanamel, and Shalum. Rabbi Yehuda says, Chulda the Prophet was also descended from Rachav the Harlot. In one verse, it is written, 'Chulda the prophet, wife of Shalom Ben Tikvah' [II Melachim 22:14], and also 'the length of purple thread'" [ibid].

What is the deep meaning of this Agada? Note that all of the people mentioned appear in the book of Yirmiyahu, the prophet of the destruction. Anyone sensitive to the nuances of the matter can see that the fact that Yehoshua kept Rachav alive held the seeds of destruction of the Temple that would take place about 800 years later. Anybody who doubts this idea should take note of the following Midrash about impending disaster. "The Almighty said to Yisrael: I commanded that 'you shall destroy them' [Devarim 20:17], but you did not do this. Rather, 'Rachav the Harlot and her father's house and all that belonged to her were kept alive by Yehoshua' [Yehoshua 6:25]. And then Yirmiyahu was descended from the offspring of Rachav the Harlot." [Psikde D'Rav Kahane 13].

This criticism of Yehoshua is the same as appears in another Agada: "At the moment when Shlomo married Pharaoh's daughter, Gavriel descended and stuck a pole in the ocean. A reef grew there, and on the reef the great city of Rome was built." [Shabbat 56b]. (According to the Rambam, Pharaoh's daughter converted to Judaism – Issurei Bi'ah 13:10.) Maintaining a relationship with Gentiles, no matter how tenuous and proper, can be compared to founding the empire of Rome, and this can then lead to the first bulldozer working towards the destruction of Jerusalem. (More about this subject can be found in my recent publication, "The Book of Shoftim According to the Sages," in the Chapter "Negligence in Conquest of Eretz Yisrael.")

TORAH, SOCIETY, AND GOVERNMENT

"Animal Rights" of Human Beings - by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

Bilam's donkey asks him, "Why did you hit me?" [Bamidbar 22:28]. This proved to the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim that the prohibition of causing pain to an animal is a Torah commandment. He added, "If the Torah sympathized with this spiritual suffering of the animals and the birds, it must certainly also do the same for human beings in general." This implies that the prohibition of causing suffering to an animal also applies to a person. Thus, one who sees a fellow human being struggling with a heavy burden and about to fall must help him, just as it is required to help a donkey with its burden. The prohibition to cause an animal to suffer not only refers to a positive act of pain but also to refraining from giving help (such as to an animal that has fallen into a pit), and this is a Torah law.

However, the RADBAZ feels that "with respect to human beings there is no command prohibiting one to cause suffering, since the man can think and he should not have taken on a larger burden than he can handle." This implies that it is only necessary to help a person who could not have known in advance that his burden would be too heavy to carry. However, the author of Chavat Yair writes that a person should accept

suffering with love, and that there is no mitzva to save somebody from his suffering.

Actually, why should it matter to us if the prohibition to cause animals pain is relevant for a human being? Mankind is protected by many other explicit mitzvot, such as "Love your colleague as yourself" [Vayikra 19:18] and "Do not stand aside when the blood of your colleague is spilled" [19:16], among others. The answer is that the word "colleague" in these verses limits the command to fellow Jews (who have a mutual responsibility), so that another source is necessary to include Gentiles, and this is the general rule not to cause an animal to suffer. This is what the Rambam implied by the words "human beings in general," meant to include Gentiles. Perhaps this also applies to a fetus, even if it is not considered a human being or a "colleague," providing a basis for prohibiting abortions, since the fetus is a living creature.

Who else is obligated by this command not to cause suffering? Even the sages are included, aren't they? This might explain why they took the suffering of sick people into account, even if they are not in mortal danger, in cases of rabbinical prohibitions. That is, it can be assumed that the sages felt they should not allow others to suffer. This concept provides us with a basis for allowing certain Shabbat violations for a Gentile who is sick, since the prohibition of causing unnecessary pain applies to him too.

Reference: Rabbi Yair Rozenfeld, "Techumin," volume 25, pages 406-410

MOUNT MORIAH

Shiloh and Jerusalem - by Rabbi Yitzchak Levy, Yeshivat Har Etzion

In the last article we discussed the relationship between the sanctity of Jerusalem and the times when sacrifices could be brought on private altars. Today we will discuss the relationship between Shiloh and Jerusalem. There seem to be several fundamental differences between the two sites, with respect to the basic structure, the rules of approaching the site, and the sanctity of the place.

