

Islamic Academy of Coventry

The Prohibition of Alcohol in Islām



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction

I begin in the name of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى Lord of the Worlds, and sending Salutations on our beloved Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى has created a system where consumption of certain foods or substances are considered Ḥalāl – permissible. Other foods or substances are considered Ḥarām, impermissible. It is part of our faith that we only consume Ḥalāl and stay away from the Ḥarām. If a person consumes any food or substance which is Ḥarām, knowingly then this is considered a sin.

In this booklet, I wanted to talk mainly about the consumption of one such substance which is a major issue in our community and that is alcohol. However I will also discuss other intoxicants as well which have a direct effect on our community.

As we all know in this world, wine, and alcohol in the general sense for Muslims is prohibited, which means it is Ḥarām. Unfortunately, there are sections of our community that still consume alcohol and many also take drugs. Many also sell alcohol and deal with drugs. Nowadays, you can also get ‘legal highs’ which give the same sense of intoxication but can be purchased legally.

Alcohol and Drug abuse have become something which has unfortunately become accepted in many cases, overlooked and normal in our community when in fact it is a Major Sin.

Intoxication can lead a person into a spiral of sin, causing harm to oneself as well as other people who are close to them. We have recently seen a massive increase in the amount of drug related crimes resulting in many fatalities, many times both the victim and the perpetrator are from our own communities.

How many parents see their own children become involved in drugs and alcohol? Have the children even ever thought what pain they are putting their parents through let alone going against the commands of Allāh **سُبْحَانَكَ وَتَعَالَى**? Imagine how a parent feels when their child is caught selling drugs and is sentenced to incarceration.

As a community we need to do more to tackle this issue and our first step should be educating ourselves and our children with the Islamic reasoning behind the prohibition.

There is a very detailed explanation about this subject in the Tafsīr M'āriful Qur'ān which I shall Inshā'Allāh summarize in this booklet adding some information on how these substances can also be detrimental to one's health.

I pray that Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى accepts this small piece of work and after reading this booklet helps us to understand the reasoning behind the prohibition and why we should keep away from this Major Sin.

Ebrahim Noor

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The Days of Ignorance

In the times of Jāhiliyyah, the times of ignorance, drinking wine was normal. It was a common practise as well as other customs such as gambling and using divining arrows. When Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ came to Madīnah, it was the same over there.

Now normal people had no idea of the effects of these practices but Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى makes some people use their reasoning to not go towards anything which goes against it. In the same way our Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ naturally had a distaste for things which would be made Ḥarām later on.

There were also many Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ who had never touched wine even though it was not prohibited in the beginning of Islām. You will also see many people today in society, they might not follow a religion or the consumption of wine might not be prohibited - Ḥarām in their religion, yet they use their own reasoning and do not drink. They stay away from all forms of intoxication.

The Initial Revelation

Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى sometimes sends down revelation due to an event or someone asking Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ a question. This is called the Shāne Nuzūl, or cause of revelation.

It so happened that some of the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ were deeply concerned about the consumption of alcohol. ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, Muadh ibn Jabal رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ along with some other Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ from the Anṣār came to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and told him how wine and gambling causes a person financial loss and also affects a person’s ability to reason and they wanted his advice with regard to this.

Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى then revealed the following Verse in answer to the advice they sought. This was the first verse which was revealed about wine and also the first step in trying to stop the people from consuming wine and gambling.

Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى says in Surah Al-Baqarah:

﴿ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ^ص

قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ

مِن تَنْفَعِهِمَا ^ق¹

“They ask you about wine and gambling. Say in both there is a great sin and some benefit for people. And their sin is greater than their benefit”

Now this verse mentions some benefit for people, some good, this could mean the taste of the wine and a feel good factor if a person drinks it. These factors are short lived, temporary and are far outweighed by the amount of bad things they can lead to.

The meaning in this verse of the word ‘ithm’ is sin and everything that may become a preliminary to sin, which means anything that can lead to the sin. For example, if a person consumes alcohol, it causes their senses to become dull and weakens their ability to reason. A human beings’ reasoning is what acts like a brake

¹ Qur’ān 2:219

against committing evil deeds. Once this brake is not working, it opens the door to commit all types of deeds.

The actual word in Arabic for wine is 'Khamr', and Khamr means to cover. So in the same way a woman's headscarf is called a Khimār because it covers her hair, wine covers a person's senses, so it is called Khamr.

