

WINE AS A SYMBOL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Abstract

According to archaeology, scriptures, and the Bible, wine is a typical drink in ancient Israel. Wine is a drink and a significant symbol in the Bible that reflects the cultural reality of ancient Israeli society. In this article, I have reviewed research literature on wine drinking, and I will argue that wine is an essential symbol in some literary genres in the Bible. The symbolism of wine can be divided into a few themes of symbolic representation: a positive sign of blessing, A negative symbol of emotions and actions, and an ambivalent symbol of disobedience to God and social order. The choice of wine as a symbol in the Bible as a drink produced in ancient society is considered a gift from God and part of the blessing for the abundance of the land. Excessive use of wine, however, can lead to irresponsible acts. Wine is not a prominent symbol but an enclave whose essence emphasizes the obvious in human life in ancient Israeli society. Combining the archaeological research with literary research in the Bible and non-biblical sources, it will be possible to form a better picture of ancient Israeli culture if we remember that there is a bias in the excavated areas and the biased writing of biblical writers in time, place, and purpose. This is an opportunity to peek into the depths of ancient Israeli society's culture and understand its arrangements and power relations.



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Drinking Wine

Wine, an intoxicating, usually alcoholic drink made of grape juice, was used daily thousands of years ago in Mesopotamia and ancient Israel. The Hebrew word for wine, יַיִן (*yēn*), is common in the Bible 144 times. Various expressions related to

wine can be found in the Old Testament, but they create different meanings, such as drunkenness (Gn 9:24; 1Sam 25:37), ale (Isa 28:1,7), or dark senses of incidence (1Sam 1:14; Mic 2:11) (Anani 2020, 16-7; Melamed 1943, 189). But also, the opposite meaning of wine is “to make happy” (Dt 14:26; 2Sam 13:28; Ps 75:65) (BDB 2018, 406; TDOT 1990, 06).

Studies on wine drinking in the Bible, based on archaeological and epigraphic findings published in the 20th century, expose ample information on the subject without focusing systematically on specific themes. In poetic and prophetic texts, wine is used as a metaphor for the people of Israel and their relationship with God. Studies on prophetic texts have dealt with several Prophecy books, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Micah (Field 1882, 284-320; Haupt 1917, 75-83; BDB 2018, 1015-6; Beinart 1965, 672-8; Brown 1969, 146-70; Shpanier 2001, 119-65; Bottéro 1994, 3-13; Michalowski and Milano 1994, 33; Sasson 1994, 399-419; Broshi 2001, 146; Rosso 2012; Brown 1969, 146-70).

Theological studies, too, have indicated a complex attitude toward wine. Most Christian studies treat wine as a cultural symbol, distinguishing between drinking wine in a religious context, as a gift of God, and drinking in a secular social context. Other theological studies present a moderate approach to alcohol. Studies see drinking wine as a blessing. A person may choose to avoid the social drinking of wine, as opposed to the necessity of using wine as medicine (Ray 2018, 1-2).

Ryken et al. (1998) believe that water shortage in the Ancient Near East led to the proliferation of the wine industry, which was not considered a luxury. Evidence for drinking wine in a variety of circumstances is found in prophecies, where the prophets refer to people who drink at the Temple in Jerusalem (Jr 35:6; Ez 44:21), in feasts (Is 5:11-12, 22:5; Prov 23:30-31, Job 1:4), in contexts of idolatry (Is 22:13; Am 2:8) or at the dedication of leaders (Prov 31:4; Hos 7:5; Est 1:5,7) (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman 1998, 201; Brown, 1969, 153, 169; Golden 2020, 1-19). Therefore, the widespread use of drinking wine at religious and secular events has led to ambiguous references regarding wine.

In Ancient Israel, Grape-harvest days became family merriment, celebrated with wine drinking accompanied by music and meals that symbolized fertility and continuity. Dietler (2006) claims that wine production in small societies was usually assigned to women and workers whose wages generally consisted of drink and food given to them by the wealthy owner of the vineyards (Dietler 2006, 239). Hence, there

is another ambivalent reference point to the importance of men drinking wine and women making wine.

