

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Chapter 5, Section 12

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 87

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُعْتَدِينَ

87. "O' you who have Faith! Do not prohibit the good things that Allah has made lawful to you, and do not transgress. Verily Allah does not like the transgressors."

It happened that one day the Messenger of Allah (S) was speaking for people about the Hereafter and the scenes of the gathering-place of Resurrection. The audience were so touched at heart and wept that some of them decided, from then on, not to consume any good food, to prohibit comfort unto themselves, to observe a fast, to abandon their wives, and to sleep at nights less than before.

They swore over that decision to be loyal to it. When the Prophet (S) was informed of it, he mustered people in the mosque and told them: "I eat food; I sleep at nights and do not abandon my wives. Our religion is not the creed of retreat and monasticism. The monasticism of my ummah is the holy struggle. Whoever goes a direction other than my style is not a Muslim."

Some of them asked what they would do for the oaths they had taken. The subsequent verses were revealed saying that Allah does not call them to account for their vain (unintentional) oaths.

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*"Whoever makes a lawful thing unlawful for, himself (through a vow), the one must accomplish it, and there is nothing upon him. ..."*¹

Explanations

1. Islam is the religion of 'Fitrah' (nature), wherein retreat and monasticism, or excess and defect are forbidden.
2. A Muslim submits to the command of Allah. He neither turns a lawful thing into an unlawful one, nor vice versa.

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"O' people! What I have made lawful is lawful until the day of Judgment, and what I have forbidden is forbidden until the day of Judgment." 2

3. Edible things, clothing, and the whole lawful pleasures have been created for the usage of humankind.
4. When using the lawful things, be careful of avoiding extravagance.

"... Do not transgress ..."

5. The vows, covenants and oaths that are against the explicit prohibitions of the text of the Qur'an, are worthless and invalid.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 88

وَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ

88. "And eat from the lawful and good things which Allah has provided for you; and be in awe of Allah Whom you have Faith in."

In the previous verse, the words were about the prohibition of unlawful things, while in this verse it has enjoined people to lawfully enjoying the merits of Allah. It says:

"And eat from the lawful and good things which Allah has provided for you;"

The only condition in this course is that you should avoid opposing the command of Allah in whom you believe.

"... and be in awe of Allah whom you have Faith in."

That is, your faith to Allah requires that you respect all his commandments both in enjoying the merits of Allah and observing moderation and piety.

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"It is obligatory for every Muslim believer, man or woman, to gain lawful things." 3

Again, the Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Worship consists of seventy parts, the best of which is seeking the lawful material." 4

Also, the Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Seeking for lawful sustenance is the same as holy struggle in the way of Allah." 5

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Next to the obligatory prayers, seeking for lawful (sustenance) is necessary and compulsory." 6

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Gaining income through a lawful way, is the most exalted deed." 7

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 89

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَدْتُمُ الْاَيْمَانَ فَكَفَّارَتُهُ
اِطْعَامُ عَشْرَةِ مَسَاكِينَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعَمُونَ اَهْلِيكُمْ اَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ اَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ
فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ اَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ اَيْمَانِكُمْ اِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ وَاَحْفَظُوا اَيْمَانَكُمْ
كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ اٰيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

89. "Allah does not call you to account for your vain (unintentional) oaths, but he calls you to account for what you have pledged solemnly. So its atonement is feeding ten paupers with the average of what you feed your own families, or clothing them, or freeing a slave. But whoever does not find (the means to do so), should fast for three days. That is the atonement of your oaths when you pledge. But guard your oaths. Thus Allah makes His Signs clear for you in order that you might be thankful."

The Atonement of Oaths

In this verse, the general discussion is about the oaths which are taken upon the fields of making the lawful things into unlawful ones, and the like of them. These oaths, from this point of view, are divided into two sorts. At first, it says:

"Allah does not call you to account for your vain (unintentional) oaths....."

The objective meaning of 'vain oaths', as the commentators and jurists have said, is the oaths that do not aim a definite goal and those that have not been taken intentionally and decidedly. Besides, the contents of such oaths are against the laws of religion, viz. they are estimated as opposite to the commands of Allah.

The second sort is the oaths which are taken willfully, intentionally, decidedly, and earnestly. Referring to these kinds of oaths, in the continuation of the verse, the Qur'an says:

"... but he calls you to account for what you have pledged solemnly....."

And Allah charges you with a duty to fulfill these oaths.

For the validity of an oath, of course, only its being earnest is not enough, but the content of the oath should be a lawful matter, at least. It should also be noted that an oath is not reputable except by the Name of Allah.

Therefore, if someone takes an oath by Allah, it is obligatory to perform it according to his oath. So, if he breaches his pledge, one of the following three atonements is necessary to be performed by the one. At first, it says:

"... So its atonement is feeding ten paupers ..."

Yet, in order that some people do not take this general ordinance so that they think they can give any low and worthless material of food as atonement, the Qur'an clearly explains the quality of this food, saying that it must be:

"... With the average of what you feed your own families....."

The second is: to cloth ten needy persons with proper clothing.

"... or clothing them....."