So the above are spiritual or religious effects caused by the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol causes a person to not realise what they are doing and can lead them to committing bad deeds.

Intoxication in General

Are these rulings just for alcohol or are other intoxicants also included?

The rulings will include everything which intoxicates, so that would include drugs, glue, legal highs etc. Some people use the excuse that only the prohibition of wine is mentioned in the Qur'ān so it is ok to consume other substances. Let's look at the evidence:

In a Ḥadīth narrated in Sunan Tirmidhī,

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ
قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كُلُّ مُسْكِرٍ خَمْرٌ
وَكُلُّ مُسْكِرٍ حَرَامٌ²

Ibn 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said 'All intoxicants are wine and all intoxicants are forbidden'

² Sunan Tirmidhi 1784

Alcohol & Cancer

Now let's look at the physical effects on a person who consumes alcohol; we know it damages certain body parts, the stomach, the liver, and the kidneys. It can cause alcohol poisoning. Here is a list of cancers which can be caused by alcohol consumption:

- Increase the risk of Bowel Cancer
- Breast Cancer
- Laryngeal cancer which affects the voice box
- Liver cancer
- Mouth cancer
- Oesophageal cancer (food pipe)
- Pharyngeal cancer (upper throat)³

³ www.drinkaware.co.uk

Drinking & Driving

I have already mentioned that it stops a person from being able to reason. If a person was able to reason, then why would they not allow a person to drive after consuming alcohol?

So it is agreed in our country that after consuming a certain amount of alcohol a person is no longer considered able to drive. How does intoxication affect a person's driving?

- The brain takes longer to receive messages from the eye
- Processing information becomes more difficult
- Instructions to the body muscles are delayed resulting in slower reaction times.
- You can experience blurred vision, double vision which affects your ability to see while you are driving.

How many people are killed due to drink driving, or due to a person being under the influence of drugs? On average in our country 3,000 people are killed or seriously injured in drink drive collisions.⁴

So you can see that a person consuming alcohol can also endanger somebody else as well.

⁴ www.drinkdrivingfacts.com

Social effects of Intoxication

So what about the Social effects?

When a person drinks, it costs money, people forget that alcohol is a drug and is addictive. People become addicted so they have to drink, if they don't have enough money to pay for the addiction it can lead to other crimes to try and feed the addiction. It is also expensive, when people go out with their friends or work colleagues, they are all expected to buy one round of drinks for everyone, and it can prove very expensive.

If a person gets drunk, they let their guard down, they may reveal something which they have been entrusted with, imagine a person who holds an important position in government or in industry gets drunk and lets some important information slip through.

A person who is normally of sound mind, does things he or she would never dream of doing, they could even commit adultery and then wake up the next morning without even remembering.

In a study carried out in 2016 by the Guardian, Alcohol is estimated to cost the NHS around £3.5bn a year which is £120 per tax payer. The NHS uses 3.6% of its budget treating alcohol related conditions.

The Warning for the one who drinks Alcohol

Now let's look at our religion of Islām, what did Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ say about the person who drinks wine.

In a Ḥadīth from Sunan Tirmidhī

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ بْنِ عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ
قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ شَرِبَ الْخُمْرَ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ صَلَاةً أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا فَإِنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ عَادَ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ صَلَاةً أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا فَإِنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ عَادَ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ صَلَاةً أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا فَإِنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ عَادَ الرَّابِعَةَ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ صَلَاةً أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا فَإِنْ تَابَ لَمْ يَثْبُتِ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَقَاهُ مِنْ نَهْرِ الْخُبَالِ قِيلَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ وَمَا نَهْرُ الْخُبَالِ قَالَ نَهْرٌ مِنْ صَدِيدِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ⁵

⁵ Sunan Tirmidhi 1785

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar narrates that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, the person who drinks wine (Alcohol), Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will not accept his Ṣalāh for 40 days. If he repents then Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will accept his repentance. If he then returns to drink then Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will not accept his Ṣalāt for 40 days, if he repents then Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will accept his repentance. . If he then returns to drink then Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will not accept his Ṣalāt for 40 days, if he repents then Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will accept his repentance.

If he then returns to drink a fourth time then Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will not accept his prayers for 40 days and if he seeks repentance, Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will not accept his repentance and he will be given to drink from the river of Al-Khabāl, they said Oh Abu ‘Abdur Raḥmān, what the river of al-Khabāl, he said it is a river from pus for the inhabitants of the fire.

