

Legal Issues Related to *Zakaat al-Fitr*

Its *Hukm* (Legal Ruling)

Zakaat al-Fitr is obligatory (*Waajibah*) upon every Muslim, based upon the Hadeeth of Ibn Umar (Radiyallaahu ‘an-humaa). He said: “The Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alaihi wa Sallam) made *Zakaat al-Fitr* obligatory [in the amount of] a *Saa’* (approximately 2.4 Kilos or 5 pounds) of dates or a *Saa’* of barley – upon the Muslims: the slave and the free person, the male and the female, the young and the old. And he (Sallallaahu Alaihi wa Sallam) commanded that it be distributed [to those entitled to receive it] **before** the people go out to the [Eid] *Salaah* [on the morning of *Eid of Fitr*].” [Al-Bukhaaree, no. 1503; Muslim]

Its *Hikmah* (Wisdom/Purpose)

On the authority of Ibn Abbaas (Radiyallaahu ‘an-humaa) that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alaihi wa Sallam) made *Zakaat al-Fitr* obligatory as a means of ***Tuh-rah*** (purification) for the fasting person, from senseless speech and obscene behavior, and ***Tu’-mah*** (food/nourishment) for the poor and needy. So, whoever distributes it **before** the *Eid Salaat*, will have it considered as an acceptable charity for the *Eid* (*Zakaah Maqboolah*); and whoever distributes it **after** the *Eid Salaat*, will have it considered as one of the (general) charities. [Saheeh Ibn Maajah, 2/111, no. 1492; Irwaa’, 3/332, no. 843]

Those Obligated To Give It

It is *obligatory* upon the free Muslim who owns sufficient provisions to maintain oneself and those under ones care – for a day and a night. And it is *obligatory* for him to distribute [one *Saa’* of foodstuffs] on behalf of himself, as well as a *Saa’* for each person that he is responsible for the financial maintenance of – such as his wife and children and servants – **if** they are Muslims.

On the authority of Ibn Umar (Radiyallaahu ‘an-humaa), he said “The Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu Alaihi wa Sallam) commanded that *Sadaqah al-Fitr* (be distributed) on behalf of the young and the old, the free and the slave – from those who provide for them (i.e. those who you are responsible to attend to their needs).” [Irwaa’ al-Ghaleel, no. 835. Hadeeth Saheeh]

The Amount To Be Distributed

That which is obligatory (to be distributed) on behalf of each person is a **half of a *Saa’* of wheat** [according to the view of Mu’aawiyah (Radiyallaahu ‘an-hu); See: Irwaa’ al-Ghaleel, no. 847] or a *Saa’* (approximately 2.5 Kilos or 5 pounds) of **dates, raisins, barley, or *Aqit*** (dry sun-baked yogurt); or other (staple foods) which serve the same purpose, such as rice, corn and that which is similar, or the foods which are considered ***Qoot*** (nourishment or food). [See: *al-Jaami’ li-Ahkaam Fiqh as-Sunnah*, 2/127-130, by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-Uthaimen (Rahimahullaah) for a detailed discussion on this point]

...As for the view that what is *obligatory* from foods other than wheat [and *even wheat*, according to the strongest view] – this is based upon the Hadeeth of Abu Sa’eed al-Khudree (Radiyallaahu ‘an-hu), that he said: “We used to distribute *Zakaat al-Fitr* in the amount of a ***Saa’ of Ta’aam*** (food), or a *Saa’* of **barley**, or a *Saa’* of **dates**, or a *Saa’* of **sun-baked yogurt**, or a *Saa’* of **raisins**.” [al-Bukhaaree, no. 1506; Muslim]

“Most of the scholars of *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) do not consider ***Ikh-raaj al-Qee-mah*** [i.e. distribution of the **value** of this *Zakaat* in **money**] as being lawful, while Imaam Abu Haneefah (Rahimahullaah) allowed it.” Imaam an-Nawawee (Rahimahullaah) mentioned this in the *Sharh* (Explanation) of *Saheeh Muslim*, 7/60. I (the author of this writing) say: The view of Imaam Abu Haneefah (Rahimahullaah) is rejected since ‘...Your Lord was not forgetful.’ [Qur’aan, 19:64] Hence, if distribution of ***al-Qee-mah*** (the **value** of the *Zakaat* in **money**) had fulfilled (this obligation), Allah and His Messenger (Sallallaahu alaihi wa Sallam) would have clarified this. So, that which is obligatory is to stop (and rely) upon the *obvious* meaning of the textual proofs (*an-Nusoos*), without distorting or re-interpreting (its meaning).

The Time for Its Distribution

On the authority of Ibn Umar (Radiyahallaahu ‘an-humaa), who said: “The Messenger of Allaah (Sallallaahu Alaihi wa Sallam) commanded that *Zakaat al-Fitr* be distributed **before** the people go out to the [Eid] *Salaat* [on the morning of *Eid al-Fitr*].” [Al-Bukhaaree, no. 1503, Muslim]

It is **permissible** to give it **early** to those who are *authorized to receive it* (for distribution) – one or two days before (*Eid*) *al-Fitr*. On the authority of Naafi’ (Rahimahullaah) [the *Mawlaa* and student of Ibn Umar] that he said: “...Ibn Umar (Radiyahallaahu ‘an-humaa) used to give it (*Zakaat al-Fitr*) to those *authorized to receive it* (for distribution), and they used to **distribute** it one or two days **before** [Eid] *al-Fitr*.” [Al-Bukhaaree, no. 1511; Irwaa al-Ghaleel, 3/335, no. 846]

It is **forbidden** to **delay** it beyond its prescribed time without a (legal) excuse. On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbaas (Radiyahallaahu ‘an-humaa), who said: “The Messenger of Allaah (Sallallaahu Alaihi wa Sallam) made *Zakaat al-Fitr* obligatory as a means of **Tuh-rah** (Purification) for the fasting person, from senseless speech and obscene behavior, and a **Tu’mah** (food/nourishment) for the poor and needy. So, whoever distributes it **before** the [Eid] *Salaat*, it will be considered as a *Zakaat Maq-boo-lah* (acceptable charity, for the Eid); and whoever distributes it **after** the [Eid] *Salaat*, it will be considered as one of the (general) charities.” [Saheeh Ibn Maajah, 2/111, no. 1492; al-Irwaa’, 3/332, no. 843]

Those Entitled to Receive It

Sadaqat al-Fitr is not to be given to anyone other than **al-Masaakeen** (the poor and needy), based upon the saying of the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alaihi wa Sallam), in the Hadeeth of Ibn Abbaas (Radiyahallaahu ‘an-humaa): “...a **Tu’mah** (food/nourishment) for the **poor** and **needy**...” [Saheeh Ibn Maajah, 2/111, no. 1492; al-Irwaa’, 3/332, no. 843]

‘Al-Wajeez Fee Fiqh as-Sunnah wal-Kitaab al-‘Azeez’,
Shaykh Abdul-Adheem ibn Badawee, pg. 229-231.
[Translation: Abu Muhammad, 9/1429 AH (2008 CE)]