

Ruling on playing chess

I wana ask if chess(the type played now a days)is allowed in islam or not?

Praise be to Allaah.

“ When chess distracts us from what we are obliged to do both inwardly and outwardly, it is haraam according to the consensus of the scholars – such as when it distracts from an obligatory duty such as prayer or anything that is necessary in the interests of oneself or one ’ s family, or enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, or upholding ties of kinship or honouring one ’ s parents, or any obligations connected to positions of authority or leadership, etc. In this case it is haraam according to the consensus of the scholars. Similarly, if it involves anything that is haraam such as telling lies, swearing false oaths, cheating, wrongdoing or helping in wrongdoing, or other forbidden things, then it is haraam according to the consensus of the Muslims. ” (Adapted from Majmoo ’ al-Fataawa, 32/218, 240).

But if it does not

distract us from our obligations or involve anything that is haraam, then there is a difference of scholarly opinion concerning the ruling. The majority of scholars (Abu Haneefah, Maalik, Ahmad and some of the companions

of al-Shaafa ’ i) said that it is also haraam, basing that view on the evidence of the Book of Allaah and the opinions of the Sahaabah.

The evidence of the Qur ’ aan is the words (interpretation of the meaning):

“ O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), and gambling, and Al-Ansaab [stone altars set up for sacrifices to idols etc], and Al-Azlaam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Shaytaan ’ s (Satan ’ s) handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that

(abomination) in order that you may be successful.

Shaytaan (Satan) wants only to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants (alcoholic drinks) and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allaah and from As-Salaah (the prayer). So, will you not then abstain? ”

[al-Maa'idah 5:90-91]

Al-Qurtubi (may Allaah

have mercy on him) said: “ This aayah indicates that it is haraam to play dice or chess, whether that involves gambling or not, because when Allaah forbade alcohol He explained the reason for that, which is ‘ Shaytaan (Satan) wants only to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants

(alcoholic drinks) and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allaah and from As-Salaah (the prayer). ’ So every kind of game in which a little leads to a lot and stirs up enmity and hatred between those who are devoted to it and prevents them from remembering Allaah and praying, is like

drinking alcohol, which implies that it must be haraam like alcohol. ”

(al-Jaami ’

li Ahkaam al-Qur ’ aan, 6/291).

With regard to the views of the Sahaabah:

It was narrated that ‘ Ali

ibn Abi Taalib (may Allaah be pleased with him) passed by some people who

were playing chess. He said, “ What are these images, to which you are devoted? [cf. al-Anbiya ’ 21:52] ” Imaam Ahmad said: “ The soundest comment on

chess what that which was said by ‘ Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him). ”

‘ Abd-Allaah ibn ‘ Umar

(may Allaah be pleased with him) was asked about chess and he said, “ It is worse than dice. ”

“ Dice ” refers to what is

used nowadays for playing backgammon, which is played on a special table.
It

was narrated in the ahaadeeth that it is haraam.

Abu Dawood (4938)

narrated from Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever plays dice has disobeyed

Allaah and His Messenger." (Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi

Dawood, 4129)

Muslim (2260) narrated

that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:

"Whoever plays dice is like one who has dipped his hand in the flesh and blood of a pig." Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "This hadeeth is quoted as evidence by al-Shaafa'i and the majority of scholars to prove that playing dice is haraam. The phrase 'dipped his hand in the flesh and blood of a pig' refers to eating it, and this simile is used to show that this is haraam because it is haraam to eat that."

What some of the scholars

have said about the prohibition of chess:

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah

have mercy on him) said: "Chess is like dice in that it is forbidden."

(al-Mughni,

14/155),

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah

have mercy on him) said: "The evil consequences of chess are greater than the evil consequences of dice. Everything that points to the prohibition of dice points to the prohibition of chess even more so... This is the view of Maalik and his companions, of Abu Haneefah and his companions, of Ahmad and

his companions, and the view of the majority of the Taabi'een... It is not known that any of the Sahaabah permitted it or played it. Allaah protected them from that. Everything that is attributed to any of them and says that he played it – such as Abu Hurayrah – is a fabrication and lie against the Sahaabah and is rejected by anyone who knows how the Sahaabah really were

and by anyone who has sufficient knowledge to examine the reports

critically. How could the best generation and the best of mankind after the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) permit playing something that prevents people from remembering Allaah and from praying, and is worse in this regard than alcohol when the player gets immersed in it, as we see in real life? How could the Lawgiver forbid dice but permit chess, which is many times worse?... ” (al-Furoosiyah, 303, 305, 311).

Al-Dhahabi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “ With regard to chess, most of the scholars say that it is haraam to play it, whether that is for money or not. If it is played for money then it is indisputably gambling. Even if it is not played for money it is still gambling and haraam, according to most of the scholars... al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked about playing chess, is it forbidden or permissible? He (may Allaah have mercy on him) replied that if it makes a person miss praying on time or he plays for money, then it is haraam, otherwise it is makrooh according to al-Shaafa ’ i and haraam according to others... ” (al-Kabaa ’ ir, 89-90).

For more information see

Tahreem al-Nard wa ’ I-Shatranj wa ’ I-Malaahi by al-Aajurri, ed. By Muhammad Sa ’ eed Idrees.

And Allaah knows best. We

ask Allaah to help us to do that which He loves and which pleases Him, and to help us to obey Him.

May Allaah send blessings

and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad.