

All Praise be to Allaah and peace and blessings be upon the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam)

When growing up, we used to take cash money on the day of Eid and distribute to the poor people sitting near the door of the masjid as zakat al fitr. This practice is very famous and well known in our culture. However, the sunnah teaches a specific way to give this special charity at the end of Ramadaan.

Charity is a form of worship and can't be done the way we want. We must learn how to give charity from the sunnah of the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). Our deen is based on chain of narration, an unique blessings for the ummah of Mohammad (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). When we go to the books of Sunnah, for example, Saheeh Al-Bukhari, we will be able to see what this chain of narration means. It is a unique way Allaah preserved His deen.

The problem of following the culture blindly is many times these practices are taken and copied from each other without knowing the origin or proper verification. So, it is wise to check and verify everything we do in the name of our noble religion. Zakat al Fitr is no exception to this!

Zakat al Fitr or Sadaqatul Fitr is a special charity that has the following rules:

- a) It should be given at the end of Ramadaan.
- b) It is ordained to purify the fasting person and to feed the poor people.
- c) The head of household, if able, gives one sa'a of food on behalf of each member of household. [So, if there are 4 members, then zakat al firt is 4 sa'aa or 16 mudd of food]
- d) 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 we can hold when we cup both of our hands together]
- e) 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.
- f) Zakat Al Fitr must be given before the local Eid prayer. If given after eid prayer, it will be just a general charity.
- g) 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! Different from the traditional practice of musallis going to masjid to pray Eid salah and distribute the zakat al fitr in the form of money directly to the poor people!!!

- h) 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.

Let's look at some hadith that prove the above points.

Purpose of Zakat Al-Fitr & when to give zakat Al-Fitr:

سُنُّ أَبِي دَاوُدَ <1609> كِتَابُ الزَّكَاةِ << بَابُ زَكَاةِ الْفِطْرِ >> حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ خَالِدِ الدَّمَشْقِيُّ ، وَعَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ السَّمُرْقَانِيُّ ، قَالَا : حَدَّثَنَا مَرْوَانُ - قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ : حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو يَزِيدَ الْخَوْلَانِيُّ وَكَانَ شَيْخَ صِدْقٍ وَكَانَ ابْنُ وَهْبٍ يَرَوِي عَنْهُ ، حَدَّثَنَا سَيَّارُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ - قَالَ مُحَمَّدٌ : الصَّدَقِيُّ - عَنْ عِكْرَمَةَ ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ، قَالَ : " فَرَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ طَهْرَةً لِلصَّائِمِ مِنَ اللُّغْوِ وَالرَّفَثِ ، وَطَعْمَةً لِلْمَسَاكِينِ ، مَنْ آدَاهَا قَبْلَ الصَّلَاةِ ، فَهِيَ زَكَاةٌ مَقْبُولَةٌ ، وَمَنْ آدَاهَا بَعْدَ الصَّلَاةِ ، فَهِيَ صَدَقَةٌ مِنَ الصَّدَقَاتِ " *

(قال الألباني: إسناده جيد/ هداية الرواة/ 1759)

Sunan Abi Dawud / Ibn 'Abbas reported that Allah's messenger made Zakat-ul-fitr obligatory as purification of the fasting person from empty and obscene talk and as food for the poor. If anyone pays it before the Eid prayer, it will be accepted as Zakah, and if anyone pays it after Eid prayer it will be counted as a Sadaqa like any other sadaqa. (Grade: Sahih/Al-Albani in hidayat ar-Ruwaat]

The proof of what kind of food the companions used to give and how much and for who:

