

An Analysis of How an Alcoholic Drink Can Lead One to Temptation: A Study of Genesis 19:30-38

Jose Pereira Lemos

Adventist University of Africa

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.7011144>

Received: 05 November 2023; Revised: 17 November 2023; Accepted: 20 November 2023; Published: 22 December 2023

ABSTRACT

The Bible as God's word, in its complete integrity exposes the mistakes of even the greatest men of the Bible. Unlike human tendency in some of their publications, who at times hide the sins and weaknesses of those people who are usually admired. But this is not the case with the Bible. It does not hesitate to expose even in frightening terms the danger of intoxicating wine. Lot's drunkenness in Genesis 19 is the main focus of this write-up.

INTRODUCTION

This article highlights how an alcoholic drink can cause one to succumb to sin and temptation to the extent of violating even the simplest principles of life. It further highlights that even the giants of faith can fall. So, Lot's drunkenness and its effects are a good example, and take a centre stage in this article. The article, therefore, shows that even the righteous, if not careful can fall. A good example is Lot as recorded in 2 Peter 2:7, first in this text, he is referred to as a righteous man. Secondly he is delivered by God from Sodom because of his hate of, "...the filthy conduct of the wicked". However, what is tricky in this case is that the Bible does not make it clear whether Lot was a drunkard, or he faltered on that one day only. So, the article is an analysis of how a consumption of an alcoholic drink can result in a serious violation of God's law and general life principles whether done by self, or is caused by others on the one who drinks(offender).

BACKGROUND GENESIS 19:1-29

The key character, in this article, Lot is referred to as having been a righteous man. As already mentioned above, Peter describes him as a man who maintained integrity of character. He further describes him as one who was tormented every day by the detestable works of the inhabitants of Sodom (2 Pet. 2:7). With this, one can argue that he was righteous, meaning, he did what was right in the sight of God. One could further argue that because of the influence of his uncle Abraham, he hated a sinful life. His righteous character could be emanating from the fact that Lot was the son of Haran, brother of Abraham, and consequently, the nephew of the patriarch who accompanied him from Mesopotamia to Canaan, (Gen. 11:31; 12:5) and again from Canaan to Egypt, whence he went to Bethel (Gen. 13:1). His life with his uncle Abraham could have had a strong influence in making him who he became, a righteous man. Like his uncle, Lot acquired a lot of cattle (Genesis 13:5-18). Unfortunately, his shepherds quarreled and fought with of Abraham because of the scarcity of the land where their cattle were grazing. As a solution, Abraham proposed a separation as a means of avoiding future conflicts and disputes and in his generously invited Lot to make his choice on where to go and live with his clan. As recorded in the Bible, Lot, having lifted up his eyes, beheld the whole country around the Jordan, all watered with waters like the paradise of the Lord and like Egypt, and he made his seat in Sodom. He did not take into account the character of its inhabitants and the probable effect of their bad examples on his family and his followers. So, prior to the destruction of Sodom, God through His angels removed Lot from the wicked city. Unfortunately, in the process, after he, his wife and daughters had

left the cities, his wife, because of disobedience, became a pillar of salt. Lot was now left with his two daughters. Lot and his two daughters were the only people who survived when the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah happened. After this destruction, Lot and his daughters decided to reside in the city of Zoar. However, for some reason, Lot was afraid to continue to live there, and, together with his daughters, he decided to reside in a cave (Gen. 19:30).

LOT'S OFFSPRING CAUSE HIM TO SIN

Before one can share and discuss the fall of Lot, this article first highlights the blessing and curse of having children. Firstly, according to the Bible, children are a blessing that comes from the Lord. In multiple Bible narratives, children are sometimes referred to as “the fruit of the womb his reward” (Psal. 127: 3). It is not only the children who are a blessing but also the children’s children are “the crown to the aged” (Prov. 17: 6). Children were a protection for the old and without them the family name would disappear. That is why, i.e. in the patriarchal age, it was dishonorable for a woman to have no children and was even a mockery of quarrels.

For example; Sarah, who was barren, gave to Abraham her handmaid, Hagar, that Sarah should have children through the bondwoman (Gen. 16: 2-3). Another example is Hannah. Her sadness and bitterness of a woman who was unable to give birth to her husband was indescribable

(1 Samuel 1:16). Her response to the High Priest Eli reveals her grief clearly when she said, “Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

Therefore, being barren in those days was synonymous with being in sin, it was a shame (Gen. 30:22-23) and reproach (Luke 1:25). Obviously, in Israel having children was seen as a sign of God’s blessing. And when God wanted to bless a couple, He gave children (Abraham and Sarah – Gen 17:20, Anna – I Sam 1: 3-27, Elizabeth – Luc 1). The more children the person had, the more blessings they seemed to have (Psalm 127: 3-5).