In the Old Testament literature, we find many references to the frequent use of wine for everyday needs (Prov 3:10) and sacred purposes (Lv 23:13; Nm 28:14) (Beinart 1965, 680). The wine has been used for daily life for necessities such as drinking but also supplies for times of emergency (Jr 40:10; Lam 2:12), supplies for builders (1 Chron 2:9), a drink for travelers (Josh 9:4) and people tired of their journey (Gn 27:25; Josh 9:13; 2Sam 16:2), and even a drink for elephants before a battle (1 Mac 6:34) (Rapaport 2004). Broshi (2001) suggests that humans resorted to alcohol when they wished to escape reality (Prov 27:20), when depressed and sad (1Sam 1:15; Prov 31:6), or when they wanted to confess their sins (Zeph 1:13) or undesirable behavior (Hos 4:11; Prov 23:20) (Rapaport 2004). On the other hand, wine was intended to evoke positive feelings (Hos 7:5; Ps 78:65) and make people happy (as in Yotam's Parable, Judg 9:12-13; Ps 104:15) during celebrations (Is 24:9; Est 5:6), royal meals (Gn 40:20-21), in feasts, most notably in the Book of Esther (Est 1:1-22, 5:1-8, 6:14-7:10, 9:12-28) and in seasonal festivities (2Sam 13:23-28), or others feast (Gn 27:25; Is 55:1; Dn 1:16) (Kerem 1999, 19-20). The wine was also used as medicine for the ethanol released in the process of its fermentation. For example, wine is mentioned in ancient Mesopotamia as a remedy for intestinal disease and a pain reliever (Seely 1967, 212; Wiseman 1996, 23; Rosso 2012, 237; BDB 2018, 1015; Skolnik 2007, 80; Sherratt 1995, 18). The wine was given to mourners during the condolence meal (Dn 10:2-3) (Beinart 1965, 675-6; Skolnik 2007, 81). Thus, wine was used in both positive and negative contexts and sometimes in the ancient world.

In addition, the wine was also used for unique purposes that did not occur every day; for example, wine was used in ceremonies for anointing kings (1 Chron 12:41) (Kerem 1999, 18; BDB 2018, 406; Lehnardt 2014, 14-16; Steel 2004, 283; Kaddari 2006, 424-5; Brown, 1969, 148, 166, 169). It was used in religious ceremonies such as weddings (Jdg 14:1-20; Song 4:10) and Passover Seder (Lev 23:13). In Ancient Israel, quality wine, especially from Judah Mountains, was used for libations in religious rituals (Peha 7,8) (Gesenuis 1962, 299; Kerem 1999, 17; Kaddari 2006, 425; HALOT 2018,1015 -6) It was also used at the ceremony of sacrifice at the Tabernacle and the Temple (Nm 9:5,7,10; Hos 9:4) (BDB 2018, 406).

The wine was not only used for drinking on various occasions but also served as a symbol in the Bible of important property, as the following examples illustrate.

Wine is mentioned in the Bible as a “gift” between people (1Sam 16:20; 25:19; 2 Sam 16:1), and as a fine (Prov 4:17), a tithe of the Tirosh (must) was contributed to the Temple (Nm 18:12; Dt 12:17-18; Neh 10:38-40), or as treasure, property, or tax to the Temple (1Chron 9:29), and tax to the king (Am 2:8; 1Chron 12:41), but also the opposite as taken from wine robbery metaphorically (Ezek 27:18) (Beinart 1965, 675-6; Skolnik 2007, 80; Kaddari 2006, 425).

Wine as Symbol

The literary symbol is part of the motif characterizing different meanings, such as a verbal system with archetypes and thematic links to the work. The sign will often signal a natural phenomenon to illustrate programmatic and structural connections between units to the reader and create a plot promotion. The power of the icon will strengthen the plot. In the case of wine, it is a tangible but also an abstract symbol. It has an environmental connection, and the narrator builds its power in the structure. The symbolism of wine may be controversial, yet it isn't easy to understand its nature and is a complex motif. It is not only used as a metaphor but also as an image and a pictorial symbol. However, drinking wine symbolizes national and international customs in the ancient world. Understanding the symbolism in drinking wine may explain different works in a different light (Rivlin 1990, 32, 46; Even 1978, 93-95, 197-38).

