116866 - Ruling on betting on horse races

the question

What is the ruling on betting on horse races?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Holding races between horses is permissible, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There should be no prizes for competitions except in archery, camel races or horse races.”

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (1700), an-Nasaa’i (3585), Abu Daawood (2574) and Ibn Maajah (2878); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Saheeh Abi Dawood*.

This hadith indicates that it is permissible to give money as a prize for a horse race, whether the money comes from one of the competitors or from both of them, according to the more correct view, or it comes from a third party, such as the state, for example.

But this does not include people betting on which of the competitors or horses will win, because that comes under the heading of gambling, which is haraam. It has nothing to do with what Islam has permitted of competitions.

This haraam betting is widespread in many countries, and how often it has led to loss and squandering of wealth.

If a number of people put money together for the purpose of haraam betting, it is not permissible to take part in that, because this comes under the heading of helping in gambling, which Allah has prohibited and mentioned alongside intoxicants, as He, may He be glorified, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful} [al-Maa'idah 5:90].

Shaykh 'Abd al-Majeed Saleem (may Allah have mercy on him) said: … From this it is known that the betting that is well known nowadays, whether it is betting on horse races or any other kind of betting, comes under the heading of gambling that is prohibited according to Islamic teachings, and there are no religious texts that permit it. Rather the religious texts that we have quoted indicate that it is prohibited, and the Lawgiver only prohibited gambling – which includes all types of betting that are known nowadays – because of what it leads to of grave evil consequences that we see every day. It has led to the loss of a great deal of wealth for the gamblers, and has torn apart decent families, and has prompted many gamblers to commit various crimes, such as theft and embezzlement, and even led to suicide in some cases. The one who reflects on that and other things to which gambling has led and still leads, will increase in faith and certainty that by His mercy, grace and great wisdom, Allah forbade that to His slaves, as He has forbidden many things because of the evil consequences and harm that result from them." (*Fataawa al-Azhar)*.

The scholars of the Permanent Committee for Ifta' were asked: There are a number of people among us who buy the sports magazine published by the *ash-Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper, and the purpose behind that is to fill out a coupon for horse races, in which they name the horse that will win each race. They fill out a number of coupons from a number of magazines, with the aim of winning the prize, and by doing so they lose some money. We hope that you could issue a fatwa regarding that, as we need that fatwa so that these people may learn the shar'i ruling on this matter. May Allah bless you and benefit the Muslims by means of your knowledge.

They replied: Doing that is not permissible, because it is a kind of betting that is haraam and comes under the heading of gambling. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{ O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you

may be successful } [al-Maa’idah 5:90].

Based on that, it is consuming people’s wealth unlawfully. And Allah is the source of strength. May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions. End quote.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn ‘Abdillah ibn Baaz, Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez Aal ash-Shaykh, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Ghadyaan, Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan, Shaykh Abu Bakr

Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah (15/224).