

FAQ on Zakāt al-Fitrah (Revised Ramadan 1437/July 2016)

According to the rulings of Āyatullāh Sayyid Ali al-Husaynī al-Sistānī (dz)

Q. What is Zakāt al-Fitrah?

A. It is religious tax/alms (*zakāt*) paid on the day when Muslims break (*fatar*) the fasting period at the end of the month of Ramadan. This tax/alms is known as Zakāt al-Fitrah.

Q. What do the Quran & the Hadīth say about the Fitrah?

A. Imams (a) say that the verses: *Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success, and remembers (glorifies) the Name of his Lord and prays* (87:14 & 15) refer to giving of Fitrah and saying prayers on Eidul Fitr. Imam al-Sādiq (a) said: *For your fasting to be accepted, give zakāt.*

Q. When does Fitrah become wājib (obligatory)?

A. Payment of Zakāt al-Fitrah becomes wājib (obligatory) after sunset on the eve of Eidul Fitr. The Zakāt al-Fitrah should be paid or set aside at the latest by the day of Eidul Fitr before Eid prayers for those who will perform the prayers, or before midday (the time of *zuhr* prayers) for those who will not perform Eid prayers. It is necessary to have an obligatory intention (*niyyah*) of giving Zakāt al-Fitrah to fulfill God's command and for His pleasure only.

Q. What happens if someone forgets or does not give Zakāt al-Fitrah on time?

A. If one does not give out or set aside the Zakāt al-Fitrah within the due time, he should give it later, on the basis of precaution, without making the *niyyah* of *adā* (i.e. giving it on time) or *qadhā* (i.e. giving it after the time has elapsed) but give with the intention of *Qurbatan Ilallah* only.

Q. Can we give Zakāt al-Fitrah in advance?

A. You can give Zakāt al-Fitrah anytime during the month of Ramadan before the night of Eid but the it's *mustahab* to first give it as a loan and then to change your intention from it being a "loan" to "Zakāt al-Fitrah" when the time for giving Zakāt al-Fitrah has entered.

Giving Zakāt with the intention of it being Zakāt al-Fitrah prior to the month of Ramadan is not permissible. However, you can send the appropriate amount as a temporary loan to the needy and then change your intention as described in the previous paragraph.

Q. Who is supposed to pay the Fitrah?

A. Every Muslim who is mature (*baligh*), sane, financially able (meaning that they have means of supporting themselves and their dependents for the following year through savings and/or means of earning), and conscious on the eve of Eidul Fitr.

Zakāt al-Fitrah should be paid on behalf of one's self and all dependents (e.g. wife, children) whom one supports financially.

Q: What if I'm dependent on someone who isn't going to give Zakāt al-Fitrah on my behalf?

A. If you are a dependent on someone else for whom giving Zakāt al-Fitrah is wājib, but that person does not give it either out of forgetfulness or out of disobedience, it is *ibtiyāt wājib* for you to give the Zakāt al-Fitrah for yourself if the conditions are in place for it to be obligatory on you.

Q. What happens if a person is dependent on two people?

A. If a person is a dependent of two people, Zakāt al-Fitrah is obligatory on both by being divided between them.

Q. Can I give Zakāt al-Fitrah on behalf of others who are not my dependents?

A. You can offer them the required amount for them to then give to the needy. You can also distribute it on their behalf or give it to an agent to do so but only if they request you to do so.

Q. What happens if we invite guests for a meal on the eve of Eid al-Fitr?

A. If the guest is not considered to be your "dependent" – for example, when the guest is just invited for iftār on the night of Eid - his fitrah is not obligatory on you.

Q. What happens if my guest is considered to be a dependent?

A. If your guest is staying with you in a way that he is considered a "dependent" – even if it be for a temporary period, and even if he was not invited – then: if the guest arrives before sunset to stay at least through the night, it's wājib on you to give the Zakāt al-Fitrah for him. But if he arrives after sunset to stay at least through the night, it is *ibtiyāt wājib* to give his Zakāt.

Q. What should be given as Zakāt al-Fitrah?

A. Three kilograms (one *sā'ū*) of any local food staple (like wheat) per person or dependent. Note that an item that is not considered to be staple food locally should not be given as Zakāt al-Fitrah.

Q. Can we give cash value of any commodity mentioned above?

A. Yes. For example, if rice is a local staple and it costs \$3/kg., the cash value of Zakāt al-Fitrah based on rice per person would be \$9 and one who has three dependents would give \$36 (\$9 for himself and \$27 for each of his 3 dependents).

Q. To whom should we give the Zakāt al-Fitrah?

A. It can be given to the needy locals who are unable to meet their own or their dependents annual living expenses through their savings or through earning. Such needy must be a Shī'ah Ithnā 'Asharī, unless none are to be found, in which case it

may be given to any needy local Muslims. Only after searching and not finding deserving person locally, it can be sent outside of the city. The one exception is when remitting it to the Marj'a (jurist) in which case sending it outside is allowed.

Q. To whom should the Zakāt al-Fitrah not be given?

A. One who consumes alcohol, does not say his daily prayers (salāt), and commits sins openly; and to one who will use it (directly or indirectly) in a sinful manner.

Q. Can we appoint an agent (like our local center's administration) to distribute the Zakāt on our behalf?

A. Yes, if you have trust that this agent will distribute it to those who are deserving.

Q. Are there any additional rules that we need to be aware of when giving the Zakāt al-Fitrah?

(i) Zakāt al-Fitrah given by a non-Sayyid cannot be given to a needy Sayyid, but the reverse is permissible.

(ii) Amongst the needy in town, (non-dependent) relatives and neighbors should be preferred over others when giving Zakāt al-Fitrah, and those possessing knowledge, commitment to the religion, and merit should be given preference over others.

Checked by: Shaykh Salim Yusufali, Caledon, ON

For comments please contact: **Academy for Learning Islam (A.L.I.)**
director@academyofislam.com; Tel: 1-647-928-1350, Toronto, Canada.