Secondly, still in the Bible there are narratives on children who became a curse to their parents, e.g., in one biblical narrative, we find Hophni and Phineas who are denounced and criticized for engaging in illicit behavior in the temple, the way they handled sacrifices in the sanctuary, this included having sexual relations with women who served in the temple. According to biblical narratives, the situation was so bad that they were both referred to as sons of Belial, and corrupt (1 Samuel 2:12). According to 1 Samuel 2:30–34, “the Lord said that Eli and his house would be cut off from His favour” The downfall of Eli was because the behavior of his children. Also, a narrative in Genesis 4, where Cain decided to follow his own will and inclination to the extent of killing his brother.

Now, in line with this article, the daughters of Lot were desperate to preserve the descendants of their father, the firstborn then said to her younger sister: “Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. Let’s get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father.”(Gen. 19: 31-32). She, the first-born daughter of Lot, did not care for herself; but with the offspring of his father, after considering that the mother had died and that the father had no male descendant. Arguably, one would say that they were right, for preservation of Lot’s seed and posterity, but this was incest, fornication and a violation of God’s law which are detestable in the sight of God. Did they have the right to plan for God? (1 John 3:4-6)

The expression “as is the custom all over the earth” shows that at the time of Lot, the social rules of cohabitation were still being established, for example Cain and Seth had to have relationships with their sisters to have descendants, as Adam lived eight hundred years, after begetting seven and begat sons and daughters (Gen 5:4).

As did Tamar in bothering to provide offspring to her late husband, Er, when she lay with her father-in-law Judah; as already mentioned above, Lot's eldest daughter did the same. It was then that she presented a possible solution to her younger sister to intoxicate her father with wine to lie down with him (Gen 19:32). According to Bacchiocchi "the example of Lot's daughters in their use of wine to weaken sexual inhibitions has been followed by countless people throughout the centuries. This trend is so well accepted today that in most TV soap operas drinking precedes and predisposes people to illicit sexual relationships".^[1]

And, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary comments follows: "Lot had been able to protect his daughters from becoming victims of the Sodomites, but he had not been as successful in fixing the principles of right in their hearts. Observations shows that they are more to be pitied than blamed, for Lot himself shared in their sin. One would also safely conclude that he, the father was responsible for the circumstances that led up to it, as he was also for drinking the wine they set before him. The price Lot paid for a few years in Sodom was the loss of his entire family."^[2]

INCEST AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Another factor to consider is in chapter 19, of Genesis presents historical facts without any comment on God's approval or disapproval of Lot's double incest in the drunken state. But in later parts of the biblical record, the condemnation of drunkenness by God is clearly spelled out again and again. In the same way, in his Law given to Israel, God later clarified his prohibition of incest by saying:

"You must not come, none of you, any carnal relative who comes to him to discover nakedness ... You must not discover the nakedness of your father or the nakedness of your mother." (Lev 18: 6, 7).

In fact, the Lord declared, "Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother" (Deut. 27:22). The penalty for violating the law of incest was death. (Lev 18.29) Although Lot and his daughters were not under the Law, they were nevertheless aware of the impropriety of having intercourse with their own father, as they had shown him drunk.

According to Norman Geisler & Thomas Howe," There is no doubt that Lot sinned in various ways, to say nothing as to the violation of the laws of incest that Moses later gave as commandments to Israel. Lot became drunk and sinned with his two daughters. His righteous soul had been troubled with the many sins by his long sojourn with the people of Sodom. But none of these sins is approved in this passage. In fact, the episode's dry narrative, without any positive comment from the writer, indicates that it was not intended to hide the horror of these sins. Here is a good example of the principle that not everything the Bible tells it approves."^[3]

So, chapter 19 of Genesis ends with the account of how the Moabites and Ammonites came into being. The progenitors of the people of Moab and Ammon were born from incestuous relationships. The Moabites and Ammonites were constant enemies of Israel in the Old Testament period (Numbers 23-25; Deuteronomy 23:3-6; 2 Kings 3; Nehemiah 13:1,2). Yet God's mercy was once again revealed in the fact that Ruth, the great-grandmother of King David and ancestor of Jesus Christ, was a Moabite who by faith was eventually counted among the tribe of Judah (Ruth 4:18-22; Matthew 1:5).