According to Cohen (1992), the word *יין* – wine in flowery phrases, imagery, or metaphor is seen mainly in prophetic and poetic books. The prophet, Cohen argues, was well aware that wine was a popular drink and could be used for bringing through social and religious messages (Cohen 1992, 60).

Ray (2018) recognized in her research the complex nature of wine drinking in ancient Israel. She found that wine has a positive meaning as a drink in celebration. Wine in celebration means blessing and joy, a symbol of society's abundance. However, it can assume a negative sense as the cause of poor judgment or decision-making and as a symbol of God's anger over erroneous moral behavior. Ray studied a variety of theological references in prophecy, law, or historiographic texts in the Bible and their interpretations to evaluate the different references to drinking wine. She finds four approaches to the subject: 1. Prevention; 2. Moderation; 3. Celebration regardless of worship (drinking to get drunk); 4. consuming wine is a sin. Ray concludes that drinking wine is an invitation from God to celebrate life (Ray 2018, 2-3, 16-8).

Similarly to Ray's research, we can divide the wine drinking as a symbol for three themes: A. a positive symbol of action and emotion; B. a negative symbol of emotions and actions; C. a symbol of non-compliance with God and social orders (in some cases can be positive or negative).

A positive symbol

Wine is used many times in Biblical literature in a positive symbolic sense, signifying abundance (Gn 49:12) and blessing (Gn 14:18). Wine signifies happiness (Gn 34:34; Dt 14:26; Is 24:9; Zech 10:7; Zeph 1:13; Est 1:10, 5:6; Ps 104:15). It points out the positive effects of wine, such as raising one's spirits and diligence (Ps 33:8, 104:15; Prov 9:1-9). Using wine in an agricultural banquet (2Sam 13:28) to celebrate your hard work over all year can symbolize fertility (Nm 13:23) and sexuality, gratitude, and obedience (Gn 27:38; Jdg 9:27; Am 9:13) and ask for forgiveness for sins (Ex 19:38-40). It symbolizes the promised land (Dt 8:7-8) and the society dealing between father and son (Gn 27:25). Wine is used for religious customs (at the altar – Lev 23:13; and in the Temple – Hag 2:12). Wine is a symbol of salvation (Is 25:6; Ps 23) in the context of prayer (Neh 5:18) or offering (Lv 23:13; Nm 15:5).

A similar reference to wine can be found in the work of Klaus (1993), who analyses the vertex structure of Psalms 104, at the center of which stands verse 15, describing the joy of drinking wine. Klaus claims that the author of this text assigns a psychological role to bread and wine, not merely a physical one (he bases this claim on the phrase **לֵב-בָּן-אָנוּשׁ** – human's heart, on Jdg 9:13; 19:8-9; Jr 31:11; Eccl 9:7-9; Sir 31:27-28 and on Ugaritic texts. According to this study, the author of Psalms sees wine as the crown of creation, meaning wine drinking symbolizes harmony, serenity, and brotherhood (Klaus 2003, 257-9).

This shows that wine was a significant element in Early Israelite life, so it was widely present as a positive symbol in Biblical literature (Agmon 2007, 98-100).

A negative symbol

The word for wine is used metaphorically for the wisdom of drinking (Is 55:1; Jr 25:15; Prov 9:5). Although drinking wine was a common practice in the Ancient Near East, and perhaps for just that reason, the Bible, in all its literary forms, forbade excess drinking, especially for the leaders such as when a Nazirite (**נַזִּיר**) was concerned (in the story of Samson in Judges 13:4,14; and also, in Nm 6:3; Is 5:11). That is why Amos

reproaches the Nazirites for drinking (Am 2:12, 18). The Priests, too, were warned about drinking wine (Lv 10:8-9; Ez 44:21), and the Rechavim (הַרְכָבִים) refrained from it altogether (Jr 35:1-19) (Beinart 1965, 679; de Vaux 1969, 189-90; Broshi 1985, 29; Cohen 1992, 61, 63; Lehnardt 2014, 14-6; BDB 2018, 1015-6).

