

In Vino Veritas? Drunkenness and Deceit in Micah and Isaiah: A Conversation with Richard J. Bautch

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Abstract

When viewed in light of the expression *in vino veritas*, the notion of drunkenness and deceit in the Hebrew Bible, specifically in the prophetic books of Micah and Isaiah, raises certain questions. First, is the phenomenon of *in vino veritas* present in Micah and Isaiah? Second, did Micah and Isaiah have in mind issues of unethical behaviour and social injustice in the allusions to drunkenness and deceit? This article examines the translation of Micah 2:11 to ascertain whether a reading that associates drunkenness and deceit with *in vino veritas* can be considered anachronistic. It also identifies the addressees of Micah 2 in order to locate the text in its historical context. It argues that when read in relation to verses 6–11 and verses 1–5, Micah 2:11 expresses concern about unethical behaviour and social injustice. Unlike in the Micah text, however, the probable interpretation of *in vino veritas* in the Old Babylonian sources could apply to Isaiah 28:7 mainly because Isaiah denounced prophets who prophesied under the influence of alcohol.

Keywords: drunkenness; deceit; unethical behaviour; social injustice; prophets

Introduction

On prophecy in the Old Babylonian sources, Finet and Durand argue that the Mari letters—Archives royales de Mari (ARM) 26/1 207 and ARM 26/1 212—present the use of alcoholic beverages as a means of inducing prophecy. Against the hypothesis of Finet (1982, 48–49) and Durand (1982, 44), Wilcke (1983, 93) holds that the letters do not present the use of alcohol as a means of achieving trance, but that alcoholic beverages served to loosen the tongues of a man and a woman in order to shed light on a war situation (cf. Stökl 2012, 50). The point here is that Old Babylonian sources suggest that in the Mari prophetic activities, alcohol was used to induce both ecstasy



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and prophecy. In lines 1–2 of the ARM 26/1 212, Queen Šibtu declares, “As for Babylon, I have given drink to the signs and have enquired in the matter. That man (Hammurabi) is plotting many things against this country, but he will not succeed.” Queen Šibtu offered her husband Zimri-Lim an answer regarding an oracle about Hammurabi, King of Babylon (Malāmāt 1998, 149). As Stökl (2012, 93) has observed, although there is evidence of various kinds of prophecies in Mari, namely the oracles against the nations and criticism of the king’s actions, “we do not find (conditional) oracles of doom for the ruling class” as in the biblical prophetic literature. However, drawing on Durand (1982), Bautch (2016) investigates the phenomenon of *in vino veritas* in biblical prophecy, specifically in Micah and Isaiah. Of significance in recent scholarship on prophetism, and more importantly in this article, is the question of whether drunkenness and deceit in Micah and Isaiah can be seen as a case of *in vino veritas*.

In vino veritas is a Latin phrase that means “in wine there is truth”. The phrase shows that persons under the influence of alcohol are more likely to speak their hidden thoughts and desires. Not only does the phrase allude to the effect of alcohol on reducing inhibitions, allowing someone to say what they truly think, it also suggests that when drunk, one’s perceptions and emotions are more real than when sober. Cautious about a possible anachronistic reading of the phenomenon of *in vino veritas* in Micah and Isaiah, this article employs the historical-critical method to investigate these biblical texts by focusing on a variety of historical and textual factors in the text. Issues that are considered include: 1) Micah 2:11 and translation; 2) who is being accused? The addressees of Micah 2:11; 3) Micah 2:11 in its literary context: reading vv. 6–11 in light of vv. 1–5; and 4) the relationship between Micah and Isaiah.

