

WINE OR STRONG DRINK... A BLESSING OR A CURSE?

Text: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to DRINK WINE, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Romans 14:21.

Yahweh says that "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Proverbs 20:1. Strong drink used as a beverage is a **curse**, an enemy to set -apart living. Today it is a growing curse in America--a stumbling block to millions of young and old people. Since this is true, Romans 14:21 should be the divine rule for all Believers today. Casting a stumbling block in a weak brother's way is a sin against Messiah and may cause both that weak brother and we ourselves to be lost. (Read I Corinthians 8:11, 12, 13.)

That weak brother could be your own child, so beware, my friend, what you do. Or, it may be your neighbor's son or daughter.

An Enemy of Kodesh Living

Yahweh led Israel for forty years in the wilderness teaching them His ways. He fed them and their clothing did not wear out. (Read Deuteronomy 8:1-6;

Deuteronomy 29:1-5.) But they drank **no** wine or strong drink all that time. "Neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink; that ye may know that I am Yahweh your Elohim." Deuteronomy 29:6. If Israel was better off without the wine and strong drink on their way to the promised land, so are we. Strong drink would have added to their sins and rebellion. No wine was used in the Passover services during that forty years. Tradition brought the cup, or fruit of the vine, into the Passover service later--it was not of divine origin. More on that later.

To show the evils of wine and strong drinks, Yahweh gave strict rules to the priest about using such for a common beverage. "Do not drink wine or strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, **when** ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die..." Leviticus 10:9. A death penalty went with this divine rule--a statute forever. Why? Yahweh answers--"That ye may put difference between kodesh and unkodesh, and between clean and unclean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Yahweh hath spoken unto them... Verses 10, 11. This is very clear. Yahweh's Spirit, **not** strong drink, should rule their minds. This is further brought out in Isaiah 28:7. "But they have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."

This same divine rule is given in Ezekiel 44:21-24. Yahweh's Spirit was to direct

through a clear mind, not clouded with alcoholic beverages. Death was the penalty for violating that rule. Did Yahshua change that rule? Let us see further what Yahweh says about the **moral** influence of wine and other strong drinks. "It is **not** for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." Proverbs 31:4, 5.

We have already found that wine is a mocker, and we have found that it leads men away from Yahweh's law and to perverted judgment, etc. Thus its influence is definitely downward--away from Yahweh's law--an enemy of set-apartness, which Yahweh requires of us. There is more Bible evidence on this important topic that is misunderstood by many in our times.

"Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart." Hosea 4:11. Anything that takes away our heart, or mind from Yahweh is our enemy and should be left entirely alone. Note that whoredom and wine were placed in the same class here. Indulgence in either is wrong. Now we will see that one leads to the other in many cases. Yahweh warns of danger. "Look **not** on the wine when it is red, when it giveth color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. (Why?) At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. (Result?) Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things." Proverbs 23:31-33. Here the matter is made very plain that drinking wine or other strong drinks is **poison** to both **soul and spirit**--that it often leads to lust and sin. For that reason, Yahweh said to **not** look upon it; or in other words, leave it entirely alone. Do not drink it as a beverage. Just a little will take hold of the mind and stimulate the lusts of the flesh. Yahweh's rule for the priests apply to **all** His children in New Testament times. Our bodies are the temple of Yahweh and if we defile that temple, Yahweh will destroy us. (I Corinthians 3:16, 17.)

In Babylon, Daniel, "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank..." Daniel 1:5-8. Why refuse a little wine with his meals if there was no divine rule against it? No doubt the king provided the best that he had. It is evident that for Daniel to drink this strong wine that the king served would defile him. It would have been a violation of Yahweh's rule of life. There is another "wine" spoken of in the Bible that Daniel did drink, and any Believer can drink it too without defiling himself. See Daniel 10:3. More on that later.

The person who took the vow of a Nazarite to Yahweh was forbidden to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat any fruit of the vine. (Numbers 6:2-4.) Samson's mother was forbidden to drink wine or strong drink. (Judges 13:3-5. See also I Samuel 1:14, 15.)

The Use of Strong Drink

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those of a heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Proverbs 31:6, 7.

This does **not** refer to a Believer at all, unless part of it is interpreted to refer to medical purposes. This is descriptive of what many people do with strong drink. They drink to forget their poverty and other troubles, yet add more to themselves, usually.

Now let us look at an example of the use of strong wine in Israel. Read 2 Samuel 16:1, 2. David, the king, was fleeing with many people with him from Absalom. A certain man met him with 200 loaves of bread and other food, "and a bottle of wine." David asked, "What meanest thou by these?" The answer was that the bread and summer fruit was for food for the young men and, "the wine, that such as **faint** in the wilderness may drink." This is clearly a medical use, **not** a regular beverage.

In Luke 10:34, the good Samaritan dressed the man's wounds, "pouring in oil and wine..." Today a number of poisons are used for medical purposes, but **not** for food. Yahweh speaks of the fermented, or strong wine as poison. Deuteronomy 32:32, 33.

The Wine Yahweh Gave to Israel

Yahweh gave wine to Israel, but it was not strong drink. "Thou didst drink the **pure blood** of the grape." Deuteronomy 32:14. Read it. Pure blood of the grape was **not** fermented grape juice, for in fermentation the **natural sugar** that Yahweh put in the grape juice as a blessing to our bodies is changed into **alcohol**, which is a poison to the body. This is the wine that Yahweh gave to Israel. This is the "wine, that cheereth Yahweh and man." Judges 9:13. This is the wine that maketh glad the heart of man--a blessing, and **not** a curse. Psalms 104:15. This is the new wine that "is found in the cluster." Isaiah 65:8. "A blessing is in it." It is the **pure blood**, or unfermented juice of the grape that is called "wine" in these passages of Scripture. Let us prove that statement. From Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, we get the following information. The original Hebrew word for wine in the above texts is defined, "must or **fresh** grape juice (just as squeezed out--rarely fermented)" (Word No. 8492.) There are **two** wines spoken of in the Bible--the strong wine which was forbidden, except for medical purposes, and the other, the **pure blood**, or juice of the grape, unfermented.

The **same** original word, meaning grape juice is translated "wine" in the following texts. The Kingdom blessings promised to Israel included "wheat, and...wine." Jeremiah 31:12. Yahweh promised to give Israel, "corn, and wine and oil..." "...the vats shall overflow with wine and oil." Joel 2:19, 24; Isaiah 62:8. "...the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine." Deuteronomy 33:28. The **same** kind of wine was in the blessings that Isaac gave to Jacob. "Therefore Yahweh give thee of the dew of heaven, and fatness of the earth, and **plenty** of corn and **wine**." "With corn and wine have I sustained him." Genesis 27:28, 37. It is this wine that was taken away by Yahweh's curse in Isaiah 24:5-7.

The Tithe of the Wine in Israel

Yahweh did require the tithe of the wine in Israel, but the original word in the following is the **same** as in the texts above and means unfermented grape juice. "Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine..." Deuteronomy 12:17. Read chapter 11:14. "And thou shalt eat before Yahweh thy Elohim...the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thy oil..." Deuteronomy 14:23; Deuteronomy 7:13. The first fruits, the "best of the wine," belonged to the priests. Numbers 18:12. This is the kind of wine that Judah brought the priests in 2 Chronicles 31:4-6. This same wine was brought to the priests in Nehemiah 10:37-39; 13:5, 12. This is the kind of wine that was to be restored to the poor in Nehemiah 5:11. Also, the original word translated wine some 125 times in the Old Scriptures means, "what is pressed out, grape juice." According to Young's Concordance, it can be either fermented or unfermented juice. Several places the original word for "wine" means "a thick sticky (sometimes mixed) **syrup**." (Young's Concordance, Article "Wine.") Isaiah 27:2; Ezra 6:9; Ezra 7:22; Daniel 5:1, 2, 4, 23. Also Young's Concordance defines the word used 28 times in the New Scriptures as "wine or grape juice." (Samples--Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; John 2:3, 9, 10; 4:46; Romans 14:21; 1 Timothy 5:23.) All these facts should prove conclusively that the word "wine," as used in the many Bible texts, does sometimes refer directly to the pure grape juice, that some texts refer to strong wine, or fermented juice, while some texts using the word "wine" may refer to either. Since Yahweh so pointedly condemns strong drink as dangerous both morally and physically and refers to "wine" in the same texts, this can only refer to strong wine used as a beverage, in social drinking, etc. Then when He speaks of the "wine" that is a "blessing" and cheers Yahweh and man, we can be sure He is **not** speaking of strong wine, but the pure blood of the grape. There are **two wines** spoken of in the Bible.

Fruit of the Vine at the Master's Supper

Now the question is raised about the "fruit of the vine" used at the institution of the Master's Supper by the Master Yahshua as recorded in Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-20; Mark 14:25. It will be noted that the word, "wine" is **not** used here. It says "fruit of the vine." There is absolutely **no proof** here that "the cup" contained wine--strong wine. If we take the inspired record as it is, the fruit of the vine could be pure grape juice, which would more fittingly represent the undefiled life of the Master Yahshua--his blood that was shed for us. Fermentation **destroys** the natural sugar in the juice and turns it into poison alcohol. No wine, or fruit of the vine was used in the **original** passover service, nor for years afterwards. It was added later and carried on by tradition and **not** divine commandment. We must remember the divine rule for the Levites and Priests under the Old Covenant. They were to **abstain** from wine and other strong drink entirely when ministering in their services for Yahweh. (Read again Leviticus 10:9, 10.) Yahshua was most certainly, as **our High Priest**, about to offer the one true sacrifice for sins on that night that He ate the Passover with His disciples and instituted the **memorial** of His death. Hebrews 9:9-12; Luke 22:15-22. He was the **perfect** example of kodeshness. Did He set aside Yahweh's divine rule about priests using strong drink at this important time in His

priestly ministry and use strong wine to represent His blood of the New Testament? Did He condone the use of strong drink at the Passover service? No, I am sure that He did **not**. He said "Fruit of the vine" for a purpose, lest we be misled.

The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread was one of the three times in the year that the Israelite men were to appear before Yahweh at Jerusalem. It was a **busy** time for the priest and Levites. (Read Numbers 28:16-24; Deuteronomy 16:1-16.) According to the divine rule the Priests could hardly drink strong wine at the Passover, or any of the three feasts. Numbers 28 and 29 give the regular sacrifices required at each feast, besides the many special offerings by the multitude of Israelites who had gathered for these feasts before Yahweh. There is no place for Yahweh's priests to drink any strong wine, nor for any others to use it as a beverage at their meals. With these facts before us, it should be plain that it was not strong wine at that Passover service in Luke 22.

Drink Offerings

The drink offerings were **not** offered as a type of Yahshua's blood. The priests did use "strong wine" in that meat and drink offering to Yahweh, a sacrifice made with fire, "for a sweet savour." The priests did **not** drink this offering. It was part of a burnt offering to Yahweh. (Read Numbers 28:8-14.) It takes blood to atone for sin, and neither the "meat offering" nor the drink offering had any blood, so they were not typical of Yahshua's blood, but were a kind of thank offering for the material blessings of the Old Covenant. Strong wine was used for medical purposes, as we have shown, and with the alcoholic content it would burn better than the **pure blood** of the grape. However, the first fruits and tithe of the wine that Israel gave to the priests was the "fresh grape juice, rarely fermented wine," according to Strong's Concordance definition of the original word for "wine" in the following and other texts. Deuteronomy 18:3, 4; 14:23; 12:17.

Preserving the "Wine" or Grape Juice

In Acts 2:13 we have the accusation on the day of Pentecost, "These men are full of **new wine**." Strong's Concordance defines the original word used here and translated "wine" thus: "Sweet wine, i.e. must (fresh juice), but used of the more saccharine (and therefore highly inebriating) fermented wine:--new wine." From the New Bible Dictionary, by J. D. Douglas, Article "Wine" Page 1332 on Acts 2:13, "the vintage of the current year had **not** come around, but there were means of keeping wine **sweet** all the year round."

If they could preserve this type of "wine" the year around, they could also preserve the grape juice. The fact that the Jews spake of drinking **new wine** at Pentecost, shows that it could be kept during those months since harvest. They had knowledge of how to preserve their fruits and juices. There are ways now and there were ways in Bible times too. For a bit of information, let us read from the Encyclopedia Britannica, New Werner Edition, Article

"Fermentation." "Such juice, as is well known, when recently prepared, forms an intense sweet yellowish fluid, which, if not so by nature, may be rendered perfectly limpid grape juice, when left to itself, after being thus clarified, may remain unchanged for an indefinite time, but when mixed with ever so little of unfiltered juice, it is sure...to undergo change..." Another way of preserving is given. "Grape juice which has been strengthened by evaporation or addition of sugar from without, does not ferment, when the ratio of water to sugar falls below a certain limit value." Here are **two** easy and possible ways of preserving the grape juices, and could have been used by those ancient people. "Perfectly pure grape juice does **not ferment**, unless the process has been started by at least temporary contact with ordinary **air**. The juice thus produced and preserved remained **unchanged**..." Those ancient peoples of Israel doubtless knew how to preserve that pure blood of the grape, also called "wine" in those times, and turn the tithe over to the priests as Yahweh commanded.

Ordinary grape juice was **not** leavening, but "ordinary vinous fermentation always involves the **formation of yeast**." (British Encyclopedia, Article "Fermentation.") The yeast was formed in the fermentation. The wine after fermentation would rate the same as the bread after it was leavened and baked.

Other Texts Explained

Yahshua turned the water into wine at the wedding feast in John 2:1-11. "This beginning of miracles did Yahshua in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory..." verse 11. Was this strong wine, as some claim? If so, was Yahshua a party of drunken revelry? How much glory would He or Yahweh get out of such a feast? The men had "well drunk" before Yahshua made the better wine to finish the feast. It doesn't take but a little reasoning to see the results if this was **strong wine**. All would be intoxicated to some degree, and some drunken, not to mention the unholy conversations and conduct that would follow. Do not accuse my Savior of such participation. Brethren, we must again face the fact that this wine was the pure blood of the grape.

What about the "strong drink" of Deuteronomy 14:26? This refers to selling the tithe, if they lived far from the place where they were to go for the three feasts each year, and they were to buy, or replace it after arrival. The Feast of Tabernacles being the great after-harvest feast before Yahweh was no doubt the time referred to here. The priests and Levites were to share those things they brought--they could eat of them during their stay at the appointed place --during the feast, but the tithe in the main belonged to the priests, etc. Deuteronomy 12:6, 7, 17; Numbers 18:20, 21, 24. Does Deuteronomy 14:26 teach that those Israelites were to drink "strong drink" as a beverage during that Feast of Tabernacles? No, it does **not** teach such a doctrine. First, let us consider the divine rule for the priests again in Leviticus 10:9, 10. Next, look over the sacrifices to be offered each day during that feast. Numbers 29:12-40. Those priests and Levites so occupied in those daily and special sacrifices were forbidden to drink **any** strong drink during that time at least, and yet they were to rejoice with them in this feast. Deuteronomy 12:17-19.

We have already shown that **strong wine** was used only for medical purposes, and for the drink offering that was offered many times during the year. The "strong drink" of Deuteronomy 14:26 could only be used in one or the other, or both uses, but **not** for a beverage during the feast. All Scriptures harmonize, and there is **no** contradiction. Brethren, let us rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Conclusion

We have shown that the word "wine" is used in **two** senses in the Bible. There are **two** wines spoken of in the Bible. The one, sometimes called "strong wine," is strictly condemned as a beverage, as a mocker, as raging. We are told not to indulge in it because it is poison to us physically and morally. It is a curse in America and many other nations today--a stumbling block to millions. No Believer should use it for a beverage. (Read again Romans 14:21.)

There is another "wine" in the Bible, the "pure blood of the grape" that cheers Yahweh and man--a blessing and not a curse. This is the wine that holy men of old drank. This is the wine that Yahshua made at Cana. This is the fruit of the vine at the Master's Supper.

By Frank M. Walker
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