

# A Biblical Comparison of Noah's Drunkenness and Adam and Eve's Fall in the Book of Genesis

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## INTRODUCTION

The book of Genesis is known as the book of origins. It's often referred to as one of the five books of Moses or the Pentateuch. Scholars have written many articles and essays about the book of Genesis. While reading the book of Genesis, the researcher discovered some similarities or relationships between Adam and Eve's fall and the story of the drunkenness of Noah. As will be seen in this study, this comparative study is crucial in understanding more about and the entire narrative of the Torah. This includes the story of the descendants of Shem and their conflict with the children of Ham. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to derive lessons from Noah's drunkenness and Adam and Eves fall by closely looking into their similarities and differences.

## DEFINITION: VIOLATION OF GOD'S LAWAS IN ADAM & EVE AND NOAH

Violation of God's law can be described in multiple ways, e.g., firstly, as an offence, a breaking of a moral or legal code. Secondly, the word "violation" is defined as follows: "a sin as an offence, a violation as lawbreaking, and sinfulness as a crime".<sup>[1]</sup> The above expressions clarify how the sins committed by these three can be viewed as similar and can further be interpreted as meaning, a violation of God's law. 1 John 3:4-6 rightly puts it by the words, "sin is a violation of God's Law", and that, "Whosoever committeth sin trans gresseth also the law": (KJV)

So, the first point of similarity, both stories (Adam and Eve, and that of Noah) tell of the first act of violation. When God created Adam and Eve everything, was in perfect harmony with God's plan (Genesis 1:31). God gave them instruction on what they should do and what they should not do (Genesis 2:16-17).

Adam and Eve knew that they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because in the day that they would eat they would die (Genesis 2:17). God's words were a straight forward warning that death would follow if they ate the forbidden fruit. "Giving these commands conveyed that humans are free moral agents: they could choose either to obey or to disobey God's commands. Obeying God would lead to an abundance and a possibility of endless life, but disobeying God would place them under the death penalty."<sup>[2]</sup>

Unfortunately, they did not obey God's command, they violated it as they ate from the fruit of the tree. Therefore, their capacity for obedience or our capacity for obedience plays a fundamental role in the divine plan of consummating creation.

## THE ENTRANCE OF SIN AND THE FRUIT OF THE EARTH

According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were created from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). One of their major tasks was to work the earth (Gen. 2:5) and Noah, on the other hand, is described as a farmer who planted a vineyard Gen. 9:20). Each narrative makes mention of the aspect of farming as their occupation.

Immediately after God created Adam, He placed him in a garden to live there and find provisions for his daily needs. As stated in Genesis 2:8 which reads, "now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in

Eden; and there he put man he had formed” (NIV). As Westerman observes, “the establishment of the garden for more closely parallels the provision of food for him (Gen. 1:29) than the creation of the plants (Gen. 1:12-13).”<sup>[3]</sup>

In her book, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White clarifies this temptation episode on Eve (Chapter 3). Firstly, that the Eden couple were “warned to be on guard against the devices of Satan”, secondly, how the tempter used an agent to trick them into sinning. According to this biblical narrative, Eve saw the fruit and got tempted; “the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Gen. 3:6). Looking closely at the text, one would conclude that the tempter’s words were so convincing that she saw no harm in eating of the fruit of this tree. This can be seen in the words, “pleasant to the sight, and good for food” (Gen. 3:9). With what transpired in the temptation episode, and the results, one is led to conclude that, in Eve’s eyes, this tree and its fruits were like all the other trees in the garden, and that there was nothing deadly or dangerous in eating of its fruit. As indicated in the text (Genesis 3:9), it was as pleasant to the sight as any of them. What happened to this couple can be rightly described in the words of Solomon when he says: “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death” (Prov. 14:12 NIV).

Eve saw “the fruit of the tree that it was good for food and pleasing to the eye” but at the end it led her to death.

On the other hand, like the creation story after Noah became a “man of the Soil, a farmer” he planted a vineyard (Gen. 9:20). Although, Noah did nothing wrong in planting a vineyard, his work with the soil and in the vineyard produced is what led to his fall. In other words, the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Genesis 3 and that of Noah’s vine each set the stage for the above’s fall to occur. In both the story of the Fall and the story of Noah’s drunkenness, the crisis arose when they partook of the fruit of the ground. Adam and Eve became sinners because they ate from the fruit of the soil and similarly, Noah became drunk, because he drank wine which was from the fruit of the soil. In some cases, sin can leave one feeling inadequate to stand before God just as what happened to Adam and Eve when they hid away from God (Genesis 3:8).

