

ALCOHOL WITHIN THE SCRIPTURES

—This Study is not For or Against Alcohol Consumption—

General Information and Meaning of things:

Alcohol:

Chemically, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines alcohol “as ethanol (CH₃CH₂OH). It is a toxic, psychoactive substance that the body primarily breaks down in the liver using specialized enzymes.”¹“Drinking heavily puts people at risk for many adverse health consequences, including alcohol use disorder, liver damage, and various cancers.”²

Dictionaries Sources:

- The primary Old Testament word for wine is **yayin**. “yayin, yah'-yin, from an unused root mean to *effervesce*; **wine** (as fermented); by impl. *intoxication*:--banqueting, wine, wine(-bibber).³
- “[King James Version] Translation Breakdown: Translated as ‘wine’ (138 times), ‘banqueting’ (1 time), and ‘winebibbers’ (1 time, when combined with Hebrew root H5433).⁴
- “Strong's Number G3631 matches the Greek *οἶνος* (**oinos**), which occurs 34 times in 26 verses in the MGNT Greek.” [**wine**] New Testament.
- **Shekar** functions as a broader, generic category for other fermented alcoholic beverages.⁶ “*Shekar* “an intoxicant, i.e. intensely alcoholic liquor—strong drink + drunkard strong wine.”⁷ Scholar debate on the description of *shekar* stating that it is strong wine. NASB describes it as a stronger than wine “*Then the drink offering with it shall be a fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the Holy Place pour out a drink offering of strong drink to the Lord.*”⁸“The eminent Bible scholar, Jacob Milgrom (1923-2010) identifies shekhar with

1. 1. Alcohol Metabolism: An Overview," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, accessed June 25, 2026, nih.gov. 1st par. Opening page.

2. 2. "Alcohol Metabolism."

3. James Strong, The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), s.v. "yayin," Hebrew entry 3196.]

4. Bible Tools, accessed June 25, 2026,"

<https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/H3196/yayin.htm>.

5. "Strong's G3631 - oinos," Blue Letter Bible, accessed June 25, 2026,

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3631/nkjv/mgnt/0-1/>.

6. Elaine Goodfriend, “Shekhar: Is it Wine or Beer?,” TheTorah.com, February 6, 2017,

<https://www.thetorah.com/article/shekhar-is-it-wine-or-beer>.

7. Strong, Dictionary of Bible Words, s.v. “*shekar*.” H7941

8. Numbers 28:7 (New American Standard Bible).

- beer. Milgrom points out that shekhar's exact cognate in Akkadian, shikru or shikaru, refer to beer, and that beer appears in ritual texts throughout the ancient Near East.[9] For Milgrom, Numbers 28:7 "clearly indicates that shekar can stand alone, independent of wine," and concludes that,[T]he standard Temple libation is of beer, and the rendering "ale"[10] is also possible. In either case, the liquid must be distinguished from ordinary wine."⁹ Strong's Strong's Hebrew number H7943 refers to the word שִׁכָּרוֹן (shikkârôwn), which translates directly to intoxication or drunkenness."¹⁰
- In the New Testament "By the time of the New Testament, Jewish and Greco-Roman practice had changed. Historical sources tell us that wine was commonly mixed with water before drinking. Amphorae stored undiluted wine, but at meals it was poured into mixing bowls (kraters) and diluted before serving. Writers such as Homer, Pliny, Aristophanes, and Athenaeus record ratios ranging from 20:1 to 2:1 water to wine. To drink wine "unmixed" was considered barbaric, associated with drunkenness and lack of self-control."¹¹
 "Well alcohol does have a strong anti-bacterial effect, and adding water to wine was a way to create more drink as there was very little clean drinking water. During the fermentation process many microbes die, eventually the yeast too dies in the anaerobic environment. I think adding water to wine and letting the two mix for a while would kill a significant percentage of the microbes, perhaps enough to make a safer drink."¹²

9. Goodfriend, "Shekhar: Is it Wine or Beer?"

10. Strong, Dictionary of Bible Words, s.v. "shikkarown." H7943 [Known as drunkenness].

11. Eric Gagnon, "Was Wine Mixed with Water in Bible Times?," Adorn the Gospel, March 12, 2024, <https://adornthegospel.com/2024/03/12/was-wine-mixed-with-water-in-bible-times/>.

12. J. C. Salomon, "Why Did Greeks and Romans Dilute Their Wine?," History Stack Exchange, February 11, 2013, <https://history.stackexchange.com/questions/7634/why-did-greeks-and-romans-dilute-their-wine>.

Breaking Down a Drink Content:

“Regular Beer: 12 ounces at about 5% alcohol by volume (ABV).



