

Esther 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

Analysis

And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. The emphasis on golden drinking vessels, each unique ("diverse one from another"), highlights both the treasury's wealth and the aesthetic refinement of Persian court culture. The Hebrew phrase *kelim mikelim shonim* (כֵּלִים מִכְלִים שׁוֹנִים) literally means "vessels from vessels differing," emphasizing variety—not mass-produced serving ware but individually crafted pieces, each a work of art. This detail suggests the feast showcased the royal treasury's contents.

"Royal wine in abundance" (*yayin malkhut rav*, יַיִן מַלְכוּת רַב) emphasizes both quality and quantity. Persian royal wine came from the finest vineyards throughout the empire, particularly famous regions like Chalybon (modern Aleppo) and Media. The phrase "according to the state of the king" (*k'yad hamelekh*, כִּי־יָד הַמֶּלֶךְ) idiomatically means "according to the king's bounty" or "in royal fashion"—nothing restrained, everything lavish, befitting imperial status.

The focus on wine and golden vessels foreshadows the disaster that follows. The king's eventual drunkenness (v. 10) leads to demanding Vashti's appearance, her refusal, and the subsequent events that position Esther for deliverance of the Jewish people. The apparently trivial details of drinking customs and royal protocol become the mechanism of divine providence. God's sovereignty works through the consequences of excess, poor judgment, and human folly.

Historical Context

Greek historians confirm Persian royal banquets' legendary extravagance. Herodotus describes Persian kings' daily consumption of enormous wine quantities, served in golden vessels. The Persepolis treasury tablets inventory thousands of silver and gold vessels, confirming biblical descriptions. Xenophon describes Persian wine culture, noting that kings drank excessively while maintaining elaborate protocols. The "king's wine" (yayin hamelekh) constituted an official category in Persian administration, with vineyards dedicated to royal consumption and wine production monitored by specialized officials.

Archaeological evidence from Persian sites includes elaborate golden drinking vessels—rhyta (horn-shaped vessels), amphorae, and cups—demonstrating sophisticated metalworking techniques. The Oxus Treasure, discovered in ancient Bactria, includes precisely the kind of diverse golden vessels described here. Each piece's uniqueness reflected both the artisan's skill and the empire's wealth—the treasury accumulated pieces from throughout the empire, each representing different regional artistic traditions.

Persian drinking culture included both ceremonial and social dimensions. The king's cup-bearer held a crucial position of trust, tasting wine to prevent poisoning. The relaxed atmosphere created by wine facilitated diplomatic negotiations and relationship building. However, Greek sources also criticized Persian excessive drinking as barbarian lack of self-control, contrasting with Greek moderation (at least in ideal). The seven-day feast's continuous drinking created conditions for poor judgment, as the narrative will demonstrate.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this passage illustrate the relationship between excess, impaired judgment, and serious consequences?
2. What biblical principles should guide Christian attitudes toward alcohol, celebration, and the pursuit of pleasure?
3. How can believers resist cultural pressures toward excessive consumption and ostentatious display while still enjoying God's good gifts?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| וְהִשְׁקוּתָם | מִכֵּל יָם | זָהָב | מִכֵּל יָם | מִכֵּל יָם | שׁוֹנֵי יָם |
| And they gave them drink | the vessels | of gold | the vessels | the vessels | being diverse |
| H8248 | H3627 | H2091 | H3627 | H3627 | H8138 |
| וַיְהִי יַיִן | מִמֶּלֶךְ אֲחֵר | בְּרִבְבוֹת | כִּדְלֹת | הַמֶּלֶךְ: | |
| wine | from another and royal | in abundance | according to the state | of the king | |
| H3196 | H4438 | H7227 | H3027 | H4428 | |

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 10:21 (Kingdom): And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

2 Chronicles 9:20 (Kingdom): And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

Esther 2:18 (Kingdom): Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.