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Do Not Get Drunk with Wine
5: 18a

Do not get drunk with wine DIG: How does being controlled by the Ruach Ha'Kodesh compare to, and contradict, being controlled by alcohol? What was the alcohol content during biblical times? What is the alcohol content of beer, wine, or hard liquor today? What does that mean to you? Where does your freedom in Messiah end? Why?

REFLECT: Do you drink alcoholic beverages? Why? Did your parents drink? Are you pressured to drink socially? Are you expected to drink as part of your work environment? Do you find yourself drinking to relieve stress? Do you drink alone? Do you hide your drinking from others? Do you have children? Do you drink in front of your children? Why?

The Bible does not prohibit drinking wine, it prohibits getting drunk.

This verse is one of the most crucial texts relating to the life of a believer, to walking **in a manner worthy of the calling with which** we **have been called (4:1).** Being controlled by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** is absolutely essential for living a godly life by **God's** standards. **ADONAI's** ways cannot be properly understood or faithfully followed apart from the working of **the Spirit** in the life of a believer.



But before **the Rabbi** commanded us to **be filled with the Spirit** and gave the characteristics of **the Spirit-filled** life (**to see link click Bt – Be Filled with the Ruach**), **he** first gave a contrasting and negative command: **Do not get drunk with wine** (Greek: *oinos*)**, because it makes you lose control (5:18a). Getting drunk** with **wine** not only is a hindrance to, but a counterfeit of, being filled with **the Ruach**. In light of **the apostle's** preceding contrasts between **light** and **darkness** (see **Bq – Living in Light**), and between **wisdom** and **foolishness** (see **Br – Walking in Wisdom**), **his** point here is that **getting drunk** is a mark of **darkness** and **foolishness** and that being **filled with the Spirit** is the source of a believer's ability to **walk** in **light** and **wisdom**.

There have been few periods of church history in which **the drinking** of alcoholic beverages has not been an issue of disagreement and debate. Messianic congregations and churches in our own day have widely differing views on the subject. Denominations and missions' organizations sometimes have differing views even within their constituencies from country to country. We must be clear that **drinking** or not **drinking** is not in itself a mark, and certainly not a measure, of spirituality. Spirituality is determined by what we are inside, of which what we do on the outside is merely a reflection.[215]

Scripture always condemns drunkenness: Both the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah unequivocally condemn **drunkenness.** Scripture shows **it** in its full ugliness and tragedy, as always being associated with immorality, termination, unrestrained behavior, wild, reckless behavior, and every other form of corrupt living **(Genesis 9:20-27, 19:23-29; First Kings 20:16-34, Dan'el 5;** an**d First Corinthians 5:11, 6:9-10, 11:27-30; First Thessalonians 5:6-8; Romans 13:13; First Peter 4:3)**. The book of **Proverbs** has many warnings about **drinking (20:1, 23:19-21, 32-33** and **35)**. **It** is one of the sinful deeds of the flesh that are in opposition to the righteous fruit of **the Ruach HaKodesh (Galatians 5:19-23). Drunkenness** is first of all a sin. It develops attendant disease as it ravages the mind and body, but it is basically a sin, a manifestation of depravity. So, it must be confessed and dealt with as a sin.

The Roman pantheon in **Ephesus** caused the believers living there no small amount of trouble regarding **getting drunk**. The god known as either Zeus to the Greeks or Jupiter to the Romans was the center of a mystical religious system. His son, Dionysius, had a religion consisting of wild music, frenzied dancing, sexual perversion, bodily mutilation, eating raw flesh of sacrificial animals, and drunkenness. Dionysius became known as the god of wine, the intoxicating **drink**

that was integral to the immoral religion that centered around him. This was exactly the type of pagan "worship" with which **the Ephesians** were well acquainted and in which many believers had once been involved. Here, in **Ephesians 5:18a**, **Rabbi Sha'ul** was therefore not simply making a moral, but also a theological, contrast. **He** was not only speaking of the moral and social evils of **drunkenness**, but of the spiritually perverted use of **drunkenness** as a means of worship.

Scripture sometimes commends drinking: The Bible does not prohibit **drinking wine**; it prohibits **getting drunk**. **Wine** is a symbol of joy in the Jewish community. **Drink offerings** of **wine** accompanied many of the Levitical sacrifices **(Exodus 29:40-41, 30:9; Leviticus 23:13, 18** and **37; Numbers 15:26, 6:15-20, 15:5-10** and **24,** and **28:7-10, 14-15, 24, 31,** and **29:6).** There was a royal winery in Herod's Temple for that purpose. **The psalmist** spoke of **wine which makes man's heart glad (Psalm 104:15)** and, the writer of **Proverbs** advised giving **strong drink to him who is perishing and wine to him whose life is bitter (Proverb 31:6). Paul** advised **Timothy, "Stop drinking water; instead, use a little wine for the sake of your digestion and because of your frequent illnesses" (First Timothy 5:23). Yeshua's** first miracle was **turning water into wine** at **the wedding feast at Cana** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bq – Jesus Changes Water into Wine**)**. He** also spoke favorably of **wine** in the parable of the good Samaritan, who poured oil and **wine** on the wounds of the man he found beaten by the roadside (see **The Life of Christ Gw – The Parable of the Good Samaritan**).[216]

