

Chess Playing or Even Watching it being Played is Forbidden

A centuries old and pre-Islamic game ‘Shatrang’ (Chess) has been prohibited by the Masomeen^{asws}, there are many references to their^{asws} traditions against playing it or even looking at its table. As an example, some Ahadith from Al-Kafi, Vol. 6 are cited below:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ مُعَمَّرِ بْنِ خَلَادٍ عَنْ أَبِي الْحَسَنِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ النَّزْدُ وَ الشَّطْرَنْجُ وَ الْأَرْبَعَةُ عَشْرَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ وَاحِدَةٍ وَ كُلُّ مَا قُومِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَهُوَ مَيْسِرٌ .

Muhammad Bin Yahya, from Ahmad Bin Muhammad, from Moamar Bin Khallad,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Al-Hassan^{asws} having said: ‘The dice and the chess, and the fourteen (a game) are at one status, and everything what is speculated upon, so it is gambling’.¹

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ وَ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ جَمِيعاً عَنِ النَّضْرِ بْنِ سُؤَيْدٍ عَنْ دُرُسْتِ عَنْ زَيْدِ الشَّحَامِ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) عَنْ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرَّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَ اجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ فَقَالَ الرَّجْسُ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ الشَّطْرَنْجُ وَ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ الْغِنَاءُ .

Muhammad Bin Yahya, from Ahmad Bin Muhammad, from Muhammad Bin Khalid and Al Husayn Bin Saeed, altogether, from Al Nazar Bin suweyd, from Dorost, from Zayd Al Shahham who said,

‘I asked Abu Abdullah^{asws} about the Words of Allah^{azwj} Mighty and Majestic [22:30] **therefore avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid false words**. So he^{asws} said: ‘The **‘uncleanness of the idols’** is the chess, and the **‘false words’** is the singing (music)’.²

عَدَّةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي نَجْرَانَ عَنْ مُتَنَّى الْحَنَاطِ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) الشَّطْرَنْجُ وَ النَّزْدُ هُمَا الْمَيْسِرُ .

A number of our companions, from Sahl Bin Ziyad, from Ibn Abu Najran, from Musny Al Hannat, from Abu Baseer,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{asws} having said: ‘Amir Al-Momineen^{asws} said: ‘The chess and the dice, are both (classified as) the gambling’.³

عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ حَفْصِ بْنِ الْبَحْتَرِيِّ عَمَّنْ ذَكَرَهُ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ الشَّطْرَنْجُ مِنَ الْبَاطِلِ .

Ali Bin Ibrahim, from his father, from Ibn Abu Umeyr, from Hafs Bin Al Bakhtary, from the one who mentioned it,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{asws} having said: ‘The chess is from the falsehood’.⁴

¹ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 1

² Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 2

³ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 3

⁴ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 4

ابْنُ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْحَكَمِ أَخِي هِشَامِ بْنِ الْحَكَمِ عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ يَزِيدَ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عليه السلام) قَالَ إِنَّ لِلَّهِ فِي كُلِّ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ عِتْقَاءَ مِنَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَنْ أَفْطَرَ عَلَى مُسْكَرٍ أَوْ مُشَاجِنٍ أَوْ صَاحِبِ شَاهِنٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ وَ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ صَاحِبِ شَاهِنٍ قَالَ الشُّطْرُنْجُ .

Ibn Abu Umeyr, from Muhammad Bin Al Hakam, a brother of Hisham Bin Al Hakam, from Umar Bin Yazeed,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{-asws} having said : ‘Allah^{-azwj} Emancipates (liberate) people during every night of the Month of Ramazan, Emancipating (liberating) them from the Fire, except the one who breaks Fast upon an intoxicant, or a bickerer, or an owner of the two kings’. I said, ‘And which thing is the ‘owner of the two kings?’ He^{-asws} said: ‘The chess’.⁵

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ ابْنِ فَضَّالٍ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ عُقْبَةَ عَنِ ابْنِ بُكَيْرٍ عَنْ زُرَّارَةَ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عليه السلام) أَنَّهُ سُنِلَ عَنِ الشُّطْرُنْجِ وَ عَنْ لُعْبَةِ شَدِيبِ النَّبِيِّ يُقَالُ لَهَا لُعْبَةُ الْأَمِيرِ وَ عَنْ لُعْبَةِ الثَّلَاثِ فَقَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ إِذَا مِيزَ الْحَقُّ مِنَ الْبَاطِلِ مَعَ أَيِّهِمَا يَكُونُ قَالَ قُلْتُ مَعَ الْبَاطِلِ قَالَ فَلَا خَيْرَ فِيهِ .