Although regular occasions in a person's life cycle were designated for drinking wine, Biblical literature referred to the limits and dangers of drinking (Prov 31:4;), against drinking excessive wine (Is 5:22, 22:13, 28:1,7; Prov 23:20-21), and condemns drunkenness leading to disastrous consequences (Jdg 12:20-13:2), or drunkenness as punishment behavior people of Israel (Ps 60:1-3), as a symbol for anger, or God's "cup of rage" (Is 51:17; Jr 25:15, 25:15, 23:31-33; Hab 2:16; Zech 2:12, Ps 78:8) (Ryken, Wilhoit and Longman 1998, 3203-5, 3024-5; Krzeszowski 2008, 61, 63-4, 66, 69; BDB 2018, 1015-6; Agmon 2007, 99-100; HALOT 2016- 5101,8). The negative consequences of excessive wine drinking, according to scripture, are a deep sleep (Neh 3:11, 18; Joel 1:5), impoverishment and idleness (Prov 23:20-21, 31:7), obnoxious behavior (Is 28:7; Nazirite; Prov 20:1), foolishness (Prov 27:22), cause of dizziness (Jer 60:5; Ps 75:9), self-exposure (Gn 9:21-22), incest due to drunkenness (Gn 9:21-22, 19:31-35), alcoholism (Dt 21:20; 1Sam 1:13, 16:9; Job 12:25), loss of judgment (Dt 21:18-20), physical illness (Is 19:14; Jr 25:27) and even death and murder, where wine is used as part of a surprise strategy (2 Sam 11:11, 13:28; 1 Kgs 16:9, 20:12-17), or in extreme situations or as poison, in the term הַנֶּזֶק (Hos 7:5; Hab 2:15). Thus, the Bible also uses agricultural images of the vine as a dangerous symbol of war and national disasters (Dt 32:33; Jer 25:15; Ps 25:9, 60:5) (Samet 2012, 6-11; Sutzkever 2011, 2-11).

In addition, the Bible dedicates considerable space to the use of wine as a negative figurative measure for acts of violence, for example, the death of Mo'av (Am 16:9-11) (Seely 1967, 217-8; Krzeszowski 2008, 63; Sherratt 1995, 18; Risch 2009, 89-93), as well as the victory of Gideon in war (Jdg 6:11), the Midianites' power (Jdg 7:25), the Babylonian conquest (Jr 51:7), an invading army or wicked nation (Joel 3:13). And for loyalty versus betrayal (Jr 23:9; 2 Sam 11:11). But drinking wine is not just the only issue of nations and the leader. It also refers to any negative aspects (Prov 4:17; Lam 2:12; Job 1:4-5), from very simple seemingly a brawl in the streets (Prov 20:1) to a metonymic symbol for violence (Prov 4:17) and revenge (Ps 78:65).

Wine symbolizes negative emotions such as sadness (1 Sam 1:15) and mourning (Dn 10:3). Beyond that, wine's symbolic reference is too negative in general, such as

sinful behavior (Prov 23:30-33). Other symbols are associated with suffering as divine punishment (Is 24:4-9; Jr 48:33; Am 5:11; Lam 2:12) and despair of prophecy (Jr 23:9).

Studies about wine in Wisdom Literature broaden our picture of wine in the Bible. Zakowitz (1999) refers to the parable in Prov 23:29-35, interpreting it as a warning against the recklessness caused by drinking (Zakowitz 1999, 33-5). According to Zakowitz, the commentators negatively associated wine with foreign women by linking the parable to the preceding example (Prov 23:27-28, and Midrash Lev Raba 12:1). He finds a connection between wine and poverty, presented in a pun (Prov 23:29). Zakowitz points out that the parable summons an ambiguous puzzle: On the one hand, the wise man documents the co sequences of drinking wine by looking at the drunkard. On the other hand, he supposedly lets the drunkard win. In other words, the wise man realizes that drinking is not necessarily harmful in a complex, varying reality (Zakowitz 1999, 21-2).

