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ברכי נפשי את־יהוה יהוה אלהי גדלת מאד

...

מצמיח חציר לבהמה ועשב לעבדת האדם להוציא לחם מן־הארץ  
ויין ישמח לבב־אנוש להצהיל פנים משמן ולחם לבב־אנוש יסעד

Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great!

...

You make grass to grow for the cattle, and greens for the people's labor, that they might yield food  
from the earth,  
and wine to gladden the hearts of people, oil to make faces shine, and bread to sustain people's  
hearts.

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## ABSTRACT

D. Mark Tolliver

THE ESSENCE OF WINE:

THE MEANING OF תִּירוּשׁ IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Thesis under the direction of Kenneth Hoglund, Ph.D., Professor of Religion

This thesis explores the meaning of the word תִּירוּשׁ in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the context of agricultural jargon. Based on an examination of the etymology and history of translation of the term, as well as on a study of both ancient and modern winemaking technology, this work proposes that תִּירוּשׁ denotes a young, immature wine that has not undergone secondary or malo-lactic fermentation. This understanding sheds light on the term, which is shown to have connotations of fertility and divine blessing, freshness and sacramentality and hope. This thesis contends that interpreting תִּירוּשׁ in this way supplements the meaning of the Biblical passages in which it occurs.

## INTRODUCTION

### SYNONYM, HYPONYM OR JARGON?

Vinicultural imagery and themes pervade the Hebrew Bible. Nearly every book of the Hebrew Scriptures contains some reference to the cultivation or consumption of the fruit of the vine.<sup>1</sup> Noah celebrates divine provision by planting a vineyard (Genesis 9:20), an indication of settlement and domesticity, since grapevines require years of cultivation before producing a usable harvest (cf. Walsh 2000, 20). The spies return from their reconnaissance of the Promised Land bearing grapes (Numbers 8:23), a symbol of agricultural bounty. When the trees in Jotham's Fable confer to select a king, the grapevine is among the top candidates (Judges 9:8-15), a sign of the agricultural importance of the plant. Offerings of wine, as well as abstention from its consumption, are acts of worship and devotion throughout the Bible. Isaiah depicts the nation as YHWH's vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7), a frequent rhetorical technique in the prophetic literature (e.g., Jeremiah 12:10, Hosea 9:10). The grape and its most important product, יין, "wine," are essential components of Hebrew culture.

It was thus with some bewilderment that I first encountered the word תירוש in an intermediate Hebrew readings course. I had been studying Biblical Hebrew for a couple of years by this point, and I was already well familiar with the more common term for this item, יין. In our study of Hosea, however, this "new" term kept reappearing, even though it was clear that the author of Hosea knew the more common word as well (e.g., Hosea 14:8). This struck me as a bit odd: compared to my native tongue's inclusive and reduplicative lexical tendencies, Biblical Hebrew features a rather sparse vocabulary, in

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<sup>1</sup> The only exceptions are Jonah and Nahum.

which each word tends to cover a relatively broad swath of its lexical field. תירוש occurs 38 times in the Hebrew Bible, roughly  $\frac{1}{4}$  as often as יין's 141 occurrences. Why should it be, I wondered, that this ancient language developed alternate words for such a common and important agricultural commodity as wine?

As I examined the scholarly literature, I found that there were generally two schools of thought concerning the meaning of תירוש. The first is that תירוש is essentially a poetic or perhaps archaic synonym for יין; see, for example, the way the LXX and Targumim translate תירוש, Koehler & Baumgartner (1999, 1027) or Borowski (1987, 113) for a more recent expression of this view. That is, תירוש denotes a fermented liquid made from the juice squeezed out of grapes, "wine." While there is merit to this understanding, it is ultimately insufficient. I recall a discussion in my very first college class, a freshman seminar on Shakespeare's Sonnets, about the mechanics of synonymy. My professor's contention was that there are no true synonyms. When a poet chooses a particular term in preference to another so-called synonym, this choice indicates a deliberate acknowledgment of some difference that makes the chosen word more appropriate than any alternative. Indeed, Murphy asserts that:

while it is perfectly possible that a language has words that overlap in meaning, those word meanings do tend to differ in some aspect, either by having other senses, incompletely overlapping in sense, or differing in some aspect of non-denotative content (Murphy 2006, 377).

This difference might be especially subtle, but a mastery of lexical subtlety is part and parcel of the poet's art. That is, multiple terms may all denote the same thing, but each one does so in a slightly different way; all "synonyms" have slightly different connotations. In other words, while two synonyms might overlap in meaning over, say, 90% of their mutual lexical field, each term delineates a slightly different peripheral meaning. When those skilled with language, as Shakespeare obviously was, use

synonyms together dynamically, the poetic power lies not in how these terms overlap in meaning, but in how they diverge. This is especially true for Hebrew poetry, whose organizing feature, parallelism, relies upon the relationship between parallel terms. Ultimately the synonymic approach adds little to our understanding of the meaning of תירוש, merely linking it wholesale to the meaning of the more common term, יין. Even if these terms are synonymous, there has to be some slight divergence in meaning, whether in denotation or connotation. Some Biblical authors use both terms in the same passage, occasionally even in the same verse (e.g., Micah 6:15, Hosea 4:11). In at least some of these cases, an obvious distinction is made between the meanings of the two terms (e.g., Micah 6:15, Isaiah 24:4-13). Clearly there has to be at least some divergence in the nondenotative meaning of these two words, and simply translating תירוש as a synonym of יין fails to account for these subtleties.

The other approach to interpreting תירוש is to understand it as a hyponym of יין, specifically denoting a type of יין, namely “new wine.” This is perhaps the more common approach (e.g., Brown, et al. 1996, 440; Klein 1987, 701), and does better account for instances in which תירוש and יין appear in close proximity. It also more accurately addresses the fact that the majority of the occurrences of תירוש are related to its status as a firstfruit offering, hence *new* wine. The major shortcoming of this definition, however, is that it still remains somewhat vague. If we interpret תירוש as new wine, what, precisely, constitutes “new”? At what point has the new wine sat around long enough to be considered plain (old) wine? In short, what exactly is the distinction between יין and תירוש?

My curiosity about this “new” term led me to explore the function of agricultural and, in particular, vinicultural language in the Hebrew Bible. As I am the product of a

largely non-agrarian society, it was both instructive and surprising to me to discover how rich and potent such agricultural imagery could be and, no doubt, was to its primary audiences. I felt sure that somewhere within the culture in which wine was made and used I would find the key to the uniqueness of תירוש. This led me to begin studying the technology of winemaking, both ancient and modern, to see if I could derive some clue about the process by which grapes become wine that would lead me to a better understanding of the distinctiveness of תירוש. As I learned more about the stages of wine production, an idea occurred to me: could תירוש be an example of vinicultural jargon? Could it be a technical term for a specific element of the vinicultural process that had enough significance to be appropriated by Biblical authors and used even in contexts that were not explicitly vinicultural? Chapter 1 will examine the etymological origins of תירוש, as well as the history of its translation into other ancient languages. This will underscore the distinctiveness of תירוש vs. יין and will make the case for understanding תירוש as an example of agricultural jargon.

Understanding תירוש as jargon helps to address the shortcoming of the translation of the term as “new wine” mentioned above. Jargon is necessarily precise, used within the context of some sort of specialized endeavor to refer with specificity to a particular aspect of that endeavor. When we interpret תירוש in this manner, it allows us to specify the point at which “new wine” ceases to be “new”; it permits us more exactly to differentiate between יין and תירוש. Chapter 2 will examine the historical and archaeological data concerning ancient viticulture and viniculture, and will combine this information with insights gained from the modern winemaking industry, influenced by the discipline of biochemistry. This chapter will establish that ancient vintners had a substantial knowledge of the intricacies of the vinicultural process and will link the use of

תירוש as jargon to a specific biochemical process, namely malo-lactic fermentation (MLF).

Ultimately, however, all of this effort of examining the precise nature of תירוש is futile if it does not contribute to a better understanding of the passages in which the term occurs. As noted above, vinicultural language is loaded with meaning in the Hebrew Bible, frequently adding symbolic significance in excess of the mere denotation of the terms. תירוש contributes substantially to this tendency, and Chapter 3 will discuss the occurrences of תירוש in detail, reinterpreting them in light of the proposed definition. Overall, this work hopes to supplement the accepted understanding of the meaning of תירוש in Biblical Hebrew. Based on its use in the Hebrew Bible, and in light of ancient winemaking technology, the Hebrew term תירוש represents technical agricultural jargon referring to wine that has not undergone a secondary or malo-lactic fermentation (MLF). This meaning includes connotations of freshness, sacramentality, and potential future value that combine to add unique rhetorical potency to the passages in which it occurs.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE TERMINOLOGY OF ANCIENT VINICULTURE

As the technology of winemaking has evolved over the centuries, vinicultural vocabulary has proliferated to match the increasing complexity of the industry. This is particularly evident upon examination of modern wine labels, where a profusion of terms in a variety of languages greets the would-be buyer. Indeed, this terminological complexity is often a significant deterrent to the beginning wine-drinker, who must contend with confusing terms like “appellation contrôlée” and “varietal,” all the while trying to discern what flavor quality terms like “sweet” vs. “dry” could possibly be trying to communicate. Like so many specialized endeavors in the modern world, winemaking is rife with jargon, of which the above are actually some of the more lucid examples. While many would consider the term “jargon” to be pejorative, necessarily denoting language intended to confuse or mislead, most linguists use the term to refer more neutrally to any set of vocabulary that serves a specialized purpose or population. The most obvious example of jargon to most people is the dense terminology employed by members of the legal or medical professions, which is confusing to lay people but indispensable and efficient to the doctors or lawyers themselves. Burke hints at an association between the level of skill required for a job and the development of related jargon (Burke 1995, 8). While jargon can serve to confirm “insider” status among those who use it, its primary purpose is to promote precision and accuracy in as efficient a manner as possible (Akmajian, et al. 2001, 302; Burke 1995, 14). To those that understand it, jargon is actually *more* clear and meaningful than plain language.

