96832 - Are photographs permissible by analogy with images in the mirror?

the question

If a man sees his face in the mirror, is this regarded as one of the kinds of image-making that are forbidden? May Allaah bless you.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If a man sees his face in the mirror, this is not regarded as one of the kinds of image-making that are forbidden. The scholars have explained the difference between the two matters, refuting those who use that as evidence to say that photography is permissible.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) said – refuting those who regard them as the same - : You have made a mistake by regarding them as the same and drawing an analogy, for two reasons:

1 – A photograph cannot be likened to the image in a mirror, because a photograph does not disappear and the temptation caused by it is still there.

As for the image in a mirror, it is not permanent and it disappears when the person who is facing the mirror goes away. This is an obvious difference which no man with any common sense can dispute.

2 – The text that came from the infallible Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbids images in general and states that things that are like photographs are forbidden, such as images on garments and walls.

It is narrated from him (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in several saheeh ahaadeeth that when he saw that ‘Aa’ishah had a curtain in which there were images, he got angry and tore it

down and said: “The most severely punished of people on the Day of Resurrection will be the image-makers).

In another hadeeth he said: “The makers of these images – and he pointed to the images on the cloth – will be punished on the Day of Resurrection and it will be said to them: ‘Give life to that which you have created.’”

And it is proven that he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) erased the images that were on the walls of the Ka’bah on the day of the Conquest (of Makkah), which come under the same ruling as photographs. If we accept that photographs are like images in mirrors, then we cannot draw an analogy because it is established in sharee’ah that there is no room for analogy when there is a text, rather analogy comes into play when there is no text as is well known to the scholars of usool and all scholars. End quote from Majmoo’ Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (27/442).

It says in Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah (1/673): Photography is not like the reflected image seen by one who stands in front of the mirror, because that is a fleeting image that disappears when the person moves away from the mirror, whereas the photograph is permanent and remains after the person moves away from the camera, and it may be the cause of fitnah with regard to belief (‘aqeedah) or it may be a cause of temptation (as in the case of pictures of women). Photographs may be used in cases of necessity on some occasions and put in passports, identity documents, residency permits and drivers’ licences, for example.

Photography is not only the reflection of an image, rather it is created by means of a machine that captures the image, therefore it is trying to match the creation of Allaah using this machine. Moreover the prohibition on image-making is general because it involves trying to match the creation of Allaah and it poses a danger to religious beliefs and morals, regardless of the tools used or the method in which the images are made. End quote.

And Allaah knows best.