82386 - Giving a gift to a Quran teacher

the question

Is a gift that a person gives to his Quran teacher in the mosque regarded as a kind of bribe, knowing that it is in return for teaching only and is not for the sake of certificates or grades, rather it is a gesture of respect and appreciation, and no more than that? What is the Islamic ruling on this matter?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Gifts given to a Quran teacher are subject to further discussion, as follows:

Firstly: if the teacher is teaching a number of students, and he gives them certificates and grades, it is not permissible for him to accept a gift from any of them, because that usually leads to him becoming biased towards that student and preferring him over others, and the others becoming resentful.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked: some of the female students give their teachers gifts on special occasions. In some cases the teacher is teaching (the giver) now, and in some cases she is not teaching her now but it is possible that she will teach her in the coming years, and in some cases it is not possible that she will teach (the giver) because she has already graduated. What is the ruling in these cases?

He replied:

In the third case there is nothing wrong with it. As for the first two cases, that is not permissible, even if the gift is for having a baby or something else, because this gift may lead to the teacher showing bias.

Shaykh Ibn Jibreen (may Allah preserve him) was asked about a teacher working in a Quran memorization school which belongs to al-Jamaa'ah al-Khayriyyah li Tahfeez al-Quran il-Kareem (Charitable organization for memorization of the Quran) does not receive any payment for her teaching. At the end of the school year, after the certificates have been given to the students, they may give her a gift of gold or something similar. What is the ruling on her accepting this gift? Refusing the gift would break her students' hearts and upset them, especially since she has given gifts to them.

He replied: If a student has completed her studies and will be leaving the school, there is no bribery in this case. But if the teacher-student relationship will continue, there is the fear that this gift may cause the teacher to be biased in favour of that student, so that she may overlook her mistakes and not be fair to her and the other students.

Secondly:

If there is not a number of students among whom there is competition and he is trying to treat them all fairly, such as if the teacher is teaching a student on his own, then the issue of this student giving him a gift is different in that case. Some scholars said it is not allowed, quoting as evidence the hadith of the bow, which was narrated by Abu Dawood from 'Ubaadah ibn al-Saamit who said: I taught writing and the Quran to some of ahl al-suffah, and one of them gave me a bow. I said: It is not money, and I will shoot with it (in jihad) for the sake of Allah. I will go to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and ask him about it. So I went to him and said: "O Messenger of Allah, one of the men to whom I taught writing and Quran has given me a bow. It is not money, and I will shoot with it (in jihad) for the sake of Allah." He said: "If you would like to be given a necklace of fire, then accept it." Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

Some of them said it is permissible if it is given willingly on the part of the student. They quoted as evidence reports which may be taken as meaning that it is permissible to accept payment for teaching Quran, such as the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the story of the one who was stung by a scorpion: "Among the most lawful of payments that you

accept is for the Book of Allah.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5737). If payment is permitted, then a gift is more likely to be permissible.

They interpreted the hadith of ‘Ubaadah which is quoted above (the hadith of the bow) as having happened at a time when the people were in need of those who could teach them Quran, so this was a measure aimed at preventing people from putting a price on the teaching of Quran lest the poor among the Muslims be deprived of it. This may be supported by the fact that is mentioned in the hadith itself, that the people who were taught were ahl ahl-suffah, and ahl al-suffah were poor people who lived on people’s charity, and they deserved to be given money, not have it taken from them.

Ibn Muflih (may Allah have mercy on him) said in al-Adaab al-Shar’iyyah (1/298): Our companions said concerning the teacher: if he is given something unconditionally, it is permissible. This is what may be understood from the words of Ahmad. Some of the scholars regarded it as makrooh because of the hadith of the bow.

In Haashiyat al-Qalyoobi wa ‘Umayrah (4/304) it says: It is mustahabb for a mufti, teacher of Quran and preacher to accept a gift if it is given purely for the sake of Allah, otherwise it is better for him not to accept it, rather it is haraam if he does not know that it is given willingly. End quote.

For more information on the permissibility of accepting payment for teaching Quran, please see the answer to question no. 20100.

Based on the above, if this teacher does that which is better, and does not accept gifts from her students, then may Allah reward her with good. She should beware of accepting gifts, for people by their nature are inclined to favour those who treat them kindly, which may lead to preferring and favouring some students, whether one realizes it or not.

We ask Allah to guide us and help us to memorize His Book and act in accordance with it.

And Allah knows best.