

Question 41: Pure Wine in the Qur'an

Question: What is the “sharaban tahuran” mentioned in the Qur'an (sometimes translated as “pure wine”)?

“Sharab” means something which can be drunk. It has been used in the Qur'an with this meaning.

“Many fruits and drinks are at their disposal.”¹

Allah (awj) also says,

“He sends down water from the sky from which you drink.”²

The word “Tahur” means that which is in itself pure and uncontaminated and which also makes other things pure, just as He says in the Qur'an,

“We sent down purifying water from heaven.”³

We can gather from various verses that in heaven there are various kinds of drinks that are pure⁴ and refreshing. The liquids that flow in the riverbeds of heaven differ from the drinks of this world not only in their substance but also in their qualities. This is because the rivers of this world only flow with water and after a while their water becomes rancid. But the rivers of heaven are special in both regards.

The Noble Qur'an points to four kinds of liquid that flow in four different riverbeds in heaven: the river of water that quenches thirst; the river of milk that satiates hunger; the river of honey that gives pleasure and strength; and the river of wine for happiness.⁵ These liquids have been created in such a way that the passing of time does not corrupt them. In other verses an indication is made to a drink called “*Rahiq Makhtum*”⁶ or that which is mixed with camphor⁷ or zanjabil⁸. In one verse mention is made of a pure drink⁹ that the Lord will give; the *saqi*, or cupbearer, being Allah (awj) himself.

We can summarize the viewpoints of Qur'anic commentators regarding the special “wine” of heaven into three basic views:

1. The meaning of “pure drink” is a type of drink which the people of heaven drink after eating heavenly

food. It cleans all inner wastes. Only perspiration is excreted by the body which gives off a beautiful fragrance. This is a materialistic interpretation of the blessings of heaven with the difference that what is found there is better and more long-lasting than what is found here. The traditions¹⁰ and verses of the Qur`an have described the drinks of heaven in the most beautiful of ways with the most extraordinary cupbearers who revolve around the people of heaven and give them an intensely white drink in which there is no corruption of the mind and by which they do not become inebriated.¹¹

2. The meaning behind the aforementioned drink is spiritual blessings. In the Qur`anic commentary, *a/-Mizan*, there are indications that this “pure drink” cleans one spiritually from forgetfulness of Allah (awj) and removes the curtains and barriers between us and Him.

As narrated from Imam Ja`far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (ع), “When the believer drinks the ‘pure drink’ he forgets everything other than Allah and turns solely towards his Master.”¹² In the Qur`anic commentary, *Ayab al-Bayan*, it is written that the “pure drink” cleans the hearts of the good from evil attributes and bad ethical traits and from the imaginary desires and from all sadness and misery.

In a narration from Imam Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Baqir (ع), he mentions that “When the believers drink from it Allah cleans their hearts from envy.”¹³

Some great personalities have said that since drawing ourselves in the love of Allah (awj) and cutting off all ties from other than Allah (awj) is the ultimate purity, everything which lacks that, lacks the quality of purity. This is a general principle and is one of the pearls of wisdom of the noble family of the Prophet (ع). Its message has been communicated by Imam Ja`far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (ع) when he said: “This drink cleans their bodies and their souls from other than that Pure Essence. It is only That Noble Essence of Allah and His remembrance that cleans man from impurities.”¹⁴

3. It can be gathered from some Qur`anic commentaries that they have attempted to combine the above two viewpoints. They say that since man is a combination of lowly mud and the Spirit of Allah (awj), he needs not only material sustenance but also spiritual blessings.

Just as the spiritual wayfaring of people differs, so do the rewards they receive in heaven. Some like the good taste of the refreshing drink of “*Rahiq Makhtum*” and are satiated by it. It is a drink which has been sealed with the musk of immaculateness from falsehood.

The drink of those drawn near (*muqarrabin*) is the water of *tasnim*. In a tradition from Imam Ja`far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (ع), it has been stated that “Tasnim is the most blessed of drinks in heaven, from which Muhammad and his Noble Progeny drink. The rest of the people of heaven drink from a mixture of that.”¹⁵ The cupbearer of that drink is Allah (awj) Himself¹⁶ and the chalice will be the truth of knowledge and love towards Him.¹⁷

From what we have said, we can understand that just as in this world people differ in their degrees of perfection; in heaven they also have different degrees of perfection. Their share of the blessings of

paradise is equivalent to their spiritual capacity. That is why they have been called by different names in the Noble Qur`an. What is certain is that the blessings of heaven are filled with pleasure and happiness, but not exactly like the pleasures of this world.