In both stories, that of the Fall of the Eden couple and that of Noah’s drunkenness, the sin of lust was highlighted as described in 1 John 2:16,

“For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world”.

As already indicated, the first couple (Eve and Adam), saw that the fruit was pleasing to the eye and they both ate. Similarly, when Noah saw that the wine was pleasing to the eye and drank (Genesis 9:21). On intoxicants, the wise Solomon warns as follows:

“do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights, and your mind will imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. They hit me, you will say, but I’m not hurt! They beat me, but I don’t feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?” (Prov. 23:31-35).

As in the above quotation, what happened with Noah, confirms what happens to anyone who uses intoxicating drinks, etc. The nakedness that resulted on this incident reveals the evils of alcoholic drinks where the victim is led to losing self-control and sense of being.

According to Matthew Henry’s Bible Commentary “The drunkenness of Noah is recorded in the Bible, with

that fairness which is found only in the Scripture, as a case and proof of human weakness and imperfection, even though he may have been surprised into the sin; and to show that the best of men cannot stand upright, unless they depend upon Divine grace, and are upheld thereby.”[\[4\]](#)

## THE NAKEDNESS AND THE SHAME

According to Genesis 3:7, when Adam and Eve took the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked”. The immediate consequences of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil are vividly disclosed. The text further shows that, as a result of eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, both felt ashamed and inadequate before the creator. This is seen in their attempt to hide from God, and covering themselves with leaves. The text further leaves one with the impression that instead of the “knowledge and wisdom” they expected to receive after eating of the fruit, they were overwhelmed with their nakedness and sense of inadequacy, etc. As a result, they hid themselves in the midst of the trees of the Garden (Gen. 3:8).

One source rightly asserts that, “Their guilt made them ashamed and fearful of being in God’s presence, and the clothing they had made failed to provide them sufficient confidence to meet God. There is further irony here; in striving to become like God they no longer desired to be in God’s presence.”[\[5\]](#)

According to the above quotation, when one falls into sin, the tendency is to flee and to shield oneself from those who are fellow and regular worshippers. Even if others have not known about it, his/her conscience alone accuses them. The tendency is to lurk or stay away. It could be one of the reasons why the Bible says: “The wicked flee though no one pursues them, but the righteous are as bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1 NIV).

Unlike Adam and Eve, when they realized that they were naked, they tried to hide away from God (Genesis 3:8-10). On the other hand, Noah, when he partook of his wine, as the text shows, he lost his senses, a situation which led to loss of self-control. According to Genesis 9:21 Noah lost control of both his physical and mental faculties. He could not hide his nakedness among the trees; he uncovered his nakedness within his tent (Gen. 9:21). He was not even aware when Ham saw his nudity. Noah’s intemperance brought shame on him. A man who was greatly respected, described as “righteous, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully before God” (Gen. 6:9). Unlike Adam who sought concealment from leaves of trees (Genesis 3:7), Noah, because of the condition of drunkenness he was in, he couldn’t cover his nakedness.

After reading the two episodes in Genesis 3 and 6-7, one would safely conclude that Ham’s role in this episode also is analogous to that of the serpent in Eden. When he saw his father’s nakedness, Ham went and told his brothers about it (Gen. 9:22). When Adam and Eve told God that they had hidden because they were naked, God asked, “who told you that you were naked? (Gen. 3:11). The source of this information ultimately turned out to be the serpent as the woman said: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:13 NIV).

Finally, in both episodes, the nakedness was covered by others. For instance, God Himself made coats of skin to cover Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21), while Noah was covered by Shem and Japheth (Gen 9:23). This gives the reader an idea that a man alone cannot save himself, but needs a saviour.

## CURSE ON ADAM’S FALL AND NOAH’S DRUNKENNESS

On Adam and Eve’s episode, one could conclude that it is human tendency to shift responsibility and look for a scapegoat or culprit. For example, when Adam was questioned by God where he was, and if he ate of the tree he was told not to eat, (Gen 3: 9-11), he shifted the blame to the woman by claiming that the woman God had given him had deceived him (Gen 3:12). On the other hand, the woman also blamed the serpent

when she said, it was the serpent that had deceived her (Gen 3:13).

Finally, before God outlined the punishment of Adam and Eve, the text observes, “God cursed the serpent and the ground. He did not curse the humans but inflicted pain in their efforts to sustain life, bearing children and producing food.”[\[6\]](#)

The serpent was cursed more than any of the other creatures (Gen 3:14). Though the serpent was to bear a greater curse than its fellows, the curse of sin rests on all the animal creation.

