

202355 - The ruling on tricking animals

the question

What is the ruling on tricking animals, such as making the animal think that you have food in your hands, so that it will come to you? Is this regarded as coming under the heading of lying?

Detailed answer

This matter does not have to do with the animal as much as it has to do with the human. The Muslim who has the habit of being truthful and strives to be honest in his words, actions, manners and attitudes, and in every aspect of his life, is not someone who would behave in this manner, tricking an animal to make it think something that is not true in reality. That is because truthfulness is something that is part of the Muslim's character and is second nature to him; if a man becomes accustomed to it, then it becomes something deeply rooted in his heart and mind, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man may speak the truth until he is recorded with Allah as a speaker of truth. Lying leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to Hell. A man may tell lies until he is recorded with Allah as a liar." Narrated by al-Bukhari (6094) and Muslim (2607).

In that case, this truthful person will refrain from giving the impression that he has something with him when in reality he does not, whether that is with another person or an animal, or even with himself and in his imagination.

Malik ibn Dinar (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Truthfulness and lying wrestle in the heart until one expells the other. (*Dhamm al-Kadhib* by Ibn Abi'd-Dunya, no. 48).

Each person is responsible for the way he deals with animals; he is enjoined to treat them kindly and look after them, if they are kept with him, or to let them go if he is not able to take care of them. And he is enjoined to avoid hurting them by branding them on the face or striking them severely, and so on.

Therefore, there is the worry that he may be accountable for having given the animal the impression that he had food when he did not have any food with him, and that this will be recorded against him as a lie, as it would be recorded against him as such if he did the same thing with children, as is proven in the Sunnah in the report from `Abdullah ibn `Amir, who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came to us in our house when I was a boy. I wanted to go out to play, but my mother said to me: O `Abdullah, come here and I will give you something. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "What do you want to give him?" She said: I will give him a date. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "If you do not do that, it will be recorded against you as a lie." Narrated by Ahmad in *Al-Musnad*, 24/471; the commentators classed it as authentic because of corroborating evidence in the Mu'sasat ar-Risalah edition; it was also classed as such by Shaykh al-Albani in *Sahih Abi Dawud*, 4991.

In fact, al-`Allamah al-Mu`allimi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

A group of people came to a shaykh to learn from him, and they saw him going out because his mule had run away, and he was trying to catch it. He had in his hand a bucket [of a type that was used to hold grass [to feed to animals]] and he was showing it to the mule. They noticed that the bucket was empty, so they went back and did not learn from him. They said: This man is lying to the mule, and we cannot be certain that he will not lie when narrating hadith. (*Al-Anwar al-Kashifah*, p. 90).

But we can make an exception here, if the owner of the animal needs to make the animal come to him and cannot find any other means to do that, or the animal is at the training stage, and is being tamed, and this method is one of the main methods of training. In such cases we do not see anything wrong with tricking the animal, because there is a need to do that, and it is known that necessity makes permissible that which is prohibited according to Islamic teachings, if that prohibition is for some other reason or it is prohibited because it is contrary to proper manners and etiquette, especially if there is no blatant lying; rather it is only giving a wrong impression.

And Allah knows best.