Micah 2:11 and its Translation

The traditional translation of Micah 2:11a (לֹדֵי־אִישׁ הַלֵּךְ רוּחַ וְשָׁקַר כְּזָב אֶטֶרֶף) is noteworthy: “If someone chased (the) wind and presented lies” (Wagenaar 2001, 92). Taking הַלֵּךְ רוּחַ in apposition to אִישׁ and understanding רוּחַ הַלֵּךְ as *casus pendens* to וְשָׁקַר כְּזָב, Van der Woude (1976, 91) translates v. 11a as “If someone, guided by the spirit, could lie”. He also claims that the verse refers to prophets who walk in the spirit (cf. Wagenaar 2001, 92; Wessels 2013, 45). The preceding translation is based on the view that הַלֵּךְ רוּחַ is an allusion to the phrase אִישׁ הַרוּחַ (man of Spirit) as found in Hosea 9:7 (Wagenaar 2001, 92). In this case, it is presupposed that the term רוּחַ refers to the Spirit of Yahweh, but this presupposition may be contested. Wagenaar (2001, 93) points out that “the occurrence of the identical phrase in the Damascus Document suggests that the traditional interpretation should be preferred”. For instance, the Cairo Damascus Document, CD 19:25, says, “For he chases (the) wind and weighs storms and prophecies deceivingly to the people;” whilst CD 8:18 says, “He who weighs (the) wind and prophecies deceivingly.” As in Micah 2:11, the two preceding texts mention the root

words כזב (lie or deception) and נטף (prophecy). It is thus reasonable to regard as inconclusive the proposal that נטף is an allusion to the Spirit of Yahweh.

If indeed v. 11 refers to prophecy and deception, what do we then make of the root נטף (prophecy) that is combined with the particle preposition לְ which could mean “prophecy under the influence of wine and liquor” (Durand 1982, 49)? As aforementioned, the idea of prophesying under the influence of wine and liquor is attested in the Mari letters (Durand 1982, 43–44; Wilcke 1983, 93). In ARM 26/1 207, 4–6, we read:

A propos de l'expédition que mon seigneur va entreprendre, j'ai fait boire les «signes», homme et femme, puis j'ai posé des questions : la prophétie est très bonne pour mon seigneur. De la même façon, j'ai interrogé homme et femme pour Išme-Dagan : la prophétie le concernant n'est pas bonne et son affaire est placée sous le pied de mon seigneur.

Concerning the expedition my master is going to undertake: I have made them, man and woman, drink the ‘signs,’ afterwards I’ve asked them questions: The prophecy was very good for my master. In the same way I have questioned man and woman about Isme-Dagan: the prophecy concerning him was not good and his case is put under the foot of my master.

Whereas ARM 26/1 207 says, “Concerning a message about the campaign that my Lord is about to undertake, I asked men and women for signs, while I offered the drink” (cf. lines 4–6), ARM 26 212, states, “Concerning a message about Babylon, I asked for signs, while I offered them drink” (cf. lines 1–2; Durand 1982, 43–44). These texts insinuate that some prophets prophesied under the influence of alcohol. Worthy of note is the point that the use of wine by the prophets is not presented in a negative light. In relation to the Micah texts, Wagenaar (2001, 95) holds that Micah 2:11 hardly refers to prophesying under the influence of wine and liquor. For Bautch (2016, 4), “It’s difficult to say whether Micah is more upset with the prophets preaching falsehood as handily as a free round of drinks or with the people who know better and whose only excuse is that they had one too many.” Nonetheless, concurring with Wagenaar (2001, 95), he says that the preposition לְ in v. 11 should probably be interpreted as “about” or “of” to provide the reading, “prophecy to you ‘of’ or ‘about’ wine and liquor” (cf. Wessels 2013, 45). In my view, therefore, the translation of v. 11 may be: “If someone walked after the wind and presented lies, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of (about) wine and liquor,’ such a one would be the prophet for this people.” The latter reading does not suggest that prophets did not prophesy under the influence of wine and liquor in ancient Israel. Based on the translation of v. 11, a reading of *in vino veritas* in Micah 2 would therefore be anachronistic because the text does not provide conclusive evidence that the prophets were indeed under the influence of alcohol. However, one may ask, who used the alcoholic beverages in Micah 2? One also wonders therefore whether Micah was accusing the prophets or the Judean military elites of excessive use of wine and liquor.