In addition, another point of view on the negative of drinking wine was found; according to Duran (2005, in biblical cases, women used food and drink wine to seduce men to kill them. That is why the symbolic role of food and drink can be seen in the context of sexuality and murder presented, for example, in the story of Yael (Jdg 4:17-22), Esther (Est 4-7), and Judith (Jdt 12-13). Those three women who successfully use their beauty and sexuality as a personal weapon to deceive men stand against society and weaken their enemies. Duran believes that Yael's innocent story is opposed to Esther's and Yehudit's stories, which depict manipulative women. In his opinion, the weapon each of them uses, the food and drink and fasting they take upon themselves, intensifies their strength contrary to the pleasures of the flesh. Reading Esther's story, Judith's goal is clear. Perhaps in the story, there is a critique of the weakness of the Jewish people, and thus the name of the heroine, Yehudit (יְהוּדִית) – a Jewish woman) expresses complete identification with these people (Duran 2005, 117-23).

Although the Wisdom Literature notes the consequences of drinking too much wine, it encourages a balanced habit of drinking. That is why a king, as leader of his people, was forbidden to drink to the point of drunkenness, lest he distort justice (Rosso 2012, 237; BDB 2018, 1015-6; Kaddari 2006, 424-5; Krzeszowski 2008, 64). Therefore, the advice in Prov (23:31) and Sirach (31:34-46) is to drink moderately (Broshi 1985, 33). From all the above, it can be concluded that drinking wine also served as a negative symbol, not only in the behavior of a leader or a people but also in emotions, and it was negatively associated with women.

A symbol of non-compliance with God and social orders

Drinking wine in many biblical stories reveals different aspects of life in the context of social order, such as political interaction (peace treaties – Gn 14); war – 1 Kgs 20:15-22; political actions – Josh 9:13; socio-cultural structures (as a symbol for prosperity and settlement – Job 1:1-15). This shows that wine was a significant element in Early Israelite life, so it was widely present in Biblical literature (Agmon 2007, 98-100).

In addition, drinking wine is associated with obedience to a social order in the context of divine morality. For example, we can point to a disturbance of the holy work in the god house in a social and religious context (Lv 10:9; Dt 29:5). Accordingly, wine is perceived as a symbol of moral blindness (Is 5:12, 28:7-8, 56:11-12, Am 6:6); in this sense, wine drinking serves as a metaphor for adopting bad habits, such as disloyalty to God (Joel 1:5) (Haupt 1917, 76-9; Zakovitz 1999, 33-4; Broshi 2001, 163; Agmon 2007, 98; Hadas 2007, 99).

Although wine's negative physical and mental effects were acknowledged, even in religious contexts, wine was used in Biblical stories as a metaphor for the relationship between God and His people. After all, the fertility of the soil was associated with God, and so was the fruit it bore (Ex 29:40; Dt 28:7). And the soil's produce was associated with other gods (Is 11:65; Jr 18:7; Hos 4:1). Drinking wine, then, especially at home, is served as an agent for cultural worship, according to Welton (2020). She bases her claim on other symbols, such as the pomegranate, which symbolizes desire, which does not rely on the senses and memory alone, but also on social relationships (Welton 2020, 224-7).

Several studies have been conducted on the texts of biblical law. Begg (1980), for example, refers to the expression bread and wine (לֶחֶם וַיַּיִן) in Deut 29:5. He claims that the situation was written in the context of desperate people walking around in the desert (an extreme environment) that required drinking as part of the culture in the environment (שִׂכָר – liquor, Dt 4:26). Because food could not be carried in the desert, the Israelites dedicated to wine and bread as a symbol to God as the remaining part of God's gift, so they accepted the Spirit of God and promised to obey His morals (Begg 1980; 266, 274-5).

In another way, McGovern (2013) chose to focus on the study of morality in the conduct of Noah rather than in wine production. But he emphasised drinking wine as immoral conduct (McGovern 2013, 16-39). But Green (2006) explored the vineyard for

wine as part of Noah's new creation. He analyzed the vineyard motif in Noah's story in its broader context. He found it significant because it emphasizes Noah's faith in God, trusting that God will continue his creation with a new product. Thus, the vineyard represents the creation that has been completed, giving us a view of the ideal world as God wants it to be. Therefore, according to Green, wine symbolizes loyalty (Jdg 9:13). However, Green does not state that wine symbolizes a return to the primitive state of Eden. Wine, he claims, rather signifies progress in the moral attitude of mankind by cultivating the land. Wine is a sign of the culture of God, and the production of wine emphasizes humankind's role in maintaining God's creation and ruling it. Wine symbolises food culture in biblical texts, and rhetorical means and other food motifs stand out. In this sense, the vineyard and the wine are seen as a gift of love, which God bestows on all His creatures and the people of Israel (Green 2006, 126, 139, 147, 360; cf. Sasson 1994, 399-419).

Studies on Prophetic literature and biblical poetry relate primarily to the symbolism of wine and its use as a symbolic instrument for the relationship between God and the Israelites. Prinsloo's study (2016) compares three sources (Hab 5:5; Jeremiah and Peshier Habakkuk) that, in his opinion, they demonstrate an obsessive desire for wine to the point of absurdity, and the motif of wine plays a triangular role here. Wine is used as a weapon in God's hands, a drink for thirsty people, and the fermentation of wine symbolizes violence or punishment (Prinsloo 2016, 7).

Sasson (1994) points out in his study that the feasts in the Prophet Books, where wine is mentioned, signify two opposite ideas. On the one hand, they show that God helps those who believe in him (Is 25:6-8). On the other hand, they suggest that wine causes violence, greediness, and selfishness (Zeph 12:1). The same applies to other prophets (Ez 39:17-21; Am 6:6-7). The text in Isaiah 5:11-12 illustrates this, depicting violent behavior brought on by drinking wine (Prov 17:4). Sasson refers to later periods in exile when wine testified the presence of God as if God-intoxicated the believer (Jr 23:9). Elsewhere, God is referred to as the "wine of rage", and God's salvation links God to Israel and renews their relationship (Jr 51:7-9; Hab 2:15-16). Jeremiah compares Babylon to a cup of wine, a tool in God's hands to punish Israel. Isaiah continues this cup motif as an image of God's anger at Jerusalem's sinning. He figuratively refers to the punishment and torture of the people of Jerusalem as taking the cup of poison (Is 51:17-22) (Sasson, 1994, 409-10).

A limited review of the proverbs and parables in the Bible also reveals a reference to a desirable social order for the leader as a result of obedience to God in a two-faced manner. For example, Oprica and Ugarte (2011) suggested that the symbolic significance of wine varies considerably in different proverbs: signifying old age, friendship, relations with women, conversation (evoked by good wine and bread), “Wine shall delight a human heart” (Ps 104:15), “Wine reveals secrets” (וַיִּבְרַח סוֹד – Erub. 65:1) (Oprica and del Carmen Ugarte 2011, 1-2).

In addition, Albright (1980) refers to the ambivalence towards wine and focuses on the prophets and the book of Proverbs. He finds evidence of drinking wine not intended for pleasure but, ironically, for relieving pain (Prov 31:6) (Albright 1980, 63-4, 203-4).

Douglas (2003) mentions three contexts of social drinking: 1. Drinking arranges a person's social status according to his behavior; 2. Drinking shows a person's economic ability; 3. Participation in a drinking ceremony is a social ideal. From this, in her opinion, it is possible to deduce who the people who drink in society are and who the groups excluded from the community are (Douglas 2003, 3-4, 8).

