חֲמַר מְדִינָה

Chamar Medina — Kiddush & Havdalah on Coffee

When there is no wine — or no desire for it — may the national drink stand in? Coffee as chamar medina for kiddush, havdalah, and the melave malka table.

8 QUESTIONS · **10** SOURCES · POSKIM **1488–1977**

3.1 Is there a distinction between hot black coffee and cold black coffee for chamar medina?

THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה

Machloket. The Grishza holds one should not serve cold coffee for kiddush/havdalah even though it is common to drink, because cold coffee is not truly chamar medina. Hot coffee has the stronger claim.

Dor HaMelaktim (שבת א, סי' ער"ב ח) cites Shulchan Shelma and Grishza. Cold black coffee — even if people drink it — may not be chamar medina since the standard form is hot. This parallels the question of cold beer vs. hot beer in earlier poskim.

א **דור המלקטים שבת א — קפה כחמר מדינה** ↗

Section ח — hot vs. cold black coffee for chamar medina

3.2 Does coffee with milk or without milk affect its status as chamar medina for kiddush/havdalah?

THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה

Machloket. Some hold that coffee with milk is not chamar medina since it is no longer plain coffee. The Grishza holds the distinction is not significant l'halacha.

Dor HaMelaktim (שבת א, סי' ער"ב) surveys poskim who distinguish between coffee with and without milk. Coffee without milk (black coffee) has stronger grounds to be chamar medina since it is the standard local drink. Adding

milk/chalav changes its character. Some sources (Teshuvos v'Hanhagos) require at least a little milk to even be drinkable, while others hold even black coffee is not chamar medina. The Grishza's view (via Dor HaMelaktim) is that coffee can be chamar medina even with milk.

א **דור המלקטים שבת א — קפה כחמר מדינה** ↗

Section ו — coffee with vs. without milk and chamar medina status

3.3 Does coffee with sugar vs. without sugar affect its chamar medina status for kiddush/havdalah?

> THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה
>
> Coffee even without sugar may qualify as chamar medina according to many poskim. The Aderet rules it is chamar medina; some distinguish that without sugar it is too bitter to be a normal drink.

Dor HaMelaktim (שבת א, סי' ער"ב ה) surveys sources on sugar. The Aderet holds coffee qualifies even without sugar. Others note that in practice people do not drink unsweetened coffee regularly and it may therefore not qualify as the standard local drink.

א **דור המלקטים שבת א — קפה כחמר מדינה** ↗

Section ה — coffee with vs. without sugar and chamar medina status

3.4 Is there a distinction between regular brewed coffee and instant coffee (נמס) regarding chamar medina?

> THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה
>
> The Grishza holds there is no distinction — instant coffee (נמס) has the same status as brewed coffee for chamar medina purposes.

Dor HaMelaktim (שבת א, סי' ער"ב ז) cites the Grishza that one should not distinguish between regular and instant coffee for chamar medina. The Alibaah d'Hilkhesa (R' Rotenbereger) is cited as a marei makom.

א **דור המלקטים שבת א — קפה כחמר מדינה** ↗

Section ז — distinction between regular and instant coffee (נמס) for chamar medina

3.5

May coffee, tea, or other soft drinks/juices be used for kiddush or havdalah?

> THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה
>
> No. Tea, coffee, and other juices and soft drinks may not be used for kiddush or havdalah, as they do not qualify as chamar medina.

Chamar medina is defined as any beverage (other than water) that the general populace drinks as a substitute for wine when wine is unavailable. Coffee, tea, juices, and soft drinks do not meet this standard and therefore cannot serve as a valid substitute for wine for kiddush or havdalah.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch — Shulchan HaMelech (Laniado).

א Kitzur Shulchan Aruch - Shulchan HaMelech (Laniado) ↗

שִׁוִּיתִי ה' לְנֶגְדִּי תָּמִיד, הוּא כְּלָל גָּדוֹל בַּתּוֹרָה וּבְמַעֲלוֹת הַצַּדִּיקִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹלְכִים לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים. כִּי אֵין יְשִׁיבַת הָאָדָם תְּנוּעָתוֹ וַעֲסָקָיו וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ, כְּמוֹ יְשִׁיבָתוֹ וּתְנוּעָתוֹ וַעֲסָקָיו כַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל. וְכֵן אֵין דִּבּוּרוֹ וְהַרְחָבַת פִּיו בְּהְיוֹתוֹ עִם אַנְשֵׁי בֵּיתוֹ וּקְרוֹבָיו, כְּמוֹ בְּהְיוֹתוֹ בְּמוֹשַׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ, כִּי אָז מַשְׁגִּיחַ בְּוַדַּאי עַל כָּל תְּנוּעוֹתָיו וְדִבּוּרָיו שֶׁיִּהְיוּ מְתֻקָּנִים כָּרָאוּי. כָּל שֶׁכֵּן כַּאֲשֶׁר יָשִׂים הָאָדָם אֶל לִבּוֹ כִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר מְלֹא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ עוֹמֵד עָלָיו וְרוֹאֶה בְּמַעֲשָׂיו, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, אִם יִסָּתֵר אִישׁ בַּמִּסְתָּרִים וַאֲנִי לֹא אֶרְאֶנּוּ נְאֻם ה', הֲלוֹא אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי מָלֵא, בְּוַדַּאי מִיָּד תַּגִּיעַ אֵלָיו הַיִּרְאָה וְהַהַכְנָעָה מִפַּחַד הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיֵבוֹשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ (אוֹרַח חַיִּים סָעִיף א).

