

But I Say to you ...

Purified wine

By Diana Mitchell, 3/24/2021, 8/24/2026

Note: Right click on links, then select "Open link in new tab" to remain on this Web page.

"For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land" (Exodus 12:19, NRSV; *see also* 13:7).

"Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink" (Numbers 20:8, NIV)

"You shall keep the festival of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt" (Exodus 34:18, NRSV).

"You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, and the sacrifice of the festival of the Passover shall not be left until the morning" (Exodus 34:25, NRSV; *see also* 7:17, 12:19, 20:8, and 34:18).

⁹"And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, ⁹Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: ¹⁰And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; ¹¹And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses" (Leviticus 10:8-11, KJV).

The first miracle God did through Moses (*see* Exodus 7), Pharaoh's magicians were able to claim as trickery because their staffs became serpents, too. In the story, they ignored the fact that Moses' staff swallowed theirs whole, which, according to their own beliefs, was something that only a greater god could do. Similarly, the first miracles Jesus did in the Synoptic Gospels, others could decidedly, in their own minds, choose to attribute to trickery as well.

Likewise, beginning with the first plague that God did through Moses—turning water into blood—Pharaoh may have, in his heart, recognized that Moses' God was, as with the water miracle that preceded it, doing only what God could do. Although Pharaoh's magicians tried to claim credit for being able to do the same thing, had they been able to, common sense tells us that they would have reversed the "trick," and turned blood into water so that they, Pharaoh, and the people could drink and satisfy their thirst. There is nothing in the TaNaKh noting that they did. Instead, we read that the Egyptians could not drink from the Nile for seven days (*see* Exodus 7:25). Then, after Pharaoh's magicians try to take credit for being able to do the second plague in Exodus 8:7, in Exodus 8:8—not in Exodus 8:9, 8:10, 8:11, or later, but immediately in the next verse in Exodus 8:8—Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron and asks them to "intreat" (KJV, emphasis mine) God to take away the frogs of the second plague. That was Pharaoh admitting out loud that his magicians could not do, nor undo, what God had done. Similarly, Jesus' disciples don't seem, to truly recognize his power until the water miracles in the Synoptic Gospels (*see* Matthew 8:24-27; Mark 4:38-41; and, Luke 8:22-25), and in John 2.

Why does all of this matter? As we prepare for Palm Sunday, and Pesach (Passover), I'd like for us to seriously consider the text that John represents as the first miracle that Jesus did, John 2—or, maybe it was the first miracle they couldn't attribute to some sort of trickery. In that miracle, Jesus turned water into an unfermented, red liquid that I call purified wine, aka, grape juice, water

wine. I make this claim primarily because of the word that translates as “purification” in John 2:6, “καθαρισμὸν (katharismos),” a word used only seven times in the New Testament. It refers to what the water in the six stone jars was used for, and that was purification (cleansing). This first miracle, turning water in stone vessels blood red, parallels the first plague God worked through Moses for a stone-hearted Pharaoh (*see* Exodus 7:14-25) where water was turned into blood. How the story in John 2 parallels the first plague in Exodus 7:14-25 is obvious.

What is not so obvious is that John 2 also parallels the last plague God did in Egypt, and the Synoptic Gospels parallel the second miracle God did in Egypt for all who would believe in the God of the Hebrews, which was the water miracle at the Red Sea. In the last plague, God did not allow the death of the first born of any family (Hebrew or otherwise) who believed in the God of the Hebrews and marked their door posts with the blood of an unblemished lamb. Before that plague began, lamb’s blood was applied to the door posts as a sign to the death angel to pass over homes marked with the blood of the lamb. In addition, the Hebrews were to empty their homes of all leaven and all that had been leavened (*see* Exodus 12:19 and 13:7). Leaven (yeast) is the substance that ferments flour and water into puffed up bread, and grapes into wine. The result of the last plague was Pharaoh letting the Hebrews leave Egypt without obligation to return. All who had believed with the Hebrews during the plagues left Egypt with them. In parallel, in John 2:11-12, John writes that the result of Jesus turning water into a red liquid was that Jesus’ “disciples believed on him” (KJV), and all who believed, including his mother and brethren, left with Jesus.

This chart might help clarify the paragraphs above:

Miracles and Plagues in Egypt in Exodus	Miracles in Cana in John
In the <u>first miracle</u> that God worked through Moses, his rod became a serpent. Believing it to be trickery, Pharaoh’s magicians threw their rods down, and they became serpents as well. But, Moses’ rod ate up the rods of the magicians. This act alone made the GOD of Moses more powerful than the gods of the magicians. Nonetheless, Pharaoh and his magicians apparently ignored this fact.	Scripture such as the following in the Synoptic Gospels reveal a lack of believe in Jesus as LORD. • Jesus’ response to the centurion who came to Jesus to heal his servant in <u>Matthew</u> 8:10 was to marvel at the faith of the non-Jew. • The response of the scribes in <u>Mark</u> 2:7 to Jesus’ healing of someone “sick of the palsy” (Mark 2:5, KJV) was to accredit what he had done to blasphemy. • In <u>Luke</u> 4:36, in the synagogue, after Jesus healed the man with the unclean spirit, they attributed what Jesus had done to some sort of new teaching.

