

Zakatul Fitr and Eid

Zakatul Fitr

There are two types of *Zakah* in Islam. The first is the regular, compulsory charity (levied on the rich), also referred to specifically as *Zakatul mal*; it is the third pillar of Islam. The other is *Zakatul Fitr*, also known *sadaqatul Fitr*. In this book, we are concerned only with *Zakatul Fitr*. *Zakatul Fitr* is due on every person who has sufficient means to maintain himself and his family beyond the day and night of Eid, and it must be paid on behalf of every member of one's family including infants.

Zakatul Fitr is obligatory on everyone who has witnessed the last part of Ramadan and the beginning of *Shawwal*. Thus, it is not obligatory on those who have died before the sunset of the last day of Ramadan, nor is it a must to pay it on behalf of infants born after the final departure of Ramadan.

As explicitly stated by the Prophet (PBUH), the purpose of *Zakatul Fitr* is two-fold:

1. To help compensate for the deficiencies in our fasts. Often we are guilty of mistakes, which, although we may be unaware of them, may nevertheless undermine the blessings and rewards of fasting.

2. Secondly, it is intended to help the poor celebrate *Eidul Fitr*. Islam, being a religion with a social message, considers it essential that at least on the day of Eid, nobody should be allowed to go hungry. Abu Dawud narrated on the

authority of Ibn ‘Abbas that he (the latter) said, “The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) prescribed *Zakatul Fitr* in order to cleanse those who were fasting from (damages done to their fasts due to indulgence in) lewdness or obscenities, as well as as a means of providing food for the poor; so, if someone pays it before the *Salah*, it is considered *Zakah*, and if someone pays it after, it is a form of charity” (Reported by Ibn Majah on the authority of Abd Allah bin Abbas).

Who Must Pay?

Zakatul Fitr is considered obligatory on every Muslim, male or female, young or old. Imams Bukhari and Muslim reported on the authority of Abd Allah bin Umar: “The Messenger of Allah prescribed the payment of *Zakatul Fitr* at the rate of one *sa‘* of dates or wheat, to be paid by every Muslim, whether free or slave, male or female, young or old.” Imam Khattabi commented on this, saying, “If we say its purpose is to purify our fasts, *Zakatul Fitr* should be obligatory on every person who is fasting, rich or poor, who has a sufficiency above his sustenance, for everyone is in need of purification.” However, Ibn Hajar countered this argument, saying, “Purification is mentioned only as one of the major purposes, albeit an important one, but its wisdom is not exhausted by it; so, it should be binding on everyone, including those who have not incurred any sins whatsoever, such as children, etc.).”

What is to be Paid?

During the time of the Prophet (PBUH), he ordered the people to take *Zakatul Fitr* out from the foods they used to have available, such as wheat, dates, etc. Thus, Bukhari and Muslim reported on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: "During the time of the Prophet (PBUH), we used to take out *zakaatul Fitr* in the form of a *sa'* of food, or a *sa'* of wheat or dates, or cheese or raisins" (Reported by Bukhari, Muslim, and others).

Scholars differ in specifying the foods referred to in the above tradition. Some say the food is meant to be grain; however, others say it could include any of the staple foods customary in each country, including rice, wheat, raisins, pulses, flours, etc.

A question arises: What is a *sa'*? Scholars agree that it was the standard measurement in Madinah during the time of the Prophet (PBUH). It was comparable to four *mudds*; a *mudd* is what an average person can hold when he cups his hands.

As for the wisdom of fixing the measurement as one *sa'*, Imam Shah Waliullah explained that it was considered sufficient at the time (i.e., during the Prophet's time) for sustaining a family for the day of Eid.

The conversion of a *sa'* into the metric standard of weights is contentious, precisely because of the fact that it varies according to the type of foods that are being weighed. Therefore, many consider it best to consider four *mudd*, as measured by average persons, as the standard to follow. The Saudi Council of Scholars, after due deliberation, has estimated it to be equivalent to approximately three kilograms.

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, while paying *Zakatul Fitr*, one should ideally take into account the standard of living he is used to, for a rich person may spend lavishly on the Eid feast, while an average person cannot afford do so; therefore, one would do well to give according to his own means.

