137954 - Is buying expensive items regarded as extravagance or excess?

the question

Is buying expensive items that one's sister or mother asks for regarded as coming under the heading of extravagance or excess, even if one can afford to buy these things, and there is no difficulty in buying them?

Detailed answer

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

"O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess" [al-A'raaf 7:31].

Shaykh as-Sa'di (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Committing excess means either consuming more than is sufficient and eating too much of foods that are harmful to the body, or going to extremes in choosing the most luxurious and fanciest of foods, drinks and clothing, or going beyond that which is permissible to that which is unlawful."(*Tafseer as-Sa'di* 287).

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

"And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully

Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful" [al-Isra' 17:26-27].

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

When Allah enjoined spending, He forbade spending excessively; rather spending should be moderate, as Allah says elsewhere (interpretation of the meaning):

"And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate" [al-Furqaan 25:67].

Then He says, deterring people from wastefulness and excess: "*Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils*" meaning that they resemble them in that regard.

Ibn Mas'ood said: Wastefulness is spending inappropriately. This was stated by Ibn 'Abbaas.

Mujaahid said: If a person spends all his wealth appropriately, then he is not wasteful, but if he spends a mudd [a small amount] inappropriately, then he is wasteful.

Qataadah said: Wastefulness is spending wealth in acts of disobedience to Allah, may He be exalted, and inappropriately, and for evil purposes."(*Tafseer Ibn Katheer* 5/69).

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

"*And give the relative his right*" of kindness and honour, both that which is obligatory and that which is Sunnah. These rights vary according to the situation, the degree of relationship and the extent of need at different times.

"*and [also] the poor*" – give them their due of zakaah and other forms of charity in order to meet their needs

"*and the traveler*" this refers to the stranger who is cut off from his homeland. They should all be given from one's wealth, in such a way that does not harm the giver and is not more than is appropriate, because that would come under the heading of squandering, which Allah has prohibited.

And He tells us that "*Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils*" because the Shaytaan only calls people to that which is blameworthy, so he calls people to be miserly and stingy, then if they disobey him, he calls them to be extravagant and to squander their wealth, whereas Allah, may He be exalted, only enjoins moderation in all things and praises people for that, as He says, describing the righteous slaves of the Most Gracious: "*And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate*" [al-Furqaan 25:67].

Tafseer as-Sa'di (456).

Thus it is clear that Allah, may He be exalted, has permitted His slaves to enjoy what He has bestowed upon them of good things, such as food, drink and clothing, and He has enjoined them to uphold ties with relatives, and to give to the poor and needy, and He has forbidden them to go to excess and be wasteful in their spending and their giving.

As for spending on something haraam, it is definitely excess and wasteful, but when it comes to spending on permissible things, what is regarded as excessive varies according to the situation of the one who is spending, what he is spending his wealth on, and other factors that may affect his actions, such as time and place, and what he can afford.

Shaykh Ibn ʻUthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

We hear that extravagance and excess may vary from one person to another, according to the wealth that he has, whether he is a businessman or a rich man?

He replied:

This is correct. Extravagance or excess is a relative matter, which has nothing to do with the action itself; rather it has to do with the doer of the action. For example, if a poor woman acquires jewellery that is equal in value to the jewellery of a rich woman, is it regarded as extravagant? If a rich woman acquired this jewellery, we would say that it is not extravagant, but if a poor woman acquires it, we say that it is extravagant. In fact, people may vary with regard to what constitutes excess even with regard to food and drink. A person may be poor, meaning that he is one of those for whom a small amount of food is sufficient, whereas it will not be sufficient for someone else. Moreover, it also varies in that a person may have a guest staying with him, so he honours him by offering food that is not ordinarily eaten in his house, but this is not regarded as excess or extravagance.

The point is that extravagance has to do with the doer, not the deed itself, because people vary in this regard."(*Liqa' al-Baab al-Maftooh* 88/34).

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:

Excess or extravagance means overstepping the mark, and Allah, may He be exalted, has stated in His Book that He does not love those who commit excess. If we say that excess or extravagance means overstepping the mark, then excess varies. This thing may be extravagant in the case of one person, and not extravagant in the case of another. One person may buy a house costing two million riyals, and furnish it for six hundred thousand, and buy a car; if he is rich, then he is not committing excess, because these things are easily affordable for those who are very rich. But if he is not rich, then he is regarded as committing excess, whether he is one of the middle class or among the poor, because some poor people want to project an image of wealth, so you see them buying big houses and furnishing them with expensive furnishings, and they may have borrowed some of that from people. This is wrong.

So there are three categories, the first of which is one who is very wealthy. In this case, we say that at the present time – and we do not say that this is applicable in all times – if he buys a house for two million riyals, and furnishes it for six hundred thousand riyals, and buys a car, then he is not committing excess.

The second category is the middle class; in this case, such purchases are regarded as committing excess.

The third category is the poor; in the case of a poor man, such purchases are regarded as foolishness, for how can he borrow money in order to project an image for which he has no need?!"(*Liqa' al-Baab al-Maftooh* 107/23).

Based on the above, if what your mother and sister are asking for are permissible things, and you can afford to buy them, in the sense that it will not cause you any hardship or affect spending on something that is more important than that, then it is permissible for you to buy them, and the question of whether that is regarded as extravagance depends on the factors mentioned above. If it is customary for people of your standing to buy such things, then that is not regarded as extravagance in your case.

What appears to be the case in your situation is that you should buy such things, when you are able to afford them, if buying them will enhance the upholding of ties of kinship and soften

people’s hearts, or there is the fear that not buying it will result in the severing of ties of kinship, or create trouble between people.

And Allah knows best.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 101903 .