82461 - Accept a gift even if it is humble

the question

If someone gives a gift and i do not like it, is it permissible to give it back to the person who gave it and to say that I did not like it and the gift was of cheaper quality than what we normally give to that person? The person who gave the gift is quite well off and can afford much more than he gave.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Humility is one of the best and noblest of characteristics; it is the attitude of the Prophets and Messengers, and the way of the close friends of Allah and the righteous. That is being kind to people, lowering the wing of humility to them and trying to meet their needs and wants.

It was narrated from Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The most perfect of the believers in faith is the one who is best in attitude and humble, who get along with others and others get along with them, and there is no good in the one who does not get along with others and they do not get along with him.”

Narrated by al-Tabaraani in al-Awsat (2/268); classed as hasan by al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah (751).

One of the greatest qualities of those who are humble is that they accept gifts no matter what their value, and they do not look at their value or whether the giver could have afforded something better than that, rather one should accept it and appreciate it, and feel that the true gift is the love that motivated them to give, not the value of the gift.

The leader of mankind, the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, our Beloved Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), despite his high status and lofty position, would accept a gift even if it was a sheep's foot or a drink of milk.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"If I were invited to a meal of a sheep's foot I would accept, and if I were given a sheep's foot as a gift, I would accept."

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5178).

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Fath al-Baari (9/245-246):

The karaa' (translated here as sheep's foot) is the narrow part of the leg and the words refers to the feet of cows and sheep, as opposed to the hooves of camels and horses.

This hadeeth is indicative of the good attitude of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his humility, and his desire to make people happy by accepting gifts and responding when a man invited him to his home, even if he knew that what he was inviting him to was something small. This is encouragement to keep in touch with one another, love one another, make friends with one another, and accept invitations great and small, and to accept gifts likewise. End quote.

Al-'Ayni (may Allah have mercy on him) said in 'Umdat al-Qaari (13/128):

Ibn Battaal said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) referred to sheep's feet in order to encourage us to accept gifts no matter how small in value, so that one would not be discouraged from exchanging gifts by the scorn of the one to whom the gift is given. End quote.

It was narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would accept gifts and reciprocate for them. Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2585).

Indeed, his acceptance of gifts was one of the signs of his Prophethood for the people who followed previously-revealed Books. Salmaan al-Faarisi (may Allah be pleased with him) recognized him by that, as is told in the story of how he came to Islam, as narrated in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad (5/441). We have quoted this story previously on our site in the answer to question no. 88651.

Umm al-Fadl gave the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) a drink of milk and he accepted it, as narrated in al-Bukhaari (1658) and Muslim (1123). Abu Talhah give him the haunch of a rabbit and he accepted it, as narrated by al-Bukhaari (2572) and Muslim (1953). It is almost impossible to list all the occasions on which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) accepted people's gifts, no matter how small.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to say:

"O Muslim women, no woman should look down on a gift given by her neighbour, even if it is the meat from a sheep's foot." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2566) and Muslim (1030).

Indeed it was narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that it is forbidden to refuse a gift.

'Abd-Allah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Accept invitations, do not refuse gifts and do not beat the Muslims."

Narrated by Ahmad in al-Musnad (1/404), and classed as hasan by the editors of al-Musnad. It was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Irwa' al-Ghaleel (6/59).

Ibn Hibbaan said in Rawdat al-'Uqalaa' (242):

In this report the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) rebuked the one who does not accept gifts among Muslims. If a person is offered a gift, he must accept it and not refuse it,

then he should reciprocate if he is able to, and express gratitude for it. End quote.

So you have to accept the gift and not look at its value or whether the giver could have afforded something better. He may not have realized that he could have bought something better or he may have been pressed for time or he may not have made a good choice, or other excuses that may apply to him, that have nothing to do with you. Follow the example of your Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); accepting gifts is part of having a good attitude and good manners.

And Allah knows best.