Many of the topics included in the Pardes curriculum are far-reaching and have broad ramifications. The intent of Pardes is to promote sensitivity and spiritual growth through exposure to a variety of Torah sources. It is not within the purview of Pardes to arrive at conclusions relevant to decisions of Halacha. Please consult your Rabbi for personal decisions.

Introduction

When the Jew celebrates, a glass of wine is almost always close at hand: Kiddush, Havdala, the Passover Seder, Purim, and every wedding ceremony and Brit Milah. Wine serves as the symbol of our sanctity, of freedom, of Divinely inspired victories, of the greatest, most joyous moments of our past, and of our dreams for the future. Wine has always held an honored, obligatory, almost irreplaceable, place in our culture. Yet, over the ages, how often did one hear of a Jewish drunkard?

Who, more than the Jew, could better have justified drowning the sorrows and torments of life in a glass of alcohol? Yet the Jew of yesterday rarely indulged in such a luxury. Even today, with alcoholism rampant in American society, with the Jew exposed no less than any other American to the temptations of drink and drugs, the Kiddush wine seems to protect its celebrants rather than enticing them into the vicious, all-too-familiar, alcoholic spiral of self-destruction. People rarely have become drunk on Kiddush.

Is there a hidden charm in the Kiddush wine? Or does the Kiddush itself contain the magic that fends off the dangers of the wine used in its celebration?

Perhaps the very pedestal on which we have placed wine inspires the Jew to raise wine from the gutters to which alcoholism would doom it.

Wine is far more than a drink. In its power to loosen restraints, it clarifies the contrast between man's inner self and his external reality. As the premier product of earthly bounty, wine represents the pursuit of pleasure in both earthly and heavenly. And in wine's ability to induce forgetfulness, it confronts the ever-present tension be-
tween pain and suffering on the one hand and the human need for happiness and comfort on the other.

Can we deny that there are times when a small measure of forgetfulness is good? Aren't there times when the routines of life seem to bog us down and a drop of refined pleasure would raise our spirits; or when we find our rational minds too limited and restrained, while a measure of freedom would enable us to soar to greater intellectual and spiritual heights?

Yes. But it must be a measure: too little and we accomplish nothing; too much and we do more harm than good. A precise balance must be found between the forces of joy, pleasure, and freedom embodied in wine and the reality and rationalism that exist outside of wine. Perhaps the magic of the Kiddush lies precisely in its ability to balance the drink of wine and the message of the Kiddush, to enable the Jew to balance the forces symbolized by wine with the forces of rational reasoned pursuits symbolized by the kiddush. Perhaps, in a deeper sense, this knowledge has enabled the Jew to negotiate safely the contradictions of his existence, the sorrow and joys, tragedies and victories that are often the catalyst that brings people to hopelessness, thereby leading them to drink. The Jew, with an understanding built on Kiddush, has been able to face all and yet maintain his equilibrium, his hope, and his dreams.

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How would you respond?

1. Noticing a slight swagger in the gait of your sixteen-year-old child, you smell the alcohol on his breath. He is clearly not drunk, yet you admonish him for imbibing at the class's year-end party. He challenges your rebuke. He notes that he neither drank to intoxication nor sat behind a steering wheel. However, he argues, his drinking a couple beers is surely no different that your glass of wine (or two) at the Shabbat evening meal.

2. You have read the source materials again and again. While selected rabbis disagree, most assert that the proper observance of Purim requires you to drink wine to a state of intoxication. A Jew getting drunk! And a mitzvah, too! This rule seems so contradictory to your recently acquired appreciation for the discipline, thoughtfulness and rationalism expected of a Torah Jew.

