

In the very old Christian *Apocalypse of Baruch*,¹⁸²⁵ we are told that Noah after the Flood hesitated to plant the vine, “for Adam was destroyed by it”—the grape being the forbidden fruit in many old Adam accounts,¹⁸²⁶ so he prayed for forty days with tears streaming down (an Enoch motif), until an angel appeared to reassure him: “Arise Noah, plant the vine; its bitterness shall be changed to sweetness, and its curse shall be changed to a blessing. What it yields shall be the blood of God.”¹⁸²⁷

In this instance, however, the vine is better understood as a representation of the Tree of Life than the Tree of Knowledge.¹⁸²⁸ Cohen, having explored the “symbolic meaning of wine in ancient cultures,” concludes that Noah’s actions in this regard have been completely misunderstood, the result of “biblical scholarship’s failure” in explaining the meaning of the enigmatic incident.¹⁸²⁹ Summarizing Cohen’s view, Haynes writes:

Cohen explores Israelite and other traditions to elucidate a complex relationship between alcohol, fire, and sexuality. Drawing on this connection, he surmises that Noah’s drunkenness is indicative not of a deficiency in character but of a good-faith attempt to replenish the earth following the Flood. Indeed, Noah’s “determination to maintain his procreative ability at full strength resulted in drinking himself into a state of helpless intoxication.” How ironic, Cohen notes, that in acceding to the divine command to renew the earth’s population, Noah suffered the opprobrium of drunkenness. In Cohen’s view, he “deserves not censure but acclaim for having played so well the role of God’s devoted servant.”¹⁸³⁰

E-114 Brodie insightfully observes:

There is no moral condemnation of [Noah’s] drunkenness and nakedness—any more than of [Adam and Eve’s] nakedness. The trouble starts therefore (both in Eden and here) not with the nakedness but with an intrusive visitor—the serpent... and now Ham...

Then the intrusive visitors, the serpent and Ham, spoke to others, enticing them. But the reactions are diverse. While the tree’s looks caused the couple to give way to the serpent, the two brothers, Shem and Japheth, resisted Ham/Canaan and his invitation to look...

As in the Garden, so here the emphasis on nakedness is followed quickly by judgment.¹⁸³¹

Though a variety of speculations have arisen to explain the severity of the condemnation received by Ham/Canaan, “there is no clear evidence that Ham actually did anything other than see the nakedness of his uncovered father.”¹⁸³² So concludes Hamilton:

We are on much safer ground in limiting Ham’s transgression simply to observing the exposure of the genitalia and failing to cover his naked father. Otherwise, the two brothers’ act of covering their father’s nakedness becomes incomprehensible. We deliberately entitled this section “The Nakedness of Noah” rather than “The Drunkenness of Noah.” Noah’s drunkenness is only circumstantial to his nakedness. It is Noah’s nudity, not his inebriated state, which Ham saw, and then passed on to his brothers. His sin would have been equally reprehensible had his father been sober.¹⁸³³

Nibley cites ancient accounts arguing that Ham’s disregard for this father was part of an effort to steal Noah’s priesthood garment and authority¹⁸³⁴—a further parallel to Satan’s attempts in the Garden of Eden. Because of the faithfulness of Shem and Japheth, they received the reward of special garments themselves.¹⁸³⁵ They had entered their father’s presence facing backward as they restored his covering.

1825 H. E. Gaylord, Jr., *3 Baruch*, 4:13-15 (Greek), pp. 667, 669.

1826 E.g., L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:168; M. Maher, *Pseudo-Jonathan*, 9:20, p. 45; H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 308. See *Commentary* 3:9-i, p. 168.

1827 H. W. Nibley, *Abraham 2000*, pp. 155-156. See H. E. Gaylord, Jr., *3 Baruch*, 4:15 (Greek), p. 669.

1828 H. W. Nibley, *Since*, p. 189, 191-192; H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:135, 137; E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 10:200. The fruit of the Tree of Life is described as being like a “white grape” in M. Barker, *Joseph Smith*, p. 76; H.-G. Bethge, *et al.*, *Origin*, 110:15-16, p. 179; R. Milstein, *Stories and Illustrations*, p. 107; R. Murray, *Symbols*, pp. 95-130; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 32:4, p. 320. See *Commentary* 3:9-g, p. 163.

1829 S. R. Haynes, *Curse*, p. 188.

1830 *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189. See H. H. Cohen, *Drunkenness*, pp. 8, 12.

1831 T. L. Brodie, *Dialogue*, p. 192.

1832 Ross in J. M. Boice, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 397-398.

1833 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 323.

1834 H. W. Nibley, *Lehi 1988*, pp. 168-170; H. W. Nibley, *What*, p. 366; H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*, pp. 128-131; H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 309.

1835 H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*, p. 129; Rashi, *Genesis Commentary*, 9:23, 1:97; cf. Numbers 15:37-41, J. Neusner,