128791 - Who is the guest who must be honoured?

the question

Who is the guest who must be honoured? If one of my friends or neighbours visits me, is he regarded as a guest and is he entitled to what is due to a guest?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The host must honour his guest and give him his dues. This is indicated by:

The hadith that was narrated from Abu Shurayh al-Khuza`i (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: My ears heard and my eyes saw when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) spoke and said: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his guest and give him the best treatment.” Someone said: For how long should I offer him the best treatment, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “For one day and one night, and hospitality is for three days, then anything beyond that is charity given to him.” Narrated by al-Bukhari (5673) and Muslim (48).

According to the version narrated by Muslim: “Hospitality is for three days, and the best treatment is to be for one day and one night.”

Al-Khattabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Regarding the words “the best treatment is to be for one day and one night”, Malik ibn Anas was asked about that and he said: Let him be generous to him, offer him fine food, treat him in a special way and take care of him for one day and one night, and the total duration of hospitality is three days.

I said: He means that he should go out of his way to honour him as much as he can on the first day, being generous towards him and offering him fine food, then on the second and third days he

may offer him whatever is available to him and not offer him more than he usually has for himself and his family. And anything beyond three days is charity and a favour; if he wishes he may do it, and if he wishes he may refrain from doing it.

Ma`alim as-Sunan, 4/238.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The guest has rights over the one with whom he is staying, and those rights are of three levels: obligatory, recommended and a kind of charity. What is obligatory lasts for one day and one night. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) mentioned the three levels in the hadith of which the authenticity is agreed upon, which was narrated from Abu Shurayh al-Khuza`i – and he quoted the above hadith.

Zad al-Ma`ad, 3/658.

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What is obligatory is one day and one night, and what is ideal is three days, because of the report narrated by Abu Shurayh al-Khuza`i – and he quoted the hadith.

End quote from *Al-Mughni*, 11/91.

The guest who must be honoured and who has rights over the host is the guest who is a traveller and has come from another city.

The one with whom he stays is obliged to feed him and be generous towards him, and if he does not do that, then the guest has a right to his host's wealth. This does not apply to a visitor from the same city who is not returning from a journey. One may tell such a visitor to go back, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{And if it is said to you, "Go back," then go back; it is purer for you. And Allah is Knowing of what you do}[An-Nur 24:28].

The evidence for what we say is what is found in several hadiths which clearly state that, and this indicates that the rights of the guest are only for travellers, not for those who are resident in the same city. These reports include:

It was narrated that `Uqbah ibn `Amir said: We said: O Messenger of Allah, you send us and we stay with people who do not offer us hospitality [meaning: they do not offer us what is due to a guest]. What do you think? The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to us: “If you stay with a people and they order that you be offered what is befitting to a guest, then accept it, and if they do not do that, then take from them the right of a guest that is due to him.” Narrated by Muslim, 1727.

The scholars differed regarding the ruling on offering hospitality and for whom that is obligatory. In *Al-Mawsu`ah al-Fiqhiyyah*, 28/316-317, it says:

The Hanafis, Malikis and Shafa`is are of the view that hosting a guest is Sunnah, and the duration of hospitality is three days. This was also narrated in one report from Ahmad.

According to the other report narrated from Ahmad – which is the view of his madhhab – it is obligatory; the duration of hospitality is one day and one night, and what is more appropriate is to offer hospitality for three days. This is also the view of al-Layth ibn Sa`d.

The Malikis think that it is obligatory to offer hospitality to a traveller who is passing through, but does not have sufficient provisions to last him until he reaches his destination and fears that he may die, and that hospitality is an obligation on people of villages and cities, except for what was narrated from Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad – according to one report – that it is not obligatory for city-dwellers to offer hospitality. Sahnun said: Offering hospitality is obligatory for people of villages; as for city-dwellers, when a traveller comes to a city he will find an inn – which is a hotel – so in that case it is recommended, but not obligatory, for city-dwellers to offer hospitality to the traveller. End quote.

The correct view – and Allah knows best – is that offering hospitality to a traveller who is passing through – and not someone who is a resident of the same city, is obligatory, and this is required of

both people living in villages and those living in cities, without differentiating between them.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said, commenting on the words of al-Hajjawi (may Allah have mercy on him), Hospitality must be offered to any Muslim who is passing through villages, for one day and one night.

He said: Regarding the words “Hospitality must be offered to any Muslim”, this explains the ruling on offering hospitality, which means welcoming the person who has come, honouring him, letting him stay in one’s house and offering him food. This is one of the beauties of the Islamic religion. Ibrahim (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) set a precedent for that, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Has there reached you the story of the honored guests of Ibrahim?} [Adh-Dhariyat 51:24].

This refers to those whom Ibrahim honoured, and it does not make any difference even if the intended meaning is that it was Allah, may He be Exalted and Glorified, Who honoured them for being angels.

So the ruling on offering hospitality is that it is obligatory, and honouring the guest is also obligatory; honouring the guest is something more than mere hospitality in a general sense. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his guest,” meaning whoever has a perfect level of faith, let him honour his guest.

The words one who is passing through mean: one who passes by you when he is travelling. As for one who is a resident in the city, he does not have the right to hospitality; if one who is resident in a city had the right to hospitality, how many residents would be knocking on doors! So it must refer to one who is passing through, namely a traveller who is passing by. Even the traveller who comes to stay for two or three days, or more, does not have any right to hospitality; rather he must be passing through.

Regarding the mention of villages, and not cities, villages are small settlements and cities are

larger towns. They said: that is because in villages, it is likely that one who is passing through needs help, whereas in large cities there are restaurants, hotels and other means by which a person has no need of hospitality. This is also contrary to the correct view, because the hadith is general in meaning. How often do people come to cities in which there are hotels and restaurants and everything, but he dislikes them and thinks it is not appropriate for him to go to such places, so he prefers to stay as a guest with a friend or with a prominent figure. So if a guest asks to stay with you – even in cities – the correct view is that it is obligatory to offer him hospitality.

Ash-Sharh al-Mumti` `ala Zad al-Mustaqni`, 115/48-51.

Regarding a visitor from the same city, undoubtedly offering him food and honouring him is included in the general meaning of the command to feed people and show kindness to them, but he is not the type of guest whom the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed us to honour and granted him a right to some of the wealth of the host.

And Allah knows best.