LOT'S DRUNKENNESS

In spite of being a godly man, Lot added the sin of drunkenness to his list of sins and weaknesses. Lot and his daughters became desperate and failed to trust God to help them. He was in deep despair which means "to lose all hope or confidence." This would include any hope or trust they had in God.

According to Samuele Bacchiocchi “an important reason that drinking alcoholic beverages, such as wine, is prohibited in the Bible is because it impairs the capacity to think, to distinguish between right and wrong and consequently to make responsible moral decisions”[\[4\]](#).

In addition to the quotation from the biblical narrative, an alcoholic drink is not and has never been healthy. It is also associated with sexuality. The following are good examples: Firstly, the Song of Songs uses the image of wine to evoke love and pleasure (5:1). Secondly, the Apocalypse speaks of wine to evoke prostitution and the seduction of idolatry (14:8).

As it can be observed in this sad narrative of Lot, the danger of his drunkenness; it was not only a sin in itself, but also led to another sin, which arguably, produced lasting wounds and dishonor. This happens also with many men when they are drunk do what, when they are sober, they would not even think of, for they would be horrified. That is why in Ephesians 5:18 we are instructed not to get drunk, but to “be filled with the Spirit”. When one is drunk, they are “under the influence” of alcohol; but when one is filled with the Spirit, they are “under the influence” of the Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8 drunkenness is spoken of as a work of “darkness”. We are called not to hide in the dark, but to live our faith in the open. This passage talks about being “mindful and sober” something a drunk is not and cannot.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

When we analyze the scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New Testament they give us a vivid description of why the Bible condemns alcohol and drunkenness. Many Bible narratives reveal how drunkenness leaves one prone to disgrace and makes one an object of ridicule, as happened to Noah (Gen 9:20-22). Drunkenness can make people commit wrongs they would never have done if sober because “they lose inhibitions (internal rules of conscience that preserve decorum and morality).”[\[5\]](#) So when a person is drunk, his ability to control himself is greatly reduced and he opens himself up to many temptations. Lot, for example, committed incest with his daughters while drunk (Gen 19:31-36). Drunkenness often results in physical injuries as people fall or engage in fights (Prov 22:29-35). It could be the reason why the writer of Proverbs describes beer as “a brawler” (Prov. 20:1).

Observation has shown that today some injuries sustained can be even be more serious than in biblical times, for people may use guns when drunk or may kill themselves and others by driving while drunk or by staggering into the path of an oncoming car.

Intoxicating drink affects judgment. As Isaiah 28:7 states, “The priest and prophet stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine; they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions.” It is no wonder that those who are enslaved by the strong drink are said to be unwise or foolish (Prov. 20: 1). Samuel Waje Kunhiyop comments that: “they lose concentration and cannot grasp or remember what is said to them.”[\[6\]](#)

In summary, the Bible clearly reveals that although there are many biblical characters who have consumed alcoholic beverages, or fermented drinks as they appear in the sacred scriptures, God, the creator of human beings, does not approve of the intake of alcoholic beverages. As Christians, we are called to be examples to others, to be the light of the world (Mat 5:14), and to guide.

“God desires us to reach the standard of perfection made possible for us by the gift of Christ. He calls upon us to make our choice on the right side, to connect with heavenly agencies, and to adopt principles that will restore in us the divine image. In His written word and in the great book of nature He has revealed the

principles of life. It is our work to obtain a knowledge of these principles and by obedience to cooperate with Him in restoring health to the body as well as to the soul”[\[7\]](#)

LOT AS A RIGHTEOUS MAN

Interestingly, as Noah was referred to as a righteous man (Gen. 6: 9); Also, Lot is also called “righteous” (2 Peter 2: 7-8). But because of his participation in worldliness he lost his testimony (Gen. 19:14), his wife (Gen. 19: 26), his sons-in-law, his friends, his fellowship (there was none in Sodom), his property (he entered rich but left poor), his character (Gen. 19: 35), his life’s work, and almost his life (Gen. 19: 22).

Some pertinent, rhetorical questions which a Bible reader may rightly raise are: What is this righteousness of Lot if he had become drunk and committed incest with his own daughters? Interestingly, in the Bible we do not find a record indicating that Lot was a habitual drinker, or that he was habitually involved in acts of incest.

