

ALCOHOL (PART 2 OF 2): THE MOTHER OF EVERY EVIL

Rating: 4.8

Description: The Islamic stance regarding alcoholic beverages.

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Published on: 11 Dec 2006

Last modified on: 22 Jun 2010

“O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! That we should with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause transform ourselves into beasts!” (Cassio, in William Shakespeare’s Othello, act 2, scene 3)

One day, as he came out from his mosque, the Prophet Muhammad, may God send praises upon him, noticed his cousin and son-in-law, Ali b. Abi Talib, visibly upset. When the concerned Prophet asked Ali what was troubling him, Ali simply pointed to the bloody carcass of his dearly cherished camel - no ordinary camel, but the war-weathered camel that Ali would mount in his valiant defense of the Prophet and Islam on the battlefield. Ali told the Prophet that one of their uncles had been responsible for the unsanctioned slaughter of his animal, and so the Prophet went to ascertain his (i.e. the uncle’s) side of the story.

Entering in the presence of his uncle, the Prophet found him drunk with wine. Upon seeing the displeasure in his nephew’s face, the uncle knew at once, despite his intoxication, that the Prophet had come to question him about Ali’s beast of war. With nothing good to say in his defense, the guilt-ridden, drunken uncle blurted out to his nephew: **“You and your father are my slaves!”** The Prophet’s only response to the blasphemous outburst was to exclaim: **“Truly, alcohol is the mother of every evil!”**

And so, from the biography of the Prophet Muhammad we learn a weighty lesson as regards the colossal and evil consequences of alcoholic drink. Any one of the alcohol-inspired acts in this short episode from the blessed Prophet’s life would suffice the reader as an admonition: whether it be the culling of Ali’s camel, the drunken state of an uncle of a Prophet of God – let alone His last and final messenger to mankind - or the wicked insult he spewed out against him and his own deceased brother, who was no less than the father of the Prophet of God. How much worse then when we consider all these crimes together? Not to mention the many evils indirectly resulting from the uncle’s consumption of the alcohol, such as the loss to the Muslim community of one its battle-hardened steeds of war, or the pain, anguish and, perhaps, embarrassment that Muhammad must have felt at this tragic family affair. No doubt, it was precisely because the Prophet recognized that it was the alcohol that gave birth to and nurtured all these foul sins that he denounced it as: **“the mother of every evil!”**

Hence, we find Islam completely forbidding the consumption of alcohol, whether in large or small amounts. The Prophet Muhammad said:

“If a large amount of anything causes intoxication, a small amount of it is also prohibited.”[\[1\]](#)

In this one *hadeeth* narration, we see the perfection of Islam as a religion, its conclusiveness as a legal code, and its comprehensiveness as a way of life. As one German convert to Islam noted:

“[Islam] values the moral and spiritual health of a nation as much as its physical well-being. It considers anything that interferes with the normal working of the mind, numbs our senses, thereby reducing our level of shame or responsibility, or clouds our perception as harmful (this includes alcohol as well as other drugs altering the mind). And recognizing that different people react quite differently to the same stimulant, it does not leave the judgment, as to how much is acceptable to them. Too many people thought they had control over their drinking habit, yet ended up having ‘one glass too many’. Islam categorically states that if a substance can destroy the clarity of the mind in large quantities, it is harmful even in minute quantities. Islam, therefore, advocates a total prohibition of narcotic drugs, including alcohol. It forbids the use, not just the abuse of these substances.”[\[2\]](#)

Yes, there are some benefits to be derived from alcoholic beverages. For example, alcohol can give one strength and confidence; it helps one to relax and, in small quantities, is even good for the health of one’s heart.[\[3\]](#) However, as the Glorious Quran states, the harms associated with alcohol far outweigh its benefits. As such, in the final analysis, alcohol is a foe, not a friend of its consumer.

“They ask you (O Prophet) concerning alcoholic drink and gambling. Say: ‘In them is a great sin, and (some) benefit for men, but their sin is greater than their benefit...’”
(Quran 2:219)

It is only because Islam seeks the benefit and betterment of man that Islamic law criminalizes the consumption, production, transportation and sale of alcoholic drink.[\[4\]](#) In fact, the mere consumption of alcohol is a criminal pursuit so serious that it carries with it a severe corporal punishment. As for the Hereafter, the punishment is truly grotesque:

“Every intoxicant is prohibited. God has made a covenant regarding those who consume intoxicants to give them to drink the discharge (of the inhabitants of Hell)!”
[\[5\]](#)

To conclude, it is perhaps useful to have the reader ponder over the following well-known story; well-known at least to many a cautious Muslim.

Once upon a time, a bad woman invited a good man to bad deeds. The man, fearing God, flatly refused. But, determined not to let her prey escape, the woman offered him one of three choices, each one more dastardly than the other: to consume alcohol, to commit adultery, or to murder her child from a previous marriage. If the man refused, she would cry rape. So, after having pondered his predicament, the pious man chose what he reckoned to be the lesser of the three evils. However, upon taking the alcohol, the man became drunk and then, under the influence of his brain-killing beverage, he killed the child and committed adultery with the wicked woman.

Ponder, and then consider how easily you yourself could degenerate as a human being if, that is, you too were to embrace “**the mother of every evil.**”

Footnotes:

[1] Narrated by the Companion, Jaabir, and recorded in the collections of Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud & Ibn Majah.

[2] Sahib M. Bleher, *One glass too many*. Pg. 199.

[3] Although, strictly speaking, it is the pigment that occurs naturally within the grape and not necessarily the wine fermented from it that is beneficial for the heart.

[4] “Allah curses all intoxicants (alcoholic beverages); (He also curses) the one who drinks it and the one who serves it, the one who sells it and the one who buys it, the one who makes it and the one who asks that it be made for him, the one who delivers it and the one to whom it is delivered.” (*Abu Dawood*)

[5] *Saheeh Muslim*.

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