

159104 - An airline steward is asking: is it permissible for me to offer alcohol to passengers?

the question

Dear Shaykh, I would like to know which of these two things is better: for a man to work as an airline steward, and on some trips some kinds of alcohol are offered. Is it better to conceal the alcohol so that the passengers do not see it, and therefore do not ask for it except in rare cases, or to show the alcohol as usual, because it is the passengers' right?... Is there a difference between the two matters in terms of sin for the one who serves alcohol once a month, and the one who serves it ten times?... Please note that both men are not pleased with this blameworthy act that is imposed on them by the company.

Detailed answer

What the Muslim must do is fear Allah with regard to his work, and seek out earnings that are lawful and wholesome. Allah has made every person accountable for his actions and He will ask him about his earnings: from where did he acquire them and on what did he spend them? Anything that comes under the heading of disobedience to Allah or disobedience to the Messenger must be avoided, and the Muslim must avoid helping others with it, and he should strive to put a stop to it, because Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression”

[al-Maa’idah 5:2].

Undoubtedly alcohol is the mother of all evils. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) cursed ten people with regard to alcohol: The one who presses (the grapes, etc), the one for whom they are pressed, the one who drinks it, the one who carries it, the one to whom it is carried, the one who pours it, the one who sells it, the one who consumes its price, the one who purchases it, and the one for whom it is purchased.

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (1295); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani

It is not permissible for the airline steward to serve alcohol to the passengers, because that comes under the heading of approving of evil and helping others with it. What he must do is pour it away or destroy it, if he is able to do so; at the very least he should prevent those who want to consume it, and tell them not to do that. Otherwise it is not permissible for him to do this job in which he is not able to denounce evil and, rather, he is encouraged to help others to do it. He has to give up this job and look for a lawful means of earning a living and permissible work.

The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

What is the ruling on an airline steward who is obliged to carry alcohol on board the plane, and what should he do?

They replied:

Drinking alcohol is prohibited, and selling it and manufacturing it is prohibited, and serving it to one who will drink it is prohibited, because the one who serves it is helping the one who drinks it to commit sin and transgression. Allah, may He be exalted, says(interpretation of the meaning):

“Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression”

[al-Maa’idah 5:2].

Based on that, it is not permissible to remain in the job mentioned. The ways of earning a living are many, and Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty).

3. And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine”

[al-Talaaq 65:2-3].

End quote from Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah (22/ 96)

It is not permissible for the airline steward to serve alcohol to the passengers, whether in small or great amounts, and whether he serves it once or more than that. All of that is prohibited, although prohibited things vary in degree, and the one who commits a sin several times incurs a greater burden of sin than one who does it just once, and so on.

The questioner’s saying that alcohol is the right of the passenger is completely incorrect. How can it be his right when Allah has cursed the one who drinks it?! Whatever rights people claim that are contrary to the commands and rulings of Allah, those rights are invalid, because they are not rights at all.

The fact that both stewards do not approve does not make it permissible for them to cooperate in doing evil deeds and exposing themselves to the wrath and curse of Allah – Allah forbid; rather not approving means that one should not participate in the sin, or sit in the place where it is being committed, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And it has already been revealed to you in the Book (this Quran) that when you hear the Verses of Allah being denied and mocked at, then sit not with them, until they engage in a talk other than that; (but if you stayed with them) certainly in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will collect the hypocrites and disbelievers all together in Hell”

[an-Nisa’ 4:140].

Shaykh as-Sa ‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah has explained to you – in what He has revealed to you – that His shar‘i rulings to be followed when attending gatherings in which disbelief and sin are present:

“And it has already been revealed to you in the Book (this Quran) that when you hear the Verses of Allah being denied and mocked at” that is, being belittled. That is because what is required of every accountable person with regard to the Revelations of Allah is to believe in them, then venerate them and respect them. That is the purpose for which they were revealed, and it is the purpose for which Allah created His creation. The opposite of belief is rejection of them, and the

opposite of respecting them is mocking them and scorning them. That includes the arguments that the disbelievers and hypocrites may come up with to invalidate the Revelations of Allah and support their disbelief.

The same also applies to innovators of various types. Their argument in support of their falsehood implies disrespect towards the Revelations of Allah, because the revelation only supports the truth, and does not contain anything but truth. And in fact this also applies to attending gatherings of sin and immorality, in which the commands and prohibitions of Allah are flouted and the limits that He has set for His slaves are transgressed. This ruling also includes the prohibition on sitting with them, “until they engage in a talk other than that” that is, until they begin to talk about things other than disbelief in the Revelations of Allah and ridiculing them.

“(but if you stayed with them) certainly in that case” that is, if you sit with them in the situation mentioned,

“you would be like them” because then you would be approving of their disbelief and ridicule, and the one who approves of sin is like the one who does it. The point is that whoever attends a gathering in which Allah is disobeyed is obliged to object to them if he is able to, or to get up and leave if he is not able to do so.

End quote from Tafseer as-Sa‘di (210)

Conclusion:

It is not permissible for you to carry alcohol, or to give it to any of the passengers, and even if the company orders you to do that, there is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience towards the Creator. In fact the minimum that you must do is hide it, and do not let the passengers see it. If one of them looks for it, do not tell him where it is, and if it so happens that one of them asks for it, and insists on what the company has allowed him, you should not be the one who gives it to him, or play any part in that.

Please see also the answers to questions no. [1830](#) and [96739](#).

And Allah knows best.