Jargon is not unique, of course, to modern languages. Scholars of ancient

Mesopotamian religious literature, for example, must contend with a complex ritual vocabulary when studying ancient sacrificial texts, much of which is still only partially comprehensible (Wilson 1980, 93). Likewise, ancient Greek astronomic/astrologic terminology highlights the creative nature of jargon to which Akmajian et al. allude (2001, 303), using everyday terms like πλανήτης (“wanderer” = planet) and κομήτης (“long-haired one” = comet) to refer to specific and distinctive cosmological phenomena. It should come as no surprise, then, that ancient viniculture – just like modern viniculture – developed a specialized vocabulary. This is particularly evident in the expansive Hebrew vocabulary of viticulture and viniculture. Borowski lists nearly 20 separate Hebrew terms associated with winemaking and notes that the grapevine is unique in its status as “the only fruit-bearing plant...mentioned in the OT for which the different parts are enumerated” (Borowski 1987, 103). Thus, it seems only natural that the ancient vintner would have found it useful to come up with terminology to distinguish among different types of wine. As we shall see in the next chapter, there is a specific biochemical mechanism involved in the process of fermentation that can serve as a marker of a wine's development. Wine that has reached this stage is more likely to be of a higher quality and have “staying power,” while that which has not is more volatile: susceptible to bacterial spoilage, but also potentially valuable if the phenomenon does in fact happen. Recognizing a distinction between these types of wine, it is my contention that ancient vintners developed a technical vocabulary to distinguish between wines in various phases of production, although these technical terms would have appeared synonymous to the uninitiated. Older texts preserve this jargonistic distinction between תירוש and יין while later texts do not, in spite of having terms suitable to this purpose. Further, the derivation of תירוש seems to support a meaning associated with present

immaturity with the potential for long-term value.

As mentioned in the introduction, תירוש occurs 38 times in the Hebrew Bible, roughly  $\frac{1}{4}$  as often as יין. While Chapter 3 will examine these occurrences in greater detail, two of them warrant discussion now, since they are the only cases in which יין and תירוש occur in the same verse. The first occurrence, Hosea 4:11 (the first word of which, זנות, belongs with v. 10), is part of the prophet's sexually-charged critique of the people's cultic impurity:

both vintage and young wine abolish the intellect<sup>2</sup>                      ויין ותירוש יקח־לב

The second occurrence, Micah 6:15, is the concluding phase of the prophet's lawsuit-motif, in which YHWH pronounces judgment on the people:

you might sow, but you will not reap;                      אתה תזרע ולא תקצור  
you might tread olives, but you will not anoint with oil                      אתה תדרך־זית ולא־תסוך שמן  
[you might tread] young wine, but you will not drink vintage                      ותירוש ולא תשתה־יין

Again, more details concerning these passages appear in Chapter 3, but it is important to note here that both of these verses indicate some distinction in meaning between יין and תירוש; otherwise these lines would be meaninglessly redundant. Even if the ranges of connotation of יין and תירוש differ only slightly, the authors of these passages and their audiences would have to have understood them as somehow distinct, for both verses demand at least some divergence in meaning between the two words. This is most obvious in the Micah passage, which sets up an analogy along the lines of *olives are to oil as תירוש is to יין*. Chapter 3 will examine the implications of this analogy in detail, but the point here is that תירוש is somehow different than יין, just as olives are different than oil. Neither of these passages articulate this difference explicitly, but both the author and audience would have been aware of it, since the poetic value of the verses depends on the

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations are mine.

distinction.

The pairing of these terms has historical antecedents in ancient texts from Ugarit.

The Ugaritic equivalents of יין, *yn*, and תירוש, *trt*

both יין and תירוש with חמר<sup>6</sup> and *vinum* respectively, although again there are a handful of exceptions regarding the translation of תירוש. Table I contains these exceptions, which warrant brief discussion here.

The most telling passage in terms of illustrating the jargonistic nature of תירוש is Hosea 4:11. This is the only case in which all three translators felt compelled to maintain a distinction between יין and תירוש in their translations, and all three versions contain remarkably similar terms. The translators recognized that the context of the verse requires a term having something to do with intoxicating beverages, which is what both Aramaic “ריוותא” (Jastrow 1971, 1459) and Greek “μέθυσμα” mean. The Latin term is slightly more abstract: *ebrietas* means “intoxication, drunkenness,” likely used to parallel *fornicatio* earlier in the verse. Interestingly, μέθυσμα may not be all that bad a choice. In Homeric Greek, μέθυ, from which μέθυσμα is derived, means “wine” (Danker 2000, 625-6), so it seems possible that the term had similar archaic connotations to the Greek speaker that תירוש, which is essentially the same as the older Ugaritic and Phoenician terms, did to the Hebrew speaker. Of course, both the Targumim and the Vulgatemiss this connection, and in the LXX μέθυσμα appears much more frequently as a translation of שכר (“strong drink, beer [?]”), so this association may well be a coincidence. Thus, it appears that while ancient translators understood the intoxicating connotations of תירוש, it is not clear that they all understood the explicit vinicultural connection present between יין and תירוש.

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Jerome consciously chose to use the Hebrew text as a source.

<sup>6</sup> חמר appears throughout the Targumim as the standard translation of יין and תירוש, as well as of שכר (in cases where יין and שכר appear together, the phrase חמר חדת ועתיק [“wine new and old”] appears). Jastrow also cites passages from the Babylonian Talmud (e.g., Sabbath 77a, Erubim 53b) and Midrash (Gen. Rabbah 91) in which חמר clearly means “wine” (Jastrow 1971, 480).

Table I

## Variations in the Standard Translation of תירוש with חמר/οἶνος/vinum

Vulgate	Septuagint	Targumim <sup>7</sup>	Masoretic Text
<i>fornicatio et vinum et ebrietas aufert cor</i> (Hosea 4:11)	πορνεῖαν καὶ οἶνον καὶ μέθυσμα ἔδέξατο καρδία λαοῦ μου (Hosea 4:11)	זנותא וחמרא וריוותא שליף ומטעי ית ליבהון (Hosea 4:11)	זנות ויין ותירוש יקחילב [אמי] (Hosea 4:11)
<i>tu seminabis et non metes to calcabis olivam et non ungueris oleo et mustum et non bibes vinum</i> (Micah 6:15)	σὺ σπρέῖς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀμήσης σὺ πιέρεις ἔλαιαν καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀλείψῃ ἔλαιον καὶ οἶνον καὶ οὐ μὴ πίτηε ... <sup>8</sup> (Micah 6:15)	את תזרע ולא תחצור את תבדיר/תדרוך <sup>9</sup> זיתין ולא תשוף משח ותעצר ענבין ולא תשתי חמר (Micah 6:15)	אתה תזרע ולא תקצור אתה תדרך-זית ולא-תסוך שמן ותירוש ולא תשתי יין (Micah 6:15)
<i>haec dicit Dominus quomodo si inveniatur granum in botro et dicatur ne dissipet illud quoniam benedicto est sic faciam propter servos meos ut non disperdam totum</i> (Isaiah 65:8)	οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὃν τρόπον εὐρεθήσεται ὁ ῥῶξ ἐν τῷ βότρει καὶ ἐροῦσιν μὴ λυμήνη αὐτὸν ὅτι εὐλογία κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ οὕτως ποιήσω ἕνεκεν τοῦ δουλεύοντός μοι τούτου ἕνεκεν οὐ μὴ ἀπολέσω πάντας (Isaiah 65:8)		כה אמר יהוה כאשר ימצא התירוש באשכול ואמר אל-תשחיתוהו כי ברכה בו כן אעשה למען עבדי לבלתי השחית הכל (Isaiah 65:8)
<i>et diligent te ac multiplicabit benedicetque fructui terrae tuae frumento tuo atque vindemiae oleo et armentis gregibus ovium tuarum super terram pro qua iuravit patribus tuis ut daret eam tibi</i> (Deut. 7:13)		אתבזיזו חקליא חרובת ארעא ארי סף עיבורא יבישו גופניא (Joel 1:10)	שדד שדה אבלה אדמה כי שדד דגן הוביש תירוש אמלל יצחר (Joel 1:10)
<i>et diliget te ac multiplicabit benedicetque fructui terrae tuae frumento tuo atque vindemiae oleo et armentis gregibus ovium tuarum super terram pro qua iuravit patribus tuis ut daret eam tibi</i> (Deut. 7:13)			ואהבך וברכך והרבך וברך פרי-בטנך ופרי-אדמתך דגנך ותירושך ויצחרך שגר-אלפיד ועשתרת צאנך על האדמה אשר-נשבע לאבותיך לתת לך (Deut. 7:13)
<i>luxit vindemia infirmata est vitis ingemuerunt omnes qui laetabantur corde</i> (Isaiah 24:7)			אבל תירוש אמלה-גפן נאנחו כל-שמחילב (Isaiah 24:7)
<i>et primitias ciborum nostrorum et libaminum nostrorum et poma omnis ligni vindemiae quoque et olei adferemus sacerdotibus ad gazofilacium Dei nostri et decimam partem terrae nostrae Levitis ipsi Levitae decimas accipient ex omnibus civitatibus operum nostrorum</i> (Neh. 10:37)			ואת-ראשית עריסאינו ותרומתינו ופרי כל-עץ תירוש ויצחר נביא לכהנים אל-לשכות בית-אלהינו ומעשר אדמתנו ללויים והם הלויים המעשרים בכל ערי עבדתנו (Neh. 10:38)

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the passages listed, the Targumim for Isaiah 65:8 and Zechariah 9:17 depart completely from vinicultural imagery and thus תירוש is not translated. Likewise, while Targumim Onqelos & Neofiti for Genesis 27:37 and Deuteronomy 14:23 use חמר to translate תירוש, Targum Jonathan apparently preserves a different textual tradition.

<sup>8</sup> The Septuagint includes an additional clause that contains no vinicultural language.

<sup>9</sup> Textual variant.

The same is true for the three translations of Micah 6:15. Again, the Masoretic Text (MT) includes two different vinicultural terms within the same verse, although in this case the translations diverge in their approaches to translating this difference. Recognizing the parallelism acting in the second colon of the verse, the Targum inserts a verb, תעצר (“you will press”), to parallel תדרך/תדרוך (“you will tread”), and modifies the second verbal object (MT תירוש; Targum ענבין, “grapes”) to match the first (זית/זיתין) more literally. This is a logical move, although Hebrew poetic syntax commonly allows a single verb to govern multiple clauses. The Septuagint either fails to translate תירוש altogether, moving οἶνος earlier in the verse than in the original, or collapses the two terms into one. The analogy יין is to תירוש as שמן is to זית is missing in the LXX, which suggests that the translator was unaware of any difference between the two vinicultural terms. The most literal translation is that of the Vulgate. Jerome’s translation preserves both the syntax and diction of the MT, using the term *mustum* (“young wine, fresh-pressed grape juice”) to translate תירוש. The difference between *mustum* and *vinum* is fundamentally the same as the proposed difference between תירוש and יין, and this highlights an important point. Both Latin and Greek had terms with meanings and connotations essentially equivalent to those of תירוש, but the translators of the Biblical text were not always aware of this fact. Greek γλεύκος (mentioned above in note 3 as a translation for יין) and Latin *mustum* both denote wine in the early stages of production, and would have been appropriate and accurate choices to translate תירוש. The fact that Biblical translators used the same word to translate both יין and תירוש indicates that they did so not because they had no alternatives in their own languages, but because they failed to recognize the nuanced distinction between the two Hebrew terms.