صَحِيحُ الْبُخَارِيِّ <1503> كِتَابُ الزَّكَاةِ << أَبْوَابُ صَدَقَةِ الْفِطْرِ >> بَابُ فَرَضِ صَدَقَةِ الْفِطْرِ << 1443 حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ السَّكَنِ ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَهْضَمٍ ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ ، عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ نَافِعٍ ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ ، عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا ، قَالَ : " فَرَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ صَاعًا مِنْ تَمْرٍ ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ شَعِيرٍ عَلَى الْعَبْدِ وَالْحُرِّ ، وَالذَّكْرِ وَالْأُنثَى ، وَالصَّغِيرِ وَالْكَبِيرِ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ، وَأَمَرَ بِهَا أَنْ تُؤَدَّى قَبْلَ خُرُوجِ النَّاسِ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ " * وفي رقم 1511: وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا " يُعْطِيهَا الَّذِينَ يَقْبَلُونَهَا ، وَكَانُوا يُعْطُونَ قَبْلَ الْفِطْرِ بِيَوْمٍ أَوْ يَوْمَيْنِ " *

Ibn Umar said: Allah's messenger made Zakat-ul-fitr obligatory on every Muslim, slave or free, male or female, young or old, one Saa' of date, or one Saa' of barley, and he ordered it to be paid before the people went out to offer Eid prayer.

Ibn Omar used to give it (Zakat-ul-fitr) to those who had been officially appointed for its collection. People used to pay it (Zakat-ul-fitr) even a day or two before the (Eid).

Similarly, it has been reported in Bukhari by Abu Sayeed Al-Khudriy (May Allaah be pleased with him)

عَنْ عِيَاضِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَعْدِ بْنِ أَبِي سَرْحٍ الْعَامِرِيِّ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ أَبَا سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيَّ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - يَقُولُ كُنَّا نَخْرِجُ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ صَاعًا مِنْ طَعَامٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ شَعِيرٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ تَمْرٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ أَقِطٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ زَبِيبٍ.

Sahih al-Bukhari » Obligatory Charity (Zakat)/ Chapter: Obligation of Sadaqat-ul-Fitr

Chapter: Sadaqat-ul-Fitr is one Saa' of food (per head)// (73) Narrated Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri: We used to give Zakat-ul-Fitr one Sa' of food or one Saa' of barley or one Sa' of dates, or one Saa' of cottage cheese or one Sa' of Raisins (dried grapes)

[As previously stated, Sa'aa is a special volume equal to 4 handfuls of a grown man's two hands when cupped together]

It is allowed for the collectors to delay the distribution of zakat al Fitr:

The famous hadith of Abu Hurayrah and the Shaytan thief is reported in muallaq form [i.e. without a chain] in Saheeh Al-Bukhari. However, the chain is connected in other books of hadith. Imam Ibn Khuzayman in his Saheeh reports this hadith and the hadith has been authenticated by Imam Al-Albaani and many others.

Imam Ibn Khuzaymah mentions this hadith in "Book of Zakat" under the chapter title: It is allowed for the Imam to delay the distribution of Zakat al Fitr after day of Eid Al-Fitr when he is given the zakat. **بَابُ الرَّخْصَةِ فِي تَأْخِيرِ الْإِمَامِ قَسَمِ صَدَقَةِ الْفِطْرِ عَنْ يَوْمِ الْفِطْرِ إِذَا أُدِّيَتْ إِلَيْهِ.**