As the story unfolds, it leaves one with the impression that being righteous does not necessarily mean one is holy or perfect. For example, Lot is called righteous is an amazing example of God’s grace. Clearly the righteousness was not his own. Like Abraham, one would safely conclude that Lot’s righteousness was imputed on the basis of faith. His righteousness related to his heart’s intents. They were good. His reputation was that of a “righteous” man, and he had this reputation before God, who examines the heart. Lot deplored the ‘deeds against the law’ of the people of Sodom. And, of course, God who examine the hearts considered him righteous, because God is not a man; “the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Therefore, Lot was considered “righteous” because he had been justified by God. He had received the grace of God, so righteousness was imputed to him, even as it is to us.

“No person is proclaimed righteous apart from Christ, but all who are in him are declared righteous along with him. This is how Lot could be righteous even in the midst of his sin.”[\[8\]](#).

Lot must also have lamented the wrong conduct in which he was involved in. Therefore, the inclusion of information about Lot and his daughters in the Bible record should really help us to recognize that the Bible is a real book which if read, transformation is sure to occur in a person. Even when those known as God’s servants were involved in improper acts, the Bible does not hide their dirty acts. However, these things are always narrated, not to amuse or to stimulate a desire to indulge in immoral conduct, but to provide the historical background for understanding other events, and for character development on the part of the reader.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON GENESIS 19:30-38

Because of the following and other verses in the Bible, it can be concluded that drunkenness is a great sin that opens the door to even greater sins. Even scientific facts are that “alcohol interferes with the brain’s communication pathways, and can affect the way the brain looks and works. These disruptions can change mood and behavior, and make it harder to think clearly and move with coordination”[\[9\]](#). Therefore, the biblical view is clearly that:

- The wine and strong drink make the priest and the prophet err and mis. Isa. 28: 7, 8.
- There is a curse for those who follow the drunkenness. Is a 5:11 And another curse for them that give

drink to their neighbors Living room. 2:15.

– Alcoholic beverages are mocking and uproarious. Prov. 20: 1.

– The ideal is neither to look at wine as it is treacherous, the more you use it! Prov. 23:31, 32.

– Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. Eph. 5:18. The alcoholic beverage is incompatible with the Holy Spirit, as the adversary conjunction “mas” clarifies.

– It is not good to drink wine because of the scandal it may provoke in others. Rom 14:21. The drink is related to the works of the flesh. Gal. 5:21.

– Usually those who are drunk today did not start with the intention of being drunk. Watch out! Drunkards will not enter the kingdom of God—I Cor. 6:10.

– Micah warns that a wicked people would have false prophets and liars who would defend wine and strong drink. Miq. 2:11.

– People given to wine are disloyal, superb and not contained. Those who wish to do God’s will must abstain from the even moderate use of alcoholic beverages, considering the following reasons: the light we have, the ideal of God and the evils and dangers of this habit. Total abstinence is the position to be taken by those who are preparing the way for the Lord’s return as did John the Baptist. (Luke 1:15)

Therefore, the fact that some patriarchs, such as Noah (Genesis 9: 20, 21) and Lot (Genesis 19: 30-38), became drunk on certain occasions does not provide divine endorsement to this practice. The Bible warns that the “Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler, whoever is led astray by them is not wise” Proverbs 20:1. Furthermore it says: “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” Prov. 23:31-32.

CONCLUSION

Through in Lot’s life we can see how much an alcoholic drink can lead one’s to be tempted into making wrong decisions and become embarrassed. He ended up losing the key person in his family, his wife. While Lot’s example stands as a warning even to humanity today, we cannot forget that he was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7). This makes it an even more effective warning for God’s children (Proverbs 20:1). At times, even those who know Christ can make mistakes and do much harm to themselves if they fail to watch and pray.

Understanding the account of Genesis 19:30-38, we then witness one of the most troubling and bizarre stories in all of Scripture. Therefore, the story of Lot closely resembles the story of Noah. After being spared widespread judgment that rained down from Heaven, both Noah and Lot get drunk and end up naked and pass out. People look to wine to significantly enhance their lives. But the Christian knows a better way to do this, and that is to have Christ. He gives his people the deepest joy, the only and invincible joy not only in this world but also in the world to come.

So, Lot’s terrible sin should make us realize that just being a believer isn’t enough. Christians can fall into sins that are just as bad as those committed by unbelievers. Though Lot was a believer, he failed miserably with God and as a father.