So from the above we can see the seriousness of drinking alcohol, that a person Ṣalāh will not be accepted for 40 days.

The Initial Advice

So now we have seen the effects let's go back to the first verse that was revealed with regards to wine.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ^ص

قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ

مِنْ تَفْعِهِمَا ^ق

In this verse, it doesn't clearly tell us that consuming wine and gambling are Ḥarām, but tells us that their evils may lead a person to committing sins. So it is advice to people, telling them not to do it, not to consume wine or gamble.

Now when some of the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم heard about this, they took the advice and stopped drinking from that moment in time. Now there were some others who thought that the verse has identified wine as a cause for sin and it is not Ḥarām, so if we make sure we

⁶ Qur'ān 2:219

do not commit these evil deeds, what harm could there be if we continued to drink?

This is an argument which is also made nowadays, that if we can control how much we drink, what harm can there be in consuming alcohol? The same for drugs, if I just have a puff or two of a joint, I will feel a quick hit but it won't lead to me committing any sins. In order to answer this, let's see what happened after this.

The Second Revelation

So we have a group of Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who have taken the advice from the Qur'ān and stopped drinking, and others who have carried, on as the ruling for its prohibition has not been revealed yet.

One day one of the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ invited some friends to his house. They had dinner and after they all started to drink. Now the time for Maghrib Ṣalāh came, so they all stood up for Ṣalāh and selected one among them to become the Imām. The Imām started to recite the Quran and while he was reciting Surah al-Kāfirūn he got it wrong, because he had been drinking. So now the second step was taken.

Allāh ﷻ now revealed the verse in Sūrah An-Nisā’:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنتُمْ
سُكْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ⁷

“Oh you who believe, don’t go near Salāh when you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying”.

So now drinking had been prohibited when it was time for Ṣalāh. So when it was not time for Ṣalāh some of the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ continued to drink at those times.

So you can see that the excuse of drinking to an extent where a person is in their senses to not commit any evil deeds now reaches another level. Will the intoxication cause a person to remember to pray there Ṣalāh if the time comes? Will they be able to pray it properly if they are intoxicated? Will they be even able to tell if they have made a mistake whilst praying?

Imagine reading the verses all muddled up and completely changing the meaning! From the above example we can see that

⁷ Qur’ān 4:43

it does have an effect, so now people cannot pray when they have been drinking.

Now as we said, drinking had not yet been clearly prohibited, it was only prohibited during the hours of Salaat. So this was the second stage.

The Third Revelation

Another incident then followed, a Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ invited some others to his house and after dinner they started to drink. It was Arab custom at the time that people used to recite poetry, so they started reciting poetry mentioning their accomplishments and excellences when one of the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ recited a poem which satirized the Anṣār, the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ from Madinah. Satirize means to say bad things, ridicule.

Now when the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ read the poem, a young Ṣaḥābah from the Anṣār got angry and hit the other Ṣaḥābah on the head with a camels jaw bone causing him serious injury. When this happened Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ raised his hands in prayer and said,

اللهم بين لنا في الخمر بيانا شافيا

‘Oh Allāh, give us a clear and conclusive guidance in the matter of wine’

Now when Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ made this dua, Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى sent down the definitive ruling in Sūrah Al-Mā'idah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَمُ

رَجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ⁸

“Oh you who have believed, indeed wine (intoxicants) and gambling and (sacrificing) on stone altars and diving arrows are but defilement from the actions of Shayṭān, so avoid it so that you may be successful”

So now it was clear that the consumption of wine was unlawful Ḥarām.

⁸ Qur'ān 5:90

The Gradual Prohibition

We can see from Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى infinite wisdom that this process of prohibition was done gradually. The first verse that was revealed just pointed to the fact that consuming alcohol can lead a person to sin and is sin-prone. And some Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ left it there right away.

Then the next stage was to tell people not to read Ṣalāt if they drank, so Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى was advising people to leave this habit.

There is very good advice in this, that any habit which can cause a person to become forgetful of their Ṣalāh needs to be reviewed.

The final stage was to completely prohibit the consumption of Alcohol. If the prohibition had come immediately in the beginning of Islām then it would have been difficult for some of the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ to leave this habit of a lifetime in an instance. We have to remember that this is an addiction for many people, and when a person becomes an addict, it is very difficult for them to let go of the habit suddenly, it has to be done gradually.