صَحِيحُ الْبُخَارِيِّ <2311> كِتَابُ الْوَكَايَةِ << بَابُ إِذَا وَكَّلَ رَجُلًا ، فَتَرَكَ الْوَكِيلُ شَيْئًا فَأَجَازَهُ الْمُوَكَّلُ فَهُوَ وَإِنْ أَفْرَضَهُ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى جَازَ >> وَقَالَ عُنَيْنُ بْنُ الْهَيْثَمِ أَبُو عَمْرٍو ، حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سَبْرِينَ ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ ، قَالَ : وَكَلَّنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِحِفْظِ زَكَاةِ رَمَضَانَ ، فَأَتَانِي آتٍ فَجَعَلَ يَحْتُو مِنْ الطَّعَامِ فَأَخَذْتُهُ ، وَقُلْتُ : وَاللَّهِ لَأَرْفَعَنَّكَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، قَالَ : إِنِّي مُحْتَاجٌ ، وَعَلَيَّ عِيَالٌ وَلِي حَاجَةٌ شَدِيدَةٌ ، قَالَ : فَخَلَيْتُ عَنْهُ ، فَأَصْبَحْتُ ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : " يَا أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ ، مَا فَعَلَ أَسِيرُكَ الْبَارِحَةَ " ، قَالَ : قُلْتُ : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، شَكَأَ حَاجَةٌ شَدِيدَةٌ ، وَعِيَالًا ، فَرَجَمْتُهُ ، فَخَلَيْتُ سَبِيلَهُ ، قَالَ : " أَمَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ كَذَبَكَ ، وَسَيَعُودُ " ، فَعَرَفْتُ أَنَّهُ سَيَعُودُ ، لِقَوْلِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّهُ سَيَعُودُ ، فَرَصَدْتُهُ ، فَجَاءَ يَحْتُو مِنْ الطَّعَامِ ، فَأَخَذْتُهُ ، فَقُلْتُ : لَأَرْفَعَنَّكَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، قَالَ : دَعْنِي فَإِنِّي مُحْتَاجٌ وَعَلَيَّ عِيَالٌ ، لَا أَعُودُ ، فَرَجَمْتُهُ ، فَخَلَيْتُ سَبِيلَهُ ، فَأَصْبَحْتُ ، فَقَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : " يَا أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ ، مَا فَعَلَ أَسِيرُكَ " ، قُلْتُ : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ شَكَأَ حَاجَةٌ شَدِيدَةٌ ، وَعِيَالًا ، فَرَجَمْتُهُ ، فَخَلَيْتُ سَبِيلَهُ ، قَالَ : " أَمَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ كَذَبَكَ وَسَيَعُودُ " ، فَرَصَدْتُهُ الثَّلَاثَةَ ، فَجَاءَ يَحْتُو مِنْ الطَّعَامِ ، فَأَخَذْتُهُ ، فَقُلْتُ : لَأَرْفَعَنَّكَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ، وَهَذَا آخِرُ ثَلَاثِ مَرَّاتٍ ، أَنْكَ تَرَعُمُ لَا تَعُودُ ، ثُمَّ تَعُودُ قَالَ : دَعْنِي أَعْلَمُكَ كَلِمَاتٍ يَنْفَعُكَ اللَّهُ بِهَا ، قُلْتُ : مَا هُوَ ؟ قَالَ : إِذَا أُوتِيَ إِلَيَّ فِرَاشُكَ ، فَأَقْرَأْ آيَةَ الْكُرْسِيِّ : (اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ) ، حَتَّى تَخْتِمَ الْآيَةَ ، فَإِنَّكَ لَنْ يَزَالَ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَافِظٌ ، وَلَا يَفْرَبُكَ شَيْطَانٌ حَتَّى تُصْبِحَ ، فَخَلَيْتُ سَبِيلَهُ ، فَأَصْبَحْتُ فَقَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : " مَا فَعَلَ أَسِيرُكَ الْبَارِحَةَ " ، قُلْتُ : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، زَعَمَ أَنَّهُ يَعْلَمُنِي كَلِمَاتٍ يَنْفَعُنِي اللَّهُ بِهَا ، فَخَلَيْتُ سَبِيلَهُ ، قَالَ : " مَا هِيَ " ، قُلْتُ : قَالَ لِي : إِذَا أُوتِيَ إِلَيَّ فِرَاشُكَ فَأَقْرَأْ آيَةَ الْكُرْسِيِّ مِنْ أَوَّلِهَا حَتَّى تَخْتِمَ الْآيَةَ : (اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ) ، وَقَالَ لِي : لَنْ يَزَالَ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَافِظٌ ، وَلَا يَفْرَبُكَ شَيْطَانٌ حَتَّى تُصْبِحَ - وَكَانُوا أَحْرَصَ شَيْءٍ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ - فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : " أَمَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ صَدَقَكَ وَهُوَ كَذُوبٌ ، تَعْلَمُ مَنْ تَخَاطَبُ مِنْذُ ثَلَاثِ لَيَالٍ يَا أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ " ، قَالَ : لَا ، قَالَ : " ذَاكَ شَيْطَانٌ "

