

294987 - Ruling on playing with the sacrificial animals for fun, and enjoying watching the rams butt heads and fight with one another

the question

I hope that you can explain to us the ruling on telling jokes about the sacrificial animals as the time for Eid al-Adha approaches. There are some posts on social media that warn against that, their evidence being the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols of Allah – indeed, it is from the piety of hearts” [al-Hajj 22:32]. Similarly, there are people who use the sacrificial animals for entertainment, making them fight with one another, sometimes to the death.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

The udhiyah (sacrifice) is one of the symbols of Allah, by means of which the believer draws close to his Lord, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the camels and cattle We have appointed for you as among the symbols of Allah; for you therein is good. So mention the name of Allah upon them when lined up [for sacrifice]; and when they are [lifeless] on their sides, then eat from them and feed the needy and the beggar. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may be grateful.

Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and give good tidings to the doers of good”

[al-Hajj 22:36-37].

And Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah – it is best for him in the sight of his Lord”

[al-Hajj 22:30]

“That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols of Allah – indeed, it is from the piety of hearts”

[al-Hajj 22:32].

This great symbol is not something to be mocked or jokes made about it.

What must be remembered is the purpose behind this great symbol and ritual, which is to grow close to Allah by offering these sacrifices and slaughtering them by way of seeking to draw close to Allah and obeying Him, then by doing what He has prescribed for His slaves: “So mention the name of Allah upon them when lined up [for sacrifice]; and when they are [lifeless] on their sides, then eat from them and feed the needy and the beggar. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may be grateful” [al-Hajj 22:36].

Shaykh as-Sa ‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This indicates that the symbols of Allah include all visible symbols of Islam. We noted above that Allah tells us that if a person respects His symbols, that stems from the piety of the hearts. Here He tells us that one of His symbols is the sacrificial camels – and cows according to one of the two scholarly views. They are to be respected, and healthy and good specimens are to be chosen for the sacrifice.

“for you therein is good” that is, for the one who offers the sacrifice and others, as their meat may be eaten and given in charity, bringing benefit and reward.

“So mention the name of Allah upon them” that is, at the time of slaughter, say: “Bismillah (in the name of Allah)” and slaughter them.

“when lined up [for sacrifice]”. The camel is to be made to stand on all four legs, then the left foreleg is to be tied up, then it is to be slaughtered.

“and when they are [lifeless] on their sides” having fallen to the ground, then the carcass is skinned and cut into pieces by the butcher, and the pieces fall to the ground, at that point it

is ready to be eaten from.

“then eat from them”. This is addressed to the one who offers the sacrifice; it is permissible for him to eat from his sacrifice.

“and feed the needy and the beggar” that is, the poor person who does not ask out of dignity, and the poor person who does ask. Both of them have a right to a share of it.

“Thus have We subjected them” namely the sacrificial camels

“to you that you may be grateful” to Allah for subjecting them to you, for if He had not subjected them to you, you would not be able to control them (and benefit from them). But He has subjected them to you out of mercy and kindness towards you, so praise Him.

End quote from Tafseer as-Sa’di (p. 538).

Secondly:

It is not permissible to provoke animals against one another so that they fight, even if they are not set aside for the udhiyah, because that is harmful to the animals.

Al-Khateeb ash-Sharbeeni said in Mughni al-Muhtaj (6/168): It is not permissible to make dogs, roosters or rams fight one another and bet on that, and there is no difference of scholarly opinion on that, whether that is for a prize or otherwise, because doing that is foolishness and is the action of the people of Loot whom Allah destroyed for their sins. End quote.

Al-Bahooti said in Kashshaaf al-Qinaa’ (4/48): With regard to playing with dice, chess, ram fighting, and cockfighting, these actions are not permissible under any circumstances – whether for prizes or otherwise. End quote.

Once an animal has been earmarked for the sacrifice, it becomes for Allah, and becomes a trust in the care of its owner, so let him fear Allah and uphold that trust; he should strive to keep it safe and protect it from harm, bearing in mind that it is an animal over which Allah has given him control so that he might draw closer to his Lord by sacrificing it.

And Allah knows best.