2898 - Are Video Games Haram?

the question

What is the ruling on playing or allowing one's children to play the many electronic games that are widely available, such as those produced by companies like Sony and Nintendo, etc.?

Summary of answer

Video games are permissible so long as they do not get in the way of obligatory duties such as establishing prayer and honoring one's parents, and so long as they do not include anything that is haram.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Types of video games

The one who looks at these games will see that they are based on mental skills and individual reactions or decisions. These games are of various types, with many aspects. Some of them take the form of illusionary battles which train a person in what to do in similar circumstances [in real life].

Some other games are based on being alert so as to save oneself from danger; fighting enemies and destroying targets; planning; having adventures; finding the way out of a labyrinth; escaping from wild beasts; racing cars, planes, etc.; overcoming obstacles; searching for treasure.

Some games increase knowledge and enhance one's interests, such as games that involve taking things apart and putting them back together, jigsaw puzzles, building things, colouring, and shading and lighting.

Are video games haram?

Islam does not forbid leisure or having fun in permissible ways. The basic rule concerning these games is that they are permissible so long as they do not get in the way of obligatory duties such as establishing prayer [i.e., praying properly and on time] and honouring one's parents, and so long as they do not include anything that is haram.

What are the forbidden elements in games?

There are, however, many haram elements in these games, such as the following:

- Games which depict wars between the people of this world (good guys) and people from the sky (bad guys), with all its implications of accusations against Allah, may He be glorified, or the noble angels.
- Games which involve sanctifying the cross or passing over or by it to gain strength, to bring one back to life or to give the player extra lives and so on. Also, games which are used for designing birthday cards as in Christian culture are also forbidden.
- Games which approve of witchcraft/magic, and which glorify witches/magicians/sorcerers, etc.
- Games which are based on hatred of Islam and Muslims, like the game in which a player gets 100 points if he hits Makkah, 50 points if he hits Baghdad, and so on.
- Games that glorify the non-Muslims and show pride in belonging to them, like games in which if a player chooses an army belonging to a non-Muslim state he becomes strong, and if he chooses an army belonging to an Arab state he becomes weak. Also, games which teach a child to admire non-Muslim sports clubs and the names of non-Muslim players.
- Games that include depictions of nudity, and some games that allow the winner to see a pornographic picture; games that corrupt morals, such as games where the idea is to run away with a girlfriend from the bad guys or a dragon.
- Games based on ideas of gambling.
- Music and other things that are known to be forbidden in Islam.
- Physical harm, such as damage to the eyes and nervous system; harmful effects of game

sounds on the ears. Modern studies have shown that these games may be addictive and harmful to the nervous system, as well as causing stress and nervous tension in children.

- Making children get used to violence and criminality, and teaching them to take killing and murder lightly, as in the famous Doom game.
- Corrupting children’s sense of reality by teaching them about a world of illusions and impossible things, such as coming back from the dead, supernatural powers that do not really exist, images of space aliens, and so on.

We have gone into details about some of the ideological dangers and things that are prohibited by Islam because many fathers and mothers do not pay attention to these things, and they bring these games for their children and let them play with them.

We should also point out that it is not permissible to compete for prizes in playing these electronic games , even if the game itself is permissible, because they are not a means of jihad, and they do not help you develop strength for jihad.

And Allah knows best.