Based on the traditions referenced above, the standard ruling of the majority of scholars is that *Zakatul Fitr* is to be paid in staple foods rather than in cash. However, Imam Abu Hanifah is one of those who ruled early on that one should pay what is most beneficial for the poor. There is no doubt that this view seems to be in perfect agreement with the wisdom of *Zakatul Fitr*, as the Prophet (PBUH) clearly stated it was “in order to help the poor celebrate Eid.” We need not mention the fact that paying in grains, although beneficial in a rural setting, may not be beneficial for the people in an urban milieu, so Imam Abu Hanifah’s position seems to be more relevant in such cases. This position has also been endorsed by Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, as well as by a number of eminent scholars in modern times, such as the late Shaikh Mustafa al-Zarqa and Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi among others. There is no need to point out that in North America, and in the West in general, that this is perhaps the most practical way to implement *Zakatul Fitr*, since giving grains may not be beneficial for either the giver or the beneficiary.

As far as calculating the amount to be paid in cash, it is estimated to be the equivalent of one full meal; according to current Canadian standards, it can be considered ten dollars as less than that amount cannot fetch a decent meal. However, Imam Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinion cited above

should be taken into account, as it allows some leeway for individuals to decide how much they can afford to pay, although it is always best to err on the side of giving rather than withholding, especially in the realm of *'ibadah*.

Zakatul Fitr must be paid before Eid *Salah*. According to the *fuqaha* (jurists), it is permitted to pay it in advance during Ramadan. We learn from the traditions that the Prophet (PBUH) used to accept *Zakah* from his uncle Abbas in advance before it was due; there is no reason why this rule should not be extended to *Zakatul Fitr*. Following this rule would help the poor prepare for the Eid; it would also facilitate the distribution of *Zakah* to the needy in time for Eid if we choose to send it overseas. Delaying *Zakatul Fitr* till after the *Salah* is not at all recommended. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "If someone pays it before Eid *Salah*, his charity will be considered *Zakah*. If someone pays it after the *Salah*, it is reckoned only as a regular form of charity" (Reported by Abu Dawud on the authority of Abd Allah bin Abbas).

Who Receives Zakatul Fitr?

Who are the recipients of *Zakatul Fitr*? A *hadith* is quite explicit on the issue: "The Prophet (PBUH) prescribed *sadaqatul Fitr* as a means of cleansing the fasting person...as well as as a means of providing food for the poor (for the day of Eid)" (Reported by Abu Dawud and others).

Given the explicit nature of the above *hadith*, one should not take liberties with regard to *Zakatul Fitr*, and it should not be diverted to other causes, however noble they may be.

The proper manner of giving *Zakatul Fitr* is to give it where one is residing. However, in the event that one cannot find deserving people nearby, or one has close relatives in another country who are more deserving, then it is allowed to send the funds there.

As stated above, if there are no needy people to receive the *Zakah* in one's local area, it should be directed to where there is a need. In today's world, there is no justification for holding the funds or directing them to other channels when we know that millions of people, a large percentage of whom are Muslims, are living in sub-human conditions of extreme poverty and deprivation.

Whether one decides to give it locally or elsewhere, the amount of *Zakah* should be calculated according to the standard of his place of residence rather than by where the funds are sent.

Eidul Fitr

As a religion of moderation, Islam does not ignore the need of humans to express joy and celebrate festive occasions. The Eid festivals are occasions to recuperate and relax. They are a time to get away from the stresses of daily life, for families to get together, and for the community to come together. A nation's holidays and feasts are tied to its sacred history and world outlook, and Islamic feasts are no exception; they reflect the Islamic worldview and vision of the Ummah.

There are two basic celebrations in Islam, and each one is connected with a religious event.

The first is *Eidul Fitr*, which is connected with fasting. It is a celebration of the victory one has achieved in mastering and subduing the carnal soul by the successful completion of fasting.

The second feast is *Eidul Adhha*, which coincides with *Hajj* and is intended to commemorate the faith and sacrifice of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), known as the Friend of Allah and the Father of Prophets.

The two days of Eid in Islam replace all of the ancient feasts associated with pagan traditions. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Through these two fasts (i.e., *Eidul Fitr* and *Eidul Adhha*), Allah has replaced the pagan festivals with that which is better" (Reported by Abu Dawud on the authority of Anas bin Malik).

Takbir on the Day of Eid

It is a *Sunnah* to spend the nights of both Eids making *Dhikr*, *takbir*, *Du'a* (supplications), and pleas for forgiveness.

On *Eidul Fitr*, the chanting of *takbir* should start after the sighting of the moon, or when the day of Eid has been announced; this chanting should continue until the beginning of the Eid prayer.

Allah says: "(And to) complete the number [of days required] and that you extol Allah for His having guided you

aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him]” (Qur’an 2:185). As reported in various traditions, it was customary to begin *takbir* on the eve of *Eidul Fitr* and end it as soon as the imam got ready for the *Salah*.

