

The Payment Of Zakah Al-Fitr In Money

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(Rahimahu-llaah)

Q. 1 Is it permissible to discharge the obligation of Zakah Al-Fitr on the first day of Ramadan? And is it permissible to distribute it in money?

Answer: As for the discharging of it on the first day of Ramadan - there is *Ikh-ti-laaf* (difference of opinion among the scholars) about it. The most correct opinion is that its *not* permissible, because it is called Zakah Al-Fitr, and Al-Fitr (ending of the fast) does not occur except at the end of the month. Also, the Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) ordered that it be discharged before the people go out to the Prayer (Salat Al-Eid). Along with that, the companions (Sahabah) used to give out the Zakah Al-Fitr one or two days before the Eid. As for discharging the Zakah Al-Fitr in **money**, this is a point of *Ikh-ti-laaf* (difference among the scholars). And the correct opinion - as I see it - is that it is *not* discharged except by (distribution of) **food**.

This is because Ibn Umar (Radiyallaahu 'an-huma) said: "The Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) made obligatory (the payment of) Zakah Al-Fitr from a **Saa'**¹ of dates or a **Saa'** of barley." [al-Bukhaaree, no. 579]

Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree (Radiyallaahu 'an-hu) said: "We used to distribute it (i.e. Zakah Al-Fitr) in the time of the Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) as one **Saa'** of **food**, and our food was dates and barley and raisins and sun-baked yogurt." [al-Bukhaaree, no. 582]

So, it becomes clear from these two hadiths that it (i.e. Zakah Al-Fitr) is not discharged except from **food**. And the distribution of it in food displays it openly and shows it, and all of the members of the family know about it. In this way, there is an exhibition or manifestation of this aspect of the religion.

As for discharging it in **money**, this causes it to be concealed (unseen), and perhaps the person may favor himself, by discharging it in money, and thus reduce its amount. [This is understood if we consider that the amount would differ if we compare the value of one **Saa'** of dates to one **Saa'** of barley for example. Since a **Saa'** of barley is about 7 riyals (\$2.00), while a **Saa'** of dates ranges - according to quality - from 25 riyals (\$7.00) for a lesser quality to 42 riyals (\$12.00) for a medium quality, to 175 riyals (\$49.00) for the best quality per **Saa'**]. Therefore, strictly following the Law (al-Qur'an and Sunnah) is best and it is blessed. Someone might argue that the distribution of **food** doesn't benefit the poor. (But, we say) the poor person - if truly poor - must definitely benefit from the **food**.

¹ One (1) **Saa'** is equal to four (4) **Mudd**, and one (1) **Mudd** is equal to the amount held by cupping the two hands together. It is a measure by volume not by weight.

Q.2 Is it permissible to discharge Zakah Al-Fitr in money? - with mention of the evidences.

Answer: Zakah Al-Fitr is not permissible except (to be paid) from **food**. And it is not allowed to discharge its value in **money**. This is because the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) made it obligatory (to be discharged) from a **Saa'** of dates or a **Saa'** of barley.

Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree (Radiyallaahu 'an-hu) said: "We used to discharge it (Zakah Al-Fitr) in the time of the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) as a **Saa'** of **food**...". [al-Bukhaaree, no. 582]

Therefore, it is not lawful for anyone to discharge Zakah Al-Fitr from **money** (dirhams) or clothing or household furnishings. Instead, that which is obligatory is to discharge it in what Allah has made obligatory on the tongue of the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam). There is no consideration (weight given to) the *Is-tih-saan* [viewing of something to be good, without basis from the legal sources of Qur'an and Sunnah] of those of the people who viewed the giving of **money** as a good thing. The Law (Sharee'ah) does not follow (i.e. take a back seat to) the opinions of people.

No, it (the Law) is from the One Who is Wise, Knowing - Allah - the Mighty, the Glorious, the Most Knowing, the Most Wise. So, if that which has been made obligatory by the tongue of Muhammad (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) is a **Saa'** of **food**, then it is not permissible to bypass (skip over) that, no matter what our intellects make us to view as being good. Instead, it is a must that the human being question and suspect his intellect and his views if it conflicts with, or contradicts, the Law of Allah.

Q.3 What is the ruling in the case of someone compelled to discharge Zakah al-Fitr by money? And does it fulfill for him his obligation?

