145226 - Is Online Chess Prohibited?

the question

I have heard many fatwas concerning chess saying that it is prohibited for having statues in it , it leads to a sort of conflict between people and some words are used in it such as King is dead , Rook , queen , etc.. , So I was thinking about playing it on the computer against an artificial intelligence (Program) where everything will be on the screen of the computer and I'll be playing chess against myself? I am not 100% addicted to chess but I kind of like to play it once each two days or so.

Summary of answer

Playing chess is prohibited according to the majority of scholars. There is no difference between playing chess in real life or on the computer or online.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Is online chess prohibited?

Playing chess is prohibited according to the majority of scholars, and that is because of evidence that has been discussed previously in the answer to question number 14095 .

There is no difference between playing chess in real life or on the computer or online. It is all prohibited because the reason that makes it prohibited is present in all cases.

The Prophetic Guidance against Playing with Dice

Shaykh Dr. Fahd ibn `Abd Ar-Rahman Al-Yahya, a member of the faculty in Al-Qasim University was asked: What is the ruling on playing backgammon and chess on the Internet?

He replied:

It is well known that the game of backgammon is the “dice” concerning which reports were narrated stating that it is prohibited, such as the report in Sahih Muslim from Buraydah (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever plays with dice, it is as if he were dipping his hand in the flesh and blood of a pig.” (Narrated by Muslim, 2260). The word translated as “dice” in this Hadith refers to the game of backgammon. Moreover there are other Hadiths which say that it is not permitted, and many of the scholars have stated that it is prohibited.

Why is Chess Prohibited by Most Scholars?

With regard to chess, most of the scholars have also stated that it is prohibited to play it. Al-Bayhaqi narrated in As-Sunan Al-Kubra (10/212) from `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) that he passed by some people who were playing chess and he said: What are these images that you are so devoted to?

This ruling, meaning the ruling that it is prohibited according to most of the scholars, applies if both backgammon and chess of free of other things that are contrary to Shari`ah, the worst of which are: if it is played in return for money, because then it is gambling which is prohibited according to consensus, as was stated by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) ; if it leads to missing prayer; and if it creates grudges between people.

Moreover, the ruling does not vary whether the game of chess or backgammon is played in real life or on a computer or online. The Muslim is enjoined to make good use of his time and not waste it, as `Umar Al-Faruq (may Allah be pleased with him) said: If you want to spend leisure time, then spend it practising archery, and if you want to talk, then talk about obligatory duties. (Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in As-Sunan Al-Kubra, 6/209 and others)

If a Muslim wants to relax, then it should involve beneficial pursuits, such as educational competitions, or racing on foot, or competing in archery, or competing on horseback and other things that are beneficial for the body and mind.

If people claim that there is some intellectual benefit in playing chess, that is not quite right, because the game is not based on reality; rather it is all imaginary.

For more details, please see the following answers: 120806 , 181642 , 12567 , 22069 .

And Allah knows best.