Malt Liquor: 8 to 9 ounces at about 7% ABV. alcohol



Table Wine 5 fl. oz about 12%— fortified wine 3-4oz about 17% alcohol usually mix with brady



Cordial, liqueur, or aperitif 2-3oz 12% about 24% alcohol



Brandy or Cognac 1.5 oz about 40% alcohol



Distilled Spirits (whiskey, rum, tequila, vodka, gin, etc. 1.5oz about 40% 80%-proof



Each drink shown above represent one U.S. standard drink and has an equivalent amount (0.6 fluid ounces) of "pure" ethanol.”¹³

- **Moderate Drinking:** Low-risk patterns. This is defined as 1 drink or less per day for women, and 2 drinks or less per day for men.
- **Binge Drinking:** A pattern of drinking that elevates Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) to 0.08% or higher. For most adults, this is 4 or more drinks within 2 hours for women, and 5 or more drinks within 2 hours for men.
- **Heavy Alcohol Use:** Exceeding moderate guidelines, classified as more than 3 drinks on any day or more than 7 drinks per week for women, and more than 4 drinks on any day or 14 drinks per week for men.¹⁴

“Evidence-based survey of the elimination rates of ethanol from blood with applications in forensic casework—The comprehensive physiological range of ethanol elimination established in this survey is 10 to 35 mg/100mL/h (or 0.010 to 0.035 g% per hour).”¹⁵
There is an approximate 1 to 2 hours for a healthy liver to eliminate 12oz beer. On average people tend to drink two 12oz beers in 1 hour period. The New York State “Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) is between 0.05% and 0.07% and is considered (Driving While Ability Impaired), first offense traffic violation and there is pending a legislation in the NY Senate, which will convert it to a (full criminal misdemeanor charge in New York.”¹⁶

13. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, "The Basics: Defining How Much Alcohol Is Too Much," Core Resource on Alcohol, last modified June 2021, nih.gov.

https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/sites/default/files/styles/image_small_180w/public/graphic_cordial_2021_full.jpg?itok=h-GewZoe, Topic 1.

14. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, "The Basics.

15. A. Wayne Jones, "Evidence-Based Survey of the Elimination Rates of Ethanol from Blood with Applications in Forensic Casework," *Forensic Science International* 200, no. 1-3 (July 2010): 1–20, doi.org. 1-20.

16. New York State Senate, "Legislators, NYC DOT, Advocates Push to Lower the Legal Blood Alcohol Limit in NY State from .08 to .05," press release, February 8, 2023, <https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/john-c-liu/legislators-nyc-dot-advocates-push-lower-legal-blood>.

“The standard "regular" law for Driving While Intoxicated(DWI) across the United States is the "Per Se" DWI law, which makes it strictly illegal to operate a motor vehicle with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.08% or higher.”¹⁷

The central thesis of this study is that a deficiency in spiritual and intellectual vigilance corrupts moral judgment, inducing a state of ethical intoxication that inevitably precipitates adversarial encounters with judicial authorities. From a theological perspective, this state mirrors or manifests as physical drunkenness, which Sacred Scripture explicitly condemns as a moral transgression against divine law. The gravity of this matter demonstrates that an unrepentant lifestyle of drunkenness—or a state of acute intoxication caught unexpectedly by death or the Rapture of the Church, and thus unmitigated by forgiveness—forfeits inheritance of the Kingdom of God(1 Corinthians 6:9-10). This stricture, however, does not condemn past or present transgressions that have been fully expiated by the blood of Jesus.

What, then, do the Scriptures say directly about alcohol, given that Jesus drank wine with His disciples and the Apostle Paul recommended wine to Timothy for his frequent ailments?

We begin by examining the scriptural accounts, Jesus’ first miracle was at a wedding converting water into wine, Jesus demonstrates that He was not against the partaking of wine(John 2:1-11). Jesus participated with the tax collectors and sinners at a banquet hosted by Levi, a wealthy man (Luke 5:29–30). In first-century Jewish culture, it was customary to celebrate such social events with wine. In the subsequent chapters of Luke, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of being a glutton and a drunkard, using His table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners as the basis for their charge (Lk 7:34). In Roman and Greek era, “At a banquet or a meal, it was standard practice to mix a small amount of wine into a larger volume of water. The alcohol in the wine helped purify the water and eliminate harmful bacteria, while the fruit flavors masked its unpleasant, stagnant taste.”¹⁸ Although the alcohol content was significantly lower than that of modern beverages, it is vital to acknowledge that it remained an intoxicating substance if consumed without proper moderation.

Jesus drank wine with His disciples at the Last Supper for the last time (Luke 22:17–18). Beyond this event, three additional examples illustrate His engagement with wine imagery: the teaching on new wine in old wineskins (Luke 5:37–39), the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matthew 21:33–46), and His discourse on the True Vine (John 15:1–8). Although these passages directly involve or reference wine, Scripture affirms that Jesus was entirely without sin (Hebrews 4:15). One has to determine that because He exercised perfect mastery over His physical intake, Jesus never succumbed to drunkenness. In 1 Timothy 5:23, the Apostle Paul advises Timothy to no longer drink water exclusively, but to use a little wine for the sake of his stomach and frequent ailments.

17. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 0.08 BAC Sanction, Fact Sheet (Washington, DC: NHTSA, June 2001), [nhtsa.gov](https://www.nhtsa.gov).

18. See footnote (12)

We will now explore Scriptural Events that offer Relevant Insights for our Modern Society:

Dysfunction within the family. Noah most likely non-intended got drunk and out of that came **family dispute**(Genesis 9:20–27).

Lot's daughters out of **desperation**intoxicate their father and commit **incest** (Genesis 19:30–38).

Jacob, known **to deceive**, induced his father's intoxication and received a gift not intended(Genesis 27:25).

The Marriage Feast of Jacob where he is **deceived** (Genesis 29:22).

Forfeit requirements at a high cost. God commands Aaron and the priests: "Drink no wine or strong drink... when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die." The Tragedy of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1–9).

The Nazarite Vow (Numbers 6:1–4), other may have to **skip due to responsibilities**.

Hannah Accused of Drunkenness (1 Samuel 1:12–15):**Appearance act**(often seen in recovery).

Nabal's Demise (1 Samuel 25:36–37):**Neglect, associated with health**.

David Schemes Against Uriah (2 Samuel 11:13): Intentionally pursuing others intoxication by deception, **like obtaining sensual sexual benefits, date rape**.

The Death of King Elah (1 Kings 16:9–10):**Intoxicated and then murdered, replacement**.

Ben-Hadad's Military Blunder (1 Kings 20:16–21)**Incapacities to respond to danger**.

Ahasuerus's 180-Day Festival (Esther 1:5–10):**Intoxicated and seeking sexual pleasures**.

Queen Esther's Banquets (Esther 5–7):**Intoxication produces erratically behavior**.

Samson's Mother (Judges 13:4):**Abstinence during pregnancy to protect the unborn child from harmful exposure**.

Proverbs 20:1: States that wine is a mocker and beer is a brawler:**foolish and aggressive behavior**.

Proverbs 23:21: Warns that drunkards and gluttons will come to poverty: **uncontrolled indulgence.**

Proverbs 23:29-32: The passage depicts wine appealing to the senses, thereby creating a false illusion of peace and pleasure.

Proverbs 23:35: It swaps '**numbness to pain**' for '**insensibility to physical pain**' and introduces '**tragic stupor.**'

Proverbs 31:4-5: "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they **drink and forget what has been decreed...**"

Isaiah 5:11: "Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink..." This is referred **to alcoholism behavior.**

Isaiah 28:7: Describes priests and prophets who stagger from beer: **incapacitated to function their duties and judgment.**

The Rechabites' Faithfulness (Jeremiah 35): **The marginalize embarrass the ones who were to give the best examples.**

Luke 21:34: Jesus warns, "Watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life." **Unexpected results that are tragic.**

1 Corinthians 6:9-10: **the drunkards** who will **not inherit the kingdom of God**, emphasizing a lifestyle of unrighteousness.

1 Corinthians 5:11: Directs the **church not to associate with the behaviors of anyone claiming to be a believer who is a "drunkard."**

Abuse of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20–21): **unrighteous festivities.**

Galatians 5:21: Identifies "**drunkenness**" as a work of the flesh.

1 Peter 4:3: Peter notes that believers have spent enough time in the past living in "sensuality, passions, **drunkenness**, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless: **Past lifestyle.**

POSITIVE BENEFITS

Psalms 104:14-15: God provided "wine to **gladden the heart** of man[woman]." When used in moderation, Scripture often describes wine as a symbol of joy, God's abundance, and agricultural blessing.

Luke 1:15: Announcing the birth of John the Baptist, the angel: **Keeping the vows.**

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:34): wine turns into medicine for physical wounds.

Romans 13:13: Commands believers to "walk properly as in the daytime: Moderation or abstinence.

Romans 14:21: Outlines a principle of love over personal freedom: Sacrifice over understood rights.

1 Corinthians 6:11 The Transformation in recovery.

1 Corinthians 6:12: "'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything."

1 Corinthians 8:13: Reaffirms that causing a fellow believer with a weaker conscience to sin is a sin against Christ.

Ephesians 5:18: Gives a direct operational contrast: Be filled with the Spirit of God and not of wine.

Colossians 2:16: Protects personal liberty: "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink" Do not use your liberty and rights for personal gains. The New Testament emphasizes that even if drinking is permitted, a believer must prioritize the spiritual well-being of others.

1 Timothy 3:3 (also Titus 1:7): Dully responsibilities.

Ultimately, believers must not abuse their Christian liberty or personal rights to indulge in behavior that will, in the long run, cause physical, emotional, and relational harm. To all, when moderation is surrendered, one forfeits the privilege of enjoying these type of activities that bring that kind of personal satisfaction. Under compromised conditions, alcohol consumption inevitably becomes a destructive force in a person's life. However, practicing absolute temperance over one's intake significantly reduces the risk of intoxication. Consequently, I advised my clients in addiction recovery that total avoidance remains the most effective remedy; after all, what the body does not consume, will not affect.

