78353 - She is blind and she has no one to protect her and help her. Can she keep a dog that is trained for that purpose?

the question

There is a sister of yours in Islam who is American and became Muslim more than a year ago, after she suffered beatings from her husband which caused her to lose some movement and to lose her sight. Allaah made this incident the cause of this woman entering Islam. The problem is that this woman needs care and help 24 hours a day. She got in touch with the imam of the nearest mosque and he helped her, by sending one of the sisters to look after her. But this sister cannot carry on because of personal reasons. Hence she has asked for help from the state social services. They told her that they cannot give her a person to look after her, but they can give her a dog that is trained to help the handicapped and blind.
This woman is asking and says: I know that having a dog in the house is forbidden in Islam, but you do not know how much help it can give me. It could take me out to the supermarket and help me with my needs inside the house, etc.
The question now is:
This woman is in need of this kind of dog. It is permissible for her to keep it in the house because of necessity?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We ask Allaah to make our sister steadfast in Islam, and to heal her and decree reward for her for her patience.

Keeping dogs is basically haraam – as is well known – but the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) granted a concession with regard to keeping dogs if it is for guarding the fields, herding livestock or hunting.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever keeps a dog, a qiraat will be deducted from his reward every day, except a dog for guarding the fields or herding livestock.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2197) and Muslim (1575).

It was also narrated from him (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever keeps a dog, except a dog for herding livestock, hunting or guarding the fields, a qiraat will be deducted from his reward every day.” Narrated by Muslim (1575).

Is it permissible to keep a dog for purposes other than those mentioned above?

The answer is: yes.

Imam al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

There was a difference of opinion with regard to whether it is permissible to keep dogs for purposes other than these three, such as guarding houses and roads. The most correct view is that it is permissible, by analogy with these three, based on the reason that is to be understood from the hadeeth, which is necessity. End quote.

Sharh Muslim (10/236)

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

In my view, the meaning of this hadeeth also includes keeping dogs if there is a purpose in doing so and for warding off harm, if a person needs that. End quote.

Al-Tamheed (14/219)

For this woman to keep a trained dog – when there is no one who can help her, take care of her and protect her – is more essential than guarding fields and livestock.

Shaykh Yoosuf ibn ‘Abd al-Haadi said, quoting from one of the scholars:

There is no doubt that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) gave permission for keeping hunting dogs, according to numerous ahaadeeth, and he said that the reward of the one who keeps a dog for hunting is not reduced. In other ahaadeeth he gave permission for keeping dogs for herding livestock, dogs for herding sheep and dogs for guarding the fields. Thus it is known that the reason for allowing this is people's interests, and the ruling is based on the reasons for and against. If there is an interest to be served, then it is permissible (to keep a dog). Some interests may be more important and greater than that of farming, and some interests may be equal to those mentioned by the Lawgiver. There is no doubt that fruits are equivalent to crops in the fields, and cattle are equivalent to sheep, and chickens and geese – (as a dog is needed) in order to keep the fox away from them – are equivalent to sheep too. Undoubtedly the fear of thieves attacking a person, and keeping a dog to warn against them and wake one up is even more important than that. Islam seeks to protect interests and ward off harm. End quote.

Al-Ighraab fi Ahkaam al-Kilaab (p. 106, 107).

Based on this, there is nothing wrong with this woman keeping this trained dog until Allaah provides her with a way out, such as her living with a Muslim family who can take care of her for the sake of Allaah, or her marrying a Muslim man who may seek reward with Allaah for looking after her.

And Allaah knows best.