335520 - Are Luck-Based Games Prohibited in Islam?

the question

Do games that are commonly played by children – such as “Rock, Paper, Scissors”, “Murder in the Dark”, “The Wretched” (on Gameboy), and so on – come under the same rulings as chess?

Summary of answer

Games that rely on luck, conjecture and guessing are regarded as prohibited by a number of jurists, by analogy with dice games. So we should completely avoid games that rely on chance or luck.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Understanding Games That are Based on Luck

Games that rely on luck, conjecture and guessing are regarded as prohibited by a number of jurists, by analogy with dice games.

The Prohibition of Dice Games in Islam

Dice, as it says in Al-Mawsu`ah Al-`Arabiyyah Al-`Alamiyyah, are small cubes that are used in some games of chance, such as craps, which is a gambling game played with two dice. Dice are also used in backgammon, Monopoly and other board games. Each dice has six sides, on each of which there are between one and six dots. (End quote)

Playing with dice is prohibited, because of the report narrated by Muslim (2260) from Buraydah ibn Al-Husayb (may Allah be pleased with him), that 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.”

Abu Dawud (4938) and Ibn Majah (3762) narrated from Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever plays with dice has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger.” (Classed as sound by Al-Albani in Sahih Abu Dawud)

What Scholars Say about Chance and Luck Games

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Sharh Muslim:

This Hadith was quoted by Ash-Shafi`i and the majority to support the prohibition on playing with dice.

What is meant by dipping his hand in the flesh and blood of a pig whilst eating from them is to liken this prohibition [on playing with dice] to the prohibition on eating those things. And Allah knows best. (End quote)

Some of the jurists included dice games any game that relies on luck and guessing with.

Ibn Hajar Al-Haytami (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Tuhfat Al-Muhtaj Sharh Al-Minhaj (10/215): It is prohibited to play with dice according to the correct view, because of a report narrated by Muslim which says that whoever plays with dice, it is as if he were dipping his hand in the flesh and blood of a pig, and according to a report narrated by Abu Dawud, he [the one who plays with dice] has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger.

Playing with dice is completely based on conjecture and guessing, and is very foolish and silly.

Ar-Rafi`i and those who followed him said what may be summed up as: An analogy may be drawn with them [i.e., dice and chess] to include other similar types of games. So any game which depends on calculation and thinking, such as lines from which and to which pebbles are moved, based on calculation, are not prohibited.

Any game that relies on chance is prohibited.

That also includes playing cards. (End quote)

Please also see: Nihayat Al-Muhtaj (8/295)

The Permanent Committee (15/231) issued a fatwa prohibiting playing cards, even if the game is not played for money. A similar fatwa was issued by Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him).

Please also see: Qadaya Al-Lahw wat-Tarfih by Madun Rashid (p. 186)

The Prohibition of Chess in Islam

With regard to chess, most of the scholars are also of the view that it is forbidden 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 statues that you are so devoted to?

With regard to the prohibition on playing with cards, see the answer to question no. 12567 .

Alternatives to Luck-Based Games

In conclusion, we should completely avoid games that rely on chance or luck. There are plenty of other games that rely on intelligence and movement.

For more details, please see the following answers: 181642, 120806, 145226, 334296.

And Allah knows best.