

Zakat Al-Fitr: Rulings & Wisdoms



In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy.

It is incumbent upon every Muslim to seek knowledge and learn, more so before a particular act of worship is obligated. Below is a concise summary of the basic rulings of Zakat Al-Fitr.

What is Zakat Al-Fitr and why is it called this?

Zakat al-Fitr is an obligatory form of charity during Fitr i.e. when the fasting of Ramadhan is broken with Eid.

What is the wisdom behind Zakat Al-Fitr?

The Prophet (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam) beautifully explained the wisdom for the obligation of Zakat Al-Fitr, he said:

It is purification for a fasting person, from idle talk and false speech, and also to feed the poor. [1] i.e. despite a fasting person trying to stay away from false speech during fasting, sometimes we may fall short. Therefore, Zakat Al-Fitr is a purification from this.

It is also a way of us showing our gratitude to our Lord, who bestowed upon us Ramadhan and allowed us to live until Eid. The third wisdom is to give some food to the poor to enable them to enjoy Eid without asking others.

Who needs to pay Zakat Al-Fitr?

The Prophet (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam) obligated Zakat Al-Fitr on “Muslims, free or slaves, male or female, young or old.” [2]

Therefore, it is an obligation upon every Muslim, however the responsibility falls on the head of the household such as the father or husband, to donate it on behalf of his dependants. This is assuming they have enough food for themselves.

It is not obligated to pay Zakah Al-Fitr on behalf of a foetus, however it is recommended and desired. Also, it is not legislated to pay Zakat Al-Fitr on behalf of a deceased person.

What should be donated?

The Prophet (sal Allaahu alayhi wa salaam) obligated Zakat al-Fitr to be given “a Saa’ of dates, a Saa’ of barley...” [3]

Abu Sa’eed Al-Khudree narrates that the companions:

“would give Zakat al-Fitr on behalf of every young and adult, the free and enslaved in the era of the Messenger of Allah one Saa’ of staple foodstuff...” [4]

The above – and other narrations – show us that Zakat Al-Fitr should be donated in the form of the staple food of one’s locality.

How much should be donated?

The measure used at the time of the Prophet (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam) was a Saa’. [5]

In modern measurements this relates to:

- Rice: 2.3kgs
- Raisins: 1.64kgs
- Dates: 1.8kgs
- Wheat: 2.04kgs
- Lentils 2.1kgs
- Flour: 2.06kgs
- Couscous 1.8kgs [6]

From the above measurements we can see that Zakat Al-Fitr ranges from 1.5kgs to 2.5kgs approximately depending on the type of food. For this reason, the scholars have recommended for **3kgs** of food to be given as a matter of caution. [7]

How is it given and to whom?

Zakat al-Fitr is given to any poor person who cannot afford his daily food for himself and his family. There are three possibilities for Zakat Al-Fitr:

1. The correct measure of food should be given to poor people in your locality. This is the Sunnah and it fulfils the objective of community cohesion.
2. If poor people are not found in one’s community, then the correct measure of food can be transferred to a different community or country, especially if the poor are relatives.
3. Finally, if none of the above are possible, then a person should give the monetary value of food, this is not from the Sunnah however it is done for a particular need or benefit as in the above scenario. [8]

How should it be given?

From the above it is clear that the best practice is to give it directly to the poor in one's locality. A person should include his wife and children in every step of the donation – buying the food, each child measuring their own quantity, packaging it and finally donating it to the poor.

However, we should also be sensitive to the poor who are receiving it, that they are not to be made to feel belittled, therefore where appropriate anonymity can be maintained.

Why is it given to the poor specifically?

Eid is a day of happiness and festivities, and nobody should feel left out on such a day. For this reason, essential food items are distributed to the poor without them asking. It is also encouraged for Muslims to give gifts and honour the poor in other appropriate ways.

When should it be given?

The best time to donate the Zakat Al-Fitr is before the Eid prayer, however it can be given earlier by a day or two especially if it is felt that it may not reach the poor in time. If it is delayed until after the Eid Prayer, it is no longer considered as Zakat, but mere charity.

The Prophet (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam) said,

Whoever donates the Zakat before the Eid Prayer then it is an accepted form of Zakat, and whoever gives it after the Prayer it is a Sadaqah. [9]

Allaah knows best; May peace and blessings be upon our beloved Prophet, his family and companions.

Written by the one in need of Allaah,

Abul Abbaas Naveed Ayaaz

Nelson, Lancashire

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Corresponding to 3rd July, 2016

FOOTNOTES

[1] Narrated by Ibn Abbaas; Collected by Abu Dawood

[2] Narrated by Ibn Umar; collected by Al-Bukhaaree & Muslim

[3] Ibid.

[4] Narrated by Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree; Collected by Muslim

[5] A Saa' is a measure of volume which was used in the Prophetic era, it is 'four double handfuls of food' measured by an average man.

[6] This was calculated by a number of students in the presence of Shaykh Ferkous of Algeria. Ref: www.sahab.net/forums/index.php?howtopic=131485

[7] Refer to: www.binbaz.org.sa/article/353

[8] Ibn Taymiyyah said: "As for donating Zakaat Al-Fitr in monetary value (ie as opposed to actual food) then there is a difference of opinion. Is it permitted unrestrictedly? Is it forbidden unrestrictedly? Is it permitted in some instances due to a need or a benefit?

There are three opinions [as above] in the Madhhab of Imaam Ahmad and others. [The last opinion] is the most just and fair." [Majmoo' Al-Fataawa 25/79]

[9] Narrated by Ibn Abbaas; Collected by Abu Dawood

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