155691 - He wants to study genetics; is there anything wrong with that in shar‘i terms?

the question

I am a student in the faculty of sciences and I want to choose a specialty that will not conflict with Islam. What do you think of specialising in genetics? Is it permissible for me to choose this specialty?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Every branch of knowledge that people need in their religious or worldly affairs is not forbidden in and of itself with regard to studying, learning and understanding. But what is of concern is how this knowledge is used and applied. There is nothing wrong with studying accountancy – for example – but the problem is with the practical application of it in the real life financial world, such as working in riba-based banks and other institutions. The same may also be said concerning medicine. It is a branch of knowledge that is very important and people cannot do without it, but sometimes in real life it is used for things that are forbidden in Islam, such as cosmetic surgery for the purpose of beautification, abortions, and so on.

The same may be said concerning the science of genetics, which is defined in al-Mu‘jam al-Waseet (2/1024) as the science which examines the transmission of characteristics in living beings from one generation to another and explaining the way this occurs. It is an important branch of knowledge, one of the greatest benefits of which is knowledge of hereditary diseases and how to protect against them and treat them. It may also be used for beneficial purposes in plants and animals. But at the same time there is room for those who are toying with what is called cloning. We have discussed a little about what is permitted and what is forbidden with regard to cloning and genetic engineering in the answers to questions no. 103335 and 21582.

What matters then is not the theoretical study of genetics; rather it is the practical application thereof. Whatever is permissible and beneficial is encouraged by Islam, and whatever is haraam and harmful, is forbidden by Islam.

In a conference of the Islamic Association of Medical Sciences in Kuwait, which was held under the heading, “Genetics, Genetic Engineering, the Human Genome and Gene Therapy: an Islamic View,” with the participation of the Islamic Fiqh Council in Jeddah, the Local Chapter of the World Health Organization in Alexandria, and the Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture, which was held during the period 23-25 Jumaada al-Aakhirah 1419 AH/13-15 October 1998 CE, the following statement was issued:

Islam is the religion of science and knowledge, as it says in the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say: ‘Are those who know equal to those who know not?’”

[al-Zumar 39:2].

Islam does not hold the human mind back from beneficial scientific research, but it is not permissible for the results of this research to be put into practice until they have been measured against Islamic guidelines. Whatever is in accordance with sharee‘ah is permitted, and whatever goes against it is not permitted. The science of genetics with its various aspects – as with all additions to knowledge – is something that Islam encourages and Muslim scientists should be in the forefront of it.

End quote.

And Allah knows best.