The Sanctity of Shiloh and the Sanctity of Jerusalem

The holiness of the Tabernacle is a direct continuation of the sanctity of Mount Sinai, just like the Tabernacle is a natural extension of the events that took place at Sinai. At Sinai, the people were not allowed to approach the mountain, but when the ceremony of giving the Torah ended they were permitted to enter the site. "When the Yovel sounds, they may climb up the mountain" [Shemot 19:13]. Mount Sinai was holy only during the time that the revelation took place. As soon as the revelation ended, the site was no longer holy. Today Mount Sinai is not holy in any way.

Exactly the same is true of Shiloh. Some people identify the position of the Tabernacle at Shiloh to the north of Tel Shiloh. But even if this is reasonable and accurate, the place is not holy today. The sanctity of the site of Shiloh depends on the status

of the revelation. As long as the revelation continued, the sanctity of the edifice was extended to the site as a whole and it too became holy. When the Tabernacle was destroyed, the revelation of the Shechina at the site was stopped.

As opposed to the sanctity of Shiloh, the sanctity of Jerusalem is not just a direct result of the Divine revelation. Rather, it is related to the fact that G-d chose the place, starting with the creation of the world from the "Even Hashetiyah" (according to the Midrash), and it does not depend on whether the Temple is there or not. The choice of the site for the Temple had an effect on the entire world. From the time of the creation of the world, this site was set aside as the place where the Shechina would appear. It provides a point of contact between the Almighty and the entire creation, and for this reason it was also the site of the binding of Yitzchak, and also the place of the First and Second Temples, in addition to the Temple which will be built in the future. When the First Temple was built, the site became holy, with an eternal sanctity, at that moment and for all time to come, with the sanctity not related either to time or any specific building. The Altar that David built on Mount Moriah became holy because of the sanctity of the site, the site did not become holy because of the Altar. This explains why the sanctity of Jerusalem is eternal, and after Jerusalem was built no private altars were ever permitted again.

The Construction of the Tabernacle and the Construction of the Temple

The Tabernacle in Shiloh was made of bricks for the bottom sections of the walls, with curtains on top of them. This was an intermediary stage between the Tabernacle of the desert, which was made of beams and curtains, and the permanent Temple, which was constructed completely of stone.

There is a strong symbolism in the construction. In the desert, the Tabernacle was made of temporary material, corresponding to the conditions in the desert. At Shiloh, the construction of the Tabernacle symbolized an intermediary structure. Bnei Yisrael had already entered the land, but they did not yet have a permanent government and the Shechina was not revealed in a constant way. The main era of the Tabernacle at Shiloh – 369 years – was at the same time as the era of the judges. Thus, the bottoms of the walls were stone, denoting permanence, while the tops were made of curtains. Thus, the building symbolized a combination of status, with elements that were both temporary and permanent. In Jerusalem, the permanent construction symbolizes eternity. The walls and the ceiling were made of stone, and the Shechina was revealed only at this site and at no other place in the world.

Eating Holy Food at Shiloh and in Jerusalem

When the Tabernacle was in Shiloh, eating holy food – "kodashim kalim," such as the flesh of a Shelamim sacrifice – was permitted everywhere that the Tabernacle could be seen. After the Temple was built in Jerusalem, on the other hand, this was restricted to the formal limits of the city, "within the walls."

In Shiloh, eating the flesh of the sacrifices depended only on the position of the person, whether he could see the Tabernacle

or not. It was not related in principle to a specific place. This sanctity is related to the level of Yosef – it is not linked to a specific area but is temporary. As opposed to this, in Jerusalem the flesh can only be eaten inside specific physical boundaries. This defines the area of the Camp of Yisrael, and it symbolizes the royal authority of Yehuda. In this case, the holiness is linked to a specific area, and it is defined by objective criteria and not by a subjective viewpoint. Such sanctity has a significance of eternity, different from the sanctity of Shiloh.

Jerusalem – The Site Chosen by G-d

It is clear from the passages in the Torah that Jerusalem is "the site chosen by your G-d" [Devarim 12:5]. This site was revealed to David in a prophetic way, linked to the site where David had already built an altar. At Shiloh, on the other hand, there was no prophetic vision that pointed to the site. Shiloh is related to the first Mashiah, son of Yosef – the first kingdom, which will build the House of Yisrael. Jerusalem is related to the second Mashiah, son of David. This is the eternal kingdom that will erect the complete and permanent level of existence.