Muhammad Bin Yahya, from Ahmad Bin Muhammad, from Ibn Fazzal, from Ali Bin Iqba, from Ibn Bukeyr, from Zurara,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{-asws} having been asked about the chess, and about a game of youths which is called ‘The game of the Emir’, and about a game of the three. So he^{-asws} said: ‘What is your view, if the truth were to be differentiated from the falsehood, with which of these two would these all be?’ I said, ‘With the falsehood’. He^{-asws} said: ‘Therefore, there is no goodness in it’.⁶

عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ بَعْضِ أَصْحَابِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عليه السلام) فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَ اجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ قَالَ الرَّجْسُ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ هُوَ الشُّطْرُنْجُ وَ قَوْلُ الزُّورِ الْغِنَاءُ .

Ali Bin Ibrahim, from his father, from Ibn Abu Umeyr, from one of his companions,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{-asws} regarding the Words of Allah^{-azwj} Blessed and High [22:30] **therefore avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid false words**. He^{-asws} said: ‘The **uncleanness of the idols** it is the chess, and the **false words** is the singing (music)’.⁷

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سِنَانَ عَنْ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُمِيِّ قَالَ كُنْتُ أَنَا وَ إِدْرِيسُ أَخِي عِنْدَ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عليه السلام) فَقَالَ إِدْرِيسُ جَعَلْنَا اللَّهَ فِدَاكَ مَا الْمَيْسِرُ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عليه السلام) هِيَ الشُّطْرُنْجُ قَالَ قُلْتُ أَمَا إِنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّهَا النَّرْدُ قَالَ وَ النَّرْدُ أَيْضاً .

Muhammad Bin Yahya, from Ahmad Bin Muhammad, from Muhammad Bin Sinan, from Abdul Malik Al Qummy who said,

‘I and my brother Idrees were in the presence of Abu Abdullah^{-asws}, so Idrees said, ‘May we be sacrificed for you^{-asws}! What is the gambling?’ So Abu

⁵ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 5

⁶ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 6

⁷ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 7

Abdullah^{-asws} said: 'It is the chess'. He said, 'So I said, 'But they (people) are saying that it is the dice?' He^{-asws} said: 'And the dice, as well'.⁸

عَدَّةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَاصِمٍ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ الْمَيْمَنِيِّ عَنْ رَبِيعِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ الْفَضِيلِ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) عَنْ هَذِهِ الْأَشْيَاءِ الَّتِي يَلْعَبُ بِهَا النَّاسُ التَّرْدُ وَ الشِّطْرُنْجَ حَتَّى انْتَهَيْتُ إِلَى السُّدْرِ فَقَالَ إِذَا مَيَّرَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَ الْحَقِّ وَ الْبَاطِلِ فِي أَيِّهِمَا يَكُونُ قُلْتُ مَعَ الْبَاطِلِ قَالَ فَمَا لَكَ وَ الْبَاطِلِ .

A number of our companions, from Sahl Bin Ziyad, from Muhammad Bin Isa, from Abdullah Bin Aasim, from Ali Bin Ismail Al Maysami, from Rabie Bin Abdullah, from Al Fuzayl who said,

'I asked Abu Ja'far^{-asws} about these things which the people play with, the dice and the chess, until I ended up to (mentioning) *Al-Suddary* (a game). So he^{-asws} said: 'If Allah^{-azwj} were to Differentiate between the truth and the falsehood, in which of these two (categories) would (these games) fall into'. I said, 'With the falsehood'. He^{-asws} said: 'So what is it to you with the falsehood'.⁹

سَهْلٌ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ يُونُسَ عَنْ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عُمَرَ بْنِ يَزِيدَ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ فِي شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ إِلَّا لِثَلَاثَةٍ صَاحِبِ مُسْكَرٍ أَوْ صَاحِبِ شَاهِينٍ أَوْ مُشَاجِنٍ .

Sahl, from Muhammad Bin Isa, from Yunus, from Al Husayn Bin Umar Bin Yazeed,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{-asws} having said: 'Allah^{-azwj} Forgives during the Month of Ramazan (every one) except for three – the partaken of an intoxicant, or a player of the two kings (Chess), or a bickerer'.¹⁰

عَنْهُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ يُونُسَ عَنْ أَبِي أَيُّوبَ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ جُنْدَبٍ عَمَّنْ أَخْبَرَهُ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ الشِّطْرُنْجُ مَيْسِرٌ وَ التَّرْدُ مَيْسِرٌ .

From him, from Muhammad Bin Isa, from Yunus, from Abu Ayoub, from Abdullah Bin Jundab, from the one who informed him,

Abu Abdullah^{-asws} has said: 'The chess is gambling, and the dice is gambling'.¹¹

عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ حَمَّادِ بْنِ عَيْسَى قَالَ دَخَلَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْبَصْرِيِّينَ عَلَى أَبِي الْحَسَنِ الْأَوَّلِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) فَقَالَ لَهُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ إِنِّي أَقْعُدُ مَعَ قَوْمٍ يَلْعَبُونَ بِالشِّطْرُنْجِ وَ لَسْتُ أَلْعَبُ بِهَا وَ لَكِنْ أَنْظُرُ فَقَالَ مَا لَكَ وَ لِمَ جَلَسْتَ لَا يَنْظُرُ اللَّهُ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ .

Ali Bin Ibrahim, from his father, from Hammad Bin Isa who said,

'A man from the (people of) Al-Basra came over to Abu Al-Hassan^{-asws} the 1st so he said to him^{-asws}, 'May I be sacrificed for you^{-asws}! I sit with a people who are playing with the chess, and I do not play with it, but I (just) look'. So he^{-asws} said: 'What is it to you and a gathering which Allah^{-azwj} does not Look at its people?'¹²

⁸ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 8

⁹ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 9

¹⁰ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 10

¹¹ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 11

¹² Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 12

عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ هَارُونَ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ عَنْ مَسْعَدَةَ بْنِ زِيَادٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) أَنَّهُ سُئِلَ عَنِ الشَّطْرَنْجِ فَقَالَ دَعُوا الْمُجُوسِيَّةَ لِأَهْلِهَا لَعَنَهَا اللَّهُ .

Ali Bin Ibrahim, from Haroun Bin Muslim, from Mas'ada Bin Ziyad,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{-asws} having been asked about the chess, so he^{-asws} said: 'Leave the Magian thing to its people, may Allah^{-azwj} Curse it'.¹³

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ الْقَاسِمِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ عَنِ الرَّضَا (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) فَقَالَ يَا أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ مَا تَقُولُ فِي الشَّطْرَنْجِ الَّتِي يَلْعَبُ بِهَا النَّاسُ فَقَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي أَبِي عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ عَنِ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) مَنْ كَانَ نَاطِقًا فَكَانَ مَنْطِقُهُ لِعَيْرٍ ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ كَانَ لِأَعْيَا وَ مَنْ كَانَ صَامِتًا فَكَانَ صَمْتُهُ لِعَيْرٍ ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ كَانَ سَاهِيًا ثُمَّ سَكَتَ فَقَامَ الرَّجُلُ وَ انْصَرَفَ .

Muhammad Bin Yahya, from Ahmad Bin Muhammad Bin Isa, from Musa Bin Al Qasim, from Muhammad Bin Ali Bin Ja'far,

(It has been narrated) from Al-Reza^{-asws} having said: 'A man came over to Abu Ja'far^{-asws}, so he said, 'O Abu Ja'far^{-asws}! What are you^{-asws} saying regarding the chess which the people are playing with?' So he^{-asws} said: 'My^{-asws} father^{-asws} Ali^{-asws} Bin Al-Husayn^{-asws} informed me^{-asws} from Al-Husayn^{-asws} Bin Ali^{-asws}, from Amir Al-Momineen^{-asws} having said: 'Rasool-Allah^{-saww} said: 'The one who spoke and his speech was for other than the Mention of Allah^{-azwj} Mighty and Majestic, it would be vain, and the one who was silent, so his silence was for other than remembering Allah^{-azwj}, is would be forgetfulness'. Then he^{-asws} was silent, so the man stood up and left'.¹⁴

عِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ عَنِ ابْنِ رَبَابٍ قَالَ نَحَلْتُ عَلَى أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) فَقُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ مَا تَقُولُ فِي الشَّطْرَنْجِ قَالَ الْمُقَلِّبُ لَهَا كَالْمُقَلِّبِ لَحْمِ الْخَنْزِيرِ فَقُلْتُ مَا عَلَى مَنْ قَلَّبَ لَحْمَ الْخَنْزِيرِ قَالَ يَغْسِلُ يَدَهُ .

A number of our companions, from Sahl Bin Ziyad, from Ibn Mahboub, from Ibn Raib who said,

'I went over to Abu Abdullah^{-asws}, so I said, 'May I be sacrificed for you^{-asws}! What are you^{-asws} saying regarding the chess?' He^{-asws} said: 'The mover of it is like a mover of the flesh of swine'. So I said, 'And what is upon the one who moves the flesh of swine?' He^{-asws} said: 'He should wash his hand'.¹⁵

سَهْلُ بْنُ زِيَادٍ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ الْجَعْفَرِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي الْحَسَنِ الرَّضَا (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ الْمُطَّلِعُ فِي الشَّطْرَنْجِ كَالْمُطَّلِعِ فِي النَّارِ .

Sahl Bin Ziyad, from Ali Bin Saeed, from Suleyman Al Ja'fary,

¹³ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 13

¹⁴ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 14

¹⁵ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 15

(It has been narrated) from Abu Al-Hassan Al-Reza^{-asws} having said: 'The one familiar regarding the chess is like the one familiar regarding the Fire'.¹⁶

عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ النَّوْفَلِيِّ عَنِ السَّكُونِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ نَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) عَنِ اللَّعِبِ بِالشَّطْرَانِجِ وَالتَّرْدِ .

Ali Bin Ibrahim, from his father, from Al Nowfaly, from Al Sakuny,

(It has been narrated) from Abu Abdullah^{-asws} having said: 'Rasool-Allah^{-saww} forbade from the playing with the chess, and the dice'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 16

¹⁷ Al Kafi – V 6 – The Book of Drinks Ch 35 H 17