To be sure, ancient translators did grasp many of the connotations of תירוש, but

this apparently led them to over-interpret the term, translating metaphoric language more literally than necessary. Thus, in both the LXX and Vulgate translations of Isaiah 65:8, the translators interpreted the passage to suggest that YHWH will not destroy the whole bunch for the sake of one good grape. This is not a completely inaccurate reading of the sense of the Hebrew original, but the MT is explicitly vinicultural as opposed to viticultural in its vocabulary (i.e., “just as future vintage is found in the cluster...”). As the context of the surrounding verses suggests, the metaphor the Hebrew author had in mind was not merely agricultural, but instead drew on the more pervasive sense of blessing for which vinicultural language is frequently the vehicle in the Hebrew Bible. This tendency to over-translate is present in Aramaic as well, as the Targum of Joel 1:10 illustrates. By translating תירוש with גופניא (“the grapevine”), the Targum provides an arguably more logical object for the verb יבש√ (“to dry up”), but dilutes the formulaic trio of דגן תירוש יצחר to which the Hebrew text alludes. This translation diminishes the rhetorical potency of the original, which turns a familiar formula for blessing on its head.<sup>10</sup> The targumic translator clearly did not grasp the full implications of the original Hebrew vocabulary of the verse. The final three verses in Table I demonstrate a similar tendency on Jerome’s part. As with many of the above cases, the use of *vindemia* (“grape harvest”) as a translation of תירוש is not so much blatantly incorrect as it is inaccurate. Granted, there is a good deal of overlap between the semantic ranges of the words תירוש and *vindemia*, but the latter is less explicitly vinicultural than the former. In the grand scheme of things, concern over these minor variations in meaning may seem pedantic, but that is entirely the point. The failure of later translators to grasp fully the technical, nuanced meaning of תירוש and to uphold this meaning in their translations testifies to its

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<sup>10</sup> Chapter 3 discusses the formulaic use of תירוש in greater detail.

nature as vinicultural jargon.

As mentioned above, תירוש likely had archaic connotations even to ancient Hebrew speakers, since the term is closely linked to older Phoenician and Ugaritic cognates. This ancient etymology has divided scholars over whether תירוש was originally a Semitic word or a loan-word from another language family. The earliest etymological discussions over the origin and meaning of תירוש are preserved in the Babylonian Talmud. For example, the following discussion appears in tractate Yoma 76b:

But is 'tirosh' wine? Was it not taught: One who takes a vow to abstain from 'tirosh' is forbidden to use any sweet drink but may use wine? – But is ['tirosh'] not wine? Surely it is written: *And tirosh makes the maids flourish* [Zech. 9.17]. The thing which is derived from 'tirosh' makes the maids flourish. But it is written: *And thy vats shall overflow with tirosh* [Prov. 3.10]? – Thy vats shall overflow with what is derived from 'tirosh'. But it is written: *Harlotry, wine and tirosh take away the heart* [Hos. 4.11]? – Rather, everyone agrees that 'tirosh' is wine, but with regard to vows [the subject of the tractate] we go after common parlance [which distinguishes between *tirosh* and *yayin*].

Why is it [wine] called 'yayin' and 'tirosh'? – It is called 'yayin' because it brings lamentation into the world [pun on lamentary 'ya, ya!'], and 'tirosh' because he who indulges in it becomes poor [from רישׁ, "to be poor"].

R. Kahana pointed out a contradiction: It is written 'tirash' and we read 'tirosh'! – If he is meritorious he becomes a head [ראשׁ] through it; if not, he becomes poor through it. (Jung 1961, 371-2)

Tractate Sanhedrin 70a records a similar (or possibly the same) etymological conversation:

R. Kahana raised a difficulty: The Bible writes *tirash* [for wine], but the word is read *tirosh*. – If one has merit he becomes a leader [contraction of תהי ראשׁ], if not he becomes impoverished [again from רישׁ, "to be poor"]. (Freedman 1961, 476)

Clearly the ancient Talmudic sages were cognizant of the fact that there is a distinction between תירוש and יין: the nature of this distinction is the cause of the debate in the first passage above. In an attempt to understand the distinction, the sages hypothesize various etymologies to explain the meaning of תירוש in light of its derivation from Hebrew verbal roots. These discussions suggest that, while they may have considered its origins obscure, ancient scholars of Hebrew recognized a Hebrew etymology for the term.

As knowledge of other ancient Near Eastern languages has expanded through modern scholarship, some scholars have expressed doubt that תירוש is truly a Semitic word. Albright confidently links תירוש with the name of the Canaanite deity *Tiršū*, and professes skepticism that the word had Semitic origins (Albright 1968, 162). Healy repeats this claim in more recent works, but is cautious enough to admit that there is currently no clear evidence for the worship of *Tiršū* in the southern Levant where Hebrew was the *lingua franca* (Healy 1996, 71; 1999, 872). J. P. Brown connects תירוש to Hittite *tuwarsa*, Greek θύρσος and Latin *thrysus*, all terms having to do with the vine, and postulates that תירוש is the Phoenician equivalent of יין (Brown 1969, 168-9). While the connections between תירוש and other terms in different regional languages are apparent, these connections do not discount conclusively a Semitic origin for the term. Given the current evidence, it is just as logical to argue that the Semitic antecedents of תירוש were borrowed by other regional languages as it is to argue the reverse. In another work, Koehler & Baumgartner affirm that there is just as much (or as little) evidence to support a Semitic origin for the term as there is to support the position of Albright, et al. (Koehler & Baumgartner 1999, 1727). Even if it could be shown that תירוש originated as a loanword, scholarship must still account for later understandings of the term as a Semitic word. Clearly by the time of the Talmudic sages at the latest, speakers of Hebrew were able to draw meaningful connections between תירוש and other Hebrew roots. Thus, even if תירוש or its antecedents did enter the Semitic language family from an outside language, speakers of Hebrew still came to understand the word as derived from a Hebrew root. Any attempt by modern scholarship to understand the full meaning of תירוש without taking the Hebrew derivation into account (even if this derivation is historically-linguistically inaccurate) will be incomplete.

From a morphological perspective, תירוש makes the most sense in terms of the pattern of the verbal noun with a preformative ה. Gesenius lists several nouns of this type, noting that they are particularly common in words derived from פ"י and ע"ו roots (Gesenius 1910, 237). Indeed, nearly all scholars who argue for a Semitic origin for תירוש agree that the term must come from ירש√, which is clearly a פ"י root. This root occurs more than 200 times in the Hebrew Bible in verbal or participial form, and has the general meaning of “to dispossess, to inherit.” The majority of these occurrences have land as their object, either explicitly or otherwise, and in most of these cases the land in question is occupied or possessed by someone other than the subject. That is, the verb ירש can be understood to have rather sinister connotations, in the sense of “to evict/expel.” These connotations have led some scholars to hypothesize a primary meaning for ירש√ that has to do with pressing/squeezing out, or with more abstract meanings such as “to rob, extort” (Haupt 1910, 215; Klein 1987, 701). Particularly in light of the more concrete meaning “to squeeze,” תירוש does make sense as a derivative of this root (e.g., תירוש as the “squeezings” or “pressings” from the grapes). Indeed, van Selms argues that תירוש’s archaic connotations to ancient Hebrew speakers are due to the fact that the term dates from a time when wine was squeezed from grapes manually, prior to the widespread use of the winepress (van Selms 1974, 83).

The problem with this etymology is that there are no Biblical instances of the root ירש√ in which it means anything like “to squeeze/press” (cf. Fleischer 1995, 646, where he refers to the hypothesized primary meaning as alternate root *jrs* II). All of the Biblical occurrences of ירש√ mean something like “to acquire as a possession/dispossess” or “to inherit,” or are nominal or participial equivalents of the verbal forms (e.g., “inheritance,” “possession” or “heir”). While it is appealing to posit a primitive meaning for ירש√

related to squeezing/pressing, particularly in light of the implications this would have on the meaning of תירוש, the lack of evidence for this usage casts serious doubt on such an etymology. This fact inspired Görg (1979, 10) to assert:

Ich möchte daher von dem Appell an eine "Grundbedeutung" absehen und zu erwägen  
ob man nicht bei der alleinigen Basis YRS bleiben sollte, ohne eine weitere Wurzel  
homonymer Konsonatenstruktur oder eine andere semitische Basis zu postulieren.<sup>11</sup>

If, then, there exists no clear support for understanding תירוש as derived from a root meaning "to press/squeeze," what are the implications of an etymology related to ירש? As mentioned, this root consistently means "to possess" or "to inherit," so it stands to reason that תירוש has something to do with these notions if it is indeed derived from ירש. Therefore, it seems reasonable to interpret תירוש as wine that it would be desirable to possess rather than drinking it.

meaning of תירוש over time is genuinely helpful, and has been quite influential on the present work (Naeh and Weitzman 1994, 118-119). Unfortunately, their conclusion that תירוש usually functions as a metonymic reference to grapes is tenuous. Naeh and Weitzman appear to recognize the liminal nature of תירוש as something between ענבים and יין, but the evidence they offer to argue that “grape” would be a better translation for תירוש is inconclusive. They assert, for example, that “many passages that describe the growth of the [תירוש]...point to the grape rather than the wine produced from it.” Why, however, can God not “give” (נתן; Hosea 2:10) or “send” (שלח; Joel 2:19) young wine/must just as easily as grapes (cf. Naeh and Weitzman 1994, 115)? Elsewhere, the authors contend that תירוש is personified, a literary device more often used with plants (itself a debatable point), citing Joel 1:10 as an example of תירוש being “ashamed” (Naeh and Weitzman 1994, 116). The word, הוביש, that they translate as “is ashamed” (based on בוש ) is translated much more commonly as “dries up” (יבש), which makes perfect sense with reference to young wine/must. Indeed, it is this necessity to retranslate other terms to support their reading of תירוש as grapes that most undercuts Naeh and Weitzman’s argument. As mentioned in more detail in Chapter 3, most of the occurrences of תירוש also include the term יצהר, “oil.” These concurrences lead Naeh and Weitzman to assert “in those passages where it occurs together with [תירוש], a better translation [of יצהר] would be ‘olive’” (Naeh and Weitzman 1994, 119). It is difficult to see how clarifying the meaning of one obscure term by obfuscating the meaning of another really adds to our overall understanding.