The appearance of this verse, of course, indicates that the clothing should be of a sort which normally covers the body.

Yet it can be of various kinds according to the seasons and places in different periods.

To answer to the question that whether, from the point of quality, the minimum material is enough or the average should be observed here, too, as the absoluteness of the verse implies, any sort of clothing can be enough.

The third is:

"...freeing a slave..."

Sometimes it happens that there may be some persons who are able to fulfill neither of the above two atonements. Therefore, next to stating these ordinances, it says:

".. But whoever does not find (the means to do so), should fast for three days...."

After that, as an emphasis, the Qur'an says:

".. That is the atonement of your oaths when you pledge ..."

But, in order that no one might consider that by giving atonement, breaching the proper oaths is not unlawful, it says:

".. But guard your oaths ..."

The purpose of this phrase is that you should be careful not to commit sins by breaching your oaths.

And, finally, at the end of the verse, in order that you might be grateful for these ordinances and commandments, which guarantee the happiness and felicity of both an individual and society, the Qur'an says:

".. Thus Allah makes His Signs clear for you in order that you might be thankful."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 90

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ
الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

90. "O' you who have Faith! Verily wine, gambling, idols, and (dividing by) arrows are an abomination of the Satan's work, so avoid it, that you may be prosperous."

At the time of the advent of Islam, the Arabs customarily were intensively interested in poetry, wine, and fighting. The Divine revelations concerning the prohibition of wine were gradually conveyed.

At first, there revealed a verse stating that provision is supplied from date and grapes either, from which you can obtain intoxication, too⁸. This indication of intoxication implies the statement of its badness.

The Qur'an, then, has referred to the benefits of gambling and wine (and also that their containing sin is greater than their benefits⁹. After that the Divine verse was revealed enjoining not to establish prayer at the state of being intoxicated¹⁰. And, finally, the above verse was revealed which considered wine as an

abomination, a Satanic action, and ordained that it is unlawful.¹¹

The Arabic term /xamr/ (wine) is derived from the same root as the Arabic word /xumur/ (cover) is. In Arabic, the veil of a woman is called /ximar/; since it covers the hairs. Similarly, wine covers the wisdom.

The Arabic term /maysir/ is derived from /yusr/ with the meaning of easiness, since, in gambling, players sometimes earn money by that play without tolerating any trouble.

The Qur'anic term /azlam/ means a kind of lottery done with some sticks of arrows. It used to be performed before Islam, at the Age of Ignorance.

Explanations

1. In Islam, having Faith and drinking wine do not agree with each other.
2. Drinking wine and gambling are in the same row with idolatry.

"... Verily wine, gambling, idols, and..."¹²

3. The Islamic commandments and prohibitions have been ordained reasonably and wisely.

"... and (dividing by) arrows are an abomination of the Satan's work, so avoid it ..."

4. The verse enjoins to avoid not only drinking wine, but also approaching it. The reason of this ordinance is that a sound nutrition is effective in the prosperity of human beings. Therefore, it enjoins to avoid intoxication, so that you may be prosperous. The verse says:

"... So avoid it, that you may be prosperous."

Any kind of cooperation concerning wine, including its production, distribution and consumption, prohibited.

Imam Baqir (as) has narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) that he cursed ten groups of people who are concerned somehow with drinking wine. They are as follows:

"Its planter, its guardian, its maker, its drinker, its cupbearer, its bearer, its receiver, its seller, its purchaser, and anyone who, in a way, devours from its income."¹³

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 91

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ
وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ

91. "Certainly Satan desires to cast enmity and hatred among you by wine and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer. So will you stop?"

Considering the concerning statistics, a great number of murders, crimes, accidents, divorces, psychic sicknesses, and renal diseases and so on, are caused by wine, liquor. Here, in stating the philosophy of its prohibition, the Qur'an emphasizes on two points: social harms and spiritual losses, (including enmity, and neglecting both prayers and the remembrance of Allah).

Explanations

1. Stating the philosophy of ordinances is one of the factors of the effectiveness of speech.
2. All the factors that may create grudge and rancor should be challenged against.
3. Any action or any person that causes enmity and hatred amongst people is Satanic.
4. Anything, like wine or gambling, that causes the negligence of a person from the remembrance of Allah and establishment of prayers is obscene.
5. Wherever enmity and hatred come forth, it is appropriate to devote material gains, whatever they may be. (There is some profit in wine and gambling, too, but, because of their evil effects, they are prohibited).
6. The mental harms and spiritual losses are the most important damages, both bodily and financially. Wine has also bodily harm, yet, here, hatred and negligence have been emphasized on.

Thus, the prohibition of drinking liquor and gambling, enjoined by Allah, is for the goodness and improvement of people's affairs both in this world and the Hereafter.

Ibn-Abas, a leading commentator, says that the target of the verse is Sa'd-ibn-'Abi-Waghghas and a man from the Helpers who had compacted the agreement of brotherhood with each other. A man from among the Helpers invited Sa'd to a party. They prepared a table of food and wine and drank so much so that they became intoxicated.

