

ALCOHOL IN THE BIBLE

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The attempt has often been made to prove that the wine referred to in the Bible was non-alcoholic (DB 2, 34^a; EB 5306, n. 1; 5321, § 32).¹ The story of Noah's first experience with the wine he had made shows that it was intoxicating: the patriarch lay in a drunken stupor (Gen. 9:21). Böhmer pointed out long ago that the statement after the name of Noah

¹ AJSL = *American Journal of Semitic Languages*.—AkF = Zimmern, *Akkadische Fremdwörter* (Leipzig, 1915).—AL = Delitzsch, *Assyrische Lesestücke*.—ASKT = Haupt, *Akkadische und Sumerische Keilschrifttexte*.—AV = Authorized Version.—BA = Delitzsch-Haupt, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*.—BAL = Haupt, *Beiträge zur assyrischen Lautlehre* (Göttingen, 1883).—BB = Haupt, *The Burning Bush and The Origin of Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1909) = PAPS 48, No. 193.—BL = Haupt, *Biblische Liebeslieder* (Leipzig, 1907).—BT = Goldschmidt, *Der babylonische Talmud*.—CD = Century Dictionary.—CoE = Haupt, *An Ancient Protest against the Curse on Eve* (Philadelphia, 1911) = PAPS 50, No. 201.—DB = Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*.—EB = Cheyne-Black, *Encyclopædia Biblica*.—EB¹¹ = *Encyclopædia Britannica*, eleventh edition.—GB¹⁶ = Gesenius-Buhl, *Hebräisches Handwörterbuch*, sixteenth edition.—GGAO = Hommel, *Grundriss der Geschichte und Geographie des Alten Orients* (München, 1904).—GK = Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Hebräische Grammatik*, twenty-eighth edition.—HW = Delitzsch, *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch*.—IN = E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle, 1906).—JAOS = *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.—JBL = *Journal of Biblical Literature*.—JHUC = *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*.—JSOR = *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research*.—KAT = Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*.—MuS = Haupt, *Midian and Sinai* (1909) = ZDMG 63, 506-530.—NBSS = Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg, 1910).—NT = New Testament.—OLZ = *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*.—OT = Old Testament.—PAPS = *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*.—PSBA = *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*.—RE³ = Hauck, *Realencyklopädie*, third edition.—REJ = *Revue des Études Juives*.—RV = Revised Version.—SBOT = Haupt, *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament in Hebrew*.—SGI = Delitzsch, *Sumerisches Glossar* (Leipzig, 1914).—TOCR = *Transactions of the Third*

in Gen. 5:29, *This will make us forget our work,² and the toil of our hands, and the ground which Jahveh has cursed,* was a misplaced subsequent addition to the passage *Noah, the husbandman, began to plant a vineyard* (Gen. 9:20; cf. *Pur.* 2, 42). If a man wants to drown his cares he cannot do it in plain water or unfermented grape-juice. At the reunion of the gods, which is the primordial prototype of the Babylonian New Year's festival, all were full of food and liquor, so that they were crazed and stupefied. New Year is still observed in this ancient Babylonian fashion, and Rabbinical authorities say that in celebrating Purim, which is an adaptation of the Persian New Year's festival, you must drink till you cannot tell the cursing of Haman from the blessing of Mordecai.³

Prohibitionists often emphasize the fact that the wine made by Jesus at the wedding at Cana was made of water. The

International Congress for the History of Religions (Oxford, 1908).—VHOK = *Verhandlungen des Hamburger Orientalisten-Kongresses* (Leiden, 1904).—WF = *Wellhausen-Festschrift* (Giessen, 1914).—ZA = *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*.—ZAT = *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*.—ZDMG = *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.—ZR = *Zimmern, Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion* (Leipzig, 1901).—Mic. = Haupt, *The Book of Micah* (Chicago, 1910) = AJSL 27, 1-63; 26, 201-252.—Nah. = Haupt, *The Book of Nahum* (Baltimore, 1907) = JBL 26, 1-53.—Pur. = Haupt, *Purim* (Leipzig, 1906) = BA 6, 2.—G = Greek Bible.—J = Jerome (Vulgate).—S = Syriac Bible.—T = Targum.—Cf. JBL 34, 41; AJSL 32, 64; ZA 30, 60.