One source suggests, “This curse was for Adam’s benefit, as one means of impressing him with the far-reaching consequences of sin. It must have brought intense suffering to his own heart as he beheld these creatures, whose protector he was supposed to be, bearing the results of his sin.”[\[7\]](#)

From then his offspring were doomed to be subject to the woman’s offspring and a great promise was made in Christ as the deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan (Gen. 3:15).

In the narrative in Genesis 9 on the drunkenness, Noah curses Ham’s fourth son. Two questions can result from this occurrence. Firstly, why the severity of this curse? Secondly, why was the curse not pronounced on the perpetrator of evil himself?

On the side of Noah, some views have been expressed by some theologians as an attempt to interpret what this curse, uttered by Noah to Canaan, Ham’s youngest son on the outlined story of drunkenness of Noah could mean.

(i) The voyeurist position, which understands Ham’s deed as nothing more than looking, yet fails to explain the gravity of Ham’s sin or the cursing of Canaan.

(ii) The castration view which is defended by Rab who concludes that Ham must have castrated Noah. He cites examples from ancient Near Eastern mythology of a son castrating his father as part of an effort to usurp his authority.[\[8\]](#)

Thus, Rab’s view suffers from a lack of textual support.

(iii) The currently popular paternal-incest interpretation that Ham sexually abused Noah supported by the idiomatic meaning of the phrase “to see the nakedness of the father.”[\[9\]](#)

In almost every case of these Interpretations, the Pentateuchal narrative is seldom careless or arbitrary, and intertextual echoes are seldom coincidental. Noah curses Ham’s fourth son since Ham deprived Noah of a fourth son.

In contrast with the curse, the blessings upon Shem and Japheth are introduced: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, may Canaan be the slave of Shem” (Gen. 9:26). This would preserve the pious lineage through Shem and from his offspring the Messiah would come.

Ham’s offspring, too, became cursed and doomed to subjugation to the offspring of his brothers (Gen. 9:25). But the effective result of this curse is generally reminiscent of the consequences which Adam and Eve suffered because of their sin: his descendants were to forfeit their homeland, just as Adam and Eve had forfeited Eden.

## CONCLUSIÓN

The story of Adam and Eve’s fall as well as the story of Noah’s drunkenness are very rich in lessons. They

are among examples that show how the Bible “is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3:16-17). In its integrity, it exposes all mistakes and short-comings, even of the best and highly admired men.

On the other hand, the present a comparative analogy of Adam and Eve, and of Noah, has shown that when God says “you shall not”, i.e. people should obey. Such obedience, is a recognition of God’s right to rule us, the living, and an obligation to be ruled by Him. In other words, one should never allow any will of their own to be in contradiction to, or in competition with, the holy will of God.

The study can therefore, be concluded in the following points:

1. No matter how long one will have been converted into Christianity, or no matter how faithful one will have been to God, one has to be vigilant. As Jesus once said, the best man can fall if he does not watch and pray (Matthew 6:13). Jude confirms this when in verse 24, he asserts that, “only God is able to keep us from stumbling”.
2. The use of alcoholic beverages is a real danger to humanity, even to rulers, as it can be deceptive to them, and damaging to their body systems. (Proverbs 20: 1; 23: 29-35).
3. Alcoholic beverages abuse leads to other sins as indicated in Habakkuk 2: 15.
4. This article, has also shown that lack of diligence can cause even the great men of faith to fall, making the words of Paul true when he says, “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall” I Cor 10:12.
5. The study also notes that, sometimes alcoholic drink may even bring some kind of temporal joy, but then the tragedy usually follows. Such observations cited in this study, are an excellent indication that alcoholic drinks should be banned.
6. The first Eden couple, especially Eve thought that the eating from the forbidden fruit would bring them happiness, and make them wise. It was a real deception, and they realized too late that were wrong in partaking of the forbidden fruit.

One would then conclude that, Adam and Eve, as this article shows, sin entered the world through them (Genesis chapter 3) and that the way it entered humanity, can be the way it enters human life today. Also, that it was all a matter of choice for each of the two, the Eden couple. The episode reveals, therefore, that one is not compelled to sin, or to let the Lord to control and to guide their life. On the other hand, like in Eve and Adam’s situations where there was now a blame game, one would easily blame Noah’s son or the alcoholic drink for the latter’s fall. At the end, everyone had to bear their consequences.

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## FOOTNOTES

[1]<https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/transgression>, accessed 2 May 2023

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[9] See Robert A. J. Gagnon. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 63-71