47067 - Using the company’s property for personal things

the question

We work for a public company and we use the company’s machines and equipment to copy some Islamic articles so that others can benefit from them. We also listen to the lectures of shaykhs and daa’iyahs and recordings of Qur’aan on the computer. Please note that this does not conflict with work time and we only do this during our spare time, after finishing work. Is it permissible for us to do that? With regard to what is mentioned above, will repentance from that be sufficient?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is not permissible to use copiers and other machines in ways that involve using up things that belong to the company, even if that is done for the purpose of distributing Islamic articles, because the employee is in a position of trust with regard to what he has been given and what he has been made responsible for. So it is not permissible to dispose of or use things that have been entrusted to him for purposes other than work.

If it is a private company and is owned by a specific individual, and the owner allows such uses (of machines etc), then there is nothing wrong with that, because it is like a donation from the owner. But if it is a government company then that is not permitted, even if your boss at work gives permission, because he does not own those things himself, so how can he give them to someone else?

The same applies to using the computer to listen to lectures and Qur’aan, especially if that involves using the internet etc, which incurs costs for the company.

Even if it does not incur costs for the company, it is still a dubious area, because it still involves wear and tear on the computer for purposes other than work.

The point is that it is not permissible to do such things, and you have to repent to Allaah and pay back whatever you have used up.

If you used papers for photocopying, then you have to give back similar papers. You also have to pay for using the photocopier. If you cannot work out how much expense is involved, do your best to pay off what you owe. You can give paper instead, or something else that will benefit the workplace.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked: What is the ruling on using government cars for personal purposes? He replied: Using government cars and other equipment that belongs to the state, such as photocopiers, printers, etc for personal purposes is not permissible, because these things are for the public interest and if a person uses them for his own personal needs, this is a kind of aggression against all the people. If something belongs to the Muslims as a whole, it is not permissible for one person to use it for himself. The evidence for that is the fact that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade ghulool, i.e., a person taking something from the war-booty for himself, because this (the war-booty) is public property. If a person sees someone using government equipment or cars for his own purposes he should advise him and explain to him that this is haraam. If Allaah guides him, then this is the desired outcome; if not, then he should report him, because that is a kind of cooperating in piety and righteousness. And it was proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Support your brother whether he is a oppressor or oppressed.” They said: O Messenger of Allaah, (we know how to help) if he is oppressed, but how (can we help him) if he is an oppressor? He said: “Prevent him from doing wrong, that is how you help him.”

And he was asked: If his boss agrees to that, is there any sin on him?

He (may Allaah have mercy on him) replied: Even if the boss agrees with that, the boss does not own that thing, so how can he give permission to someone else to use it?

Liqa’ al-Baab il-Maftooh, question 238.

See also questions no. 40509 and 4651.