² Lit. *cause us to stop sighing from our work* (see *Pur.* n. 22; cf. WF 223, l. 6; AJSL 32, 65, l. 2). Also Arab. *sâlâ, îsâlû*, to be comforted over a thing and forget it (AJSL 33, 48), is construed either with the accusative or with the preposition 'an, from. Similarly Arab. 'âzzâ, to comfort, is construed with 'an.

³ Cf. *Pur.* 3; Rogers, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (New York, 1908) p. 120; *Megill.* ב (BT 3, 557): אמר רבא מייב איניש לבסופי בפוריא: עיר רלא ירע בין ארור הכין לברוך מרדכי; see also Lagarde, *Purim* (Göttingen, 1887) p. 56. For לבסופי (cf. Syr. *îbbassûn*, he refreshed himself) see Margolis' grammar, p. 95*, and for *ênês = inâš*: Levins' grammar, § 69, and BA 1, 7. Also Assy. *nišu*, people (HW 483) is not a biconsonantal noun, but stands for *nêšu = inêšu = inâšu*. Nor is there a biconsonantal noun *nišu*, being, spirit, person (AI⁵ 171b): this *nêšu* stands for *nîš'u*; see GB¹⁰ 507 s.v. *nês*. Assy. *nîš šarrišunu izkurû* (ASKT 67; JBL 19, 68, n. 40) is equivalent to Arab. *râfa'û 'sma mâlikihim* (cf. Ps. 16: 4^b) while Assy. *nîšê âli*, the people of the city, corresponds to Syr. (E) *nâšêh da-mêdittâ*. For Assy. *nêku*, people (written *ni-c-ku*), see Delitzsch, *Sumerisch-akkadisch-ägyptische Vokabularfragmente* (Berlin, 1914) p. 12.

strongest drinks may be made of water. But the miracle at Cana must be interpreted allegorically: Jesus turned the water of the old dispensation into wine, the blood of the new covenant (cf. JBL 35, 206, n. 67). Similarly the raising of Lazarus symbolizes the revivification of the defunct church (EB¹¹ 15, 454^b).

I have shown in my paper on *Beer and Brandy in Babylonia* (JHUC, No. 287, p. 33) that the wines of the ancients were stronger than our modern wines, and this may be the reason why they were mixed with water. In the *Odyssey* (9, 209) we read that the Maronean wine, three cups of which made the cyclops Polyphemus so drunk that Odysseus could blind him by plunging a burning stake into his single eye, was, as a rule, diluted with twenty parts of water. Some of the ancient wines seem to have been more like brandy: Pliny (14, 63) says that the Falernian district produced a wine which could be ignited. Brandy is inflammable, but wine will refuse to deflagrate.

The strongly alcoholic character of the wines of the ancient Hebrews is evident in a number of Biblical passages, but several of them have been misinterpreted. In Prov. 23:20/1 *e. g.* AV renders:

- 20 Be not among winebibbers,
among riotous eaters of flesh;
21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty,
and drowsiness shall clothe a man in rags.

20 אֱלֹהֵי בָסָבָאֵי יִין בְּזָלְלֵי בֶשֶׂר לְמוֹ:
21 כִּי־סָבָא וּזְלָל יוֹרְשׁוֹ וּקְרָעִים תִּלְבֵּשׁ נֹמָה:

This couplet should be translated:

- 20 Be not among winebibbers,
among those who indulge in meat;
21 For bibber and gormand may be robbed,
and stupor clothes in tatters.