Naeh and Weitzman’s conclusion is the most helpful contribution of their discussion:

Tradition, etymology and comparative philology are of course helpful indications; but they must yield to the meaning which actually makes good sense in the biblical passages where the word occurs.

(Naeh and Weitzman 1994, 119)

While the etymological and linguistic considerations discussed above are not conclusive by themselves, they complement and inform our understanding of the passages in which תירוש occur. Biblical texts demand at least a slight distinction between תירוש and יין, and the failure of subsequent translators to preserve this distinction in spite of having suitable vocabulary choices suggests that תירוש has a specialized meaning. Furthermore, both the most reasonable etymology and the patterns of occurrence point to connotations of freshness and potential future value for תירוש. When considered in the context of the long and developed vinicultural tradition discussed in Chapter 2, these connotations mesh well with an understanding of תירוש as a young wine that has not yet undergone the process of malo-lactic fermentation. Furthermore, as Chapter 3 will illustrate, this understanding of תירוש not only makes sense, but also adds meaning and nuance to passages in which the term occurs in the the Hebrew Bible.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE TECHNOLOGY OF ANCIENT VINICULTURE

Before there was viticulture<sup>12</sup> there was wine. Wine, at least in small quantities, has existed as long as there have been grapes. The process of alcoholic fermentation, in which yeasts convert sugar into alcohol, is completely natural and has occurred for ages without the need for human intervention. This is particularly true in the case of the fruit of the grapevine (*Vitis vinifera*), since grapes are the only fruit that contain enough naturally-occurring sugar to produce an alcoholic liquid without the addition of supplemental ingredients (Johnson 1987, 10). The origins of deliberate wine production are entwined with the cultivation of the grapevine, but long before the development of systematic viticulture humans certainly ate grapes and drank wine (Gorny 1997, 136; Singleton 1997, 72).

A precise date for the development of grape cultivation is difficult to determine. Since the domestication of the grapevine preceded writing (Powell 1997, 100), there is no historical documentary evidence to record the genesis of viticulture.<sup>13</sup> From the standpoint of physical archeology, grape seeds (or “pips”), the only part of the grape that stands any chance of surviving from prehistoric or ancient times, exhibit a remarkable diversity in shape and size. This fact complicates attempts to use pip morphology as a method of dating grape cultivation, yielding inconclusive data (Zohary 1997, 27). In spite of these problems, scholars generally agree that viticulture originated in Transcaucasia and Asia Minor, possibly as early as the ninth millennium BCE (e.g., Olmo

<sup>12</sup> That is, the cultivation of the grapevine.

<sup>13</sup> The account of Noah planting the first vineyard in Genesis 9 dates to a later period, and in this context is not “historical” in the modern, technical sense.

1997, 36; Unwin 1991, 59). While viticulture began as a local endeavor (Unwin 1991, 59), viticultural knowledge eventually became sophisticated enough to allow humanity to transplant vines outside their natural range. Thus, by Early Bronze I (i.e., after about 3200 BCE), people were cultivating the grapevine as far east as Mesopotamia (Zettler and Miller 1997, 125-6), throughout Syria-Palestine (Borowski 2002, 102; Goor 1966, 46; McGovern 1998, 32; Zohary 1997, 28), and as far south as Egypt (Lesko 1977, 11). The Levant in particular is well-suited to viticulture, with its generally hilly country, rocky soil and limited rainfall (Walsh 2000, 27, 31-33).

As Unwin points out, however, evidence for viticulture does not necessarily equal evidence for viniculture (i.e., wine production; Unwin 1991, 61). In other words, the fact that people were growing grapes does not necessarily mean that they were using those grapes to make wine. The earliest convincing evidence for wine production and consumption comes from the excavations at Godin Tepe, modern-day Iran, and dates to the late fourth millennium BCE (Badler 1997, 45). At Godin Tepe, archaeologists unearthed a complex of rooms containing a large vat and several jar fragments. The shape of the reconstructed jars suggests that they contained a liquid (Badler 1997, 50), and a chemical analysis of the residue found on the shards indicates that they once contained a grape product (McGovern and Michel 1997, 63). This evidence is not unequivocal, since the analytical techniques were not designed to confirm that the jars contained a *liquid* grape product in general and a fermented liquid grape product (i.e., wine) in particular. Still, the combined evidence does strongly suggest deliberate production of wine in some quantity, since a liquid grape product stored without refrigeration will eventually ferment. In light of the antiquity of viticulture and viniculture, the archaeological record shows that ancient vintners had a practical

understanding of the fermentation process in which the juice of grapes becomes wine.

Excavations of later sites throughout the ancient Near East confirm the spread of viticulture and viniculture during the Bronze Age. Gibson and Edelstein's survey of the area around Jerusalem found numerous vinicultural installations in a relatively small area (Gibson and Edelstein 1985), as did the Jenin-Megiddo Survey reported by Ahlström (Ahlström 1978). Both studies note the difficulties involved in dating winemaking installations like winepresses, given that they were usually cut into the bedrock, making stratigraphic analysis imprecise or impossible. In spite of the difficulties, both Ahlström and Gibson and Edelstein affirm that several of the presses they encountered could be dated to the Bronze Age. Additionally, excavations and texts from upper Mesopotamia indicate that by the Middle Bronze Age "viniculture occupied an important, if small, niche in the economy" (Powell 1997, 103). Indeed, the Mari texts contain references to the storage, shipment and consumption of wine in the early second millennium BCE (Zettler and Miller 1997, 131). In spite of a long history of viticulture and evidence of viniculture, however, wine apparently remained a luxury item in Mesopotamia (Unwin 1991, 93), and the best wines appear to have been imported from the northern Levant (Powell 1997, 121).

In contrast, the ancient Egyptians practiced viniculture with gusto. Textual accounts from first-dynasty Egypt (ca. 3000 BCE) confirm that wine had been produced there since the dawn of history (James 1997, 198; Poo 1995, 5). This fact is particularly telling in light of the fact that the grapevine was not native to Egypt: it had to be imported, probably from the Levant (Zohary 1997, 28; Unwin 1991, 73). Indeed, the Levant was known to the Egyptians as a land of vineyards and wine. Sinuhe, the Egyptian courtier who flees to Canaan during an attempted coup in the twelfth-dynasty

(ca. 1900 BCE) *Tale of Sinuhe*, describes his adopted home:

...it was a splendid land, called Yaa.  
Figs were there, along with grapevines:  
    wine flowed more plentiful than water  
...They furnished me food day by day  
    and wine was a daily pleasure (Foster 2001, 131-2).

Perhaps more concretely, wine was among the spoils of Thutmose III's sack of Megiddo in the early 1470s BCE (Breasted 2001, 186). Other texts confirm the link between Egyptian and Levantine viniculture. The Egyptian ruler Kamose of the late 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty (ca. 1550 BCE) declares in an inscription, "I shall drink the wine of your vineyard that the Asiatic whom I captured pressed for me" (Poo 1995, 10). The term *prw* appeared later in reference to these Asiatic vintners in two tombs dating from the reign of Thutmose IV (~1400 BCE). This term is frequently transliterated as "Hapiru" and understood to refer to ancient inhabitants of Canaan, possibly even ancient Hebrews (Poo 1995, 10).

As in Mesopotamia, wine in Egypt seems to have remained largely an upper-class beverage (Poo 1995, 5; James 1997, 204). This fact is most likely due to the labor involved in maintaining vineyards and the ready availability of grain and water, with which the majority of the population made beer (Walsh 2000, 25-26). Nonetheless, since wine was both a standard part of religious offerings (e.g., Breasted 2001, 224-25) and a valued commodity in the afterlife in ancient Egypt (James 1997, 204), a wealth of information about Egyptian viniculture has survived in the form of religious texts and tomb decorations. The tomb of Khaemwaset (Theban Tomb #261) from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (~1500 BCE), for example, features imagery depicting grapevine cultivation and the process of bottling wine (Lesko 1997, 219). In more detail, the slightly earlier tomb of the Royal Herald Intef (Theban Tomb #155) shows the entire winemaking process, from grape harvest, to pressing, to bottling, to storage (Lesko 1997, 217-18).

As the ancient Egyptians gained experience with storing wine, they became aware of a problem. Occasionally, wine jars that had been filled with wine and sealed broke open or exploded (see, for example, Forbes 1955, 77-78; Lesko 1977, 21). In alcoholic fermentation, yeasts, either occurring naturally in the grape juice or specifically cultured for that purpose, consume sugars present in the juice and convert them into alcohol. In wines made from grapes with low sugar content, the yeasts convert all available sugar into alcohol, depleting their food source, and then die. This produces a dry wine with relatively low alcohol content. Conversely, in wine made with sugar-rich (typically very ripe) grapes, the yeasts wind up producing so much alcohol that they die off due to the alcohol content of the wine, leaving some sugar still unconverted. The result of this is sweet wines with higher alcohol content. In all cases, the main by-product of alcoholic fermentation is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), which is clearly evident in the churning, bubbling, frothing wine undergoing fermentation. Could these broken jars be the result of wine that had been placed in sealed jars before fermentation was complete? Forbes notes that the ancient Egyptians distinguished between the vat used for fermentation and the vessel(s) used to store the wine after fermentation, and tomb scenes show wine being strained through linen strainers prior to bottling (Forbes 1955, 75). In light of the sophistication of Egyptian viniculture, it seems unlikely that ancient winemakers would continually seal jars full of wine that was still visibly undergoing fermentation, especially if such jars had the tendency to burst. Instead, it appears that some jars that had been filled with fermented wine, sealed, and set up for storage burst open for reasons the Egyptians didn't fully comprehend. What mechanism could account for such activity in wines that were obviously already fermented?

It turns out that vintners throughout history have been aware of this phenomenon,

often called secondary fermentation. Until the advent of modern biochemistry, winemakers generally assumed that the secondary fermentation was essentially a slow continuation of the initial, turbulent fermentation process (Amerine, Berg and Cruess 1972, 371). As twentieth-century enologists began to study the phenomenon scientifically, however, they discovered that, while this secondary process is a fermentation similar to the initial alcoholic fermentation, the mechanism behind secondary fermentation is different. Instead of yeasts converting sugar into alcohol, secondary fermentation is the process in which certain strains of bacteria naturally present in the wine convert malic acid ( $C_4H_6O_5$ ) into lactic acid ( $C_3H_6O_3$ ). For this reason, secondary fermentation is increasingly referred to as malo-lactic fermentation (MLF). While  $CO_2$  is also the main by-product of this process (Kunkee 1974, 152), it is usually less obvious than in alcoholic fermentation, since MLF begins later (Kunkee 1984, 320) and occurs over a longer period.

