

Vinegar containing a percentage of alcohol

Shaykh Aboo `Abd-al-Mu`iz `Alee Ferkous al-Qoobee

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: We would like your Eminence to enlighten us about the ruling concerning consuming the vinegar that is sold in the markets and that contains a proportion of alcohol?

Shaykh Aboo `Abd-al-Mu`iz `Alee Ferkous al-Qoobee (May Allaah the Most High preserve him): All praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon whom Allaah sent as a mercy to the Worlds, upon his Family, his Companions and his Brothers till the Day of Resurrection:

There is no divergence among notable scholars that it is unanimously permissible to consume vinegar resulting from the wine that acetified by itself. However, if it acetified through treatment then there is a divergence therein. The sound view is that the vinegar resulting from the wine is permissible, whether it acetified by treatment or by itself, since the vinegar resulting from wine is considered vinegar linguistically and religiously. Its permissibility is indicated in the hadeeth of the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “**What a good condiment vinegar is!**”¹ The hadeeth does not differentiate between the vinegar that results from wine and the vinegar prepared directly. The difference requires a piece of evidence, and “Delaying the evidence beyond the time of need is not permissible”; and because the acetification removes the corrupting feature and gives the wine a characteristic of goodness; so it no longer remains wine after it has changed. The acetification is distinguished by changing from bitterness to acidity; that is why there is no harm if a proportion of alcohol exists therein. All that is sufficient is the appearance of acidity therein, because it is the proof of the acetification in the drink, in addition to the fact that not every alcohol is intoxicating. For instance, the orange shells contain alcohol but it is not intoxicating. Therefore, the vinegar is pure and good according to the foregoing hadeeth, and also because it is included in the general meaning of the Verses of permissibility, such as Allaah’s (He, The Most High) saying:

﴿الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ﴾

The meaning of the verse:

﴿**This day, good things have been lawful for you**﴾

[Al-Maa'idah (The Table spread with Food): 5]

¹ Reported by Muslim (2051) from the hadeeth of 'A'ishah (May Allaah be pleased with her).

Vinegar containing a percentage of alcohol

And His saying:

﴿وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ﴾

The meaning of the verse:

﴿ He allows them as lawful good things ﴾

[Al-A'raaf: 157]

Moreover, the vinegar is a useful remedy. Ibn Al-Qayyim (*May Allaah have mercy on him*) said: "And the vinegar of wine cures the stomach inflammation, curbs the bile, fends off the harm of fatal drugs, dissolves the milk and the blood when they coagulate in the belly, it is useful for the spleen, tans the stomach, constipates the belly, quenches thirst, prevents the tumour from taking place, helps the digestion, fights against the phlegm, softens heavy foods and lightens the blood ..." ². And Al-Munaawee said: "the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) liked it and used to drink it mixed with honey, and that is the most beneficial of foods. Ibn Al-'Arabee said: 'For that reason, physicians mixed them and considered them the origin of drinks, and there was no drink, prescribed in medicine, except it' ³.

Given this, the reason for the scholars' divergence over the previous issue springs from the question: - Can the wine be purified by putting something like salt, vinegar or suchlike in it, and after acetification, or does it remain impure? Knowing that the divergence is based on the belief that wine is impure. So, those who see that it cannot be purified; their view is grounded on the hadeeth of Anas Ibn Maalik (*May Allaah be pleased with him*) that the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) was asked whether or not the wine can be taken as a vinegar, he said: "No" ⁴. And the meaning of "taken" - according to them - is transforming the wine into vinegar by treating it. However, if it acetifies by itself, then it is not encompassed by the prohibition. And the thing that is added to the wine to acetify it will become impure after its transformation into vinegar. So, it can in no way be purified and this is the view held by Ash-Shaafi'ee and Ahmad (*May Allaah have mercy on them*).

As for those who see that it can be purified, their view is grounded in the hadeeth reported by 'A'isha (*May Allaah be pleased with her*) in which the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) said: "The best condiment is vinegar" ⁵. In this hadeeth the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) has generalised [when he mentioned vinegar] without differentiating whether it acetifies by itself or by treatment; this view is held by the followers of the Hanafee doctrine.

² See: "Zaad Al-Ma'aad" (4/306).

³ See: "Faydh Al-Qadeer" (6/285).

⁴ Reported by Muslim (1983) from the hadeeth of Anas (*May Allaah be pleased with him*).

⁵ This hadeeth is previously reported.

Vinegar containing a percentage of alcohol

The soundest opinion is that the wine is pure because the origin in materials is purity and there is no religious text stating its impurity as we have fully detailed it in our book: "Selections of Hadeeth Texts in the Jurisprudence of the Financial Transactions"⁶. And the prohibition does not imply impurity whereas the impurity implies prohibition, as every impurity is forbidden and not the contrary. And the aforementioned hadeeth of Anas Ibn Maalik (*May Allaah be pleased with him*) concerns the prohibition of leaving the wine for a certain period for acetification because this act contradicts the Divine Imperative, in His saying (*May He be Exalted the Most High*):

﴿فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ﴾

﴿So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination)﴾

[Al-Ma'idah (The Table spread with Food): 90]

If we take the impurity of wine for granted, the prohibition herein does not imply the impurity of vinegar. But, pouring it is made obligatory to obstruct the ways [that lead to commit what is unlawful] and restrict the pathways of the Satan who runs through the human being like the blood circulation and arouses his desire to drink the wine that he possesses. For that reason, leaving the wine for a certain period to acetify is religiously forbidden, and Allaah is the All-Knower. Furthermore, it is well-known that if a thing changes its nature, fades away and turns into something else, then the ruling pertaining to it before its change and transformation is removed since it is no longer the same but it became something else which is pure. It is like the impurity when it falls into an abundant quantity of water and does not change one of its three characteristics: its colour, taste and smell; and the intoxicant when mixed with a drug in a way it loses its effect and is -in this case- not intoxicant but rather a pure drug wherein some of the intoxicant is melted, like the wine which acetifies by itself and becomes vinegar, it is unanimously considered pure by the scholars.

The perfect knowledge belongs to Allaah (*Mighty and Majestic is He*). Our last prayer is all praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon our Prophet, his Family, his Companions and Brothers till the Day of Resurrection.

Algiers on Dhu Al-Qa'da 24th, 1424 H

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⁶ From: p.30 to: p.39.