



Letter to the Editor

The hypnagogic effect of the milk in the Holy Bible



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Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the article by Fakh-Movahedi *et al.* [1], which revealed the beneficial effect of a milk-honey mixture on the quality of sleep among coronary patients. It is widely known that milk belongs to the familiar traditional category of sleep-promoting foods because of its contents: carbohydrates (mainly lactose), fats (mainly saturated fatty acids) and proteins rich in tryptophan (such as α -lactalbumin) [2,3]. However, the hypnagogic effect of the milk was described centuries ago in the Bible. In particular, in the Book of *Judges* of the Old Testament, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, killed Sisera, who was being chased by Barak, a commander of Jabin's army, when he fled to her tent and slept deeply after drinking the milk which she offered him (see *Judges* 4:17–21 5:25). Obviously, Jael knew the hypnagogic effect of the milk and for this reason, when the thirsty Sisera asked for water, she brought him full fat (or curdled) milk in a magnificent bowl (see *Judges* 4:19 5:25) in order to make him sleep and thus kill him more easily. It is striking that the biblical text refers to fatty milk and not milk, indicating the sleepiness which could be induced by the consumption of a fatty food or meal due to the postprandial release of cholecystokinin from mucosa cells in the duodenum and the jejunum [2]. Because of the impact of milk and other dairy products on sleep and thus to reduced spiritual alertness, the Holy Tradition (written and oral) of the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church excludes, among others, these spiritual laziness-promoting foods during the days or periods of Orthodox Christian fasting [4]. We point out that in the Old Testament the Promised Land is often described as “a land flowing with milk and honey” (see *Exodus* 3:8.17 33:3; *Leviticus* 20:24; *Numbers* 14:8; *Deuteronomy* 11:9 26:15 27:3 31:20; *Ezekiel* 20:6.15; *Jeremiah* 11:5 32:22). Most Bible commentators based on passages of the New Testament (see *Galatians* 3:16.28–29; *Romans* 4:13; *1 Corinthians* 3:1–3; *Hebrews* 1:2 5:12–14; *1 Peter* 2:2–3; *1 John* 2:25; *Acts* 4:12; *Revelation* 10:10) believe that this description is not a beautifully graphic way of highlighting the agricultural richness of the Promised Land, but is rather a prefiguration of the Kingdom of Heaven (synonymous with the Kingdom of God); the milk and honey of the

Promised Land is a prefiguration of God's Word and God's Wisdom, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. Because milk and honey were known to induce sensory pleasure and sleepiness, it is quite possible that God used them as a medium in order to make it easier to understand the spiritual pleasure or resting of the soul which a righteous and holy human experiences in the Paradise after their death and in the Kingdom of God after the resurrection of their bodies. We also remind that milk is the life-giving force, the material through which a mother can sustain her infant and therefore can be compared to spirituality, which sustains our connection with the eternal life.

Conflict of interest

There was no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clnesp.2019.04.009>.

References

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