Who is Being Accused? Addressees of Micah 2:11

Wolff (1990, 75) and Smith-Christopher (2015, 103) hold that the addressees of Micah are the elite officials of the military occupation and royal administration in the fortified cities in Moresheth's domain. Wolff (1990, 75) argues that if the "oppressed people" in Micah 3:3,10 "refers to men from the Shephelah who were forced to labour in Jerusalem, then it becomes intelligible why Micah especially takes the side of the women and children in his homeland (v. 9f)". Thus, Micah 2:8–11 possibly depicts Micah's denunciation of the Judean military elites and their so-called prophets who exploited the less privileged Judeans during the monarchic period (Smith-Christopher 2015, 94; cf. Bautch 2016, 1–2). The prophets that Micah denounced probably prophesied to please their audience and therefore compromised the word of Yahweh (Wessels 2013, 45). The idea that some prophets had associations with the political elites may not be far-fetched.

Smith-Christopher (2015, 103) has also argued that the noun נִשְׁקָר (deception) defines the action of the prophets who were working for the central leadership of the Judean military elites. However, Wolff (1990, 84) proposes that the allusion to drinking points in the direction of the officers and soldiers, that is, military elites, who are associated with excessive use of alcoholic drinks. Wolff further makes a distinction between the addressees and non-addressees of Micah. He claims, "Micah's opponents in this dialogue are not the false prophets themselves, but an audience which finds this kind of prophets desirable" (Wolff 1990, 84). In line with the view of Wessels (2013, 45) and Smith-Christopher (2015, 103), I would not exempt the false prophets from Micah's accusation because the prophets were indisputably implicated in the behaviour of the ruling elites. At issue here is the point that the ruling elites sought to justify their drunkenness with a word from the prophets. During the epoch of the eighth century prophets, it was commonplace for the ruling elites who were out of God's will to work hand in glove with false prophets who operated deceitfully (Ben Zvi 2000, 58; Bautch 2016, 2; Masenya 2016, 372).

On the issue of deception, the combination of רוּחַ (spirit) and נִשְׁקָר (deception) calls to mind the "story of a spirit volunteering to God to deceive the kings of Israel and Judah" (1 Kings 22:15,17,22–23), and it also suggests that the liars in Micah 2 were the prophets who supported the military elites (Smith-Christopher 2015, 103). The motive for lying is not clearly articulated in Micah 2:8–11. However, the point that the condemned prophets were paid to preach a message that is both biased and in support of the paymasters is convincing (cf. Smith-Christopher 2015, 103).

Micah 3:5,11 supports the view that the false prophets were bribed in order to deliver messages that were favourable to the paymasters. This view reminds one of the objectionable relationship between the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the members of the ruling national party, African National Congress

(ANC). Hlaudi Motsoeneng, former CEO of the SABC, allegedly said that the SABC “will no longer broadcast footage of people destroying public property during protests” (Raborife 2016, 1). In other words, the SABC would refrain from broadcasting issues which expose the wrongdoings of public servants who are associated with the ANC. In a similar way, Smith-Christopher (2015, 81, 103) compares the condemned prophets to contemporary “paid ‘consultants’ in the ubiquitous ‘think tanks’ of industry”, among other examples. The preceding illustrations throw light on the corrupt practices of some of the prophets and more importantly their relationships with the military elites who in the text of Micah 2 are identified as evil doers.

