

309254 - The difference between reciprocating when someone does you a favour and giving a gift to one who intervened for you

the question

How can we reconcile between the two following hadiths? The first hadith is “Whoever does you a favour, then reciprocate him, and if you cannot find anything with which to reciprocate him, then offer supplication for him until you think that you have reciprocated him.” The second hadith is: “Whoever intervenes for his brother and he gives him a gift for that and he accepts it, he has engaged in a major form of riba.” I am confused about this matter, because we have a colleague who helps us with some personal issues of ours and looks after our interests in some other government departments, not as part of his job or his specialty, but out of generosity on his part. Can we reciprocate him for that or not?

Detailed answer

It was narrated that ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever does you a favour, then reciprocate him, and if you cannot find anything with which to reciprocate him, then offer supplication for him until you think that you have reciprocated him.” Narrated by Abu Dawud (1672) and an-Nasa’i (2567). Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said: al-Hakim said: It is sahih according to the conditions of the two shaykhs (al-Bukhari and Muslim), and adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. And it is as they said. End quote from as-Silsilah as-Sahihah (1/510).

It was narrated from al-Qaasim ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahman, from Abu Umamah, that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever intervenes for his brother and he gives him a gift for that and he accepts it, he has engaged in a major form of riba.” Narrated by Abu Dawud (3541) and Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad (36/588); classed as hasan by al-Albani in as-Silsilah as-Sahihah (7/1371).

There is no contradiction between these two hadiths. The scholars have mentioned several ways in which we may reconcile between them.

-1-

In the hadith of Abu Umamah, the idea of intervening is to be understood as meaning that the person intervenes for his brother, intending that to be for the sake of Allah, so it is not permissible for him to accept any gift or payment after that, so as not to lose the reward with Allah.

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

These two sahih hadiths appear to contradict one another. The first hadith is when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever does you a favour, then reciprocate him..."

The second hadith is: "Whoever intervenes for his brother and he gives him a gift for that and he accepts it, he has engaged in a major form of riba."

This person who intervened for his brother undoubtedly did him a favour, so if he wants to reciprocate him, how can that be regarded as riba? Please advise us, may Allah reward you with good. Can this be understood as referring to when a payment is stipulated or a payment is given for doing that?

He (may Allah have mercy on him) replied:

What is referred to in this hadith is intervention that is done for the sake of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, so he should not accept payment for it, because that which is done for the hereafter cannot be a means of worldly gain, and because if the one who intervenes for the sake of Allah is given a gift, his desire for worldly gain may overwhelm him in the future, so he may expect some worldly gain for his intervention. Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) warned against accepting gifts [in return for intervening]."*(Liqa' al-Bab al-Maftuh 83/16)*.

-2-

The hadith of Abu Umamah (may Allah be pleased with him) may be understood as referring to the kind of intervening that is obligatory, such as intervening to stop oppression or to restore rights that have been taken from someone, and the like.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

As for gifts in return for intervening, such as one who intervenes on behalf of a man with someone in authority, so that some wrong that has been done to him may be put right, or so that he may get what is due to him, or so that he may be appointed to a position of authority that he deserves, or so that he may be accepted to join the troops – when he is qualified for that – or so that he may be granted something from a waqf (endowment) that is allocated to the poor, jurists, reciters of Qur’an, devoted worshippers and so on – when he is deserving of that – and other types of intervention in which the one who intervenes helps to make sure that something obligatory is done or that something prohibited is stopped: in these cases too it is not permissible to accept gifts, but it is permissible for the giver of the gift to give as much as will enable him to get what is rightfully his or to ward off oppression. This is what was narrated from the early generations and the major scholars.

Some later jurists granted a concession allowing that, and regarded it as coming under the heading of “payment for some service.” But this is contrary to the Sunnah and the views of the Sahabah and senior scholars, so it is wrong, because such actions come under the heading of serving the public interest that one should do as a duty and obligatory act, either as an individual obligation or as a communal obligation.” (*Majmu’ al-Fatawa* 31/287).

Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Abu Dawud included this hadith in a chapter entitled: Chapter on gifts given to one who does an errand or helps with something.

Based on that, I say: if a person has an issue that the one who is intervening is obliged to help his brother with, such as if he wants to intervene for him with the judge in order to relieve him of some wrong that is being done to him, or to help him get what is rightfully

his, and similar matters which Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) discussed in detail...

It may occur to some people that this hadith contradicts the hadith in which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever does you a favour, then reciprocate him, and if you cannot find anything with which to reciprocate him, then offer supplication for him until you think that you have reciprocated him."

I say: There is no contradiction, because this is to be understood as referring to issues in which help does not involve intervening, or something that is not obligatory."(*As-Silsilah as-Sahihah* 7/1372).

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The hadith of Abu Umamah is to be understood as referring to all forms of intervention that are aimed at helping others, and this is an exception to the hadith of Ibn 'Umar.

As-San'ani (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Subul as-Salaam* (5/128), commenting on the hadith of Abu Umamah:

Perhaps what is meant is that if the intervention is concerning something that is obligatory... or is aimed at stopping something that is prohibited... (then it is haram to give a gift).

If the intervention has to do with something that is permissible, perhaps it is permissible to accept the gift, because it is by way of reciprocation for a kind action that is not obligatory.

Or it may be haram, because the intervention is something minor (that does not require much effort), therefore one should not accept a gift in return. End quote.

Secondly:

With regard to your question:

If this employee does some work and puts effort into it, then there is nothing wrong with giving him payment or a gift in return for that, because it may be regarded as being in return for the work that he did.

But if his work is limited to (verbal) intervention only, and he does not do any other work, then this is a matter concerning which there is a difference of scholarly opinion. The Shafa'is and Hanbalis allow that, and call it "the price of status."

This has been discussed previously in the answer to question no. [120819](#) .

And Allah knows best.