Modern vinicultural studies have identified three main factors that influence the occurrence of MLF. The first and most important variable is the pH value of the wine, essentially a measure of its acidity. Wines with higher pH (i.e., lower acidity) and sugar levels are more likely to undergo MLF than wines with lower pH values (Fornachon 1957, 128; Kunkee 1974, 156; Rankine 1977, 29; van Wyk 1976, 182). These wines tend to be made with relatively ripe grapes and/or grapes from warm winemaking regions, since both sugar and pH increase with ripeness (Amerine, Berg and Cruess 1972, 56; Fornachon 1957, 126; Rankine 1977, 27). The second factor in the occurrence of MLF is the storage condition of the wine. Wines stored at temperatures of  $18^{\circ}$ - $22^{\circ}C$  ( $65^{\circ}$ - $70^{\circ}F$ ; warm by modern vinicultural standards) and with limited exposure to oxygen are most likely to undergo MLF (Amerine, Berg and Cruess 1972, 371; Kunkee 1974, 158).

Finally, the longer the wine is allowed to remain on the lees (the solid grape skins, pulp, pips, etc. that remain after the pressing), the more likely it is that MLF will occur (van Wyk 1976, 185). While not all of these factors are necessary, the presence of one or more of them increases the likelihood of MLF.

In addition to the production of CO<sub>2</sub>, MLF affects the wine in which it occurs in two main ways. The most important effect of MLF is that it renders wine in which it occurs bacteriologically stable (Amerine, Berg and Cruess 1972, 566; Kunkee 1974, 155). This means that post-MLF wine is more suitable for long-term storage, as it will not produce additional gasses, spoil or develop undesirable flavors or odors once the process is complete.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the second effect of MLF is the enhancement of the flavor of the wine. Since the crisp, harsh-tasting malic acid has been converted into mellower lactic acid, wines that have undergone MLF tend to have a more complex, refined flavor (Amerine, Berg and Cruess 1972, 567; Kunkee 1974, 151; Rankine 1977, 32). Although the aesthetic value of flavor complexity in wine may be open to debate, the bacteriological stability it affords makes MLF desirable when it occurs.

Even if they were unsure of the cause, ancient Egyptian vintners discovered a way to minimize the problem of exploding wine jars. As wine was bottled and sealed for storage, the jars were closed with stoppers containing tiny holes (James 1997, 207; Lesko 1977, 20-1). This would permit the slow release of CO<sub>2</sub> produced during MLF, and would limit exposure of the small cross-sectional amount of wine in a full jar to vinegar-causing oxygen. As the Egyptians became more experienced with winemaking, they developed the ability to detect the end of the MLF process, at which point they would seal off the vent holes (James 1997, 207). This would allow the wine to be stored for a

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<sup>14</sup> Post-MLF wine is still sensitive to oxygen, which causes it, like all wine, to turn to vinegar.

longer period of time, and it wouldn't have taken long for the Egyptian vintner to realize that wines in this class tended to be of higher quality and last longer without developing off flavors. Thus, although the ancient Egyptians didn't think in terms of modern biochemistry, their use of these "secondary fermentation locks" by at least the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (ca. 1500 BCE; Lesko 1977, 20-21; Lesko 1997, 217, 219) indicates that Egyptian vintners did have at least a rudimentary understanding of the existence of MLF and its positive effects on their wine.

While none of these secondary fermentation locks have been unearthed in Syria-Palestine<sup>15</sup>, ancient Levantine winemakers certainly had a knowledge of MLF at least as sophisticated as the ancient Egyptians. It was these ancient "Asiatics," after all, who first introduced wine and the vine to Egypt. In addition, the political and cultural histories of these two regions were intimately connected at least into the Late Bronze Age (Mazar 1992, 279). Whether by commerce or by deliberate imperial design, technological advances in the production of such a valuable commodity as wine seem likely to have been shared in both directions.

Indeed, later archaeological evidence shows that MLF would have occurred as frequently and predictably in the ancient Levant as in Egypt. In the warm climates of both ancient Egypt and Syria-Palestine, grapes would have ripened relatively quickly, and would have been high in sugar and low in acid when they were harvested. Thus, the first factor affecting MLF – acidity – would have been comparable in both places. Likewise, both regions commonly used the same techniques for extracting juice from the grapes: treading the grapes in a vat (e.g., Ahlström 1978, 41; James 1997, 205). This process

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<sup>15</sup> Both Gal and Stager raise the tantalizing possibility that the spherical clay objects frequently interpreted as loom weights are in fact fermentation locks (Gal 1989; Stager 1996, 64, 68). While their arguments are intriguing, the evidence for either interpretation is inconclusive.

would have lengthened the amount of time the juice was in contact with the lees, further increasing the likelihood of MLF.<sup>16</sup> Incidentally, this prolonged contact with the lees would have produced red wine, since naturally-colorless grape juice absorbs pigments and tannins from the grape skins in the vat (Walsh 2000, 108). Finally, storage conditions were also essentially the same in the Levant as in Egypt. As stated above, the optimum storage temperature for MLF to occur is in the 18°-22°C range. This is cooler than the average outside temperature in both Egypt and Syria-Palestine, although both regions have significant periods of time in which the temperature is in this range, particularly in the winter. Some of the earliest evidence for the occurrence of MLF, however, is the burst wine jars found in Egyptian tombs. The Egyptians dug tombs into the ground and/or walled them in with heavy stone, and such conditions would have preserved cave-like temperatures within the 18°-22°C range. It must have occurred early-on to the Egyptians that such structures would also make effective wine cellars, for subterranean wine cellars became a standard feature of large winemaking facilities (e.g., Lesko 1977, 31-2).

Elaborate tomb complexes in the Egyptian style are relatively rare in the Levant, but underground storage chambers are more common, particularly in larger settlements. Perhaps the most extensive is the series of chambers that James B. Pritchard discovered during his excavations at el-Jib (biblical Gibeon). Inspired by the discovery of inscribed jar handles on early surveys of the site, Pritchard spent four seasons excavating what he eventually interpreted to be a large vinicultural complex. In two seasons in 1959-60,

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<sup>16</sup> There are some accounts of ancient Egyptian vintners pressing grapes using a linen sheet stretched and twisted between two poles (e.g., Lesko 1997, 218). This would have reduced the time the juice was in contact with the lees, likewise reducing the chances of MLF. There is no evidence that this technique was used in Syria-Palestine.

Pritchard unearthed a total of 63 chambers which had been cut into the bedrock to an average depth of 2.2 meters (Pritchard 1964, 1). Since the chambers were cut into porous limestone and were largely unplastered, thus unable to hold water, Pritchard concluded that they were not cisterns but underground storerooms or cellars (Pritchard 1962, 82-83). Approximately half of the cellars were found to have stone covers nearby, and the potsherd contents of the cellars date predominantly from the Iron II period, leading to Pritchard's conclusion that their widespread use was abandoned during this time (Pritchard 1964, 16). While some of the cellars contained plaster dating to a later period, only 5 of the 63 appear to have been plastered during the Iron Age (Pritchard 1964, 9-10). Associated with these plastered cellars are a series of small, oblong/circular depressions cut into the bedrock, some of which are connected to a plastered cellar by a channel cut into the stone. Pritchard understood these depressions to be winepresses in which the must was stomped out of the grapes and dipped into settling basins before being allowed to flow into the plastered vats for fermentation (Pritchard 1964, 10-11). Based on the size of jars reconstructed from potsherds found at the site, combined with the volume of the cellars, Pritchard calculated that the winery at Gibeon was capable of storing over 25,000 gallons of wine at a time (Pritchard 1962, 92-93).

Pritchard's interpretation of Gibeon as a winery makes sense in the context of the evidence for a winemaking industry in the ancient Levant. In addition to the Mesopotamian and Egyptian data mentioned above, the Samaria Ostraca demonstrate that there was a highly-developed Israelite commerce in wine and oil by the mid-eighth century BCE at the latest (Kaufman 1982). Perhaps even more pertinent to Gibeon, Rainey argues that the so-called "למלך stamps" attest to a royal wine trade in the Judean Hill Country during the late eighth/early seventh century BCE (Rainey 1982, 57-61). It is

in the context of data such as these that Pritchard claims that a large amount of wine was produced in Gibeon by at least the seventh century BCE, and that some of this wine was sold elsewhere, specifically marketed as wine from Gibeon (Pritchard 1962, 99). Most compelling, in light of the discussion of storage conditions and MLF, is Pritchard's report that the temperature inside his cellars was observed to be 18.3°C. This is within the ideal temperature range for MLF, and this datum was recorded during the summer when the outside temperature registered at 28.6°C, over 10°C (nearly 20°F) higher (Pritchard 1962, 84). Clearly Israelite vinicultural technology was at least as likely as that of ancient Egypt to produce wines in which MLF occurred.

Although the dates above regarding the Israelite wine industry are much later than the Egyptian data above, there is no reason to think that these two winemaking traditions are discontinuous. The winery at Gibeon, itself only one example of this type of installation throughout Syria-Palestine (see, for example, Ahlström 1978, Edelstein and Gibson 1982, Frankel 1999), represents the apogee of a long Levantine winemaking tradition. This tradition, which inspired and informed Egyptian viniculture, was quite sophisticated, utilizing the best technology of the time to preserve its products. This technology would have included provisions to account for MLF, since all the necessary conditions for its occurrence were present in ancient Levantine winemaking. Not only that, the remains of the ancient Egyptian wine industry, itself the heir of ancient Levantine viniculture, show without a doubt that ancient vintners knew of the occurrence of MLF. It is certain that Ancient Levantine vintners had a sophisticated understanding of the fermentation process, and they would have recognized both the occurrence of malolactic fermentation and its effects on their products.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CONNOTATIONS OF ANCIENT VINICULTURE

As we have seen, the ancient Hebrews had considerable knowledge of and experience with making wine. Ancient vintners developed a specialized vocabulary as part of their craft, and this vocabulary comprised terms denoting various stages or processes of production. While the nuances associated with these terms might have been somewhat unclear to non-vintners, it is obvious that ancient Hebrew writers did not consider the terms יין and תירוש interchangeable. Indeed, the appearances of תירוש in the Hebrew Bible capitalize on some of its more abstract connotations as immature wine; for example, freshness, potential future value, and agricultural bounty. This chapter will demonstrate that a reading of passages in which תירוש appears informed by the definition of the term proposed in this work will yield more meaning than common understandings of תירוש as a poetic synonym of יין. In its Biblical occurrences, תירוש makes a distinctive contribution to the vocabulary of the Biblical Hebrew corpus by denoting a viticultural product that uniquely connotes fertility and divine blessing, freshness and sacramentality, and hope.