In the case of *Eidul Adhha*, however, the *takbir* starts from *Fajr* on the Day of Arafah (on the ninth day of *Dhul Hijjah*) and continues until the sunset of the last day of *Tashriq* (i.e., the thirteenth day of *Dhul Hijjah*).

According to the *Sunnah*, the *takbir* should be uttered both before and after regular prayers, as well as intermittently in assemblies and gatherings of people.

Takbirs of the Two Eids

The precise words of the *takbir* are as follows:

الله أكبر الله أكبر لا إله إلا الله
الله أكبر الله أكبر والله الحمد

*Allahu akbar-Allahu akbar-Allahu akbar- Laa ilaaha illa
Allahu-Allahu akbar-Allahu akbar wa lillahi al-hamd.*
(Allah is Great; Allah is Great; there is no deity but Allah;
Allah is Great; Allah is Great; all praises to Allah.)

These words are repeated thrice; one may then follow them with a recitation of the following:

الله أكبر كبيراً والحمد لله كثيراً و سبحان الله بكرةً وأصيلاً

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ صَدَقَ وَعْدُهُ وَنَصَرَ عَبْدَهُ وَأَعَزَّ جُنْدَهُ وَهَزَمَ
الْأَحْزَابَ وَخَدَّه لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَا تَعْبُدُ إِلَّا أَيَّاهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ سَيِّدِنَا وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ
مُحَمَّدٌ وَعَلَى أَصْحَابِ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى أَنْصَارِ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ
وَعَلَى أَزْوَاجِ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى ذُرِّيَّةِ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَ سَلِّمْ تَسْلِيمًا
كَثِيرًا

*Allaahu akbar kabeeran wa al-hamdu lilaahi katheeran
wa subhaana Allaahi bukratan wa aseelan Laa ilaaha illa
Allaahu sadaqa wa'dahu wa nasara 'abdahu wa a'azza
jundahu wa hazama al-ahzaaba wahdahu Laa ilaaha illa
Allah walaa na'budu illaa iyyaahu mukhliseena lahu al-
ddeena walaw kariha al-kaafiroon Allaahumma salli 'alaa
sayyidinaa Muhammadin wa 'alaa aali sayyidinaa
Muhammadin wa 'alaa ashaabi sayyidinaa Muhammadin
wa 'alaa ansaari sayyidinan Muhammadin wa 'alaa azwaaji
sayyidinaa Muhammadin wa 'alaa dhurriyyati sayyidinaa
Muhammadin wa sallim tasleeman katheeran.*

(Allah is the Greatest And all Praise is due to Him And
Glory to Allah in the morning and evening there is no God,
but Allah the Unique He has fulfilled His Promise and made
Victorious His servant and made Mighty His soldiers and
defeated the confederates; there is no God, But Allah, He
alone we worship with sincere and exclusive devotion even
though the idolaters hate it.

O Allah, bless our master Muhammad; bless the family of our master Muhammad; bless the companions of our master Muhammad; bless the helpers of our master Muhammad; bless the wives of our master Muhammad, and bless the progeny of our master Muhammad; and greet him and them, with abundant blessings and peace.)

There is no need to object to the above words as some people tend to do. It is pertinent to remember on this occasion that Jabir bin Abd Allah, while narrating the story of *Hajjatul Wada'* (the farewell *Hajj*), said that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed people to add words of their own choice to the original words of *talbiyah* he was chanting, and he never objected to this (Muslim on the authority of Jabir bin Abd Allah). The *talbiyah* is comprised of words (first sounded by the Prophet Ibrahim) one chants in response to Allah's call to perform *Hajj*.

Eid Salah

The scholars are divided on the precise legal status of *Eid Salah*. There are essentially three views on this:

1. It is considered a strongly recommended *Sunnah*. This was the view of Imam Malik and Imam *Shafi'i*.

2. It is considered to be *fardh kifayah* (a collective duty), so individuals can be excused if they could not attend it for some reason, as long as it is established by the community. This opinion was held by Imam Ahmad.

3. It is *wajib*, or an essential duty required of every Muslim, and those who neglect it without valid reason incur a sin. This was the view of Imam Abu Hanifah.

Imam Abu Hanifah's view seems to be stronger in terms of evidence from the sources. We learn from the traditions that the Prophet (PBUH) ordered everyone to come out to attend the Eid prayer, including those women who were prevented from prayer due to menstruation or other reasons. They were ordered to be present with the Muslims at this big assembly in order to benefit from the blessings and to be part of the celebration.