At that time they boasted to each other so violently that their dispute ended to a conflict. The Helper took a piece of bone and struck on the nose of Sa'd so vigorously that his nose was smashed. Then Allah sent down this verse about them.

The verse means that Satan wishes to seduce you and attract you toward drinking wine in order to take your wisdom from you, and persuade you to do some evil things that you do not do them in an ordinary state.

Ghattadah says that some people played gambling upon their own property and wives. At last, those

who had lost their property and their wives sat in grief, planning to take vengeance from their rivals. Therefore, gambling has no consequence but grudge and enmity.

By this way, Satan desires to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, so that you do not offer your thanks for His bounties.

Satan also desires to make you neglectful of prayer, which is the firm base of the religion. So, obey Allah (S.w.T.) and be not heedless of His prohibition. The verse says:

"Certainly Satan desires to cast enmity and hatred among you by wine and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer. So will you stop?"

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 92

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا
الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

92. " And obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and beware but if you turn away, then know that Our Messenger's duty is only conveyance (of the Message) Manifest. "

The governmental and political commandments of the Messenger of Allah (S) are similar to, and the same as, the commandments of Allah, and for this reason it is obligatory to obey them.

Those who refrain to obey the command of Allah deserve to be punished. So, there is no responsibility upon the Messenger of Allah save conveying the message of Allah and stating it manifestly.

The verse says:

"And obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and beware, but if you turn away, then know that Our Messenger's duty is only conveyance (of the Message) Manifest. "

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 93

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُوا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

93. "On those who have Faith and do good deeds, there is no sin in regard to what they ate (before prohibition) so long as they are virtuous and faithful and do good deeds, then still they

be virtuous (upon prohibited things) and believe (in their prohibition), then they are virtuous (due to prohibited things) and do good; and Allah loves the doers of good."

When the verse of prohibitions of gambling and drinking wine was revealed, there were some people who asked about their condition regarding to the time before that revelation or the condition of those who had not heard of that ordinance yet and were living in some far distances.

The verse answers them implying that those who have believed and have done good deeds but have not received this ordinance, if they have drunk wine or have devoured from the income of gambling, there is no sin on them. The verse says:

"On those who have Faith and do good deeds, there is no sin in regard to what they ate (before prohibition) ..."

Yet, this ordinance has conditioned that such people should be virtuous, have Faith, and do good actions. Here is the continuation of the verse:

"... so long as they are virtuous and faithful and do good deeds...."

This subject is repeated once more in the verse, when it says:

"... then still they be virtuous (upon prohibited things) and believe (in their prohibition)...."

And, for the third time this meaning is repeated, with a little difference, of course. It says:

"... then they are virtuous (due to prohibited things) and do good...."

So, at the end of the verse, it says:

"... and Allah loves the doers of good."

Each of these three senses of virtuousness refers to a stage of feeling responsibility and piety.

However, the great commentators of both outstanding sects of Islam: Sunnites and Shi'ites, have vastly explained upon the commentary of this verse, especially about the phrase /fi ma ta'imu/ (in regard to what they ate), and mentioning the subject of 'virtue' for three times in their commentary books.

In order to observe conciseness here, we have not narrated those detailed explanations, but you can refer to their commentary books, some of which are as follows:

Tafsir-i-Al-Mizan, Ali-ibn-'Ibrahim, Al-Kashif, Majma'-ul-Bayan, At-Tibyan, 'Atyab-ul-Bayan, Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Abul-Futuh-i-Razi, Manhaj-us-Sadiqin, As-safi, Mulla-Sadra, Shubbar, Ayyashi, Ibn-i-'Abbas, Furat-ul-Kafi, At-Tafsir by Imam Hasan-'Askari, Jawami'-uj-Jami', Jami'-ul-Bayan by Muhammad-ibn-Jarir-i-Tabari, Vol. 5 PP. 36 - 37, Zad-ul-Masir-Fi-'Ilm-ut- Tafsir by Ibn-ul-JauZi,

Vol. 2, P. 419, Tafsir-i-Ibn-i-Kathir, Vol. 2, PP. 91 – 92, Tafsir-ul-kabir by Fakhr-i-Razi; Parts 11 – 12, P. 83.

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1. Mustadrak-ul-Wasa'il, vol. 3, p. 52
 2. Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol., 2, p. 260
 3. Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 100, p. 9
 4. Safinat-ul-Bihar, ward /halala/, p. 298
 5. Kanz-ul-Ummal, vol. 1, p. 6
 6. Kanz-ul-Ummal, vol. 4, p. 5
 7. Kanz-ul-Ummal, vol. 4, p. 4
 8. Surah 'An- Nahl. No.16. verse 67
 9. Surah Al-Baqarah. No.2. verse 219
 10. Surah An- Nisa'. No.4. verse 43
 11. Musnad Ahmad-i-Hanbal, Sunan-i-Abi-Dawood, Nisaiee and Tarmathi have stated a vast explanation about the Occasion of Revelation of this verse which is suggested to be referred to.
 12. Some Islamic traditions indicate that the drinker of wine is counted like an idolater.
 13. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 1, P. 670

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