As indicated in the introduction, תירוש occurs 38 times in the Hebrew Bible. Of these occurrences, the majority (76%) also include the word דגן (“grain”) and frequently also the word יצהר (“oil”) within the same verse. This combination, דגן ותירוש ויצהר, is a frequent feature of Biblical discussions of Israel’s agricultural abundance, and appears so regularly within the Deuteronomistic History that Ringgren considers it a part of what Wolff called “the body of Deuteronomistic formulas” (Ringgren 1974, 141; citing Wolff, 1974). Although defining “formula” in the context of oral poetry, both Watson and

Culley mention features of formulaic language that apply to the appearances of **דגן ותירוש ויצהר** even in non-poetic passages. Watson defines a formula as

a ready-made phrase taken from traditional diction (or invented by a poet and eventually becoming part of traditional diction) which fits the metrical slots characteristic of a particular verse-form (Watson 1986, 74).

Similarly, Culley considers a formula to be

a repeated group of words the length of which corresponds to one of the divisions in the poetic structure, such as the line or smaller divisions within the line created by some formal division such as the caesura (Culley 1967, 11).

While the metrical elements of these definitions do not always fit the occurrences of the **דגן ותירוש ויצהר** formula, the standard repetition of the constituent words and their unified meaning in the passages in which they occur nonetheless qualify them as formulaic. Two of the elements of this tripartite formula – **תירוש** and **יצהר** – are considerably more obscure than their more common synonyms (**שמן** and **יין**), appearing  $\frac{1}{4}$  as frequently or less. As both Bowra and Culley have noted, formulaic language is capable of preserving older or more obscure locutions within the common parlance, maintaining meaning that would otherwise have been lost (Bowra 1952; Culley 1967). The fact that these rarer occurrences are nearly always coincidental with each other suggests that this formula is a distinctive lexical entity.

As mentioned above, most of these formulaic occurrences of **דגן ותירוש ויצהר** (a total of 19 out of 29) consist of the phrase **דגן ותירוש ויצהר** (“grain, young wine and oil”), or the same phrase with the addition of the definite article (see Table II). Five of these occurrences (Numbers 18:12, Jeremiah 31:12, Haggai 1:11, Hosea 2:24 and Joel 1:10) also include additional words (adjectives, prepositions, particles and verbs) interspersed within the formula, but in none of these cases do the inclusions alter the meaning of the formula. In addition, two verses (Joel 2:24 and Nehemiah 10:38) include variations of the tripartite formula with a different word for grain (**בר**, “grain,” and **עריסה**, “barley meal,”

respectively), but both of these appear within five verses of strict tripartite formula occurrences (Joel 2:19 and Nehemiah 10:40). Only in Numbers 18:12 do the three formulaic elements appear in a different order (תירוש ודגן... יצהר), which Levine believes reflects the Priestly writers' adaptation of the formula (Levine 1993, 446).

There also appears to be a variant type of the formula consisting of only two elements, דגן ותירוש. This construction appears eight times, roughly one third as frequently as the three-part formula, and accounts for approximately 20% of the total occurrences of תירוש. Again, the order of the elements does not vary, and the sequence is not interrupted by other words. Since even four of the nine non-formulaic occurrences of תירוש clearly allude to the formula, and since formula-related occurrences account for 87% of the total occurrences of תירוש, an examination of the formula is key to understanding the Biblical meaning of תירוש. As the following discussion will show, formulae like these transcend the meaning of their constituent elements, combining connotations to yield richer meaning. The inclusion of תירוש in these two- and three-part formulae highlights its potency as a connotative term, even when its technical vinicultural meaning may have been missed by the average speaker of Hebrew.

**Table II**  
**Biblical Occurrences of תירוּשׁ**

Formulaic Occurrences		Allusions to Formula	Stand-Alone Occurrences	
3-Part (דגן תירוּשׁ יצהר)	2-Part (דגן תירוּשׁ)			
Num. 18:12*	Joel 2:19	Gen. 27:28	Isa. 62:8-9	Jdg. 9:13
Deut. 7:13	Joel 2:24**	Gen. 27:37	Hos. 9:1-2	Isa. 24:7
Deut. 11:14	Hag. 1:11*	Deut. 33:28	Mic. 6:15	Isa. 65:8-9
Deut. 12:17	Neh. 5:11	2Ki. 18:32	Zec. 9:17	Hos. 4:11
Deut. 14:23	Neh. 10:38**	Isa. 36:17		Pro. 9:13
Deut. 18:4	Neh. 10:40	Hos. 2:11		
Deut. 28:51	Neh. 13:5	Hos. 7:14		
Jer. 31:12*	Neh. 13:12	Psa. 4:8		
Hos. 2:10	2Ch. 31:5			
Hos. 2:24*	2Ch. 32:28			
Joel 1:10*				

\* Contains verbal/adjectival/prepositional inclusions.

\*\* Contains a variant word for דגן.

It should go without saying that Israel's notion of divine blessing was strongly linked to the land itself. In light of God's covenant with Abraham, the ancient Hebrews implicitly understood agricultural productivity to be a gift from God. Thus, in Isaac's blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27:28, four manifestations of this divine gift are mentioned: the dew of heaven (טל שמים), the fat of the land (שמני הארץ), and, in the two-element version of the formula, grain and young wine (דגן ותירש). Interestingly, the fullness of this blessing appears to depend upon the inclusion of דגן ותירש. While he explicitly mentions having "supported" or "endowed" (סמך/√) Jacob with דגן ותירש in verse 37, Isaac conspicuously fails to include these terms in his alleged blessing of Esau in vv. 39-40, in spite of repeating the elements of טל שמים and שמני הארץ (cf Sarna 1989, 194; Hamilton 1995, 221).

Deuteronomy contains other examples of the תירוש formula as metonym for divine blessing. In Deuteronomy 7:13, the three-part formula appears amidst a spate of images of fecundity of the vegetable, animal and human varieties. YHWH promises to bless the fruit of the land, namely דגן ותירש ויצהר, along with the fruits of the wombs of both people and flocks. In 11:14, the focus is less about procreation as it is about the satisfaction that comes from agricultural abundance. YHWH provides the land with rain, producing דגן ותירש ויצהר for the people and grass for the cattle, which they will eat and be filled. The two-part formula again appears with טל שמים in a clear allusion to Isaac's blessing of Jacob in Moses' farewell blessing of Israel in 33:28. As in the Genesis passage, the תירוש formula functions as an expression of YHWH's overwhelming providence to those beloved of God. In a similar vein, the three-part formula appears in 2 Chronicles 32:28, a part of the description of Hezekiah's great wealth provided by YHWH, including not only דגן ותירש ויצהר, but also silver, gold, spices, cattle, etc.

In a masterful bit of rhetoric, the Rabshakeh appropriates the familiar language of agricultural abundance in his bid to sack Jerusalem, promising the people of the city that they will be taken to a land like their own land, a land of דגן ותירוש, if they will only surrender. This passage, appearing in virtually the same form in both Isaiah 36:17 and 2 Kings 18:32, features the Rabshakeh addressing the people in their own language, using terminology loaded with sentiment (Cogan & Tadmor 1988, 243; Childs 2001, 274). There is a sinister tone present here as well, though, since the implication is that failure to surrender will result in destruction, not to mention separation from דגן ותירוש.

In other words, while דגן ותירוש ויצהר can be used as a metaphor for fecundity and divine blessing, the absence of these things can also signify divine wrath. Hosea 2:10-11 is a clear example of this potential, as Israel's failure to recognize that "it was [YHWH] who gave her הדגן והתירוש והיצהר" results in the revocation of these gifts as part of Israel's punishment. Hosea 9:1-4 alludes to this concept of revocation of divine blessing. While the phrase דגן ותירוש ויצהר does not occur in this passage, the presence of דגן in verse 1 in close proximity to תירוש in verse 2 indicates that this passage relies on a knowledge of the formula (Mays 1969, 126; Andersen & Freedman 1980, 519). As a result of the people's cultic infidelity, their harvest will fail and they will go into exile in foreign lands. As verses 3-4 depict, not only will YHWH revoke the blessing of agricultural fertility, he will go so far as to undo the Exodus entirely (Landy 1995, 111). Similarly, in Deuteronomy 28 Moses warns the people about the consequences of breaking the covenant YHWH has made with them. YHWH threatens to revoke completely the blessings Israel has received, including having their דגן ותירוש ויצהר totally consumed by foreign invaders (verse 51). Indeed, we see that this is not an idle threat, for Joel uses similar language of divine judgment and agricultural affliction in his description of the

foreign locust plague. Amidst descriptions of assaults on other key institutions, Joel 1:10 invokes the three-part formula to express the utter devastation of Israelite agriculture. This is a unique instance of the formula, in that each element is paired with a verb, highlighting the completeness of the destruction: the grain is ruined (שדד), the new wine is dessicated (הוביש), and the oil is decimated (אמלל). Similarly, Micah 6:15, in a clear allusion to the abundance normally signified by the formula, inverts the usual meaning of the elements to depict imminent divine judgment. As we saw in Chapter 1, this verse is a rare case of יין occurring within the same verse as תירוש. The rhetorical force of this verse depends upon a series of contrasts between produce close to the soil and the finished agricultural product (cf. Nelson 2002, 102) as part of a passage concerning the futility of human actions in the face of divine wrath. Micah 6:15 points out that the end-stage enjoyment of blessings – anointing with oil (שמן), drinking aged wine (יין) – will not happen in this case, in spite of the hard work – treading olives (זית) and young wine (תירוש) – that has been done, so imminent is YHWH’s judgment.

תירוש, along with דגן ויצהר, functions as a tangible sign of divine blessing, specifically agricultural fertility. The absence of תירוש signifies divine displeasure, but the point is that, for the ancient Hebrews, the link between תירוש and YHWH is essential. The decoupling of this link is an example of Israel’s unfaithfulness against which Hosea rails in chapter 7. In Hosea 7:14, we see the accusation that the people have so neglected the connection between YHWH and blessing that they have resorted to apparently pagan practices, self-mortifying for the sake of דגן ותירוש. There is some debate over whether יתגוררו comes from גורל (“to sojourn, be a stranger”) or גדל (“to cut, pierce”). While ritual self-mortification makes the most sense in light of Hosea’s consistent concern with cultic propriety, it is possible that the term comes from the first root, meaning something

along the lines of “they lose themselves.” In either case, the point is that Israel has forgotten the connection between YHWH and the land’s agricultural bounty. Hosea’s characterization in this passage alludes to the words of the psalmist in Psalm 4, who uses much of the same terminology to highlight YHWH’s provision. In contrast to the people wailing on their beds instead of calling out to YHWH in their hearts, Psalm 4:5 exhorts the faithful to meditate (literally אמרו בלבבכם, “speak in [their] hearts”) on their beds, and to be silent. Likewise, instead of gashing oneself for the sake of דגן ותירוש, in verse 8, the psalmist asserts that YHWH is the source of joy, even more than the grain and young wine. Similarly, for Haggai, the link between proper worship and agricultural fertility is so important that the neglect of the former results in YHWH’s restriction of the latter. Instead of rebuilding the temple immediately upon their return from exile, YHWH accuses the people of being more concerned with their own individual well-being. This leads to another revocation of the traditional blessing of fertility: the heavens have withheld their dew (טל שמים), and drought has afflicted the דגן ותירוש ויצהר (Haggai 1:10-11). As these passages indicate, the value of the blessing of fertility lies only in the fact that YHWH is its source.