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) put me in charge of charity of Ramadan (Sadaqat-ul-Fitr). Somebody came to me and began to take away some food-stuff. I caught him and

said, "I must take you to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)." He said, "I am a needy man with a large family, and so I have a pressing need." I let him go. When I saw the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) next morning, he asked me, "O Abu Hurairah! What did your captive do last night?" I said, "O Messenger of Allah! He complained of a pressing need and a big family. I felt pity for him so I let him go." He (ﷺ) said, "He told you a lie and he will return." I was sure, according to the saying of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that he would return. I waited for him. He sneaked up again and began to steal food-stuff from the Sadaqah. I caught him and said; "I must take you to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)." He said, "Let go of me, I am a needy man. I have to bear the expenses of a big family. I will not come back." So I took pity on him and let him go. I went at dawn to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) who asked me, "O Abu Hurairah! What did your captive do last night?" I replied, "O Messenger of Allah! He complained of a pressing want and the burden of a big family. I took pity on him and so I let him go." He (ﷺ) said, "He told you a lie and he will return." (That man) came again to steal the food-stuff. I arrested him and said, "I must take you to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), and this is the last of three times. You promised that you would not come again but you did." He said, "Let go of me, I shall teach you some words with which Allah may benefit you." I asked, "What are those words?" He replied, "When you go to bed, recite Ayat-ul- Kursi (2:255) for there will be a guardian appointed over you from Allah, and Satan will not be able to approach you till morning." So I let him go. Next morning the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked me, "What did your prisoner do last night." I answered, "He promised to teach me some words which he claimed will benefit me before Allah. So I let him go." The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked, "What are those words that he taught you?" I said, "He told me: 'When you go to bed, recite Ayat- ul-Kursi from the beginning to the end i.e., [Allah! none has the right to be worshipped but He, the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His Permission? He knows what happens to them (His creatures) in this world, and what will happen to them in the Hereafter. And they will never compass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills. His Kursi encompasses the heavens and the earth, and preserving them does not fatigue Him. And He is the Most High, the Most Great].' (2:255). He added: 'By reciting it, there will be a guardian appointed over you from Allah who will protect you during the night, and Satan will not be able to come near you until morning'." The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Verily, he has told you the truth though he is a liar. O Abu Hurairah! Do you know with whom you were speaking for the last three nights?" I said, "No." He (ﷺ) said, "He was Shaitan (Satan)."

Conclusion: It is true that some poor people might not need food but other stuff during the end of Ramadaan. Some Muslims, out of compassion, try to collect and distribute the zakat al fitr to poor in the form of money. This practice is not correct for the following reasons:

- a) This is changing the practice of the Prophet and his companions.
- b) This is also taking the rights of other 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. We should instead focus on the people who need the food.
- c) Those who need 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!

Also these people, may Allaah guide them to goodness, claim that some scholars allow the price of zakat al fitr to be given in the form of food [referring to the madhhab of Imam Abu Haneefah]. But this doesn't matter. We are not created to follow the opinions of scholars especially when their opinion contradict the established prophet and his companions. The best guidance is the guidance of the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam).

They also say in our country, the poor people don't need food, they get food assistance from government. If this is the case, then these local poor people might not need food but there are so many in other Muslim countries who literally are deprived of food. We can definitely send the collected money to be distributed in the form of food in those countries. As for the local people's other needs, we can always help them from Zakat Al-Maal or general charity.

Let's keep Zakat Al-Fitr as we find in the sunnah of the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). May Allaah help us purify our fasting with this amazing form of 'ibadah. May Allaah make us see the truth as the truth and make us follow the truth and make us see the falsehood as the falsehood and help us stay away from it.

Written by

Abu Abu Hurayrah

In Need of Allaah's Assistance the Most

May Allaah forgive him, his parents, his family and progeny until the day of Judgment

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