Miracles and Plagues in Egypt in Exodus	Miracles in Cana in John
In the <u>first plague</u> , God instructed Moses to stretch out his rod over the Nile, and the water became blood. Pharaoh’s magicians claimed to use their rods to do the same.	Jesus gave instructions to the servants at the wedding to fill the jars used for ritual purification with water, and then draw some out for the head of the banquet, who, after tasting it, said that the host had saved the best wine for later in the feast.
Plagues 1-10 cannot be explained, especially not the first plague, and last plague where the death of the first born occurred. They could not be explained then, and science, medical or otherwise, cannot explain them today.	How Jesus turned water in to what others described as the best wine ever could not be explained then, or now.
During the last plague there was death in Egypt: no leavened grapes or bread, and no joy.	During the wedding in Cana, there was life: leavened grapes and bread, and joy.
After the last plague, the Hebrews left Egypt with Moses along with all who had believed in the God of the Hebrews (<i>see</i> Exodus 12:38).	After Jesus turned water into water wine, all who believed left the wedding in Cana with Jesus (<i>see</i> John 2:12).
The <u>second, and last, miracle</u> God did through Moses in Egypt in Exodus 14:16, like the first miracle, involved water. In this miracle, GOD commanded the wind and sea for the sake of the Hebrews, and in Exodus 14:31, the Hebrews “believed the LORD” (KJV) after witnessing the, unmistakable, power of GOD.	This miracle parallels the Synoptic Gospels where the disciples witnessed the, unmistakable, power of JESUS as he commanded the wind and the sea for their sake (<i>see</i> Matthew 8:24-27; Mark 4:38-41; and, Luke 8:22-25).

Again, why does all of this matter as we prepare for Palm Sunday, and Pesach (Passover) this 2024? Because there was to be no leaven in their homes, there could not have been any wine at that first Passover (*see* Exodus 12:19). They essentially drank the nutritious red water of grapes at that first Passover. I’m basing this on the fact that grapes today contain about 78.2% to 79.5% water (*see* the “Initial Moisture Content” heading in this [link](#); *see* also this [USDA](#) link). And if that is true, then, retrospectively speaking, Jesus, the lamb of God (*see* John 1:36), did not turn water into what we think of today as wine—a substance that can only be created using leaven—especially not if he represents the Passover lamb, and definitely not if the stone jars he used were for ritual καθαρισμὸν.

What he did do, in addition to revealing himself to be God (*see* my post “[The 1st Significant Miracle That Jesus Did](#)”), was to affirm our freedom of choice. Notice that his brothers, and his mother left the wedding with him. That is notable because, according to the other, synoptic,

Gospels, Jesus' brothers weren't exactly his biggest cheerleaders during his earthly ministry. What do you think could have changed their minds? Perhaps they knew he had not given them anything fermented to drink, but instead blood red nutritious water from the rock (*see* Numbers 20:8). Maybe others knew it, too, but they chose to stay with the crowd ... just like Pharaoh and his magicians chose to ignore the power of God, a power that they could not duplicate; and, just like Adam and Eve, who had direct access to God in the closest of relationships, chose not to stop and ask God about that snake and how it got into the Garden in the first place. The common thread in each of these stories, and the lesson, is that God allowed them to choose.

God will never take that from you, and you are welcome to the consequences that result from staying with the crowd, denying the power of God, and abandoning your direct access to God for relationships with snakes and false gods instead.

Moses' rod.

A rod is a long stick that's like a security blanket. It is the thing we lean on for safety while out walking for exercise. With it, in the wilderness, Moses had the power to protect himself from wild beasts, and at 80 years old, he could use it as a walking stick. The point is, God made use of it as a point of security for Moses. When he cast it down before Pharaoh and his magicians, it turned into a snake that ate up what Pharaoh's magicians leaned on, false gods. That reminds me of the snake in the garden. Why did his rod have to turn into a snake? I think because it shows us God's power is absolute. The snake caused trouble in the garden, and it was cursed by God. Maybe God was using it to remind Moses that God was, is, and always will be in control over all, including snakes, Pharaoh, his magicians, and false gods.

The TaNaKh.

The TaNaKh is the Hebrew Bible. It is also known as the Christian Old Testament. TaNaKh is an acronym for the three parts of the Hebrew Bible, which are the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Torah/Law/Pentateuch), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim). These books were reordered as Torah, Historical Writings, Wisdom Writings, and Prophets in the Christian Old Testament because that order, from the Christian perspective, placed the prophets, who prophesized about the coming Messiah, as the last books in the Old Testament before the New Testament Gospels that feature that prophesized Messiah.