Many of the other occurrences of תירוש are similarly concerned with the appropriate ritual expression of thanksgiving for YHWH’s blessing of fertility. Although not a formulaic occurrence of תירוש, Proverbs 3:9-10 highlights this link between agricultural productivity and worship:

Honor YHWH with your wealth,  
and with the best of all your produce;  
and your storehouses will be filled with abundance,  
and your vats will burst with new wine.

כבד את־יהוה מהונך  
מראשית כל־תבואתך  
וימלאו אסמך שבע  
ותירוש יקביך יפרצו

These verses indicate that the appropriate response to YHWH’s blessing of fertility is the offering of the best produce back to God, an interaction which perpetuates the divine

blessing. These tithes are always designated ראשית, “the best” or perhaps “the first [harvested].” The fact that תירוש is an essential component of these offerings makes sense in light of its identity as newly-produced, fresh wine. יין, which denotes an aged vinicultural product, is mostly intended for human consumption (but see below), while תירוש, in a liminal state between raw material and finished product, should be offered to YHWH as a firstfruit. In particular, the people are to give these offerings to the Levites to support their ministry before YHWH (cf. Deuteronomy 18:4, Numbers 18:12). Thus when Hezekiah re-establishes observance of the law in 2 Chronicles 29-31, one of his decrees is that the people should resume their offerings to YHWH, including דגן תירוש ויצהר (II Chronicles 31:5). Likewise, when Nehemiah leads the people in renewing the covenant after the return from exile, one element is the resumption of Israel’s offerings of דגן תירוש ויצהר (Nehemiah 10:38, 40; 13:5, 12).

Eventually, the celebration of the harvest developed into a festal meal, and the tithes were to be presented and consumed at the temple, in the presence of YHWH. In fact, the Israelites were only supposed to consume תירוש and the other early harvest produce at the temple and not in their hometowns (Deuteronomy 12:17). Provision was made, however, to convert the perishable firstfruits into cash for easier transportation to the central temple (Deuteronomy 14:23-6). The appearance of תירוש in these verses of Deuteronomy hints at a distinction between the ritual functions of תירוש and יין. When the wine that is drunk in YHWH’s presence is given directly it is referred to as תירוש (as in v. 23), but when wine has been purchased to be drunk at the feast it is referred to as יין (v. 26). True, יין may be offered to God as a libation (e.g., Numbers 15:7, Hosea 9:4), and may also be consumed without any cultic associations. Could it be that only תירוש is appropriate for use as both an offering and a human-consumable product simultaneously?

In no instance does תירוש appear as an appropriate “recreational” beverage; unlike יין, its consumption is always linked to ritual celebrations or other sacred uses. This is perhaps one reason YHWH is so incensed at the people in Amos 2:6-8: not only have they neglected the poor and needy, they go so far as to drink the wrong beverage – יין – in the house of God, blurring the line between worship and recreation. Similarly, Nehemiah becomes infuriated when he learns that the Judean nobility has been taking advantage of the people’s poverty by foreclosing on their property and accepting payment in the form of דגן תירוש ויצהר. Nehemiah demands the return of these commodities (Nehemiah 5:11), which should be the offering of the poor to YHWH, not the profit of the rich. The proper use for תירוש is for it to be offered and consumed as an act of worship of the deity who grants the fertility for which it is a potent symbol.

As Walsh notes, the cultivation of vine and tree crops requires a certain amount of optimism for the future, since considerable labor is required before the first useful harvest (Walsh 2000, 20). This is especially true for the grapevine, which must be tended for years before it will bear a good crop of grapes. It is in this context that we see another important element of תירוש’s contribution to the Hebrew lexicon: its connotation of hope. This is related to the potential future value inherent in young wine: the quality that inspires one to store it rather than drinking it outright. Thus Israel is comforted by the words of the prophet in Isaiah 62:8-9, as YHWH, alluding to the 2-part formula, promises that the people’s labor will not be in vain, for they will drink the תירוש that they have produced in the traditional act of worship in the temple. The people need no longer fear the ravages of the enemy, for YHWH will restore the fertility of the land. This sentiment also appears allusively in Zechariah 9:17, a passage in which the restoration of the fertility of the land and the people themselves merge together in one expression:

For how wonderful and how beautiful!  
Grain will cause the young men  
and new wine the maidens to bear!

כי מה־טובו ומה־יפיו  
דגן בחורים ותירוש ינובב בתלות

Likewise, in Hosea 2:24, YHWH promises to restore the fertility of Israel that was threatened in verse 10-11. Once again the land will produce דגן ותירוש ויצהר, and the people will renew their devotion to God. In other passages, the hopefulness of תירוש is linked more explicitly to the people's repentance. Should the people respond appropriately to YHWH's chastisement, Joel reports that YHWH will send ותירוש דגן ויצהר, and that the people will no longer be a laughingstock among the nations (Joel 2:19). YHWH will restore Israel's fertility, and the agricultural abundance will overwhelm the vessels used to contain it (Joel 2:24). The grain, young wine, and oil will once again signify the link between YHWH and his people.

As we have already seen in the passage from Proverbs discussed above, תירוש makes use of the same range of connotations in its stand-alone occurrences as in the formulaic occurrences, although each passage emphasizes these meanings in different ways. In Judges 9:8-15, often referred to as Jotham's Fable,<sup>17</sup> תירוש appears completely independently of the other two formulaic elements. While not strictly poetic, this passage is nonetheless distinct from the prose sections that precede and follow it, due to its unique cadence and the repetition of phrases like "...and go to sway over the trees" (והלכתי לנוע). The uniqueness of this section, one of a very few fables appearing in the Hebrew Bible (Cathcart 1998, 215), has led many scholars to identify it as an originally independent text that has been appropriated to underscore Jotham's indictment of

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<sup>17</sup> Cathcart cites various scholars' definitions of *fable* in his discussion of this passage; e.g., M. H. Abrams' definition of a fable as "a short story that exemplifies a moral thesis or a principle of human behaviour; usually in its conclusion either the narrator or one of the characters states the moral in the form of an Epigram." While the issue of identification of genre is beyond the scope of this work, it does seem appropriate to refer to this passage as a fable.

Abimelech and the people of Shechem (e.g., Maly 1960, 301; Lindars 1973, 358). The appearance of תירוש in this passage emphasizes its closeness to the soil. The grapevine refers to its own direct production of תירוש, without any reference to the need for human activity, in contradistinction to יין, which is a more refined product. Indeed, as with the other two trees in the fable, the vine takes considerable pride in the value in which its produce is held by its consumers (Tatu 2006, 108), which are both human and divine in the case of the vine and fig tree. The fact that תירוש "cheers gods and men" might also hint at the sacramental nature of תירוש. As mentioned above, תירוש can be considered to cheer both humanity and divinity together as part of the cultic celebration of the Festival of Firstfruits.

The next stand-alone occurrence of תירוש is equally telling in its use of the term, particularly since יין also appears prominently in the same passage. The oracle of Isaiah 24:4-13, part of what is often called the Isaiah Apocalypse, depicts impending divine judgment using the imagery of a grape harvest festival. This occurrence of תירוש is another instance of the term serving as a symbol of the revocation of divine blessing, similar to those discussed above (cf. Joel 1:10 and Micah 6:15). The first verses of the passage (v. 4-6) depict a drought brought about by the faithlessness of the people. Then, in verse 7 the verbs of verse 4 (אבל, "to mourn"<sup>18</sup> and אמלך, "to languish") are repeated, but with new subjects, the תירוש and the grapevine (Kaiser 1974, 184). This focus on the viticultural implications of the drought represents the theme of the entire passage: because of the unfaithfulness of the people, the divine blessing of agricultural fertility, symbolized by תירוש, has been removed. Thus, the expected imagery of the vintage festival is inverted, and what should be joyous celebration becomes a lament. It is

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<sup>18</sup> Some English translations (e.g., NIV, NRSV) interpret אבל in these two verses to mean "to dry up," but this is not contextually warranted. Both the LXX νεθέω and Vulgate *lugeo* mean "to mourn."

important to note that תירוש and יין have subtly different roles in this passage. תירוש appears in the same verse as גפן, “grapevine,” and is linked to the natural world of verse 4 by the verbs mentioned above. יין, on the other hand, is linked explicitly to celebration, once wistfully in verse 9, and then through the inversion of meaning in verse 11. That is, while both terms contribute to the metaphor of divine judgment as failed grape harvest,<sup>19</sup> תירוש highlights the revocation of divinely-blessed fertility, while יין underscores the abrogation of joy. Though this difference is subtle, it is exactly the nuance of this distinction that contributes to the dynamic rhetorical utility of these two words.

The next stand-alone occurrence of תירוש comes in the broader context of a similarly dire oracle of divine judgment, although the verses immediately surrounding it have a very different meaning. Isaiah 65 is YHWH's response to the prophet's appeal for divine action in light of the misfortune that has befallen Israel. While much of the chapter expresses divine anger with the people's faithlessness, the short section of Isaiah 65:8-10 invokes the notion of the remnant, the exception to the condemned in the surrounding verses. Using the familiar Isaiahan imagery of Israel as vineyard (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7, for example; Blenkinsopp 2003, 275-6), these verses express hope using an apparently familiar vinicultural saying:

Just as the new wine is found in the cluster,	כאשר ימצא התירוש באשכול ואמר
and one says,	אלי־תשחיתוהו כי ברכה בו
'Do not destroy it, for there is blessing in it'...	

