

469532 - Is it obligatory to provide non-essential luxuries for children?

the question

If the father is well off and provides his family with all basic needs that are required according to Islamic teachings, and he has a lot of money left over, but he uses the excuse that he has done what is required according to Islam, so he will not buy non-essential luxuries that he can easily afford for the children, how can we respond to such a father? Especially when it hurts the children's feelings to see him refusing to buy a simple cake to celebrate the achievement of one of his children, on the grounds that it is non-essential and he is not obliged to provide it?

Summary of answer

Something that Islam urges people to do is show kindness to relatives and be generous to one's children, according to what one can afford. The refusal of some parents to provide non-essential luxuries may be justified, so it should not be a reason for the children to complain, because that is usually done in their best interests, immediate or long-term.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

It is indisputably obligatory for the father to spend on his children. Ibn al-Mundhir (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The scholars are agreed that a man must spend on his young children who have no wealth, and they are agreed that if the father dies and leaves behind wealth, the costs of maintenance for the child and the fee for breastfeeding him are to be taken from that wealth. End quote from *al-Ijma'* (98).

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: All the scholars from whom we acquired knowledge were agreed that the man is obliged to spend on his young children who have no wealth, because a man's child is part of him, and he is part of his father. Just as he is obliged to spend on himself and his wife, he is also obliged to spend on his children and parents. End quote from *al-Mughni* (8/212).

Al-Kasani gave the reason for that, as he said: And because spending when there is a need comes under the heading of maintaining the life of the one on whom that money is spent. The child is part of the father, and it is obligatory for him to maintain his own life and the life of the child who is part of him. Based on what we have mentioned above, each of them is obliged to spend on the other.

Because ties of kinship of this kind must be upheld and it is prohibited to sever those ties according to scholarly consensus, and spending on maintenance comes under the heading of upholding these ties, it is obligatory. Not doing that when one is able to do it, and when the one on whom he is obliged to spend is in need, leads to severing those ties of kinship, so it is prohibited."(*Bada'i' as-Sana'i'* 5/2230).

Secondly:

The religious texts did not specify a specific amount for maintenance, because that is something that varies according to people's circumstances and what they can afford, and according to differences in customs and traditions. Islam refers such matters to local custom (*'urf*), so what is obligatory with regard to maintenance for children is what the people in that community regard as essential for the man to spend on the maintenance of his children. That includes fundamentals such as food, drink and clothing, and basic needs, such as transportation, basic education and marriage.

This is indicated by the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to Hind: "Take what is sufficient for you and your children on a reasonable basis." Al-Bukhari (5364).

Thirdly:

Anything more than the maintenance which is obligatory – when the man can afford it – comes under the heading of kind treatment which Allah, may He be exalted, has enjoined. He has enjoined kindness and generosity to relatives, and the closest of people to a man are his children. Being kind and generous is something additional to doing what is obligatory, which is being just and fair. Allah, may He be exalted, has enjoined justice, and kindness and generosity, and He singled out relatives for mention in the verse (interpretation of the meaning): {Verily,

Allah enjoins justice, kindness and giving kinsfolk [their due]} [an-Nahl 16:90]. Justice in the case of maintenance means doing what is obligatory, and kindness means doing more than that, by being generous towards them as much as one can afford.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Kindness is something additional to fairness, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {Verily, Allah enjoins justice, kindness and giving kinsfolk [their due]} [an-Nahl 16:90]. Kindness sometimes means complying with what is required according to Islamic teachings – even if it is obligatory – and sometimes it means doing more than is obligatory. (Tafsir al-‘Uthaymin: *al-Fatihah wa’l-Baqarah* 1/169).

Ibn Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Allah singled out giving to relatives for mention – even though it is included in the general meaning – so as to emphasize their rights and the importance of upholding ties with them, showing kindness to them and striving in doing that. That includes all relatives, whether they are closely or distantly related, but the more closely they are related, the greater their right to kindness is." (Tafsir as-Sa‘di p. 447).

The Quran also mentions them after the command to show kindness to parents, in the verse (interpretation of the meaning): {Be kind to parents [and] relatives} [an-Nisa’ 4:36].

Based on that, being generous towards one’s children is something that Allah has enjoined, and He has made it a means of attaining His love, as He says (interpretation of the meaning): {for Allah loves those who do good} [Al ‘Imraan 3:134].

The religious texts also encourage showing generosity to one’s wife and children.

According to the hadith, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The best dinar that a man spends is a dinar that he spends on his dependents, and a dinar that a man spends on his mount (for jihad) for the sake of Allah, and a dinar that he spends on his companions (in jihad) for the sake of Allah.” Abu Qilabah said: He started with the dependents. And Abu Qilaabah said: What man is greater in reward than a man who spends on young dependents and protects them from resorting to asking of people – or Allah benefits them through him? Narrated by Muslim (994).

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said in a marfu' report [that is, one that is attributed directly to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)]: "A dinar that you spend for the sake of Allah, a dinar that you spend to free a slave, a dinar that you give in charity to a needy person and a dinar that you spend on your family – the greatest of them in reward is the one that you spend on your family." Narrated by Muslim (995).

It was narrated from 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: "If Allah is generous to you, then be generous."

Undoubtedly a father's being generous to his children and not being stingy with them is one of the most effective ways of reaching their hearts and increasing love between them, because people naturally love the one who shows kindness to them.

In this situation, being generous is something to be emphasized when there is an occasion which calls for that, such as one of the children succeeding in exams, or completing the Quran or part of it, or reaching the age of accountability, and so on. These are occasions which require a display of happiness and celebration, and it is important to do that, because the effect on the child cannot be ignored. Hence it is prescribed to offer feasts on numerous occasions, including 'aqiqah when a child is born, or offering a wedding feast. Some scholars say that it is recommended to celebrate the child's completing the Quran and so on. This is a beneficial guideline for raising children.

Fourthly:

The things referred to in the question are non-essential items, so the father may decide not to provide them by way of raising the children with a simple life and not let them get used to having non-essential luxuries. He may be right or wrong in his decision, but he may be excused and be appreciated for his efforts and the hardship he goes through to provide obligatory maintenance. Thus we may regard his approach as something for which he is to be praised. Many fathers save what is surplus to necessity for the future interests of the children, not to enjoy it themselves. This is something that should be taken into consideration.

Relationships between family members are not limited to essential and unavoidable rights and duties; rather there should be room for love, compassion, gentleness, kindness, upholding ties of kinship and being easy-going, especially with regard to one's parents.

In most cases, the children will eventually realize that what their father is doing is in their best interests, because parents are usually keener to do that which will benefit their children than the children themselves are. Hence the family must appreciate that and not make it a reason to complain about the father. In the hadith that was narrated from Abu'd-Darda', it is narrated that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The father is the middle gate of Paradise; if you wish, you may miss that gate or you may maintain it." Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (1900); classed as sahih by al-Albani in *as-Silsilah as-Sahihah* (914).

And Allah knows best.