The evil doers are characterised as a “community within which one who utters wind and lies and preaches or prophesies or both about the virtues of wine and strong drink (v.11) is accepted as prophets or preacher or both” (Ben Zvi 2000, 60). If the people of Yahweh were to “receive divine instructions and messages from YHWH through the prophets (or preachers who communicate YHWH’s word)”, the reference to prophets who say “I will prophesy to you of wine and drink” (v. 11) would subsequently “denies such a possibility and what counts as knowledge of YHWH in their (evil doers) eyes is only lies, wind, wine and strong drink” (Ben Zvi 2000, 60). Interestingly, not only is the prophecy about wine and strong drink featured alongside deception, it is also presented in the literary context of a text that exposes unethical behaviour and social injustice.

Literary Context of Micah 2:11

It is widely accepted that Micah 2 forms a unit that is constituted by three sub-sections: vv. 1–5, 6–11, and 12–13. Since Micah 2:11 occurs within the literary framework of vv. 6–11 which in turn connects with vv. 1–5, some remarks on its literary context are in order. One may therefore ask, how does Micah 2:1–11 address the issue of drunkenness and deceit? Micah 2:1–5 describes “the oppression of the ruling elite” in Judah and contains a reference to drunkenness and deceit.

The phrase *הַשְׂכָּרָה הַמְּבֹרָכָה* (planned wickedness (or injustice)) in v. 1 adds a curious dimension to Micah’s prophecy as it explains the reason for the prophet’s anger (Bautch 2016, 3). The anger is incited by what he perceives as the calculated cruelty and exploitation that is suggested by the phrase, “planned wickedness (or injustice)”, and the exploitative violence committed by the greedy elites who were militant wealthy patriots (Smith-Christopher 2015, 81). The noun *רָעָה* (wickedness or injustice) alludes to harm and injustice caused by deceit, as in Psalm 41:6, an exilic Davidic text. Thus, Wolff (1990, 78) claims that Micah accused the powerful elites of covetousness which resulted in injustice and crime. Apparently, planned criminal acts were justified by the elites as being within the power of their hands. The phrase the “power of their hand” suggests that the powerful persons often tend to boast of the power of their “hands” or enemies being delivered into their hands as reflected in Isaiah 43:13; 1 Samuel 17:46, and 2 Kings 21:14 (Smith-Christopher 2015, 82). The plan and execution of injustice and

crimes thereof are carried out by worldly powers which in turn relate to the control of fields and house (Ben Zvi 2000, 43).

As will be shown shortly, the idea of coveting houses and fields in Micah 2:2 echoes the accusations in Isaiah 5:8 against the elites who selfishly and greedily accumulated productive land and property at the expense of the poor (Smith-Christopher 2015, 83). Those in power in the eighth century B.C.E. often used their position to exploit the less privileged Judeans and seize their property and productive land (Bautch 2016, 2). The use of the *qal* verb לָקַח (take away by force) depicts the violent expropriation and destruction of people's property as well as the act of robbing the weak of what rightly belongs to them (Wolff 1990, 78; Ben Zvi 2000, 45). The term לָקַח thus connotes an element of injustice against other persons by those in power. To covet and seize fields and houses is synonymous to oppressing a householder and his household (Ben Zvi 2000, 43). The point that the reference to יְרֵכָה (inheritance) occurs in the context of the verb "take away by violence" implies that the ruling elites violated the Mosaic laws' codes which prohibited the confiscation of the inherent right of the people to family possessions (cf. Isa 19:25; Jer 2:7; Mic 7:18; Lev 25; Robinson 1954, 133; Smith-Christopher 2015, 83). In this case, a person whose inheritance is taken is "devoid of economic means" (Ben Zvi 2000, 43). As scholars have noted, Micah's accusation recalls Ahab's act of injustice in 1 Kings 21, a narrative that illustrates the forceful seizure of property from the common people (Brueggemann 1977, 97; Wolff 1990, 78; Smith-Christopher 2015, 84). It is clear that some leaders had chosen to satisfy their cravings for power and greed at the expense of the poor and the needy (Masenya 2016, 373). Moreover, in the eighth century B.C.E., the gap between the small landowners and farmers and the rich aristocratic class was noticeable. Ceresco argues that, in that case, the wealthy minority