† Heb. *nûmâ* does not refer to sleepiness on the day following the revelry, but denotes the profound slumber of alcoholic coma (EB¹¹ 8, 602^b). Excessive indulgence in alcohol may terminate in stupor with partial paralysis of the muscles. Umbreit (1826) said: *Nûmâ drückt den taumliænen Zustand des Be-*

rauschten aus. The verb *nûm* is used of the *sleep of death* in Nah. 3:18; Ps. 76:6 (*Nah.* 12. 36; ZDMG 61, 281, 15; 286, 20; 287, 13; *cf.* also 2 Macc. 4:25, 5:11). Thieves who rob dead-drunk persons are called in German *Leichenfledderer*.⁴ A university student overcome with beer is a *Bierleiche*. A man in the state of dead-drunkness may be robbed; his clothes may be torn either by a fall or in a brawl. Prov. 20:1 says: *Leç-hai-iaîn, hômê has-šekâr*, Wine is wanton, brandy is brawling (see my paper on Heb. *leç*, wanton, and *melîç*, spokesman, in BA 10, 2; contrast JBL 29, 106, n. 81). Many a tippler comes home with his clothing torn and tattered. A rich drunkard may occasionally look like a raggamuffin or tatterdemalion, and he may be robbed, but he is not impoverished. There is not a single passage in OT where *iyyarêš* means *he is impoverished*.

In my *Book of Micah* (Chicago, 1910) p. 79 (*cf.* GB¹⁶ 321^a) I have shown that Heb. *iarâš*, from which the noun *tirôš*, must, is derived, means originally *to press, squeeze, extort, rob, bereave*. The primary connotation of Heb. *îrâš*, he inherits, is *he is bereft*. German *Erbe*, heir, is connected with Lat. *orbis*, bereft, orphan. I have discussed this question more fully in my paper on Assyr. *ablu*, mourner, heir (BA 10, 2).

For *gormands* the Hebrew has *those who indulge in meat for themselves*, who gorge themselves with meat.⁵ Meat was regarded as a luxury; as a rule, it was served only in honor of a guest or at a festival.

Horton, *Proverbs* (p. 285) in *The Expositor's Bible* (1891) refers to the torn clothes and the empty pockets of the wine-bibber in the comments on the four couplets in Prov. 23:29-35 describing the danger of wine bibbing. AV renders this passage:

- 29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow?
 Who hath contentions? who hath babbling?
 Who hath wounds without cause?
 Who hath redness of eyes?
 30 They that tarry long at the wine;
 They that go to seek mixed wine.
 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,

⁴ See Rabben, *Gaunersprache* (Hamm, 1906) p. 82; *cf.* *Pur.* n. 150.

⁵ *cf.* Syr. *izdallâl*, to be luxurious, extravagant, unrestrained; also modern Arab. *zâla'*, to bolt one's food. **UB** render: *asôlâ* (= *σωστος*).

- When it giveth his color in the cup,
 When it moveth itself aright.
- 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent,
 And stingeth like an adder.
- 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women,
 And thine heart shall utter perverse things.
- 34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst
 Or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. [of the sea,
- 35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say*, and I was not
 They have beaten me, and I felt it not: [sick;
 When shall I awake?
 I will seek it yet again.

Some of these lines are preposterous, especially the statement, *Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of the mast*. If *lying down in the midst of the sea* means lying down in your bunk when the ship is on the high seas, this is not so uncomfortable; but *lying upon the top of the mast* is a more difficult proposition which a wine-bibber in the final stage of dead-drunkenness could hardly negotiate. *Top of the mast*, of course, can only refer to the highest or uppermost part of the mast, not to a sort of platform surrounding the head of the lower mast on all sides.

According to Grotius (1644) *Et erit sicut dormiens in medio maris* signifies *in insula fluctibus undique concussa*; but *thou wilt be like one riding in the midst of the sea* means simply: *Thou wilt suffer from nausea* and vomiting due to the irritation of the gastric mucous membrane. Vomiting (Jer. 25:27, 48:26; Is. 19:14, 28:8) is preceded by a feeling of nausea. To *sicut jacens in summo mali* Grotius adds: *id est, ut nunc loquuntur, in galea navis, ubi maxima est agitatio*. J. D. Michaelis (1778) rendered: *wie ein Steuermaun, der beim Sturm einschläft*, following ⚠ ὡς περ κυβερνήτης ἐν πολλῶ κλύδωνι (⚠ *akh mallâhâ hē-mahšôlâ râbbâ*; but ⚠ *hêk mallâhâ dē-damék bē-'îlfâ*, and ⚠ *quasi sopitus gubernator amisso clavo*). ⚠ did not read *ra's*, instead of *rôš*, but took *rôš-hôhél* in the sense of *top* (acme) of *destruction* (ruin). Κλύδων often denotes *disaster*, just as κατακλυσμός, cataclysm, may signify *destruction*, annihilation (cf. AJSL 23, 228, n. 17, and p. 163 of my paper on *Jouah's Whale* in PAPS 46). In the same way ⚠ *mahšôlâ* may mean *peril*;

cf. Assyr. *xašālu*, to smash, crush, destroy (ZDMG 64, 709, 10). Also *Graec. Ven.* (ὡς καθεύδων ἐν κρατὶ νεώς) read *rōš*, head, top.

The generally accepted rendering of this passage is almost as absurd as the translation of Ps. 76:11 which I discussed in my paper on an OT liturgy for Nicanor's Day (ZDMG 61, 286, 24): *Thou girdest Thyself with the residue of the gall* (see also ZAT 35, 105). I often reassure some of my candidates for the degree of Ph.D. who feel a little nervous before the final examination in the presence of the Faculty, by pointing out to them that, even if they give the most ridiculous answers, there are generally some distinguished OT scholars who have led the way.

Everything is perfectly clear if we correct the traditional misunderstanding of *rōš ḥōḇél* and the erroneous repetition of the term *lying down* due to scribal carelessness which we find in a great many passages (*cf.* JBL 34, 65, l. 7; 35, 288). Heb. *ḥōḇél* at the end of the line, which is supposed to mean *mast*, is the part. Qal of *ḥībbél*, to corrupt, to ruin; it corresponds to Arab. *xābil*, noxious, disastrous. Arab. *xābala* means especially *to craze* and *to paralyze*.⁶ In Assyrian we have *xablu* and *xabbīlu*, pernicious (*Proverbs*, SBOT, 57, 53). The addition of the epithet *ḥōḇél*, noxious, was necessary in order to show that *rōš*, head, in this connection referred to the head of the opium-poppy. Similar combinations are common in Chinese; a great many Chinese words would not be clear unless they were combined with another word (EB¹¹ 6, 217^b).

A *šōḥēb bē-rōš ḥōḇél* is *one who lies* in a stupor produced by *the noxious poppy-juice*. I have shown in my paper on *Opium in the Bible*, which I presented at the General Meeting of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia on April 24, 1915,⁷ that the *gall* (i. e. *bitter fluid*) with wine (not *vinegar*) in the account of Christ's crucifixion (Matt. 27:34) and the *myrrh* in Mark 15:23 denote *opium* (ZA 30, 64; GB¹⁰ xix^b, l. 5 and 418^b: *mē-rōš*, poppy-juice; *cf.* also DB 3, 408^a, l. 6; 2,

⁶ *Cf.* the special meanings of *haut mal*, or *grand mal*, and *petit mal*. In certain parts of Germany *Schaden* is used for *hernia*, rupture, and *Übelkeit* for *nausea*, *qualm*, just as our *sick* has the special meaning *affected with nausea*, *quinish*. Note also the special meaning of Heb. *dayā*.

⁷ An abstract was published in the programme of the General Meeting and in a great many daily papers, *c. g.* in the *Philadelphia Ledger* of April 25, 1915; *cf.* also p. 2 of Dr. Macht's paper *The History of Opium* = *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Feb. 6, 1915, p. 478.

104^b). It was entirely different from the Roman *potio myrrhina* or *murrata*, which was a sweet wine and a favorite beverage of the Roman ladies (EB 5320, below; RE³ 21, 61, 53). Jesus refused to drink the wine with gall or myrrh, *i. e.* opium, just as a soldier who is to be shot may decline to be blindfolded. The Talmud states that a cup of wine with *lēbônâ* was given to criminals before their execution. *Lēbônâ* means *incense*, but in this case it is used for a bitter aromatic drug, *i. e.* opium. Frankincense and myrrh are used for *opium* because all three are bitter and aromatic. The primary connotation of both *mērôrâ*, gall, and *môr*, myrrh, is *bitterness*. In the OT *rôš*, the bitter poison of the poppy-head, is repeatedly mentioned in connection with *la'nâ*, wormwood, absinthe. Poppy was no doubt cultivated from remote antiquity for the sake of the juice of the heads, or capsules, which is generally conceded to be the most important of all medicines. In the cuneiform texts it is called *irrû*, *i. e.* intestinal medicine (ZA 30, 64). I explained *rôš hōbél* as *noxious poison* sixteen years ago in *Proverbs* (SBOT) 57, 52. Tomyris (Herod. 1, 212) calls wine *poison* (φάρμακον).

The answer to the question in the first couplet of Prov. 23: 29-35, *Who has wounds without cause, who has dimness of eyes, which we find in the following verse, Those who linger long o'er the wine, who come to try the mixture*, is evidently a gloss. The hemistich *kî-ittén bak-kôs 'ênô* in the second couplet cannot mean *when it sparkles in the cup*; the ancient Hebrews had no sparkling wines; the phrase must be rendered: *when it gives its gleam in the cup, i. e. reflects the light*. We may say *when it glances in the cup*, just as Whittier says in *The Norsemen: The waters of my native stream are glancing in the sun's warm beams*. The *kî* in the first hemistich of v. 31 should be omitted; it is dittography of the *kî* in the second hemistich; *it'addám* is a relative clause, as is also *iafrîš* at the end of the next verse (GK § 155, g). On the other hand, *hikkûnî* and *hālamûnî* in v. 35 are conditional clauses (GK § 159, c). The verb *iafrîš* must be connected with Aram. *pērâšâ*, ox-goat; *cf.* Syr. *afrîš libbâ*, to cause compunction, lit. to *prick the heart*, and Assyr. *paruššu axxilānnî*, the p. pierced me (HW 546^a). Umbreit (1826) compared Syr. *afrîš*; contrast Delitzsch's commentary, p. 378, n. 2.

The *i* appended to *çif'ôn* before *iafriš* may be due to dittography, and the final *i* in Is. 11:8, 59:5 may be derived from the present passage. In post-Biblical Hebrew we have *çif'ôn* without the final *i*. The ἀπαξ λεγόμενον *ābōi* (for *ibāi*) is not an interjection, but a noun connected with *ebīōn* = *ibīān*, woeful, afflicted, wretched, miserable (AJSL 32, 141). The Syriac interjection אֹבִי, compared in Brown's lexicon is, according to Duval, the Greek ὦ βία (cf. König's *Lehrgeb.* 2, 339). The primary connotation of *ših* is *attention* (WF 216). Then it means *care*, concern, trouble, grief, complaint.⁸ It may also signify *contemplation*, religious meditation, devotion. In 2 K 9:11 it denotes *occupation*, profession, vocation, trade, calling (French *métier*, German *Beruf*). ἄδολεσχία, Ἐ ḫō'itā, ḫ ḫā'itā are guesswork. Klostermann's emendation *šōlēhō*, his sender, is gratuitous. Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Münster, 1912) 2, 94 says: *Am besten passt Geschäft wie 1, 18, 27; but Gewerbe or Handwerk would be a more suitable rendering.*

The beginning of the fourth couplet must not be translated *Thine eyes shall behold strange women*, but *Thine eyes will see strange things*: objects will appear double; he will also be troubled with visual hallucinations in the form of disagreeable animals or insects; he will see snakes or mice; these visions may appear also in the form of flames, goblins, or fairies (EB¹¹ 12, 859^b, l. 6; 14, 609^b). For *haklilūt*, dimness (not *redness*) see OLL 16, 492. *Al-kuhl*, kohl, from which the term *alcohol* is derived, is a transposition of this stem.