3. You have noticed that the delivery of your lecture seems to flow so much more coherently after a small sip of schnapps. And a glass of wine at the synagogue Kiddush or social function makes you so much more relaxed and witty. But are you becoming an alcoholic? And is an artificially induced mood, even a slight alteration, really what G-d wants of you?
It is customary to recite the following prayer before entering into a Torah discussion:
Shulchan Aruch O.H. 110

May it be Your will, Hashem my G-d and G-d of my fathers, that You illuminate my eyes with the light of Your Torah and that You save me from all stumbling blocks and errors, whether it be in discussions of what is prohibited and what is permitted or in monetary matters, whether it be in any other Halachic decisions or just in theoretical study. I pray that I do not make any mistakes, and if I do, my study partners should not take delight in them. I pray that I should not proclaim the impure pure or the pure impure, the permitted forbidden or the forbidden permitted. I pray that I should not derive joy from the errors of my study partner. Open my eyes and allow me to see the wonders of Your Torah because it is from G-d that all wisdom comes forth, it is from His mouth that I will acquire wisdom and understanding. Amen.

Points for Study

1. Your love is more delightful than wine (Song of Songs 1:2). With Your love you have given us Your Torah and mitzvot, they are much more beloved unto me than wine which is the ultimate in worldly pleasure.

2. But in fact the joy of wine is not at all like the joy of Torah and mitzvot! When wine leaves a person, sorrow immediately enters his heart; the one goes and the other enters immediately on its heels. Not so with Torah, they are the pleasure and joy of mankind both in this world and in the next.

3. Rebbi said, there are two things that can not coexist together: wine and the service of heaven.

4. There is no holiness except with wine, there is no blessing, except with wine, in a place where joy dwells.

5. What was the tree that Adam ate from? Rabbi Meir said, it was the Grapevine, for there is nothing that brings lamentation into the world like wine.
And the most important fruit tree is the vine, for from it comes wine, as the verse says, “And wine to rejoice the heart of man” (Psalms 104:15).

Malbim, Commentary on Psalms 104
Biography, p. 12 Source, p. 17

And [Noah] planted a vineyard... and he drank of the wine, and was drunk; and he was uncovered (Genesis 9:20).

The Satan came to meet him and said, “Would you like us to plant it together?” “Yes,” answered Noah. Immediately, the Satan brought a lamb and slaughtered it under the vine, then he brought a lion and slaughtered it there, then he brought a pig, and then a monkey, and watered the vineyard with all their blood. This teaches us that before a person drinks wine, he is as innocent as a lamb who knows nothing, and as still as a sheep before the shearsers. If he drinks the right amount, he becomes strong like a lion, and declares that there is none like him in the world. When he drinks too much, he becomes like a pig, filthy in his own urine and feces. If he becomes drunk, he becomes like a monkey. He stands and dances and clowns, saying the most disgusting things before everyone, with no idea of what he is doing. Medrash Tanchuma, Yalkut Shimoni, Noah 61
Source, p. 18

When a person eats and drinks and rejoices on a festival, he should not be drawn after wine, laughter and frivolity, claiming that whoever does so is adding to the mitzvah of rejoicing. For drunkenness, mirth and frivolity, are not joyousness but foolishness and stupidity. We are not commanded to indulge in foolishness and stupidity, but rather in the joy that is found in serving the Creator of All, as it says “Because you did not serve the L-rd your God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart” (Deuteronomy 28:47). From this you learn that worship must be with joy, whereas it is impossible to serve G-d amidst frivolity, irreverence, and drunkenness.

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Yom Tov 6:20
Biography, p. 13 Source, p. 19

It is known that it is improper to involve oneself in matters of utmost value, such as the [service] of the Temple, or words of Torah, unless one is of a clear mind and gives full attention to all his actions. This is so obvious that there is no need to comment further upon it.

Sefer HaChinuch, Parshas Shmini,
Prohibition Against Entering the Sanctuary Drunk
Biography, p. 14 Source, p. 19

G-d put into food a power of sustenance, which strengthens the body and the mind. However, He invested wine with the ability to strengthen the power of the imagination. When people learn together, they connect with their minds. When they pray together, they connect with their hearts. When they eat together, they connect on the physical level. But when they drink together, they connect via their imagination. Sitting and drinking at the Purim feast means iLet us fantasize togetheri. Fantasizing together is a completely unique category, for fantasy is itself a connector, it is the power of the imagination. By means of the imagination, one’s mind affects one’s senses, and one’s senses reflect one’s mind. It is only in our imagination that we can become one with our brother. Now, while every person has their own power of imagination that connects their mind and their emotions, today (on Purim), we connect together and become one. Gevalt, our drinking brings us higher!