Interdisciplinary studies shed light on ancient Israeli society from a historical and social perspective. Walsh (2000) studied recurring patterns of stories that referred to drunkenness and found that in the biblical story (Noah's story is unusual), Maine drunkenness is a condition for social belonging to a community, in which norms of behavior affect all participants. Drinking is not a matter of escapism or the collapse of the social order but the essence of a preferred social order. In Walsh's opinion, there is no social restriction to attending banquets to get drunk, but this is the norm of ancient Israeli culture. People who drink in society strengthen their social status and form social relationships. Therefore, drinking is a social act that generates trust within a circle of friends. However, drinking wine can also lead to social devastation. Heavy drinking can push good people into a state of intoxication. They may find themselves betrayed or expelled from the banquet, involuntarily involved in unwanted situations, or even murdered (2 Sum 13:28). Drinking within the family is different (Jer 25:27; Prov 31:6). It may be beneficial but it can also intensify tensions in the family. The biblical writer does not encourage Noah and Lot's drinking in the family's bosom; it was perceived as an escape from extreme conditions (Walsh 2000, 15-29).

In short, the complex and ambivalent nature of wine, which is also implicitly mentioned, shows the positive and negative views of drinking wine, even when it comes

to a social order made by man or God. On the one hand, drinking wine encourages and blessing Israel by God, and a cultural component symbolizes drinking wine as a curse and is considered harmful when consumed excessively (Krzyszowski 2008, 70-1). Therefore, the Bible recommends avoiding wine when it might cause moral corruption (Ray 2018, 1-2).

Insights

Drinking wine is a common motif in the various genres in the Bible. The different literary studies point to an ambivalent attitude of the Bible to drinking wine (Teachout 1979, 254-62, 300-11, 336). On the one hand, it has a positive attitude toward creating joy, influencing the creation of community, and strengthening the belonging of family and religious identities in Israel and Judea (Welton 2020, 314, 317-8). Drinking wine affects communication for the individual in the relationships within the family and the community (Sherratt 1995, 11-3, 18, 29; Silman 2013, 13-16; Lehnardt 2014, 9). It strengthens socio-political alliances and effectively enhances the social status of the host person (Steel 2004, 283; Kaddari 2006, 281-284). But on the other hand, wine hurts the person, causing various physical problems and unwanted behaviors, exclusion from the community, and a socioeconomic structure that is not necessarily egalitarian (Singer 1986, 113-30; Dietler 2006, 229-33). The ambiguous reference to drinking wine is also expressed in God's attitude towards it as a positive symbol that wine is a divine gift. As a negative motif, it symbolizes God's anger and violence toward His creatures (Welton 2020, 224-7).

Despite the abundance of research in the article, there is a considerable lack of research about wine, especially wine drinking, in parables in Biblical and post-Biblical Wisdom literature. Furthermore, no study examines Wisdom proverbs in the Bible in light of post-Biblical sources such as Sirach. Although Sirach (2nd century BCE), sums up this bifold view of wine in a positive statement: "Even life to men is wine drunken in soberness; if thou drinkest it measurably, thou shalt be sober. What is the life which is made less by wine? What defraudeth life? Death. The wine was made in gladness, not drunkenness, at the beginning." (Sir 31:27 trans. WYC)

However, he makes a statement that wine must be drunk in moderation (Sir 31:29, trans. WYC), which is followed by an altogether negative message (Segal 1997; Shupak 1996; Horovitz 2012): "Wine drunken much maketh voiding, and ire, and many fallings, or mischiefs. Wine intoxicated much is bitterness of (the) soul. Strength of drunkenness

and hurting of an unprudent man maketh virtue less and making wounds. In the feast of wine, reprove thou not a neighbour, and despise thou not him in his mirth. Say thou not words of shame [or of reproof] to him, and oppress thou not him in [again]-asking.” (Sir 31:29-31, trans. WYC)

In conclusion, Biblical references reveal a complex attitude toward wine and wine drinking, involving social, economic, religious, and medical aspects and shifting notably between negative and positive notions. These shifting notions and their relation in different Biblical texts require a more thorough study.

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