



Rulings on Zakat-ul-Fitr

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Q. What is Zakat-ul-Fitr?

- A. Apart from being known as **Sadaqat-ul-Fitr**, it is also known as the type of zakat that has to be paid before Eid-ul-Fitr prayer. It also carries the name of **Zakat-Al-Badan** (the body tax) or **Zakat-Al-Ra's** (The head tax).

Q. What is the purpose of Zakat-ul-Fitr?

- A. This Zakat was established mainly to **cleanse a Muslim individual from any shortcomings or mischief conducted during the month of Ramadan.**

Additionally, Zakat-ul-Fitr is given to the poor and needy at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan mainly to celebrate the upcoming Eid with happiness.

The following hadith also proves that Zakat-ul-Fitr is **not just a lending hand to the poor and needy but rather a favor we do to ourselves to remove any sins we have committed during Ramadan:**

Ibn 'Abbas (RAA) narrated, 'The Messenger of Allah (Peace be Upon Him) enjoined Zakat-ul-Fitr on the one who fasts (i.e. fasted during the month of Ramadan) to purify him from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the needy. It is accepted as zakah for the person who pays it before the Eid prayer and it is sadaqah (i.e. voluntary charity) for the person who pays it after the Eid prayer.' (Abu Dawud)

Q. Who should pay Zakat-ul-Fitr?

- A. Zakat-ul-Fitr is an **obligation upon every Muslim**, grown-up or a child regardless of the gender, as long as they have what is sufficient to feed them for a day or longer. The head of the family pays for every single member of the family if the members are dependent on him financially and don't have money to pay themselves.

Q. Who should receive it?

- A. Zakat-ul-Fitr is to be given to the **poor or needy of the Muslim community**, according to some scholars. Some other scholars permit giving Zakat-ul-Fitr to any or all of the **8 groups of people** who are eligible to receive it. The recipients consist of the following **eight groups** mentioned in Surah al-Tawba, verse 60:-

8 Kinds of people who can accept Zakat:

- the poor
- the needy
- Zakat administrators
- those whose hearts are to be reconciled, meaning new Muslims and friends of the Muslim community
- those in bondage (slaves and captives)
- the debt-ridden
- in the cause of God
- the wayfarer, meaning those who are stranded or traveling with few resources

Q. When should Zakat-ul-Fitr be paid?

A. You can start giving Zakat-ul-Fitr in the **last few days of Ramadan** and it **must be given before Eid-ul-Fitr prayer** is conducted; failing to do so invalidates the conditions of giving out Zakat-ul-Fitr.

It is narrated by Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever gives it before the prayer, it is accepted zakah; and whoever gives it after the prayer, it is a kind of charity.” (Abu Dawood).

Q. In what form should Zakat-ul-Fitr be given?

A. In al-Saheehayn, it is narrated that Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

“At the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), we used to give it at a rate of one saa’ of food, or one saa’ of dates, or one saa’ of barley, or one saa’ of cheese, or one saa’ of raisins...”

A number of scholars interpret that the word food here refers to local staple food, whilst others suggest it to be wheat. As the whole intention of Zakat Al-Fitr is to help the poor, it is encouraged to pay **in the form of local staple food** of the region/country.

Q. What measures of food should be given for Zakat-ul-Fitr?

A. A scoop (*saa'*) of what the Prophet (saw) practiced in Madina is **approximately equal to 3 kg of uncooked rice**. Wheat, barley, cereal, dhal etc. of equivalent weight can also be given as Zakat-ul-Fitr. The quality and type of rice has to be what the giver uses on a daily basis. You **can also give more than the required amount** (i.e. 3 kg of rice) and along with it you can add other essentials such as dhal, oil etc.

Q. Can Zakat-ul-Fitr be paid in cash, or does it have to be given as food products?

A. Many scholars argue that **Zakat-ul-Fitr must be paid in the form of the staple diet of the local community** of the payer. Again, the purpose here is to satisfy the needs of the poor. The majority of scholars **prefer that it be paid in the form of grains** such as wheat, barley or corn. Dates and other staple foods are also acceptable.

However, **many contemporary scholars argue that this is not a fixed ruling**. They maintain **that in communities where food is scarce or hard to get, Zakat-ul-Fitr must be paid in kind and it is not acceptable to pay a poor person the cash equivalent of the zakat**. On the other hand, in a community where grains and agricultural produce are available in abundance, there is no need to insist on paying Zakat-ul-fitr in kind. **Cash may be much better for the poor**. They further point out that in our modern times, homes are not equipped with the tools necessary to make bread and the like. In many communities, the poor who receive sizeable quantities of grains or flour or in communities which enjoy abundance of them find no alternative but to sell all or most of what they receive. Such a situation will inevitably lead to their depreciation and this will affect them adversely. Paying the cash equivalent of Zakat-ul-fitr is better, because it benefits the poor and allows them to buy whatever they need. **Hence, it is acceptable to pay Zakat-ul-fitr in cash. The criterion, however, is the availability of food, especially staple foodstuff, in abundance.**

It is established in Hanafi jurisprudence that the amount of Zakat-ul-Fitr is half a saa' (2.4 kg) of wheat grain, wheat flour, a mixture of wheat and barley flour, raisins or one saa' of dates or barley. Since the obligation of the above kinds of foodstuff refers to their material value and not necessarily to their



specific kinds, it is therefore permissible to pay the equivalent value of any of the above in cash, trade goods or in any other form.

The reason for specifying wheat and barley at the time of the Prophet was because they were used as a medium of exchange in al-Medina. But here where currency is the medium of exchange, it is preferable to pay the cash equivalent of zakat. This is likewise the opinion of a group from among the successors and scholars reckoned to be among them, including:

- **Al-Hasan Al-Basri:** He was reported to have said, "There is no objection to paying Zakat-ul-Fitr in dirhams."
- **Abu Ishaq Al-Suba'i:** Zuhair reported that he heard Abu Ishaq say, "I was present at the time of the Companions and they paid the cash value of Zakat-ul-Fitr."
- **'Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz:** Waqi' narrated through Qura who said, "We received a letter from 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz concerning Zakat-ul-Fitr. It said, 'Half a sa` for each person or its equivalent of half a dirham.' "

