

Sa'īd ibn Abu Burdah narrated from his father from Abu Mūsā al-Ash'arī that:

1

The Prophet sent him to Yemen. He [i.e. Abu Mūsā] asked him about certain drinks made there. The Prophet asked: 'Which ones?' He said: *al-bit'* and *al-mizr*. I asked Abu Burdah: What is *al-bit'*? He said: Fermented honey, while *al-mizr* is fermented barley.

2

The Prophet said: Every intoxicant is forbidden.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 4343.

### From the Qur'an

﴿Believers, intoxicants, games of chance, idolatrous practices and divining arrows are abominations devised by Satan. Therefore, turn away from them so that you may be successful. (90) Satan seeks only to stir up enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist?﴾ (5: 90-91)

### The Narrator

Abu Mūsā, 'Abdullāh ibn Qays ibn Salīm ibn Ḥuḍḍār ibn Ḥarb ibn 'Āmir ibn al-Ash'ar belonged to the Ash'arī tribe. He was a prominent imam and renowned scholar. He was a companion of the Prophet who migrated twice, both to Abyssinia and to Madinah. He taught the people of Basrah, helping them to acquire an insight into Islam and teaching them the Qur'an and its recitation. His recitation of the Qur'an reflected a fine melodious voice. He died in Year 50 AH, 670 CE.

### Summary

The problem with alcoholic drinks is that they influence the mind and intoxicate. Therefore, every substance that influences a person's mind, whether made from grapes or any other article, is forbidden in Islam.



# Message and Meaning

1

When the Prophet sent Abu Mūsā al-Ash'arī on a mission to Yemen, he asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the status of some drinks that were familiar to the people of Yemen, such as *bit'* and *mizr*. Abu Burdah, who was Abu Mūsā's son, explained to his own son, Sa'īd, that *bit'* was a drink made by the fermentation of honey, while *mizr* was the drink made by the fermentation of barley. It is also said that it is the fermentation of a mixture of wheat and barley. The Arabic word used in the hadith is *nabīdh*, which is a drink of dates, grapes, honey or any other soaked in water and left to ferment over a period of time, whether it intoxicates or not.

2

The Prophet gives Abu Mūsā a clear answer that applies to all drinks, not merely the two he specified. The Prophet's answer attaches the ruling to the effect of what is being consumed of food or drink. If it intoxicates, then it is forbidden, whether it is made of honey, dates, grapes, barley or any other substance, and whether it is solid, liquid or powder, regardless of names or descriptions.

In Arabic, wine means *khamr*, a word derived from a root that signifies covering. It is given to spirits generally because it is like a covering that blurs the mind, in the same way as a head covering conceals it. Thus, whatever has the same characteristic is given the same verdict. This is the meaning of the Prophet's answer: 'Every intoxicant is forbidden'.



The hadith refutes the claim that the prohibition applies only to wine made of grapes. This is confirmed by the fact that when the verses prohibiting wines were revealed, the people of Madinah did not use wine made from grapes. Ibn 'Umar said: 'When wine was prohibited, the people of Madinah used to have five different drinks, but none of these was made of grapes'.<sup>(1)</sup>

The same ruling equally applies to a strong drink of which only a small amount intoxicates and a mild one which intoxicates only with heavy drinking. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'If a large amount of a drink intoxicates, it is forbidden even in a small amount'.<sup>(2)</sup> The point here is that a small amount is forbidden although it does not intoxicate, because it is the means to drinking much and becoming intoxicated. This comes under the rule of cause prevention, prohibiting what leads to the ultimate evil. Thus, a small amount which does not intoxicate is still forbidden.



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 4616.

2 Related by Ahmad, 5648; Abu Dāwūd, 3681; al-Tirmidhī, 1865; Ibn Mājah, 3393.

# Implementation

1

Every Muslim should take precautions and stick to what Islam requires. Therefore, we must not do anything unless we know that it is permissible. The Prophet's companions were keen to ensure this, as is clear from Abu Mūsā's question about these drinks.

2

The questioner should explain what he is asking about, so that the mufti has a very clear idea of what the question concerns and gives the right ruling.

3

The original verdict about types of food and drinks is that they are permissible, unless we have evidence indicating the prohibition of something in particular. When there is nothing to indicate the prohibition of a certain type of food or drink, then it is permissible.

4

The safe protection of the mind is one of the objectives of Islamic law. Hence, the Shariah prohibits whatever influences the mind or disrupts its proper function. The worst of these is alcohol as it harms both body and mind.

5

Names may change, but the ruling is the same: alcohol, narcotics, qat, etc. carry the same ruling of prohibition, because they all have the same ultimate effect. No one may try to deceive God by using different names.

6

The reason for prohibiting alcohol is that it influences the mind, which is addressed by God's commands. When the mind is dysfunctional, the barrier that stops a person from sinful action is removed. Moreover, the person concerned is unable to control his behaviour, which may lead to hostility with others.

7

The temptation to drink alcohol is one that leads to the loss of control of one's mental faculty. He is thus unable to remember God and contemplate His blessings and signs. An early scholar said that a person who drinks goes through a period of time when he does not know his Lord. God has created mankind so that they would know, remember, glorify, worship and obey Him. What prevents this and obscures one's vision of one's Lord is certainly forbidden.<sup>(1)</sup>

8

One very important aspect of the punishment administered to the one who drinks alcohol is that he is denied drinking it in Heaven, if he is admitted there. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Whoever drinks wine in this present life and dies an addict of it, and does not repent, shall not drink it in the life to come'.<sup>(2)</sup>

1 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Ḥikam*, Vol. 2, p. 475.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 5575; Muslim, 2003.

9

Unless a person who drinks alcohol repents, God shall make him drink of the sweat and puss of Hell's dwellers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Whatever covers [the mind] is wine, and whatever intoxicates is forbidden. Whoever drinks an intoxicant, his prayers are redeemed short for forty days, but if he repents, God accepts his repentance. If he returns to it a fourth time, God will certainly make him to drink of *ḥīnat al-khabā'*. People asked the Prophet what that was, and he answered: 'The puss of Hell's dwellers. And whoever gives such a drink to a minor who does not distinguish what is lawful from unlawful, God will certainly make him drink of *ḥīnat al-khabā'*'.<sup>(1)</sup>

10

Advocates of Islam and scholars should have the insight to give questioners answers that benefit them. If they feel that it is best to give a simple answer to the question, without adding anything, they should do so, but if they feel that some extra is beneficial, they should add it.

11

Al-'Abbās ibn Mirdās al-Sulamī disdained drinking intoxicants in pre-Islamic days. He was asked why he did not drink, when drinking increases one's courage and generosity. He said: I fear that I will be my people's master in the morning and their stupid fool in the evening.

12

Drinking alcohol is the mother of all evil. When a person drinks it, it may lead him to commit adultery, theft or manslaughter. He may even blaspheme without being cognizant of what he is saying.

13

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'A man who lived before your time used to devote much time to worship and stay away from people. A woman loved him and she sent her servant to him saying: "We would like you to come as a witness". He went to her. As he entered through a door, the servant locked it. Ultimately, he entered a room where a pretty woman was seated. There was also a servant with her, and a jug which contained wine. She said: "We have not invited you to witness anything. I only want you to kill this boy, or sleep with me or drink a glass of wine. If you refuse, I shall scream and undermine your reputation". When he realized that he had no escape, he said to her: "Give me a glass of wine". When he drank it, he asked for more. He continued, and ultimately, he slept with her and killed the boy'.<sup>(2)</sup>

1 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 3680.

2 Related by Ibn Ḥibbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* anthology, 5348.

