

Isaiah 24:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.

Analysis

They shall not drink wine with a song—the normal accompaniment of wine-drinking with singing (Isa 5:11-12, Amos 6:5-6) ceases. Wine (yayin, יַיִן), typically a blessing, becomes unavailable for festivity. The phrase ba-shir (בְּשִׁיר, "with a song") indicates that even if wine were available, joy would be absent—sorrow has swallowed celebration.

Strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it—shekar (שֶׁכָּר, "strong drink," fermented beverage from grain or dates) turns mar (מַר, "bitter") to its consumers (shotav, שֹׁתֵי). This reversal echoes Exodus 15:23 where Marah's bitter water became sweet, but here sweet drink becomes bitter—blessing transforms to curse. The bitterness likely reflects both physical deprivation (drink adulterated or spoiled) and psychological anguish—guilt and judgment make even pleasant things taste bitter. Revelation 8:11 depicts similar judgment when waters become wormwood, bitter and deadly.

Historical Context

Wine and strong drink were staples in ancient Near Eastern diet and celebration. 'Strong drink' (shekar) denoted fermented beverages distinct from grape wine—beer from barley, date wine, and other intoxicants. These were consumed at festivals, banquets, and religious celebrations. Isaiah elsewhere condemns those who pursue strong drink from morning to night (5:11, 28:7), suggesting

overindulgence disconnected from covenant fidelity. Judgment reverses blessing—what once brought pleasure now brings bitterness.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the image of sweet drink becoming bitter illustrate sin's deceptive nature—promising pleasure but delivering suffering?
2. What parallels do you see between this verse and Revelation 8:11's bitter waters? How do both depict judgment?
3. In what ways might God be warning you that temporal pleasures pursued apart from Him ultimately become bitter?

Interlinear Text

בֶּשֶׁר יִר	ל א	לְשִׁתּוֹ:	יִן	יִמֶּר	שִׁכָּר
with a song	H3808	They shall not drink	wine	shall be bitter	strong drink
H7892		H8354	H3196	H4843	H7941

לְשִׁתּוֹ:

They shall not drink

H8354

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 5:22 (Parallel theme): Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:

Ecclesiastes 9:7 (Parallel theme): Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