וְגַם בְּשָׁכְבוֹ עַל מִשְׁכָּבוֹ, יֵדַע לִפְנֵי מִי הוּא שׁוֹכֵב. וּמִיָּד כְּשֶׁיֵּעוֹר מִשְּׁנָתוֹ יִזְכֹּר חַסְדֵי ה', יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה עִמּוֹ שֶׁהֶחֱזִיר לוֹ אֶת נִשְׁמָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר הִפְקִידָהּ אֶצְלוֹ עֲיֵפָה, וְהֶחֱזִירָהּ לוֹ חֲדָשָׁה וּרְגוּעָה כְּדֵי לַעֲבֹד עֲבוֹדָתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ בְּכָל יְכָלְתּוֹ וּלְשָׁרְתוֹ כָּל הַיּוֹם, כִּי זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב, חֲדָשִׁים לַבְּקָרִים רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתֶךָ, פֵּרוּשׁ, בְּכָל בֹּקֶר נַעֲשֶׂה הָאָדָם בְּרִיָּה חֲדָשָׁה. וְיוֹדֶה בְּכָל בֹּקֶר לְהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ עַל זֹאת. וּבְעוֹדוֹ עַל מִשְׁכָּבוֹ, יֹאמַר, מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיָּם שֶׁהֶחֱזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֶמְלָה, רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתֶךָ (וְאַף עַל פִּי שֶׁעֲדַיִן אֵין יָדָיו נְקִיּוֹת, יָכוֹל לוֹמַר זֹאת, כֵּיוָן שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ שֵׁם). וַיַּפְסִיק מְעַט בֵּין תֵּבַת בְּחֶמְלָה לְתֵבַת רַבָּה (שם ובמגן אברהם ויד אפרים סוֹף סִימָן ד). יְהוּדָה בֶּן תֵּימָא

"I have set Hashem before me always."1Psalms 16:8. This is a fundamental rule of the Torah and of the attributes of the righteous who walk before God. For we cannot compare a person's lifestyle, his activities and affairs when he is alone, to his lifestyle, and activities and affairs when he is before a great king. Similarly, his conversation and speech when he is amongst family or relatives, [cannot be compared] to what they would be in the presence of a king, because then he would certainly take special care that all his activities and conversations be refined and correct. How much more so when you contemplate that Hashem, the greatest of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He, Whose glory fills the entire world, stands above you and views your actions, as it is said: "If a person will hide in hidden places will I not see him? Says the word of Hashem, Do I not fill the heavens and the earth!"2Jeremiah 23:24. [Bearing this in mind] it is certain that you will immediately acquire a feeling of reverence and submissiveness for the awesomeness of Hashem, Blessed be He, and be ashamed [to sin] before Him. Also, while lying in bed you should realize before Whom you lay and as soon as you awaken you should remember the kindnesses of Hashem, Blessed be His Name, that were granted to you; that He returned your soul to you. You committed it to Him faint and weary and it was returned to you new and refreshed, enabling you to worship Hashem, Blessed be His Name, with all of your capacity and serve Him the entire day; because this is the essence of Man, as it is said in Scripture: "They are new every morning how great is Your faithfulness."3Lamentations 3:23. This verse teaches that every morning a person becomes a new creation, and he should give thanks with all his heart to Hashem, Blessed be His Name, for this (good fortune). While still in bed you should recite: I give thanks to You, living and everlasting King for You have restored my soul with mercy. Great is Your faithfulness. (Even though your hands are not yet clean, you may say this, since the name of Hashem is not mentioned.) You should pause slightly between the word chemlah "with mercy," and the word, rabbah "great." Yehudah son of Taima says: "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer and strong as a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven."4Avos 5:20. "Bold as a leopard"

