137174 - Which images are permissible to keep and which are prohibited, and what that has to do with the angels entering the places where they are

the question

Is it permissible for me to pray in a room that is decorated with dolls and toys? I do not understand why people say that the angels do not enter a house in which there are dolls and toys. Is this an Islamic teaching?

Please explain to me how sound this ruling is on the basis of an authentic hadith, if there is one.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is good to ask about the rulings of Islam for one who does not know them, and it is also good for the questioner to be smart and ask for evidence for the ruling on the issue that concerns him, so that he will be following the Quran and Sunnah.

Secondly:

It is proven in the authentic Sunnah – beyond a doubt – that it is prohibited to draw or carve images of animate beings, and it is also proven that the angels do not enter a house in which there are such prohibited images. What is meant by the angels here is the angels of mercy who pray for forgiveness for people.

It was narrated that Abu Talhah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “The angels do not enter a house in which

there is a dog or an image.” Narrated by al-Bukhari (3053) and Muslim (2106).

It was narrated that `A’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Jibril (peace be upon him) said: I do not enter a house in which there is a dog or an image.” Narrated by Muslim (2104).

So if there are prohibited images in a house, its inhabitants will be deprived of the presence of the angels of mercy who pray for forgiveness for people, and the house will become a place frequented by the devils.

These prohibited images include:

1. Statues of animate beings, whether they are manufactured or carved, no matter what material it is manufactured or carved from.

That includes women’s jewellery that is made in the image of animals.

2. Photographs that the owner does not need; rather he keeps them for memories or other unnecessary reasons.
3. Hand-drawn images or computer-generated images of animate beings.

This ruling [which states that such images are prohibited and prevent the angels from entering the house] does not include images that it is permissible to keep, which include:

1. Those which are necessary, such as pictures on identity cards and passports, and the pictures on bank notes.
2. Images that are treated in a disrespectful manner, such as those found on carpets, milk cartons, food containers and other things which will end up in the garbage can.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-Khattabi said: The images which cause the angels not to enter the house where they are, are those which it is prohibited to keep; they are images of animate beings, unless the head is cut off or the images are treated in a disrespectful manner.

Fat-h al-Bari (10/382).

The scholars of the Permanent Committee for Ifta’ said:

Images of all living beings, both humans or animals, are prohibited, whether they are three-dimensional, drawings, colours on paper and the like, or they are woven into fabric, or are photographs, for the angels do not enter any house in which there is an image, according to the general meaning of the authentic hadiths which indicate that.

A concession is granted in cases of necessity, such as photos of wanted criminals and suspects, so that they can be arrested, and photographs which are included in passports and identity cards, because they are very necessary, and we hope that these and similar things will not prevent the angels from entering the house, because it is necessary to keep such things and carry them with us. And it is Allah Whose help we seek.

The same applies to images that are treated in a disrespectful manner, such as those that are found on mats and cushions. We hope that they will not prevent the angels from entering a house. One of the hadiths which were narrated concerning that is the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). “The makers of these images will be punished on the Day of Resurrection, and it will be said to them: Give life to what you created.” Narrated by al-Bukhari.

It was also narrated from Abu Juhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) cursed the one who consumes riba and the one who pays it, and he cursed the maker of images.

Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz, Shaykh `Abd ar-Razzaq `Afifi, Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Ghadyan, Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Qa`ud.

Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Da’imah (1/720, 721).

3. Children’s toys.

This topic has been discussed previously in the answers to questions no. 119056 and 20325.

Thirdly:

Regarding the ruling on praying in a place where there are images, that is to be based on the categories mentioned above. It is not permissible to pray in a place in which there are prohibited images, but it is permissible to pray in a place where there are permissible images.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to praying in places in which there are such images, if they are images of permissible things, such as those which are treated in a disrespectful manner – according to the majority of scholars – there is nothing wrong with it. But if they are the type of images that are not permissible, such as images (photos or paintings) that are hung on the walls, then you should not pray in that place unless the images are removed. At the same time we should note that these images should not be hung on walls at all, no matter who is in the picture. Some people put their photo in a frame and hang it up in the sitting room, or they put a picture of their father, and sometimes they put a picture of their deceased father – we ask Allah to keep us safe and sound. Some people put up pictures of sportsmen – football players! – and some people merely follow their whims and desires. To sum up, it is not permissible to hang up any pictures, no matter who is shown in those pictures.

Jalasat Ramadaniyyah (Lesson no. 6, 1410 AH).

Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

I pray in a room where there are photos, such as a photo of a friend of mine hanging on the wall, or a photo of someone else. One of the brothers said to me: Your prayer is invalid because you are facing towards these photos. What should I do about my prayers in the past? And what is the ruling on my prayer? May Allah bless you.

He replied:

Your prayer is valid, and the one who said that the prayer is not valid was wrong. The prayer is valid, but it is disliked (makruh) to pray in this room if you can pray somewhere else. Otherwise,

the prayer is valid, because you were not worshipping the images; rather you were praying to Allah, so your prayer is valid.

Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb (p. 309, 310).

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

Is it permissible for someone to pray when there is a picture of an animal – such as a horse, for example – hanging on the wall in front of him?

He replied:

The prayer is valid, but in principle hanging images on the wall is not permissible.

Images are only permissible if they are treated in a disrespectful manner, such as if they are stepped on. As for those that are hung up on walls, they are not permissible. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told us that “the angels do not enter a house in which there are images.”

Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb (tape 372, side B).

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 6390 and 130263.

And Allah knows best.