R. Yitzchok Hutner, Pachad Yitzchok, Kuntress Reshimos p. 103
Biography, p. 15 Source, p. 20
There are two negative repercussions of wine. The first is the disgrace that drunkenness brings upon a person. As it says, “and [Noah] was exposed within his tent.” He was disgraced. The second repercussion is that a person loses his intelligence and power of discretion. It is this intelligence that attaches a person to G-d. Through drunkenness, one loses this attachment. When a person is not attached to G-d, he will experience dispersion and exile.

Worthless fantasies are a barrier that prevents the knowledge and awareness of G-d from entering the heart. I heard that Egypt symbolizes the power of fantasy. The First Commandment begins, “I am the L-rd your G-d, who took you out of the land of Egypt”—from the forces of illusion—and I raised your consciousness that it should cling to Me. All mitzvot are said to be “a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt,” for their entire purpose is to take us out of illusion, from Egypt, which is the exact opposite of Torah and mitzvot. A person’s main battle against his evil inclination is to overcome the fantasies and illusions of his heart and mind.

R. Tzadok HaKohen, Tzidkas Hatzadik 205, 207, 208
Biography, p. 14

R. Chanin said, whoever is comforted by wine, is of one mind with his Creator ... R. Papa said, whoever settles his mind with wine, has the mind of the seventy elders.

Talmud Eruvin 65a
Source, p. 21

This world wants to run away from the light; it does not want to see that there is a Creator and Ruler of the world. Thus the choicest pleasure of this world is wine, for it intoxicates the mind so as not to behold this light. This is true of all the pleasures of this world—they distract a person’s mind so that he should not recognize his Creator. But on Shabbos, a person must bring light into all of his actions of the week, purifying them that they should be only for the honor of heaven, and to reveal the Creator. Therefore, we must make Kiddush on wine, to take this wine—the root of all pleasure of this world, which intoxicates the mind of man—and sanctify the Shabbos over it. For Shabbos is a great light in which we can recognize the Creator, and by making Kiddush over the wine, we bring this recognition into all the pleasures and all the actions of the week.

R. Yaakov Lainer of Ishbitz Passover Haggadah, p. 15
Biography, p. 15 Source, p. 22

Light is sown for the righteous, and for the upright in heart joy.
(Psalms 97:11)

A G-dly light is found in the righteous, like a seed planted in their souls, ready to expand and multiply when it is watered, tended to and cared for. For those who guard their souls, and perform their service of G-d, the light increases sevenfold, until the great light of prophecy breaks upon them. Thus, “for the upright in heart, joy.” They will delight in a spiritual joy, by means of which G-d’s light shines in their souls.

Malbim, Psalms 97
Source, p. 23
Source Biography

The Zohar

The Zohar is the central work of the Kabbala and Jewish mysticism. It first became known in the thirteenth century. The Zohar is actually composed of several works, the most well-known that of the commentary of the five Books of Moses. Because of its esoteric nature, the Zohar was not published until 1558 when it appeared in Mantua, Italy amidst some controversy. Numerous commentaries have been written on different parts including those by R. Moshe Cordovero, the Gaon of Vilna, and R. Gershon Henoch Lainer of Radzyn. R. Dovid Luria (Kadmus Sefer HaZohar) and R. Isaac Chaver (Magen V’Tsina) wrote works to prove the antiquity of the Zohar. It is a complex work of varying levels of difficulty. It has inspired many generations to a deeper understanding of the Torah. R. Pinchas of Koretz, one of the Hasidic masters and an associate of the Ba’al Shem Tov commented that he could not exist without the Zohar.

Malbim, R’Meir Leibush (1809-1879)

Rav and Biblical commentator Malbim is an acronym of his name Meir Leibush ben Yechezkel Michel. He was born in Volhynia and was still a child when his father died. He studied in his native town until the age of 13 and then went to Warsaw where he was known as the ‘eluy (prodigy) from Volhynia.’ He was Rav of several cities but he suffered much persecution because of his uncompromising stand against Reform, leading even to a brief imprisonment on a false accusation. He wandered much of his life, serving as Rav in various cities for several years at a time. He served for a short while as chief Rabbi of Rumania.

