

FOUR CUPS AND LEANING AT THE SEDER

PESACH

REASONS FOR THE FOUR CUPS / OBLIGATION TO LEAN / IF ONE ATE
MATZAH WITHOUT LEANING / IF ONE DRANK THE FOUR CUPS WITHOUT
LEANING / GLOBAL OBLIGATION VS. SPECIFIC RULE

לע"נ זאב ארי' ע"ה בן יבלחט"א שניאור זלמן גליק

The Gemara says in Pesachim:¹ “The Chachamim taught that one is obligated to drink the four cups... including children. R’ Yehuda asks, “What do children gain by drinking wine?”” R’ Yehuda therefore says that we give the children other things to make them happy, such as nuts and roasted seeds.

The Rashbam explains R’ Yehuda’s objection as follows, “Are children not exempt from mitzvos?” How can we make them drink the four cups? The Ran explains differently, that “children don’t enjoy wine, so giving them wine as chinuch won’t accomplish anything, since they won’t have the *derech cheirus*,” the feeling of freedom. Even though we educate the children to do all the other mitzvos, here that is irrelevant, since the whole point is to feel happy, like a free man, which children don’t accomplish by drinking wine.

We can say that the Ran and the Rashbam disagree about the idea and definition of the four cups. Later in our perek, the Gemara states that “The four cups were instituted by the Chachamim in a way of freedom.” The Rashbam doesn’t include the words “*derech cheirus*,” the way of freedom. We can therefore say that the Ran holds that the cups were instituted to feel freedom, and the Rashbam holds that they were instituted for another reason.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi, regarding the source for the four cups, there are a few reasons brought: “R’ Yehuda says in the Name of R’ Benaya that they correspond to the four words used in Hashem’s promise to redeem the Jews. R’ Yehoshua

1. 108b.

ben Levi says that they correspond to the four cups of Pharaoh. R' Levi holds that they are for the four kingdoms, etc.”²

We can say that the difference between the first explanation and the rest, is that according to the first explanation it is clear how the four cups are connected to the redemption, but by the others less so. We can suggest that according to the Ran, the first reason is the main one, and he therefore holds of the version of our Gemara that includes the words “derech cheirus,” and the Rashbam holds of one of the other reasons, and therefore his version of our Gemara does not.

2 This disagreement (whether the four cups are to feel freedom or not), can make a practical difference in halachah as follows:

In the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch it states: “He should prepare his leaning place to lean like a free man... since in every generation a person should show himself as if he is now leaving Egypt... and therefore he should do every action on this night in a way of freedom (derech cheirus).”³ Further, he writes, “When does one need to recline? At the time of eating the kezayis of matzah, eating the korech, the afikoman and drinking the four cups of wine. This is because all these things are to remember the redemption and freedom.”⁴

We need to understand: why does the Alter Rebbe repeat the reason? He already explained it previously, that it is to



2. *Pesachim* 10:1.

3. 472:7.

4. *Ibid*, seif 14.

show freedom. And if the reason is to say that by all other parts one does not recline, why not write by the other parts that one does not need to recline?

3 To understand this we first need to explain what the takanah of reclining truly is.

This can be explained in two ways:

1. The first way is, every mitzvah of the seder night has a specific way of being done, with several details. The mitzvos which we recline whilst doing, have the additional requirement to recline.
2. Alternatively, the Chachamim instituted that the seder has to be done while reclining. Really we would need to recline the entire seder, to show freedom, however they limited it to specific parts of the seder.

The practical difference is someone who ate matzah without reclining. According to the second explanation, he hasn't done the mitzvah of reclining properly, but according to the first way, he hasn't eaten matzah properly. Therefore, according to the first way, he would now have to eat again with a brachah.

Another scenario would be someone who ate without reclining but is now in a place than he is pattur from reclining, such as his Rabbi's house. If we say that he hasn't fulfilled the mitzvah of eating matzah, he now has to do so again, even though he won't recline now. However, if he hasn't done the mitzvah of reclining properly, he doesn't have to eat the matzah again, because he is not going to recline anyway.

4 We can bring a proof for the first way: On the previous amud in Pesachim, the Gemara goes through who is and isn't obligated to recline. The Gemara asks, "What about an attendant? Let's see, R' Yehoshua ben Levi taught that an attendant who ate a kezayis of matzah while leaning has fulfilled his chiyuv." The Gemara learns from this, that "only if he leaned, but if not, he hasn't fulfilled his chiyuv." This implies that he hasn't fulfilled his chiyuv of eating matzah.

(The Rosh clearly holds that reclining is part of the other mitzvos, since he writes that someone who didn't lean while drinking should drink them again even the latter two, even though it may be an issue of adding to the cups. He writes that "since he didn't drink them properly the first time, it is clear that they weren't part of the four.")

The Rambam implies that reclining is its own mitzvah, as he writes: "In every generation a person needs to show himself as if he is now leaving slavery in Egypt, therefore... he needs to eat, drink and recline in a way of freedom."⁵ We see clearly that the reclining is its own concept.

5 To reconcile the two ways that seemingly contradict each other, we need to say that they're both true, there are two takanos. One is to act like a free person, and therefore recline. The second takana is that the things we do during the seder to remember our freedom should be done in a way of freedom, i.e. while reclining.

The difference between them is, that if someone didn't recline by another part of the seder, he hasn't done the mitzvah of leaning fully. However, if he didn't lean by one of



5. Hilchos Chometz uMatzah 7:6-7.

the parts that one is required to, then he hasn't fulfilled all parts of that mitzvah.

This explains why the Alter Rebbe wrote the reason for reclining twice, the first time is the general concept of reclining. The second time when he goes through all the mitzvos we need to do while reclining, is to list the things that we do in order to remember our freedom.

The difference between the Ran and the Rashbam would now be that if the four cups are about freedom (as the Ran holds), then they would have the mitzvah of reclining, but if not (as the Rashbam holds), then we wouldn't have to recline.

6 The Rebbe explains that the real freedom is to use all one's kochos to fulfill his purpose in creation. The uniqueness of a Jew is his neshamah, and the fact that he can keep Torah and mitzvos. The Rebbe explains that the more he uses out his kochos to learn Torah and do mitzvos, the freer he is.

STUDY AID

1. The disagreement between the Ran and Rashbam about R' Yehuda, and what the reason is for the four cups.
2. The Alter Rebbe explains the reclining twice, why?
3. What is the purpose of reclining, and is a separate concept.
4. Proofs for both sides.
5. Reconciliation, both concepts have truth to them, how this answers our question, whether the four cups have the concept of redemption.
6. True freedom through Torah and mitzvos.

Source:

על פי ליקוטי שיחות חלק י"א פרשת וארא שיחה ב'