(Childs 2001, 536). While most commentators interpret this saying to mean something like “don't let one bad grape spoil the whole bunch,” the passage itself makes no comment as to the quality or status of the cluster. Instead, it is my contention that this passage takes advantage of the understanding of תירוש as immature wine, a divine

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<sup>19</sup> Of course, the end of the passage ironically transforms the imagery of grape harvest to depict the unfaithful people themselves being harvested as grapes (v. 13).

blessing (v. 8) whose greatest value lies in the future. That is, the sense of this saying is that the cluster is to be protected, for it contains the young wine that will be tomorrow's vintage. Another clue to this understanding is the use of the verb  $\sqrt{\text{ירש}}$  in verse 9, which, as we saw in Chapter 1, is the most likely candidate for the verbal root of תירוש. Thus, just as YHWH's chosen will become heirs to his mountains, the תירוש currently in the cluster will become the "heirloom wine" for tomorrow's faithful.

As we have already seen in the discussion of the formulaic passages above, Hosea takes full advantage of תירוש's connotations of fertility and hope. In light of Hosea's obsession with cultic propriety, however, it should come as no surprise that the author also takes advantage of the term's meanings associated with its status as a firstfruit to be offered with religious devotion. The entire book of Hosea is built around a complex combination of metaphors exploring the relationship of YHWH and Israel. At the highest level, the book depends on the understanding that *YHWH is to Israel as husband is to wife*, as illustrated in the opening chapters. For Hosea, one implication of this understanding is represented by the additional analogy that *worship is to YHWH/Israel as sex is to husband/wife*. This concept is the dominant metaphor for most of the book, and Hosea uses various manifestations of this relationship to drive home his theological point about Israel's faithlessness. Vinicultural imagery is especially potent in this milieu, since it is linked both to worship (as we have seen above) and to sex (e.g., Song of Songs 4:10, 8:2), in addition to having implications for the fertility of both Israel and the wife.

Hosea 4:4-19, itself part of a larger indictment of Israel's failed religious leadership, focuses on the effects the priests' faithlessness have on the people as a whole. Amidst this passage, a lexically complicated series of thoughts describes the cultic depravity of the people. Scholars are divided over how to parse the verse divisions

between 4:10b-12a. The Hebrew text (with the traditional versification) reads:

כי־את־יהוה עזבו לשמר...  
זנות ויין ותירוש יקה־לב <sup>11</sup>  
עמי בעצו ישאל ומקלו יגיד לו... <sup>12</sup>

Scholars debate whether זנות belongs at the end of verse 10 (Andersen & Freedman 1980, 363) or at the beginning of verse 11 (Landy 1995, 61), and whether עמי belongs at the end of verse 11 (Andersen & Freedman 1980, 365) or at the beginning of verse 12.

Depending upon the argument, scholars also question whether both יין and תירוש really belong in verse 11, or whether one term or the other represents a literary seam linking originally independent thoughts (Wolff 1974, 72; Landy 1995, 61). As I alluded in Chapter 1, I am most convinced by the argument that recognizes זנות as the object of the infinitive לשמר, placing it at the end of the thought in verse 10. As for עמי, it seems to be necessary as the subject of ישאל, and thus belongs at the beginning of verse 12.

Therefore, the translation that informs my discussion of this passage is:

...For they have forsaken YHWH to observe <sup>11</sup> sluttishness;  
Both vintage and young wine abolish the intellect;  
<sup>12</sup> My people inquires<sup>20</sup> of his wood, and his rod gives revelation to him... .

These verses, along with the rest of verses 12-13 that follow, compose Hosea's commentary on the abysmal state of the people's religious practice as led by the priests. Animated by the analogy mentioned above relating worship to sexuality, the nouns in this passage are all charged with multiple meanings. "Wood" (עץ) and "rod" (מקל), for example, suggest both divinatory devices and phalli, both meanings working within the metaphor of cultic syncretism as sexual infidelity to add potency to Hosea's critique. Similarly, יין and תירוש work together to underscore the blindness of the people's misplaced worship. In addition to the physical inebriation that comes from inappropriate

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<sup>20</sup> Although inconsistent with English syntax, group nouns in Hebrew, as in Greek, are usually treated as singular, a practice I have used here to maintain the pronouns that appear in the Hebrew text.

consumption of wine, Hosea here insists that the people also suffer from spiritual inebriation as a result of inappropriate worship using wine (cf. Ben Zvi 2005, 104; Landy 1995, 112). The presence of תירוש in this passage is key to this understanding, based on its connotation of sacramentality associated with its use as a firstfruit offering. As a symbol of both fertility and worship, תירוש is a natural fit in this sexually-charged passage about cultic apostasy.

In the ancient Levant, wine was an essential component of agricultural productivity. This fact is manifest in the literature of the ancient Hebrews, who use vinicultural imagery often and with great effect. In particular, the passages discussed above supplement our understanding of the distinctiveness of תירוש as a vinicultural term. The exclusive use of תירוש as a firstfruit, as well as its association with agricultural fertility represent a logical progression of the connotations of freshness attached to a young wine that has not undergone MLF. Further, the use of תירוש as a symbol of hope is also consonant with the notion of non-MLF wine as a product whose greatest worth lies in the future. תירוש is a wine still in progress; a liminal state between grape and vintage; a product to be offered or drunk sacramentally, not recreationally as יין. As it is used in the Hebrew Bible, תירוש denotes a vinicultural product whose distinctive blend of connotations supports its meaning as a young, pre-MLF wine.

## CONCLUSION

### THE ESSENCE OF WINE

The Hebrew Bible is the product of a fundamentally agrarian society. While this fact is obvious to even the most casual reader, some of the implications of this reality might not be so straightforward. Because the society in which many of us now live is substantially more complex than that of ancient Israel, most of us are far less aware of the rhythms and patterns that have defined agricultural life since time immemorial. I thus contend that we are less sensitive to the plenitude of agricultural images, motifs, and themes that pervade the Hebrew Bible than were its earlier audiences, and we must therefore work harder to glean meaning from these texts. The present work has been concerned with one small piece of this endeavor: exploring the meaning of the term תירוש as an example of agricultural jargon.

Students of ancient Hebrew have too often settled for defining poorly understood words in terms of synoymic relationships with more familiar terms. While this is in many ways an appropriate linguistic practice, I contend that this habit does not go far enough. While it does help readers of Hebrew to understand the broad, denotative meanings of terms, this approach does not allow for an apprehension of the subtleties and nuances necessary for a thorough appreciation of poetic figures. In the case of תירוש, translating the term as nothing more than an archaic or poetic synonym of יין robs the passages in which it occurs of meaning. As we saw in Chapter 1, ancient translators were guilty of this conflation, and in some cases diluted the rhetorical intent of the passage (e.g., the Targum of Joel 1:10). This tendency among ancient scholars does, however, support the identification of תירוש as jargon, since the nuance inherent in the term would

have been less obvious to those without direct vinicultural experience. Furthermore, while not perhaps historico-linguistically accurate, it seems likely that ancient speakers of Hebrew innately understood תירוש as related to ירש√, which would have included connotations of possession/inheritance lacking in the term יין.

Chapter 2 explored a strategy for delineating the technical distinction between תירוש and יין as vinicultural terms. As we saw, ancient Israelite vintners were the heirs (possibly even the progenitors) of a long vinicultural tradition in the ancient Near East, and were recognized internationally for their products and expertise. Since all the conditions were in place for the occurrence of malo-lactic fermentation, it seems likely that it routinely occurred in ancient Levantine wine. Further, it also seems likely that ancient vintners would have recognized the occurrence of this process, not to mention the effects it had on their products. תירוש is a natural candidate for a term distinguishing wine which had not yet undergone MLF from the more mature יין that had. Since many people in ancient Israel had a first hand knowledge of wine production, תירוש naturally made its way beyond the winepress and into the literature of the society.

In Chapter 3 we saw the results of this move, namely the ways in which this technical vinicultural term contributes to the literary world of the Hebrew Bible. In both its formulaic and stand-alone occurrences, תירוש relies upon a unique combination of connotations as it serves its rhetorical function. These connotations are related to its proposed identity as immature wine and include notions of fertility and divine blessing, freshness and sacramentality, and hope for the future. While other terms can and do evoke these various concepts, I contend that only תירוש has the potential to convey all of these connotations at once. Interpreting תירוש in this way supplements the meaning of the passages in which it occurs, restoring the rhetorical intent of the original Biblical authors.

For one final example of the additional meaning that תירוש can yield, let us return to Jotham's Fable in Judges 9:8-15. As we saw in Chapter 3, this passage, while not precisely poetic, is in some sense elevated language, due to its strict parallelism and repetition. We also saw how interpreting תירוש as proposed in this work enlightened our understanding of these verses. As mentioned above, the use of תירוש in this passage conveys notions of freshness and natural fecundity, as it appears as the produce of the vine with no apparent human input. In addition, תירוש also connotes blessing for humans, and possibly also communion between humanity and divinity, in that it “cheers [both] gods and men.” This structure of this passage, however, suggests an additional significance for תירוש, a meaning that is potentially important for understanding the relationship of תירוש to יין. As we saw before, the pattern of the conversation between the trees and their leader candidates is fairly strict. The trees use the same phrase to invite the candidate trees to rule, and the candidates themselves answer using essentially the same responses. What differs is that each candidate demurs by pointing out what unique contribution it would have to give up in order to rule. These responses are interesting for the way in which they express the relationship between each species' main product and its essential quality. For the olive tree, this quality is דשן, “fatness/richness,” and for the fig tree this quality is מתק, “sweetness.” That is, the thing that makes olives and oil valuable is their richness, just as it is the sweetness of figs that makes them especially prized. What is interesting here is that תירוש appears parallel to these two abstract nouns in this passage. In other words, *תירוש is to grape products as richness/sweetness is to olive/fig products*. What this passage shows us is that, in addition to its other connotations, תירוש is in some sense the essence of wine; “תירוש-ness” is what makes wine (and grapes, for that matter) valuable. By virtue of its status as agricultural jargon denoting immature

wine that has not yet undergone malo-lactic fermentation, תירוש, the essence of wine, makes a truly unique contribution to the vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible.

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## SCHOLASTIC VITA

DAVID MARK TOLLIVER

BORN: March 15, 1977, Tucson, Arizona

UNDERGRADUATE STUDY: The College of William and Mary  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
B.A., Religion, 1999

GRADUATE STUDY: Wake Forest University  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina  
M.A., Religion, 2007

### SCHOLASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Wake Forest University, 2002-03

Graduate Research Assistant, Dr. Charles Kimball, Wake Forest University, 2002

The Samuel & Sarah Wait Fellowship in Theology & Ministry, The Divinity School at Wake Forest University, 2001-02

### HONORS AND AWARDS:

Nathan P. Jacobs Scholarship, 1998

Richter Scholarship, 2003

### PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:

Society of Biblical Literature, 2002-03