His fame and immense popularity rests upon his widely esteemed commentary to the Bible. His first published commentary was on Megillas Esther (1845). His commentaries to the remaining books of the Bible were published between then and 1876.

The Rambam (1135-1204)

Moses Maimonides is known as the greatest Jewish philosopher and codifier of Jewish law in history. Born in Cordova, Spain, he was forced to flee from fanatical Moslems at the age of thirteen, where he traveled with his family to North Africa, and ten years later to Palestine. As a result of the devastation left by the Crusaders, Palestine was virtually uninhabitable, forcing the family to move to Fostat (current day Cairo). Throughout these journeys, the young Maimonides had concentrated on Torah studies under the guidance of his father, and by the time he reached Fostat had become a famous scholar. Supported by his merchant brother, the Rambam was able to write copiously, gaining international acclaim in both Jewish and secular fields of knowledge. After the tragic death of his brother, the responsibility of supporting his family fell on the Rambam’s shoulders, and through his fame he was appointed chief physician of the Sultan. Despite the immense workload that was required, not only with his responsibilities to the royal family, but to the entire Egyptian community as the official Nagid (royally appointed leader), and to the halachic questions of world Jewry known as responsa, the Rambam was remarkably able to complete some of his greatest Jewish works, including his introduction and commentary on the Mishna, his philosophical work The Guide for the Perplexed, and his magnum opus the Mishna Torah - the great codification of all Jewish law. While he was considered an undisputed leader of world Jewry at the time, there was bitter opposition to much of his works because they incorporated much of Aristotelian philosophy that went against the traditional purist ideology of much of Ashkenazi Jewry, and others believed his codifications would make much of the role of the rabbi and the oral tradition obsolete.

—A.B.


Sefer HaChinuch

Written toward the latter part of the thirteenth century, the Chinuch contains a discussion of the 613 mitzvos organized according to the order of the weekly parsha. Based primarily on the Rambam and Ramban each mitzvah is divided into four parts: (1) A brief statement of the essence of the mitzvah; (2) The reason for the mitzvah; this is probably the most original part of the work. Written for a young person, the reasons given are those that would be understandable to a young person; (3) A summary of the details of the mitzvah; and (4) When and to whom the mitzvah applies.

The Chinuch emphasizes throughout that a person's inner being is shaped by the actions he performs. Thus, proper performance of mitzvos influences the doer to become a better person. The work is written in a simple, clear and inspiring style.

For a long time the Chinuch was attributed to Rabbi Aharon HaLevi (the RAH) but it has been conclusively shown that he could not have been the author. Several years ago it was thought that Reb Aharon’s brother, R. Pinchas HaLevi, was the author, but that theory was refuted. Other theories of authorship have been propounded none of which are convincing. Nevertheless, the anonymity of the author has not affected its universal appeal and continued popularity. –M.G.

Rav Yaacov Leiner of Radzyn (1828-1878)

Yaacov Leiner was the son of R. Mordechai Yosef, the Ishbitzer Rebbe and author of Mei Shiloach. After his father’s death, he inherited the position of Hasidic Rebbe. His penetrating commentaries on the Torah and Festivals are characterized by a remarkable insight into the words of the Sages, and a profound sensitivity to the tension between spiritual aspiration and human frailty.

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner (1906-1980)

Rav Hutner was the founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin, Kollel Gur Aryeh and Pachad Yitzchok in Har Nof Jerusalem which have produced thousands of disciples. Though a brilliant Rosh Yeshiva whose lectures on Talmud were dazzling, he expended greater efforts on his discourses on morals and ethics and on demonstrating the spiritual power of the Yomim Tovim (Jewish Holidays) and Yomim Noraim (High Holy Days). This came from his recognition that though there were many Roshei Yeshiva capable of delivering illuminating Talmudic lectures, there were very few who could provide guidance in the non-halachic ‘aspects’ of Torah and Avodah, (worship) who could provide a body of principles that made Judaism exciting, challenging, and inspiring.