...was composed of foreign officials based in the country itself or elsewhere. It also included their upper-class Jewish agents and collaborators. Many small farmers and their families were dispossessed of their properties. At the same time, the wealthy elites accumulated even larger tracts of land for themselves and/or as agents of foreign ruling powers, first of Persian, then of Ptolemaic kings and nobles. The dispossessed farmers and shepherders now worked the land as tenant farmers and day labourers. (Ceresco 2005, 92)

With respect to Micah 2, and more importantly to the notion of greed in the text, it is reasonable to deduce that the issue of drunkenness and deceit is placed alongside the concern for social injustice. Therefore, the idea of discerning the phenomenon of *in vino veritas* in Micah 2 would not make sense. The excessive use of wine and intoxicating drink is linked to the oppression of the Judeans. Regarding the use of the verb רָשַׁע (oppress) (Mic 2:2), particularly in the Pentateuch and prophetic literature, Smith-Christopher (2015, 84–85) remarks:

It is a key term in the Hebrew Bible for economic exploitation and oppression. In the legal texts, it is used to refer to underpaid workers (or not paid at all: Lev 6:2,4 [5:21,23];19:13; Deut 24:14). Deuteronomy 28:33 uses the term to warn what foreign nations will do to Israelites if they disobey God's laws ... It is also used in the prophets (Jer 7:6, 'if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow'; Amos 4:1. the elites who 'oppress the poor, who crush the needy'; perhaps best summarised by Hos 12:7, 'a trader, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress').

From the preceding remark, it is clear that Micah's condemnation of drunkenness and deceit connects with the texts in which the prophet accuses the ruling elites of oppressing the Judeans. On behalf of the fellow village farmers, Micah therefore "speaks of the terrible disruption of their lives as a result of the scheming of the wealthy elites as they attempt to not only solidify their own economic power, but position themselves to benefit from Jerusalem's resistance against Assyria" (Smith-Christopher 2015, 89).

Micah 2:1–5 presupposes the "misuse of power in order to oppress and exploit the people of YHWH" (Wessels 2013, 45). The association of wine and intoxicating drink with Micah 2:1–5 that is suggested by the literary context of v. 11 links drunkenness and deceit with the oppressors' deeds. Such deeds lead to "disaster, humiliation, loss of land, estrangement from the assembly of YHWH and the painful destruction of their comfortable way of life, probably ending in exile" (Wessels 2013, 45). The allusion to drunkenness and deceit in v. 11 therefore presents Micah as a prophet who confronted issues of unethical behaviour and social injustice. Thus, a reading of the phenomenon of *in vino veritas* in Micah 2 would be inconclusive.

The point that v. 11 relates to v. 6 is decisive. Micah 2:6 prohibits the false prophets from prophesying. Wessels (2013, 43) argues that in v. 6 Micah speaks in a dialogue style (cf. Ben Zvi 2000, 56). In other words, Micah quotes the words of his opponents, namely the false prophets or the land-grabbers, the powerful men denounced in vv. 1–5 or the "house of Jacob" as suggested by v. 7 (cf. Van der Woude 1969, 247; Willis 1970, 81; Mays 1976, 68–69; De Waard 1979, 511; Wolff 1990, 73,80–81; Ben Zvi 2000, 57). Variant voices therefore appear in v. 6. Commenting on these voices, Ben Zvi (2000, 57) makes a helpful remark:

"'Do not preach,' thus they preach,' suggest that the speaker is human, likely Micah; that he is constructing the speech of his opponents and presenting it as a direct quotation; and that the quotation is shaped to create an image of them opposing a group of rightful preachers or prophets or both (note the ambiguity in the root *ntp* [נָטַף] *nataph*) in the Hiphil, 'prophesy' and also 'preach') that includes Micah and others.