Brief Answer

“*Sharab*” means something which can be drunk and “*tahur*” means that which is in itself pure and uncontaminated and also makes other things pure. We can gather from various verses that in heaven there are various kinds of drinks that are pure and refreshing. The term “*Sharaban Tahuran*” has been mentioned in one of these verses:

“Their Lord will serve them with the pure drink.”¹⁸

There are three views as to what this drink is:

1. Some have said this drink is what believers will drink in paradise after having eaten heavenly foods. This drink will clear all internal wastes. The only thing left will appear in the form of a fragrant perspiration on the skin.
2. Others have taken this drink to be spiritual blessings for spiritual progress. As narrated from Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (ع), “When the believer drinks the ‘pure drink’ he forgets everything other than Allah and turns solely towards his Master.”

A narration from Imam Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Baqir (ع) says “When the believers drink from it Allah cleans their hearts from envy.”

3. A third group has combined the previous two opinions. They have said that since man is a beautiful combination of the dark soil and a divine soul, he needs not only material sustenance but also spiritual blessings.

Just as the spiritual wayfaring of people differs so too does the rewards they receive in heaven. In some verses of the Noble Qur`an the drinks in paradise have been mentioned in very beautiful phrases: the most beautiful cup-bearers; tall with pretty faces and deep-set eyes, going around with chalices of a pure drink amongst the believers in heaven; a very clear drink that gives them an indescribable feeling. This drink does not demolish the intellect, nor do they become intoxicated and drunk with it.

Other verses relate that the “*abrar*” will drink from a refreshing drink called “*rahiq makhtum*.” This drink has a scented seal on it which keeps it from any type of contamination.

The “*muqarrabuun’s*” share will be from the spring called “*tasnim*.” The cup-bearer will be the Lord himself and the chalice will be the truth of knowledge and love towards Him.

There is a narration from the Noble Prophet (ص) that he said “Tasnim is the noblest drink in paradise

which Muhammad (ص) and his progeny will drink and the *Ashab Yamin* and the rest will drink from a mixture that contains some of it.”

Thus, as people are of different levels in this world, they will be in different levels in paradise as well. What they enjoy from paradise will be according to their spiritual capacity. This is why the Noble Qur`an mentions them with different terms calling a group “ashab yamin” others “abrar” and some “muqarrabun.” Their rewards will also be according to their ranks.

Detailed Answer

1. Surat Sad (38), Verse 51:

﴿ يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ ... ﴾

2. Surat al-Nahl (16), Verse 10:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ ﴾

3. Surat al-Furqan (25), Verse 48:

﴿ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا ﴾

4. This apparently does not refer to the legal sense of purity {i.e. haharah opposite to nijasah}, because there cannot be filth or nijasah in paradise. There are only different levels of perfection.

5. Surat Muhammad (47), Verse 15:

﴿ ... مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرَ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى ﴾

6. Surat al-Mutaffifin (83), Verse 25:

﴿ يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ ﴾

7. Surat al-Insan (76), Verse 5:

﴿ إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا ﴾

8. Surat al-Insan (76), Verse 17:

﴿ وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا ﴾

9. Ibid., Verse 21:

﴿ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا ﴾

10. One example is hadith no. 30 in Nur al-Thaqalayn, vol. 5, pp. 32–33.

11. Surat al-Saffat (37), Verses 45–47:

﴿ يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ بَيضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ. لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنَزَّفُونَ ﴾

Also see Surat al-Zukhruf (43), Verse 7

12. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, pg. 223:

﴿ يُطَهَّرُهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سِوَى اللَّهِ. ﴾

13. al-Kafi, vol. 8, pg. 96:

﴿... وَعَنْ يَمِينِ الشَّجَرَةِ عَيْنٍ مُطَهَّرَةٌ مَزَكِّيَّةٌ قَالَ فَيُسْقَوْنَ مِنْهَا شَرِبَةً فَيُطَهَّرُ اللَّهُ بِهَا قُلُوبَهُمْ مِنَ الْحَسَدِ... ﴾

14. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, pg. 223:

﴿ يُطَهَّرُهُمْ عَنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سِوَى اللَّهِ، إِذْ لَا طَاهِرَ مِنْ تَدْنُسٍ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْأَكْوَانِ، إِلَّا اللَّهُ. ﴾

15. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 8, pg. 150:

﴿.التَّسْنِيمُ أَشْرَفُ شَرَابٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ يَشْرَبُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ وَآلُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَرَفًا، وَيَمَزَجُ لِأَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ وَسَائِرِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ. ﴾

16. Surat al-Insan (76), Verse 21:

﴿ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا ... ﴾

17. Surat al-Mutaffifin (83), Verses 27–28:

﴿ وَمِزَاجُهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ. عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴾

18. Surat al-Insan (71), Verse 21:

﴿...وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا...﴾

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