Recognizing the critical importance of creating well-rounded disciples prepared to communicate the power and depth of Judaism he concentrated his efforts in this area. In 1949 he began publishing his discourses on morals and ethics which he titled, Divrei Torah B’inyanei Hilchet Deot V’Chovos Halevovot, a phrase used by Rav Kook, who exercised a profound influence upon him.

As a young man he wrote Torat Hanazir on the Rambam Hilchot Nezirut. He wrote a profound commentary (Kovetz Hearot) on Rabbeinu Hillel on the Safra. His discourses on Yomim Tovim and Shabbat (Pachad Yitzchok) are collected in seven volumes. In addition there is a volume of letters and a Memorial (Sefer Zikkaron) volume which contains a 130 page biography. –M.G.

Rav Tzadok HaCohen (1823-1900)

Rav Tzaddok, or the Kohein as he was known amongst Chassidim, was one of the most prolific authors in the history of the Chassidic movement. Born into a non-Chassidic rabbinic family, Rav Tzadok became famous as a child prodigy authoring articles and books, which later became classics. Later in life, Rav Tzadok became Chassidic and became a Chassid of the Ishbitcher Rebbe. Having excelled in both the Chassidic and non-Chassidic world, Rav Tzadok’s writings became a synthesis of analytical logic and mysticism. Eventually, Rav Tzadok became the Rebbe of Lublin. Scholars everywhere treasure his writings.

–Y.H.
Sources

Medrash Tanchuma Shmini

Malbim, Commentary on Psalms 104

Talmud Brachos 40a

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Talmud Brachos 40a

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Malbim, Commentary on Psalms 104

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(וכי וחידת בחשバレ וחלות בחלות אחיו בחשバレ, ובעברת אחיו הצארכו, יברך בברךدعوربي, בארץ יברך. השם יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברך יברך יברך, יברכ...
רבע חמשה לוד ת العمر: לא בין מימד פרארה - אם
לוה: השמאת הארי ודרוריך קצוף, ונטמין טבב. אם
רבע חמשה לוד ת عمر: אף על פי שאין מים
יתפסים מתועדים. משכון + צבי + אפודים
ות المحلية על האזור שבמי שישב על אגוז ע上で.
ונה: הציל ושרד, כי אז לא בא הלאה
ורמה: אדם לא ממליל בבל, אך יאדו לה שלמה.

 Hampton,Hutner, Pachad Yitzchok, Kuntress
Reshimos p. 103
עליהם נحيا והם ישובים-copy.png

Malbim, Psalms 97

אין חוטם בברך הים עלייך וברך councils.
כיסו את כה תבואנה לברך וברך.
לנה להושיעך עמי את הימים המאכילים המותבְּכָה תכשך, והיה עמי וברך.
יכר עדויה הזהילו עליך-
ใคร ישימך בין גלי מדינה
מימר רעשיה ייצלו. יאר האל-
ecd 23.png

ויהי לרעה כי כפרך. זה מופת
שיהי ליהוה יividad עיניים.
משמורת חטאת葉דיה שלם.
Afterword

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National Director, Department of Jewish Education, Orthodox Union

While wine seems to be one of G-d’s greatest gifts to humanity, it can also be its downfall. Happiness is a virtue in the worship of G-d and there is actually a food item that can help bring one to a state of happiness. Yet important decision making, prayer and most service of G-d must be done without wine in order to be considered virtuous.

In Torah literature, the human psyche is divided in two. The mind, which is the source of the great Jewish intellectual endeavor, and the heart which is the seat of emotion. The ultimate goal of the Jew is to achieve perfect coalescence of mind and spirit. This is the balance that is so difficult to achieve.

It seems that while wine “gladdens the heart” at the same time it weakens the mind. Wine, therefore throws off the balance between heart and thought, diverting us from our larger goal. So here is the difficult part, to achieve happiness of heart without sacrificing lucidity of mind. Not to pour happiness in, but rather to let it naturally flow out of our hearts.