

## Guidelines to understand Zakat Al-Fitr

Compiled by Abu-Abu Hurayrah

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- a) Zakat al Fitr is Wajib/fard/maktuub (i.e. obligatory) for those who are able to give.
- b) Zakat al Fitr becomes obligatory when the sun sets on the last day of Ramadaan, not before that.
- c) Zakat al Fitr can be given earlier than that, the companions used to give zakat 2 to 3 days before the end of Ramadan. This is the best time to give this zakat.
- d) It is ordained to purify the fasting person and to feed the poor people.
- e) The head of household, if able, gives one sa'a of food on behalf of each member of the household. [So, if there are 4 members, then zakat al firt is 4 sa'aa or 16 mudd of food]. If he is in charge of his wife, and children, then for each gives one sa'aa. If there are more people under him, like his parents or other people, then he gives on behalf of each of them one sa'aa of food.
- f) Zakat al fitr is obligatory for male, female, young, old, slave or free from the Muslims.
- g) The recipients of zakat are the miskeen and faqir. Zakat al fitr can't be given to non-Muslims. Of course non-Muslims can be given from general charity, there is nothing wrong to feed a poor non-Muslim but it shouldn't be from zakat al fitr.
- h) One Sa'aa is equal to 4 Mudd. Sa'aa and Mudd were the volumes that were used in Medinah in the time of the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam).[one mudd is equal to the quantity that a grown up man can hold when he cups both of his hands together]
- i) Some people claim the sa'a of the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) is preserved and they provide a certain diagram to claim this is from the Prophet, however the chain of narration contains unknown people! [We can't attribute something to our Prophet unless with a connected chain which contains reliable people]
- j) Any type of food that is customary of the land can be given as zakat al fitr. We don't have to necessarily give out dates/raisins etc.. [which were given out by the companions]. Even milk, fish, chicken, vegetables and all sorts of perishable/non perishable food can be given to help the poor.
- k) Zakat al Fitr must be distributed in the form of food. The price of the food can't be distributed to the poor people in the form of money. This is because this is how the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) did it and his companions followed him in this way!
- l) No specific weight can be assigned for this charity because four handfuls of rice would weigh different than four handfuls of dates/cereal etc...

- m) No specific price can be assigned for this charity as the price of four handfuls of food would widely vary depending on what kind of food we want to distribute. Hence to say “zakat al fitr is \$10.00” will obligate a less fortunate person to pay \$10.00 per head for his family, and this is against the guidance of the Prophet (Sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam). Rather the concept should be understood and taught so people can make their individual decision of what amount of money they want to give as zakat al fitr.
- n) Zakat Al Fitr must be given before the local Eid prayer. If given after eid prayer, it will be just a general charity.
- o) The poor people of the locality should be first recipient of zakat al fitr. We shouldn’t channel money to other communities unless the need of the local community is fulfilled.
- p) If someone delays it and the time is over, still he is not exempted from it, he has to give it even if it is after eid! In that case, this will be a general charity and he will lose the immense blessings of this specific ‘ebadah!
- q) If someone didn’t give zakat al fitr for years, he has to first repent to Allaah and then has to estimate what he missed and give that amount out to the poor people in the form of food only!
- r) It is allowed for people to give money to a masjid or an organization who will use this money to buy food and distribute them in the form of food to poor people! [in Man Muslim countries, musallis going to masjid to pray Eid salah distribute the zakat al fitr in the form of money directly to the poor people sitting outside the mosque begging for fitrah!!!]
- s) It is not allowed to give zakat al fitr to an organization who distributes it in a form other than food!
- t) It is allowed for the collectors [not for the individual donors] to collect the food/money until the Eid Salah and to distribute later even after the Eid prayer is over. However, Individual donors must distribute their zakat al fitr in the form of food to the poor before the Eid prayer or in the form of money/food to an organization/masjid before the Eid prayer. They must make sure the organization/Masjid will distribute their collected money in the form of food according to the guidance of the Prophet and his companions.
- u) Individuals can prepare their zakat al fitr food bags and distribute these food packages directly to the poor people too.
- v) Of course there is a dispute with regards to “can the zakat al fitr be distributed as money to the poor?” Some notable people of knowledge allowed this. But the majority prohibited it! If there is a dispute about a certain matter with regards to a certain issue amongst the notable scholars of Islam, we can’t just side with majority or minority! We need to go back to the Quran and sunnah to solve this

issue. When we take this dispute back to the sunnah, we see the guidance of the Prophet and his companions on this is that “it should be distributed in the form of food.” Hence in this case, alhamdulillah, without doubt, the safer, the smarter, the more careful and more virtuous way is to distribute the zakat al fitr in the form of **food only**. And Allaah knows best.

w) Below are some observations for those kind hearted people who feel the poor people in the Eid need other things too! This motivates many to answer the call of distributing zakat al fitr in the form of money (i.e. other than food). But consider the following and remember in the sunnah we have all ways to help the poor!

- This is changing the practice of the Prophet and his companions.
- Those who say the purpose of zakat al fitr to enrich the poor in the time of eid, we say “of course” and if this zakat was allowed to be given in the form of money that the poor people also needed in the time of the prophet (Sallallaahu a’alyhi wa sallam), the prophet would have allowed it and showed it with his example but rather Ibn ‘Abbas defined the purpose as “feeding the poor” and with practical example the companions reported what type of food they used to take out, when and in what quantity!
- This is also taking the rights of the poor people who are desperately in need of food! If some poor people don’t need food, then it is obvious they are not recipients of zakat al fitr. So, we can fulfil their need from zakat al maal or general charity. But we must keep the zakat al fitr for those who need the food!
- The sunnah of measuring the sa’aa of food and all the associated efforts of collecting food, guarding the food, distributing the food are missed when this charity is distributed in the form of money. [remember, the Prophet asked Allaah to bless the measure of mudd and sa’aa!!]
- Those who are in need of other things, we can solve their problems by giving them money from general charity or zakat al maal. So, this way those who need food will benefit from zakat al fitr. And those who need other stuff can benefit from the general charity! In following the sunnah, there is solution for everyone and finally, the best guidance is the guidance of the Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam)