An Offering of Wine:

An Introductory exploration of the role of wine in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Judaism through the examination of the semantics of some keywords.

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Abstract

The significance of wine to the residents of ancient Palestine is demonstrated by the large number of archaeological sites where a wine making installation has been identified and the role wine plays in the Hebrew Bible, the major work of literature to survive from ancient Palestine.

The role of wine in the Hebrew Bible has generated a large volume of material, although this has been partly driven by the ongoing temperance debate. Despite this there has been little or no thorough research as to which words and thus passages should be investigated to comprehensively examine wine in the Hebrew Bible. In addition those studies which do exist do not demonstrate any in-depth knowledge of wine production and its implications in translating and interpreting the Hebrew Bible. This work aims to address these two issues.

The origin of wine demonstrates that wine was known in Palestine during the Biblical period. Agriculture and Diet provide information as to the value and context of wine production. Semantic tools detail the linguistic information for examination of the ancient Hebrew words related to wine. The styles and production methods of wine and other alcoholic beverages in the ancient world set limits for the identification of beverages. All other information must be considered in the light of these four areas.

The core of this work is an examination of the key words related to wine: the likely members of the ancient Hebrew semantic field of wine (ךִית, שׁבַי, חֵרֵד), the key words for grape, vine and vineyard (ךִית, שׁבַי, חֵרֵד); and three words identified as installations used in wine production (ךִית, שׁבַי, חֵרֵד). It is only after such detailed examination that any in-depth study of wine in the Hebrew Bible should be considered.