300556 - Ruling on racing homing pigeons for prizes or otherwise

the question

What is the ruling on racing homing pigeons, noting that they give the winnes certificates and cups only, and do not give him money?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Racing pigeons, if it is done without prizes, is disliked, and if it leads to looking into houses and private areas, then it is prohibited.

Abu Dawud (4940), Ibn Majah (3764) and Ahmad (8543) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw a man chasing a pigeon and he said: “A devil chasing a she-devil.” Classed as sound by al-Albani and the commentators on *al-Musnad*.

It says in *`Awn al-Ma`bud* (13/194): He only called him a devil because he was drifting away from the truth, and because he was distracted by something that did not concern him. And he called the pigeon a she-devil because it made him heedless of remembering Allah. End quote.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Keeping pigeons for their chicks and eggs, or as pets, or to carry messages, is permissible and is not disliked.

As for playing with them by making them fly and race, it was said that it is not disliked, but the correct view is that it is disliked, and the person’s testimony is not to be rejected for his merely doing that. But if, in addition to that, he gambles [by betting on the outcome of the race] and the like, then his testimony is to be rejected.

End quote from *Rawdat at-Talibin*, 11/226.

Ibn al-Qayyim said: The authorities should prevent those who play with pigeons above people's heads, because that leads to them looking out over them and seeing into the private areas of their houses ('awrah).

Abu Dawud narrated in his *Sunan* from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), from the Prophet (sa), that he saw a man chasing a pigeon and he said: "A devil chasing a she-devil."

Ibrahim an-Nakha`i said: Whoever plays with flying pigeons will not die until he tastes the pain of poverty.

Al-Hasan said: I was present when `Uthman ibn `Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) was delivering a khutbah in which he ordered that pigeons be slaughtered and dogs be killed. It was mentioned by al-Bukhari.

Khalid al-Hadhdha' narrated that one of the Tabi`in said: The people of Pharaoh used to play with pigeons, and Shurayh did not accept the testimony of one who owned a bathhouse or pigeons.

Ibn al-Mubarak narrated from Sufyan: We heard playing with pigeons is one of the actions of the people of Lut.

Al-Bayhaqi narrated that Usamah ibn Zayd said: I was present when `Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) instructed that flying pigeons be slaughtered, but those whose were clipped were to be left alone.

End quote from *at-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah*, p. 240.

Secondly:

It is not permissible to race pigeons for prizes, whether the prize is money, a cup or anything else, and whether the prize is provided by the competitors themselves or by another party, because this is not one of the races or competitions for which Islam allows awarding prizes.

It was narrated by Abu Dawud (2574), At-Tirmidhi (1700; he classed it as sound) and Ibn Majah (2878) from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who said: “There should be no prizes for contests except in archery, horse races or camel races.”

Classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Sahih Abu Dawud, and elsewhere.

As-Sindi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: al-Khattabi said: That is, it is not permissible to accept money as a prize for contests except in these two cases, namely camel racing and horse racing. We may add to that similar contests, such as contests in using tools of war, because awarding prizes for that is encouraging jihad and motivating people to participate in it." (*Hashiyat As-Sindi ‘Ala Sunan Ibn Majah*, 2/206) .

See also the answers to question no. 147826.

And Allah knows best.