A LESSON FOR THE CHILDREN

A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey - by Rabbi Yikhat Rozen, Merkaz Neria, Kiryat Malachi

At last we arrived in the promised land. After many years of yearning, we were privileged to come to the land, from Yemen, in Operation Eagle's Wings (this took place during the early years of Israel, it is also called "The Magic Carpet"). We kissed the ground, and our hearts were filled with joy about our great privilege.

It took only a few days for us to understand that things were not so simple. Even if this was the promised land, which we had been told is "flowing with milk and honey," there was still no promise that we could scrape the milk off the walls or gather the honey from the trees. The opposite was true. We had difficult days ahead. For a long time, we moved from tent to tent, until we finally settled in a small leaky room in the abandoned town of Yehudia (which later became the city of Yahud). In this room, we barely had room for a rusty iron bed and a clothes closet with one door. My mother slept on the bed, and I spent my nights sleeping on the hard floor.

My mother found a very difficult job in the Assis factory, and I waited to be drafted into the army. We had no money in the house, but at least my mother could provide the barest minimum of our needs. We thanked G-d for the privilege of living in our own land, and we hoped for better times.

One morning, I lay down on my mother's bed after she had left for work. When I got off the bed, I saw a very surprising sight. On the floor there was a slow flow of yellow fluid, which threatened to get my bedding wet. I got closer to see what this fluid was, and I rubbed my eyes in amazement. It was honey! How did this honey get here? How did this flow of honey get into our room? To make sure that this was not a dream, I dipped my finger into the fluid and tasted it. I had not made a

mistake. It was real honey! Pure bee honey! It was sweet and valuable!

I looked for the source of the honey, and I found that it was dripping from the ceiling. We were used to having all sorts of leaks from the ceiling. More than once we had been forced to put pails and pots all around the room in order to catch the rain, so that the floor would not become soaked. Our meager room was old and cracked, and it never even occurred to us to have the roof fixed. This time too I put a pot under the crack in the roof to catch the honey.

I felt that I must discover the secret. Was this a miracle? What was the source of the honey? I decided to climb on the roof of our neighbor's house, which gave a view of our own roof. Impatiently, I waited for the neighbor's daughter to come home from school, so that she would let me on the roof. When she finally arrived and let me climb up, I saw that a swarm of bees had landed on our roof and made a hive. The honey came through the crack in our roof, straight into the pot on the floor.

Starting with that day, our lives were sweeter than before. We sold the honey that we managed to collect and our profits improved our situation. But what was probably more important was the fact that our good feeling had returned. We really felt that we were in a "land of milk and honey."

What about our neighbor's daughter? Eventually, she became my wife, as is written, "One who has found a wife has found a good life" [Mishlei 18:22].

(With thanks to Tzori Chatuchah, Matan)

THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS (Pirkei Avot)

Chapter 5 - by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv

The sequence of this chapter, at least in the beginning, is clear to all. It is a numerical sequence, starting with ten and decreasing to four. The first Mishnayot give lists of ten declarations of G-d, ten generations, ten tests of faith, ten miracles, and ten items. All of these lists are related to the history of the world and our nation. But this leaves us with a question. If the author so carefully collected the lists of ten items, why did he leave out what is probably the most significant list of ten items in the history of the nation – the Ten Commandments? Clearly, just as the author asked if the world could not have been created with one declaration and not ten, he could have asked a similar question about the most important of the Ten Commandments. This would follow the commentary of Rabbi Simlai, "Moshe was given six hundred and thirteen mitzvot... Chavakuk came and summarized them all into one, as is written, 'A righteous man will live with his faith' [Chavakuk 2:4]." [Makkot 23b-24a]. That is, the main mitzva, the shortest abstract that Chavakuk gave, is the commandment of faith given in the first of the Ten Commandments. "I am your G-d" [Shemot 20:2]. (See Sefer Hamitzvot of the Rambam, Mitzva 1: "We have been commanded to believe... so you see that 'I am your G-d' is one of the 613 mitzvot, and it is the commandment to have faith." See also Hilchot Yesodei Torah 1:1-6.)

The Rashbatz discusses this difficulty. First he notes that the different lists of ten are related. "Ten generations from Adam to Noach... are related to the ten statements... And G-d maintained His patience until Avraham arrived and taught them the correct path... Because of this, he was given ten tests of faith, so that the world which was created with ten statements would survive. This corresponds to the ten plagues... and ten miracles that were performed for our forefathers... and G-d therefore gave a corresponding Ten Commandments." He then explains, "It was not necessary to take note of the Ten Commandments... as one of the lists of ten elements, because these are known by everybody and would not serve as any novelty."

However, the question remains. What about the ten plagues, what novelty is there in mentioning them? Doesn't every child know how to count the ten generations from Adam to Noach and from Noach to Avraham? Perhaps the author purposely refrained from mentioning the Ten Commandments, as a result of what we have been taught, that the Kohanim would recite the Ten Commandments in the Temple (Tamid 5:1). "Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel, The people wanted to do the same outside of the Temple, but this had already been cancelled because of the intrigues of the apostates." [Berachot 12a]. The apostates claimed that only the Ten Commandments came from G-d. Therefore, the sages did not want to include the Ten Commandments in the prayers. Perhaps they were not included in the Mishna in Avot for the same reason.

HOLY AND SECULAR

Efraim's Candy Test - by Rabbi Amichai Gordin

"What do you want from them," one of the new soldiers asked his friends, "how can they do a comprehensive search of the house without overturning the beds?" And another soldier replied, "It is possible to overturn the beds gently." But a soldier who had not participated in the discussion up to this point reacted to this: "Gently? Being gentle shows weakness. They only understand strength. Do you hear me? Only strength."

The sergeant who was in charge of the discussion group tried to expand the discussion. "What do you think about the fact that when the soldiers tried to arrest one of the men they kicked his mother for trying to protect him?" Some of the soldiers replied, "That was very good." One of them, on the other hand, said, "It is not right to kick like that. But when you come to arrest somebody you must do it without hesitating. They have very highly developed senses. They very quickly catch on to any hint of doubt."

The arguments continued for hours. Every action by the soldiers in the story was interpreted in two ways. Near the end of the discussion, Efraim asked to be allowed to speak. Efraim was known as a person who has an opinion on every subject. In fact, the soldiers had been quite surprised to see that he sat quietly through the long discussion that had taken place.

"Look, I hesitated how to explain the actions by the soldiers. On one hand, violence is a very bad thing, and the wisest of all men has written about the Torah, 'Its ways are ways of pleasantness' [Mishlei 3:17]. On the other hand, there are times when violence is necessary, as we have been taught, 'Anybody who has pity on one who is cruel will end up begin cruel to those who have mercy.' But now I think I have found a simple solution to my problem. You told us," he said, turning to the sergeant, "that when the soldiers finished their search one of them took a candy that was lying on the table. This is indeed a small matter, but it teaches us about the whole affair. If they had pure motives, the soldier would not have taken the candy. The story of the candy shows that everything they did was for animal and rude desires."

The complexity of the world often causes us to wrap up our personal desires in considerations of value. Zecharia, the prophet, tells us that he saw Satan standing to the right of the High Priest, Yehoshua. This leads the commentators to say that very often Satan specifically stands to the right of a person (in the Tanach, this symbolizes a positive approach) and hides what he wants to say with claims that are based on ethics.

One way that we can always check ourselves is with the "candy test." Will we continue with the same actions even if the lofty ideological considerations are removed? I know a prominent rabbi who explicitly removes any elements of personal interest whenever he has this type of dilemma. He bought threads of "Techelet" and kept them at home in order to prove to himself that his objection to using Techelet in tzitzit was not because of their high cost. For the same reason he participated in the monthly tour of the gates around the outside of the Temple Mount. This proved that his objection to entering the Temple Mount was not based on laziness or a lack of yearning for the site but purely because of halachic motives.

In our sector of the nation, many people object to the "disengagement" plan and they work very hard to prevent it from happening. In our sector, there is also a small minority that supports the plan. However, the largest group in our sector consists of those who oppose this terrible plan but do nothing to prevent it.

