

1608 - Ruling on visiting zoos

the question

What is the ruling on visiting zoos with the aim of enjoying looking at the animals?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

On the basis of the opinion that it is permissible to keep animals in cages, visiting places designed for the purpose of displaying these animals to the public such as those known nowadays as zoos, for the purpose of enjoying looking at the different types of animals, is permissible.

It is no exaggeration to say that doing so is in fact mustahabb and encouraged, when the motive for this is to think about the creation of Allaah and His Signs by looking at these animals and finding out about their different ways of life and so on. This has a good effect on a person's heart, namely it strengthens his faith in his Lord and in His exalted attributes, for example, His Power, Ability and Wisdom.

When we understand the good effects of visits to these zoos, the wisdom behind the Qur'aan's call to think about the greatness and majesty of creation will become clear. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Do they not look in the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all things that Allaah has created...?” [al-A'raaf 7:185].

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Think about the signs of Allaah, do not think about Allaah.”

Islam Question & Answer

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(Reported by al-Bayhaqi in al-Shu'ab, 1/136 and by al-Laalakaa'i in al-Sunnah, 3/525. See al-Saheehah, 4/395).

But we should not omit to note here the many wrong things that happen in zoos, such as mixing of men and women. Even in places where some days are set aside just for men to visit and other days just for women, there may be some women wearing types of clothing that it is not even permissible for them to wear in front of other women. We must therefore prepare da'wah programs to be carried out in these places so that we may fulfil our duty of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, thus making sure that there is no room in these places for license and things that go against Islam. With regard to zoos in countries where it is not possible to achieve this kind of reform, Muslims should choose the most suitable time to take their children to the zoo; they should avoid places of evil and protect themselves and their children from seeing anything that could adversely affect their faith. And Allaah is the Source of Strength.