The Bible, in turn, also presents several stories that involve alcohol. For example, the story of Nadab and Abihu, sons of the high priest Aaron (Lev. 10), which led them to act in such an irreverent and profane way in the context of the biblical narrative, it can be concluded that both were drunk (Lev. 10:8 -9). They

insolently desecrated the divine glory. Although aware of their responsibility, they were not afraid to enter the holy place to offer strange fire to the Lord. Because of this, God struck them dead right there, before the altar of incense. Absalom is another story. He decided to kill Amnon while he was drinking, perhaps because he believed that he would be less able to defend himself if he was in a somewhat inebriated state: “Absalom commanded his young men, saying, make sense; when Amnon’s heart is glad with wine, and I say to you, Smite Amnon, then you will kill him. Do not be afraid, for am I not the one who commands you? Be strong and courageous” (2 Samuel 13:28). One of Belshazzar’s sins, on the night he saw the hand on the wall and his kingdom was taken, was the fact that he was drinking: “They drank the wine and gave praise to the gods of gold, of silver, of bronze, of iron of wood and stone” (Daniel 5:4).

Therefore, the Bible consistently requires us to be sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 4:7; 5:8), because the drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God (Romans 13:13; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 6:10). Furthermore, the apostle Paul says, “So whether you eat or drink or do anything else, do everything to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). The same apostle brings the important recommendation: “Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery, but let yourselves be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). In summary, Genesis 19 is very rich in lessons as we saw in the stories of Noah and Lot, the use of alcoholic beverages is an evil that causes other evils in man. Those harmed by the use of these substances are not only the consumer, but the family and society in general. That’s why:

1. No matter how long we have been converted, or how faithful we have been to God, we have to be vigilant. The best man will fall if he does not watch and pray (Matthew 6:13). Only God can keep us from stumbling (Judas 24).
2. The use of wine is a real danger (Proverbs 20: 1; 23: 29-35).
3. Wine abuse leads to other sins (Habakkuk 2: 15).
4. Great men of faith can fall into great shameful sins; therefore, as the Bible says: “So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall” I Cor 10:12.
5. Alcoholic beverages may even bring some kind of joy, but the tragedy caused mainly in the family is an excellent indication that it should be banned – although there are other reasons.

REFERENCE

1. Bacchiocchi, Samuele, *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages* (Biblical Perspectives, Berrien Springs, Michigan), 1989
2. <https://www-thegospelcoalition-org.translate.google.com/article/you-asked-how-could-sinful-lot-have-been-righteous/>, accessed, 20 October 2023
3. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/alcohol-and-brain-overview>, accessed, 15 November 2023
4. Kunhiyop, Samuel Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan) 2008
5. Matthews, Victor H. “Hospitality and hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19.” (Biblical Theology Bulletin 22.1), 1992
6. Miranda, Sylvain de. *Drugs and Drug Abuse in Southern Africa*. (Pretroria: Sigma Press), 1987
7. McQ., Joe, *The Steps We Took*, (Published by August House, Inc., Little Rock, Arkansas, USA), 1990
8. Nichol, Francis D. editor, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol 1* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, MD), 1978
9. Norman Geisler & Thomas Howe, ed. *Eiclopedia– Manual Popular de Duvidas Enigmas e Contradição, da Bíblia*, (Editora Mundo Crista, São Paulo), 1992
10. Paul Kiritzé-Topor & Jean Yves Bénard, *Guia Prático de Medicina de Alcoologia*, (Climepsi Editores, Lisboa), 2007
11. Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths the Book of Genesis*, (Carcenet Press Limited, Manchester), 2005
12. Savran, George. “Beastly speech: intertextuality, Balaam’s ass and the Garden of Eden.” (Journal for

the Study of the Old Testament 19.64), 1994

13. White, Ellen G., *The Ministry of Healing* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans), 2006

FOOTNOTES

[1] Bacchiocchi, Samuele, *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages* (Biblical Perspectives, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1989), 98

[2] Nichol, Francis D. editor, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol 1* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, MD, 1978), 336

[3] Norman Geisler & Thomas Howe, ed. *Enciclopedia– Manual Popular de Duvidas Enigmas e Contradição, da Biblia*, (Editora Mundo Cristã, São Paulo, 1992), 32

[4] Bacchiocchi, Samuele, *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages* (Biblical Perspectives, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1989), 96

[5] Samuel WajeKunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2008), 289

[6] *Ibid.*, 289.

[7] Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006) 114,115

[8] <https://www-the-gospel-coalition-org.translate.goog/article/you-asked-how-could-sinful-lot-have-been-righteous/?>, accessed, 20 October 2023

[9] <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/alcohol-and-brain-overview>, accessed, 15 November 2023