There are many possible ideological reasons for a person not to take part in activities to prevent the plan. One may feel that blocking roads causes hate for the cause, that civil disobedience will lead to destruction, that trying to convince members of the Likud what to do is a crude interference in the democratic process, or that money donated to this cause might go to purposes to which the giver objects, among other things. This is another case where it is very difficult to know if the considerations are purely on principle or if the real reason for inaction is laziness.

One way that the quality of the claims can be tested is the "Believe and Plant" Fund. Giving money to farmers who will use it to plant their fields cannot harm any ideological purpose or value. Even those who oppose positive action can donate to this fund, which helps the farmers continue with "business as

usual." This can be the "candy test" for those who oppose the "disengagement" plan but do not play an active role in the struggle to prevent it.

THE CHAIN OF HALACHA

How Much Wine Must One Drink? (cont'd) - by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, Rabbi of Southern Alon Shevut and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion

In last week's article, we discussed the minimum amount of wine that must be drunk for various occasions. This week we will discuss the wine of the Sheva Berachot, wine at a wedding ceremony, and wine at a Brit Mila. We will then summarize the subject.

Sheva Berachot during the wedding ceremony and Brit Mila: At first glance, it would seem that in these cases it is necessary to drink at the very least more than half of a "revi'it" (or a full revi'it in order to be required to recite the final blessing). However, according to the TAZ (Yorah Dei'ah 265:10), it is necessary to drink "a mouthful" only in the cases where the Talmud has required one to drink. This does not include a Brit or Sheva Berachot, and therefore in these cases it is sufficient to take a sip of wine. This has been accepted by the Aruch Hashulchan (Even Ha'ezer 34:9) and in response "Yavia Omer" (volume 5, Even Ha'ezer 10:7). It is best to tell the groom to drink only a sip of wine, since he will probably not remember to recite the blessing after wine at the end of the ceremony.

Sheva Berachot at the end of a meal: In this case, the one who led the Grace must drink a revi'it, just as is required after any meal. The bride and groom are expected to drink from the wine cup, and for them a small sip of wine is sufficient.

Summary

The wine cup must hold an amount that is at least one "revi'it." The usual practice is to consider this as 86 cc (150 cc according to the Chazon Ish).

The amount of wine that must be drunk:

- Havdalah and the Grace After Meals: a minimum of a revi'it, followed by the blessing after drinking wine. If it is hard for him to do this, one should drink more than half a revi'it (44 cc) and not recite the final blessing for the wine.
- Kiddush: More than half a revi'it (44 cc), without regard for the size of the cup.
- Four cups on Pesach: The best practice is to drink more than half the cup (or better yet, the whole cup). After the fact, if one drinks more than half a revi'it it is sufficient.
- Sheva Berachot at the wedding ceremony and a Brit: A sip of wine is enough.
- Sheva Berachot at the meal: The one who leads the Grace should drink a revi'it (or at the very least more than half a revi'it) and the bride and groom can take a sip of wine.

A "Damaged" Cup

According to the Talmud, "If one drinks from a cup, he damages it" [Pesachim 105b-106a]. That is, if one person drinks from the wine in a cup he has spoiled the wine and it should not be used again for Kiddush. This has been accepted by the Shulchan Aruch (182:7), but Rashi writes that after the fact one can use a "spoiled cup."

Why is it wrong for the cup to be "spoiled?" Rav Hai Gaon explains that it is feared that there will no longer remain enough wine in the cup (this is also the easiest way to understand the Talmud on this issue, see 106a). According to his approach, if there is sufficient wine left in the cup there is no problem to use it again for Kiddush. Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 29:16) and the Tosafot (Pesachim, ibid) give a reason based on principle: "It seems like the leftover in the cup." That is, using a cup which has already been used before is an act of disrespect for the Kiddush.

According to the Talmud Yerushalmi, "Rabbi Yona drank from a cup and fixed it." How does one fix the cup? According to the Maharam, the "damaged" wine should be poured into a bottle containing fresh wine (quoted by the BACH, 271). But the Yera'im writes that the opposite is true: some wine should be poured from the bottle into the "damaged" wine. The Shulchan Aruch agrees with the Yera'im (182:6), but the Mishna Berura writes that it is best to follow both opinions: first pour some wine from the bottle into the cup and then return all the wine from the cup into the bottle. Then wine can be poured from the bottle into a cup and used for Kiddush.



צוותי מדע ותורה



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