Micah 2:6 thus echoes variant voices. Micah's opponents declared that prophets such as Micah should refrain from prophesying about evil practices in society which led to the proclamation of doom in vv. 1–5 and in Isaiah 30:8–11 (Alfaro 1989, 28; Wessels

2013, 43). In v. 6, Micah refers to either the prophets who prophesied to please their audience namely the evil doers or people who were sympathetic to the words of the false prophets. The portrayal of evil doers who are identified as אֵיב (an enemy) (v. 8), changes from that of thieves who oppressed male owners in vv. 1–5 to that of exploiters of women and children (cf. v. 9). Since there is no compelling linguistic evidence that נָשִׁי (women) refers to widows, Micah was probably referring to the wives of the men who were taken to Jerusalem to do forced labour (cf. Micah 3:2,10; Wolff 1990, 83). Verse 9 therefore denounces the ill-treatment of women and of children by the ruling elites. Thus, it appears that the reference to wine and intoxicating drink as well as to deceit is set in the context of the ill-treatment of Judean families. A reading of Micah 2:11 in its immediate literary context, specifically in relation to drunkenness and deceit, therefore suggests that Micah associated the use of wine and intoxicating drink with the unethical behaviour of both the false prophets and ruling elites, as well as with issues of social injustice. As Bautch (2016, 3) has observed, Micah uses wordplay וְלִשְׁכָּר and וְשִׁקָּר to associate drinking with deceit. However, one still wonders whether the relationship between Micah and Isaiah could shed some light on the issue of drunkenness and deceit.

Relationship between Micah and Isaiah

Interestingly, the phrase לֵינּוּ וְלִשְׁכָּר (wine and intoxicating drink) in Micah 2:11 is associated with the lifestyle of the wealthy elites, which includes the oppression of the less privileged Judeans. Wine and intoxicating drink are favourite themes of the carnal rulers who indulged their swollen appetites, an act of lust which was censored by the pre-exilic prophets (Waltke 2007, 130). The point here is that the excessive use of alcoholic beverages is associated with prosperity and luxurious lifestyle which existed alongside the oppression of the poor. Interestingly, Micah 2 may be compared with Proverbs 31:4–7 especially concerning the usage of the Hebrew word שְׁכָר. Micah and Isaiah link drunkenness with the oppressors, those in power, or the political elite. On the other hand, Proverbs 31 prohibits kings and rulers to drink wine/strong drink, but argues that strong drink/wine must rather be given to “one who is perishing” or “those in bitter distress.” However, my interest is not on the wisdom literature, but on Micah and Isaiah. When read in the literary context of Isaiah 5:1–30, Isaiah 5:11 suggests that לֵינּוּ וְלִשְׁכָּר is associated with the wealthy elites “who seek these pleasures so much that they are willing to oppress the people to get them” (Smith-Christopher 2015, 103). For Micah, however, the excessive greed and warmongering (cf. Mic 2:1–7) constitute a crime. As mentioned earlier, to covet houses and fields (cf. Mic 2:2) echoes the accusations in Isaiah 5:8 against the elites who selfishly and greedily accumulated productive land and property at the expense of the poor (Smith-Christopher 2015, 83). Like Micah 2, Isaiah 5 presents the issue of excessive use of wine alongside greed and oppression of the less privileged Judeans by those in power.

Isaiah 5:12 suggests that the ruling elites who indulged themselves in the luxury of יַיִן (wine) and שְׁכָר (intoxicating drink) disregarded the work of Yahweh. Masenya (2016,