Is today's wine the same as that in Bible times? Naturally fermented wine has an alcoholic content of nine to eleven percent. Since the strongest wine normally **drunk** was mixed with three parts water to one part of **wine**, its alcohol content would range no higher than 2.25 to 2.75 percent. Today, regular beer has 5 percent alcohol content, five ounces of wine, typically has about 12 percent alcohol content, and an ounce-and-a-half of hard liquor has about 40 percent alcohol content. It is clear, then, that in order to **get drunk with wine** during Bible times, a person would have to **drink** a large quantity – as is suggested in other passages in the B'rit Chadashah. Therefore, the **wine** of the first century was not the same as the **wine** of our day. Even the more civilized pagans of Bible times would have considered **the drinking** of modern **wines** to be barbaric and irresponsible.

Will it stumble other believers? But like many other things, **wine** has the potential for either doing good or doing evil. **The Ephesian** believers had **the freedom in Messiah** to **drink**, just like **the Corinthian** believers had **the**

freedom in Messiah to eat meat sacrificed to idols. But the believers in both cities had a choice to make when eating or **drinking** socially or in public. And **the apostle's** admonition to **be careful that the exercise of your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble** is still important for us to remember today (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Bm – The Weaker Brother or Sister**). Our freedom **in Messiah** stops where it begins to harm others, especially fellow believers. **Paul** said: **Do not, by your eating** (or **drinking**) **habits, destroy** (Greek: *apollumi*, meaning *to cause pain or grief*) **someone for whom the Messiah died (Romans 14:15)!** We are to do those things **which make for peace and the building up of one another (Romans 4:19).**[217]

In deciding about whether or not to participate in any behavior that is doubtful, the following principles make a good checklist to follow:

Excess: Is the activity or habit necessary, or is it merely an extra that is not really important? Is it perhaps only an encumbrance that you should willingly give up. **So then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us, too, put aside every impediment – that is, the sin which easily hampers our forward movement – and keep running with endurance in the contest set before us (Hebrews 12:1).**

Expediency: Is what I want to do **helpful** or useful, or only desirable? **You say, "For me, everything is permitted." Maybe, but not everything is helpful (First Corinthians 6:12).**

Emulation: If we are doing what **Messiah** would do, our action is not only permissible, but good and right. **Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Yeshua did (First John 2:6).**

Example: Are we setting the right **example** for others, especially for **weaker brothers** and **sisters**? If we emulate **Messiah**, others will be able to emulate us, to follow our **example**. **Set the believers an example in your speech, behavior, love, trust and purity (First Timothy 4:12).**

Evangelism: Is my testimony going to be helped or hindered? Will unbelievers be drawn to **Messiah** or turned away from **Him** by what I am doing? Will it help me conduct myself **with wisdom towards outsiders, making the most of the opportunity (Colossians 4:5 NASB).**

Edification: Will I be built up and matured **in Messiah**; will I become spiritually stronger? **You say, "Everything is permitted." Maybe, but not everything is edifying (First Corinthians 10:23).**

Exaltation: Will **the Lord** be lifted up and glorified in what I do? **God's** glory and exaltation should be the supreme purpose behind everything we do. **Whatever you do, whether it's eating or drinking or anything else, do it all so as to bring glory to God (First Corinthians 10:31).**[218]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for the joy of knowing **You** as our Awesome **Father**! When I think of all **Your** magnificent attributes my heart is full of great joy. Meditating on **You** brings a deep and long-lasting joy, unlike the quick and temporary euphoria brought on by an alcoholic drink. There is such peace in our souls as we think about and meditate on **Your** great and **steadfast love**. **Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you (Psalms 63:3).** What a comfort and peace that **You** are always with me. **For God Himself has** said: **I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Your** grace and mercy caused **Messiah** to lovingly and willingly pay the penalty for our sins, so you can fill those who have faith in **You (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 4:5)** with **Messiah's righteousness (Second Corinthians 5:21). You** not only removed sin's eternal and terrible punishment from me, but how fantastic that **Messiah** is preparing a wonderful eternal home **(John 14:1-3)** full of peace and joy for all who love and worship **You** as their **Lord** and **Savior (Romans 10:9-10).***

*I choose to live my life filled with joy in **Messiah (Ephesians 1:10, John 17:21, 23).** Even when life is hard and lonely, I can rejoice for I know with absolute certainty that **You** have already won the last battle for control of earth **(Revelation 19:11-21, 20:9-10).** You will reign as King of Kings forever with **Your** children living with **You** in **Your** perfect heaven. **I also heard a loud voice from the throne,** saying: **Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He shall tabernacle among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and be their God. He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).** Heaven will be a place of true and lasting eternal joy! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection**.** Amen*