So firstly advice was given to refrain, many people took this advice and stopped or at least reduced their consumption to a level there it would not lead them to sin, and then the ruling came where people were not allowed to drink during the hours of Salāh, so this

reduced the consumption even more. Now when the time came for them to completely stop it was made much easier.

The Order Comes

So what happened when the order came to stop drinking? ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ reported that the proclaimer, the person who made the announcements on behalf of our Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ went around the streets of Madīnah announcing that wine was now forbidden.

Many Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ took the wine they had and poured it in the street straight away. Whoever had wine in a vessel in their hands, threw it right away. Anas رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was serving some of his friends at the time. When they heard the proclaimer, everybody there said ‘now pour all this wine down on the ground and break all the cups and goblets and ewers and pitchers’.

It is said on that day, wine was flowing down the streets of Madīnah like a stream of rainwater.

The people had been ordered to take whatever wine they had to a certain place, but there was not much left there apart from the wine which was in the market for commercial sales. The wine was put there without any hesitation. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ went there himself and slit many of the leather wine-bags with his own hands and the rest were done by the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ

An Example of Obedience

The Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ were the best example of obedience. One Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was a businessman and he used to import wine in from Syria. He took his whole capital and bought a whole stock of wine to sell.

Now when he came back to Madīnah with all of his supply, he found out that Wine was now Ḥarām, so what was he to do? He left the supply on a hillside and came to see the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and asked him what he should do. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ told him in accordance with the divine command that he should tear out all those leather bags and pour the wine in them on the ground.

Now look at the behaviour of this companion, he never hesitated for a moment. He immediately went and poured all of the wine that he had invested all of his money in, into the ground. Subhānallāh, he never argued once, or tried to find a way out to see if he could get back any money from this massive investment he had made by purchasing all of this wine. Without a thought he obeyed the command of Allāh سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى and of our Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

So the question could arise from here, could he not have gone somewhere else and sold the wine to some people who could drink it, some people who were not Muslims?

Can we sell Alcohol?

We know as Muslims, we are not allowed to consume alcohol, but what is the ruling for selling it?

We see many restaurants, shops, off licences which are owned by Muslims, and they sell alcohol, so what is the ruling?

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ
لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْخَمْرِ عَشْرَةَ
عَاصِرَهَا وَمُعْتَصِرَهَا وَشَارِبَهَا وَحَامِلَهَا وَالْمَحْمُولَةَ إِلَيْهِ
وَسَاقِيَهَا وَبَاعِعَهَا وَآكِلَ ثَمَنِهَا وَالْمُشْتَرِيَ لَهَا وَالْمُشْتَرَاةَ لَهُ⁹

In Sunan Tirmidhī, there is a Ḥadīth narrated by Anas ibn Mālik رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, he said that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ cursed 10 people with regards to wine,

1. The one who presses it (squeezed it),
2. The one who ordered it to be pressed (squeezed)
3. The one who drinks it

⁹ Sunan Tirmidhi 1216

4. The one who carries it
5. The one who he is carrying it to
6. The one who gives it to someone to drink
7. The one who sells it
8. The one who consumes its price
9. The one who buys it
10. The one who it was bought for.

So you can from the above all of these people have been cursed by Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ so we should refrain from doing any of these. If we sell it in our shops or restaurants, then we should seek repentance from Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and stop selling it right away. If we fear that we will lose business because of it, then know that Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is the best of providers, our sustenance is in his hands, if we have a clear and good intention, Inshā'Allāh we will get more barakah, more blessing in our earning by abstaining from these actions.

May Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى protect us from the all the evils of all sins.

Conclusion

So you can see from what we have discussed, how the prohibition of alcohol came about in Islām and the gradual steps taken by Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى to implement this ruling. We can see the personal dangers, the social dangers and the economic dangers as well. There is risk to a person own health and also another person's when they are under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any form of intoxicants.

So if anyone is involved in any of the things mentioned, repent to Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى this month. Ask for forgiveness, have genuine regret that you should not have done it in the first place and make a firm intention you will not do it again. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is the most Merciful, the all Merciful, he can forgive the greatest of sins and in this month let us make this change.

May Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى give us all the ability to stay away from all prohibited substances and keep us all safe from the effects & evils of all types of intoxication.

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