אוֹמֵר, הֱוֵי עַז כַּנָּמֵר וְקַל כַּנֶּשֶׁר, רָץ כַּצְּבִי וְגִבּוֹר כָּאֲרִי לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן אָבִיךָ שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם. עַז כַּנָּמֵר, פֵּרוּשׁוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יִתְבַּיֵּשׁ מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי אָדָם הַמַּלְעִיגִים עָלָיו בַּעֲבוֹדַת ה' יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ. קַל כַּנֶּשֶׁר, כְּנֶגֶד רְאוֹת הָעַיִן. לוֹמַר שֶׁתְּהֵא קַל לַעֲצֹם עֵינֶיךָ מֵרְאוֹת בְּרָע, כִּי הוּא הַתְחָלַת הָעֲבֵרָה, הָעַיִן רוֹאָה, וְהַלֵּב חוֹמֵד, וּכְלֵי מַעֲשֶׂה גּוֹמְרִים. רָץ כַּצְּבִי, כְּנֶגֶד הָרַגְלַיִם, שֶׁרַגְלֶיךָ לְטוֹב יָרוּצוּ. וְגִבּוֹר כָּאֲרִי, כְּנֶגֶד הַלֵּב, כִּי הַגְּבוּרָה בַּעֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ, הִיא בַּלֵּב. וְאָמַר שֶׁתִּתְחַזֵּק לִבְּךָ בַּעֲבוֹדָתוֹ וְתִתְגַּבֵּר עַל הַיֵּצֶר לְנַצְּחוֹ כְּגִבּוֹר הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר עַל שׂוֹנְאוֹ לְנַצְּחוֹ וּלְהַפִּילוֹ לָאָרֶץ (אוֹרַח חַיִּים סִימָן א). לָכֵן צָרִיךְ הָאָדָם לְהִתְגַּבֵּר כַּאֲרִי, וּמִיָּד כְּשֶׁיֵּעוֹר מִשְּׁנָתוֹ (וְאָמַר מוֹדֶה אֲנִי וְכוּ'), יָקוּם בְּזְרִיזוּת לַעֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִתְעַלֶּה קֹדֶם שֶׁיִּתְגַּבֵּר עָלָיו הַיֵּצֶר הָרַע בְּטַעֲנוֹת וְתוֹאֲנוֹת לְבַל יָקוּם. וְיִתְחַכֵּם עָלָיו לְהַשְׁיאוֹ בַּחֹרֶף, אֵיךְ תָּקוּם עַתָּה

means, you should not be ashamed before people who mock you for worshipping Hashem, Blessed be His Name. "Light as an eagle" refers to what the eye sees. This alludes to the requirement to be swift to close your eyes to prevent the seeing of evil because the sight of evil constitutes the beginning of sin. The eye sees and the heart desires and the organs capable of action culminate the sin. "Swift as a deer" refers to the legs, for your legs should run to do good things. "Strong as a lion" is a reference to the heart, because true valor in serving the Creator, Blessed is He, emanates from the heart. He also sta

ב **דור המלקטים שבת א — קפה כחמר מדינה** ↗

Comprehensive topical compilation — surveys virtually all major poskim on both sides of the coffee-as-chamar-medina question; essential meta-source for this topic

3.6 May one recite kiddush or havdalah over coffee when no wine is available?

THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה

Yes — under extenuating circumstances, one may recite kiddush or havdalah over coffee.

SA OC 296:2 provides the framework for using chamar medina when wine is unavailable. While coffee is generally not considered chamar medina (see separate entry), under extenuating circumstances it may be used.

OU Torah Dalet Amot of Halacha (R. Enkin, 2025). Note tension with the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Shulchan HaMelech entry (Laniado) which rules coffee is NOT chamar medina — the Enkin article permits only b'dieved under extenuating

circumstances.

א **SA OC 296:2 (kiddush/havdalah)**

Rabbi Yosef Karo (Maran / Beit Yosef / Shulchan Aruch), 1488–1575 · Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 296:2 — havdalah over other beverages

ב **OU Torah Dalet Amot of Halacha — Coffee (Enkin, 2025) ↗**

3.7 May one drink coffee on Shabbos morning before davening, and before making kiddush?

> THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה
>
> Coffee may be drunk before Shabbos morning davening (see separate davening entry). After davening, one may not eat or drink before kiddush. However, water is permitted before havdalah; coffee is not permitted before havdalah for a healthy person.

After one davens on Shabbos morning, eating or drinking before kiddush is forbidden (SA OC 289:1). Water is permitted before havdalah (SA OC 299:1). However, Ohr L'Tzion (2:22:7) rules that coffee is not permitted before havdalah for a healthy person — water is the only permitted drink at that point.

Halachically Speaking Vol.4 Issue 19. Cites Kaf HaChaim 289:16, SSK 52:9, Ohr L'Tzion 2:22:7.

א **Halachically Speaking Vol.4 Issue 19 — Coffee Part 1 ↗**

3.8 Can coffee (without food) fulfill the obligation of melave malka (the fourth Shabbos meal eaten after havdalah)?

> THE BOTTOM LINE לְמַעֲשֶׂה
>
> Coffee alone may suffice for melave malka for one who cannot eat solid food.

Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah (63:8) rules that if one is unable to eat, drinking coffee is sufficient to fulfill the melave malka obligation. The meal requirement for melave malka is rabbinic and more lenient than seudot Shabbos; beverages may substitute when eating is not possible.

א

SSK 63:8

Rabbi Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth (Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah), 1927–2013 · Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah, chapter 63, siman 8

Primary source — explicit ruling that coffee fulfills melave malka for one unable to eat