

Zakat ul-Fitr

by Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Saalih Ibn 'Uthaymeen

Source: Fataawaa Ash-Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Saaleh al-Uthaymeen

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

Answer

As for the discharging of it on the first day of Ramadhaan - there is Ikhtilaaf (difference of opinion among the scholars) about it. The most correct opinion is that it's not permissible, because it is called Zakaatul-Fitr, and Al-Fitr (ending of the fast) does not occur except at the end of the month. Also, the Messenger of Allaah ordered that it be discharged before the people go out to the Prayer (Salaatul-'Eed). Along with that, the companions (Sahabah) used to give out the Zakaatul-Fitr one or two days before the 'Eed. As for discharging the Zakaatul-Fitr in MONEY, this is a point of Ikhtilaf (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 said: "The Messenger of Allaah made obligatory (the payment of) Zakaatul-Fitr from a Saa' of dates or a Saa' of barley..."¹

Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree said: "We used to distribute it (Zakaatul-Fitr) in the time of the Messenger of Allaah as one saa' of food, and our food was dates and barley and raisins and cottage cheese..."² So, it becomes clear from these two hadeeth that it (Zakaatul-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 favour himself, by discharging it in money, and thus reduce its amount.³ Therefore, strictly following the Law (al-Qur'aan 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.

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

Answer

Zakaatul-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 made it obligatory (to be discharged) from a saa' of dates or a saa' of barley.

Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree said: "We used to discharge it (Zakaatul-Fitr) in the time of the Prophet as a saa' of FOOD..."⁴

Therefore, it is not lawful for anyone to discharge Zakaatul-Fitr from money (dirhams) or clothing or

household furnishings. Instead, that which is obligatory is to discharge it in what Allaah has made obligatory on the tongue of the Prophet . There is no consideration (weight) for the Istihsaan [viewing of something to be good, without basis from the legal sources of Qur'aan 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. it is not secondary to) the opinions of people.

No, it (the Law) is from the One Who is Wise, Knowing -Allaah - The Mighty, The Glorious, The Most Knowing, The Most Wise. So, if that which has been made obligatory by the tongue of Muhammad 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 views if it conflicts with, or contradicts, the law of Allaah.

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

Answer

It appears to me that if someone is compelled to discharge the Zakaatul-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 Allaah, he should discharge what he has been commanded by the Prophet to discharge. So, he should discharge a saa' of food as the Prophet commanded. Their compelling you to discharge it from money is compulsion to do something which Allaah has not legislated. In that case, you must fulfill what you believe to be obligatory.

Q.4 Is it permissible to discharge Zakaatul-Fitr from meat? Some of the desert dwellers don't have food to distribute for Zakaatul-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 made it obligatory to give one saa' of food, while meat is measured by weight (not by volume).

Ibn Umar t said: "The Messenger of Allaah made obligatory the Zakaatul-Fitr as a saa' of dates or a saa' of barley..."⁵

And Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree t said: "We used to discharge it (Zakaatul-Fitr) in the lifetime of the Prophet as a saa' of food, and our food was dates, and barley, and raisins and cottage cheese "⁶

For this reason, the strongest opinion of the sayings of the scholars is that Zakaatul-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 Zakaatul-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 his, nor accepting as good what the intellect considers good while negating the Law (the Qur'aan and Sunnah). Allaah U 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 (as in His (Allaah's U) saying :

And (remember) the Day (Allaah) will call to them and say: what answer gave you to the Messengers?⁷

Just imagine yourself standing before Allaah on the day of Resurrection while it had been made

obligatory on you to fulfill the payment of Zakaatul-Fitr from Food. Will it be possible, if you are asked on the day of Resurrection: How did you answer the Messenger of Allaah in reference to the obligation of this charity? Will it be possible for you to defend yourself and say: By Allaah! this is the opinion 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 Zakaatul-Fitr is not accepted except from FOOD; and any food which is the staple food of the country fulfils this obligation.

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 (Zakaatul-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, cottage cheese. These two opinions are the extreme opposite of each other.

As for the middle opinion, it says : Pay it (Zakaatul-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) Zakaatul-Fitr, does not fulfill the obligation of Zakaatul-Fitr.

The preceding Fataawaa (Legal Decisions) were taken from the book entitled "Fataawaa Ash-Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Saaleh al-Uthaymeen (Hafizahu'llah -May Allaah Protect and Preserve him).

Footnotes:

1 Bukhaaree 2:579 One 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

2 Bukhaaree 2:582

3 As 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'.

4 Bukhaaree 2:582

5 Bukhaaree 2:579

6 Bukhaaree 2:582

7 Al-Qasaas : 65