The last couplet is not the addition of an antiprohibitionist, but describes, in dramatic style, the irresistible hold alcohol has on its victims. A man may have been hit and hurt in a drunken brawl, he may have lain in a drunken stupor for half a day, but he will drink again as soon as he has slept off his drunkenness. He may cry Oh! and feel miserable for some time, yet he will sin again.

In the last hemistich but one we must insert after *aqīç*, I awake: *mī-iañi*, from my wine, as in Gen. 9:24. This, it may be supposed, was afterwards regarded as an unseemly allusion to the patriarch Noah, and therefore it was suppressed; cf. BL 47, l. 7, and my remarks on suppressed passages in the OT on

⁸ Cf. Syr. ἄνιᾶ which means originally *attention*, *heed*, then *meditation*, *anxiety*, *care*; also Syr. ἰᾷḫḫā, *attention*, *care*, *anxiety*, and ἰḫḫḫā, *to be troubled*, *grieved*.

p. 75 of the *Actes du Seizième Congrès International des Orientalistes*, Athens, 1912; see also *Mic.* 31, n. 6.

The Hebrew text should be read as follows:

לְמִי מְדוֹנִים לְמִי-שָׂיִחַ	לְמִי-אָוִי לְמִי אָבוֹי	29
לְמִי חֻכְלוֹת עֵינַיִם ^a :	לְמִי פְצָעִים חָנָם	
כִּי-יִתֵּן בְּקוֹם עֵינָיו:	אֶל-תֵּרָא בֵּין בֵּית־אֲדָם	31
וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ יִכְצַפְעוֹן יִפְרָשׁ:	יִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּמִישְׁרִים ו	32
וּלְבָבְךָ יִדְבַר תְּהַפְּקוֹת:	עֵינֶיךָ יִרְאוּ זָרוֹת	33
וּכְשֶׁכֶּב בְּרֹאשׁ חֹבֶל:	וְהָיִית כְּרֹכְבִי בַלְבָּיִם	34
הַלְמוֹנִי כֹל יִדְעֵתִי	הַכּוֹנִי בֶל חֻלֵּיתִי	35
אוֹסִיף אֲבַקֶּשְׁנוּ עוֹד:	כִּתִּי אֶקְיִין מִיָּנִי	

30 (a) לְמֵאַחֲרַיִם עָלַי הֵיִן לְבָאִים לְחַקֵּר כִּמְכָר: 31 (β) כִּי 32 (γ) כִּנְחַשׁ יִשָּׁךְ ו

This may be translated as follows:

- 29 Who has woe? and who has misery?
 who has brawls? and who has grief?
 Who has wounds without any cause?
 and who has dimness of eyes?^a
- 31 Look not on the wine ^βthat is red,
 when it gives its gleam in the cup;
- 32 It glides down smoothly, but at last
 it is ^γlike a viper that stings.
- 34 Thine eyes will see strange things,
 thy heart will blab queer things;
- 34 Thou'lt feel as one sailing the high seas
 or as one put to sleep by poppy.
- 35 If they hit me, I was not sore;
 if they struck me, I did not feel it.
 As soon as I wake from my wine,
 I shall surely try it again.

(a) 30 Those who linger long o'er the wine, who come to try the mixture.

(β) 31 when

(γ) 32 like a snake that bites and

^a This reading was suggested by Budde; see *ibid.* 57, 50.