Answer: It appears to me that if someone is compelled to discharge the Zakah al-Fitr by **money**, then he should give them the **money**, and *not* openly *disobey* those in authority. But, as far as that which is between him and Allah, he should discharge what he has been commanded by the Prophet (salla'lлаhu alayhi wa sallam) to discharge. So, he should [additionally] discharge a **Saa'** of **food** as the Prophet (salla'lлаhu alayhi wa sallam) commanded. Their compelling you to discharge it from **money** is compulsion to do something which Allah has *not* legislated. In that case, you must fulfill what you believe to be obligatory (i.e. the distribution of the **food**).

Q.4 Is it permissible to discharge Zakah Al-Fitr from meat? Some of the desert dwellers don't have food to distribute for Zakah Al-Fitr, so is it permissible for them to slaughter some of their animals and distribute it to the poor?

Answer: This is not correct, because the Prophet (Salla-llaahu alayhi wa Sallam) made it obligatory to give one **Saa'** of **food**, while meat is measured by weight (not by volume).²

Ibn Umar (Radiyallaahu 'an-hu) said: "The Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) made obligatory the Zakah Al-Fitr as a **Saa'** of dates or a **Saa'** of barley." [al-Bukhaaree, no. 579]

And Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree (Radiyallaahu 'an-hu) said: "We used to discharge it (Zakah Al-Fitr) in the lifetime of the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) as a **Saa'** of **food**, and our **food** was dates, and barley, and raisins and sun-baked cottage cheese." [al-Bukhaaree, no. 582]

For this reason, the strongest opinion of the sayings of the scholars is that Zakah Al-Fitr is not fulfilled by paying (distributing of) money, nor clothing, nor furnishings (furniture). There is no weight to the sayings of those who say that Zakah Al-Fitr is fulfilled by payment of **money**; this being so because as long as we have in front of us a **text** of the Prophet, then there is no opinion (in the matter) after him, nor accepting as good what the intellect considers good while negating the Law (the Qur'an and Sunnah).

Allah will not ask us about the opinion of *so and so* on the Day of Resurrection. He will only question us about the saying of the Messenger (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) as in His (Allah's) saying: "**And (remember) the Day (Allah) will call to them and say: what answer gave you to the Messengers?**" (Al-Qur'an 28:65, al-Qasas)

Just imagine yourself standing before Allah on the day of Resurrection while it had been made obligatory on you to fulfill the payment of Zakah Al-Fitr from **food**. Will it be possible, if you are asked on the Day of Resurrection: How did you answer the Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alayhi wa Sallam) in reference to the obligation of this charity? Will it be possible for you to defend yourself and say: By Allah! this is the *madhhab* of so and so, and this is the opinion of such and such? The answer: No! and even if you said that, it would not benefit you (at all). The truth, without doubt, is that Zakah Al-Fitr is not accepted except from **food**; and any food which is the staple food of the country fulfills this obligation.

² The common factors between the items specified by the Prophet as Zakat al-Fitr are that each of them are: (a) of the staple food of the people, (b) measured by volume rather than weight, (c) food that may be stored and preserved for a long period of time.

If you see the opinions of the scholars in this issue, you will see that they are on two extremes and one in the middle. One (extreme) side says: Pay it (Zakah Al-Fitr) from food or pay it from cash (money). The other (extreme) side says: Don't pay it from money, and don't pay it from food *except five types only*, that is : wheat, dates, barley, raisins, sun-baked yogurt. These two opinions are the extreme opposite of each other.

As for the middle opinion, it says: Pay it (Zakah Al-Fitr) from every **food** which the people are fed from, and not from that which the people are not fed from. So, pay it from wheat, dates, rice, pearl millets (dukhn), corn - and whatever is similar to that, - even to the extent *if* we accepted the idea that there is a place where the staple food of the people is meat, then we would pay it from meat. Based on this, it becomes clear that what the questioner mentioned about the people of the desert giving meat in place of (a **Saa'** of those staple items which are normally given as) Zakah al-Fitr, does **not** fulfill the obligation of Zakah Al-Fitr.

The preceding Fataawaa (Legal Decisions) were taken from the book entitled

Fataawaa Ash-Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Saleh al-Uthaimeen

(Rahimahullaahu -May Allah Have Mercy Upon him).

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