372) argues that during the eighth century B.C.E. it was commonplace for the ruling elites to be out of God's will. Unlike Micah, Isaiah addresses the ruling elites and prophets as well as the priests. The occurrence together of יין (wine) and שֶׁכָּר (intoxicating drink) in Isaiah 28:7 suggests that Micah 2:11 is related to Isaiah 28:7. Thus, Smith–Christopher (2015, 103) notes, “Isaiah 28:7 shares Micah’s accusation about even the leaders seeking to indulge themselves in such luxuries” (cf. Bautch 2016, 4). The assumption is reasonable because the relationship between Micah and Isaiah is indisputable. In the case of Isaiah 28:7, both the priests and the prophets are accused of being drunk to the point of losing clear רֵאָה (vision) and פְּלִילִיָּה (judgement or reasoning) in their work. In this text, “the prophet assails certain leaders by calling them ‘drunkards from Ephraim,’ and in turn includes (Judean) priests and prophets in their sodden lot (28:7)” (Bautch 2016, 5). Isaiah 28:7 denounces the tendency to prophesy under the influence of wine and liquor (Wagenaar 2001, 94). Unlike in the Micah text, a reading of the idea of *in vino veritas* that is implied in the Old Babylonian sources might be a fitting interpretation of Isaiah 28:7 because there is a clear allusion to some prophets prophesying under the influence of wine and liquor. However, and more importantly, this behaviour is denounced by Isaiah, possibly because of the consolidation of the property and the exclusion of the poor by wealthy landowners as well as the appropriation of land by the political elites who are associated with the excessive use of alcoholic beverages (Hays 2015, 307, n. 490; cf. Bautch 2016, 4).

In contrast to Micah 2:11 and Isaiah 5:11, texts that are younger than Micah 2:11, namely, Numbers 6:3 and Leviticus 10:9, pair יין (wine) and שֶׁכָּר (intoxicating drink). This literary technique of pairing words is employed in a Temple setting to call for holiness in the presence of Yahweh. For instance, the Levites and high priests were prohibited from drinking יין (wine) or שֶׁכָּר (intoxicating drink) (Lev 10:9). The text of Judges 13:4, 7 also associates the pair יַיִן וְלֶשְׁכָּר with uncleanness, whereas in 1 Samuel 1:15, the word pair connotes unusual behaviour. Surprised by Hannah’s unusual behaviour, the priest Eli thought she was drunk. Unusual behaviour is also suggested by 1 Samuel 10:10–11 where Saul turned prophetic and acted crazy to a point that the people asked one another, “What is this that has come upon the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Sam 10:11). Although there is no mention of the use of wine, it is suspected that Saul was among the drunken prophets who were common in ancient Israel. However, the use of alcoholic beverages, whether to induce prophecy or for mere enjoyment, is denounced by Isaiah, especially when associated with unusual and unethical behaviour as well as with social injustice.

Conclusion

This article set out to investigate the notion of drunkenness and deceit in Micah and Isaiah in relation to the phenomenon of *in vino veritas*. A historical-critical inquiry into the texts of Micah and Isaiah based on the translation of v. 11 reveals that associating *in vino veritas* with Micah 2 would be anachronistic because the text does not state that

prophets were indeed under the influence of alcohol. Micah would also dismiss the idea that *in vino veritas* fits the excessive use of alcoholic beverages in pre-exilic prophecy. In addition, this article finds that the addressees of Micah 2 were the elites which belonged to the military occupation and royal administration as well as the prophets who prophesied to please their audience. In the eighth century B.C.E. it was common for prophets to work hand in glove with the ruling elites. Furthermore, the allusions to drunkenness and deceit in v. 11 express concerns about unethical behaviour and social injustice. Reading Micah 2 in relation to the pre-exilic text of Isaiah suggests that the use of alcoholic beverages, whether to induce prophecy or for mere enjoyment, was denounced by the pre-exilic prophets such as Micah and Isaiah. This is the case especially when the use of alcoholic beverages is associated with unusual and unethical behaviour as well as with social injustice. An intertextual investigation of the notion of drunkenness also reveals that a reading of the concept of *in vino veritas* that is also mentioned in the Old Babylonian sources might be a fitting interpretation of Isaiah 28:7 because Isaiah denounced prophets who prophesied under the influence of alcohol.

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