It is clear from the above that the Prophet (PBUH) wanted the Eid prayer to be a demonstration of the unity of the Ummah; as such, no Muslim should consider neglecting attendance of the Eid prayer trivial.

The Time

The time of Eid *Salah* starts just after the sun has risen fully (approximately half an hour after sunrise) and extends to the time of *zawal* (when the sun passes the meridian). Delaying it without reason is not recommended.

Who Should Attend?

Eid is a celebration, and all Muslims, male and female, young and old, should participate in it. According to the traditions, the Prophet (PBUH) desired that all Muslims,

irrespective of gender or age, should attend Eid. He ordered that on that day even menstruating women, who otherwise do not attend the prayers, should participate in the celebrations of Eid. He advised them to stay away from the prayer area (and hence the prayer) while otherwise participating in all other functions associated with Eid.

Location of Eid Salah

Eid *Salah* is preferably held in open spaces, which was the practice of the Prophet (PBUH). The wisdom in this is that it brings together the maximum number of people in one place to exhibit the strength and unity of the Ummah. Accordingly, people came from the city as well as from the suburbs during the time of the Prophet (PBUH). Even the women who were otherwise excused from prayer were encouraged to be part of the Eid celebration: “The Messenger of Allah ordered us to bring out even the women who were menstruating as well as those who are used to sitting at home to the Eid gathering in order to give them an opportunity to be part of the community and its communal prayer. However, those who were menstruating would not perform the *Salah*” (Reported by Bukhari on the authority of Umm Atiyyah al-Ansariyyah).

There are, however, no objections to holding an Eid *Salah* in the mosque, as it has been an uncontested practice among Muslims for centuries—but one cannot deny the fact that holding multiple Eid prayers in a single city contradicts the original intent and wisdom of the Eid prayer as a symbol of Muslim unity.

Important Things to Remember for Eid

1. Eid is a day of celebration. It is, therefore, recommended for one to put on the best attire he has and wear scents or perfumes.

2. While proceeding to the *Salah*, the *takbir* should be chanted intermittently.

3. It is preferred for one to proceed to the *Salah* after having a light snack for *Eidul Fitr*. But for *Eidul Adhha*, one should eat after the *Salah*. This was the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PBUH).

4. Take one route while going to the *Salah* and a different one when returning.

5. Eid means celebration and feasting. It is a time to express joy, exchange greetings, and share brotherly feelings. The exchange of visits and gifts is recommended, and the Companions used to greet each other on these days.

How to Pray Eid Salah

Like other *nafl* (optional) prayers, the Eid prayer consists of two *rak'ahs* with one difference: In the first *rak'ah*, after saying the opening *takbir* and before the recitation of *Surat Al-Fatihah*, there are seven *takbirs* with a brief pause after each. After the seventh *takbir*, *Surat Al-*

Fatihah and another surah should be read. In the second *rak'ah*, after the *takbir* of rising from *sujud* (prostration), one should say five *takbirs*, after which *Surat Al-Fatihah* and another *surah* are recited.

It is recommended to read *Suratul A'la* during the first *rak'ah* after *Surat Al-Fatihah* and *Suratul Ghashiyah* during the second *rak'ah*. One may, however, read any other surahs, if he so wishes.

If a person joins the prayer after the imam has finished any of the *takbirs*, he does not have to do them, and his prayer is not affected.

No Sunnahs Before or After Eid Salah

There is no *Sunnah* prayer to be offered either before or after the Eid *Salah*. Imam Tirmidhi reported on the authority of Abd Allah bin Umar: "The Messenger of Allah went to pray Eid *Salah*. He prayed only two *rak'ahs*. He did not pray either before or after them."

The Khutbah (Sermon)

Unlike the *khutbah* of *Jumu'ah* prayers, which precedes the *Salah*, the *khutbah* of Eid prayers follows the *Salah*. In order to follow the practice of the Prophet (PBUH) and the pious caliphs who came after him, the imam should stand up after the *Salah* and deliver the *khutbah*. The *khutbah* contains the message of Eid and stresses the duties of brotherhood. The Eid *khutbah* starts with *takbirs*.

Language of the Khutbah

The word *khutbah* in Arabic carries a variety of closely related meanings, such as speech, communication, delivering a message, etc. Anyone who reflects upon the practices of the Prophet (PBUH) and the pious caliphs would quickly conclude that the *khutbah* was a medium for communicating timely messages to the congregation. It was the most effective method of instruction that the Prophet (PBUH) used to educate the Ummah. Thus, it was from the *minbar* that he taught, delivered vital messages, and instructed people, even including demonstrations of prayer. It was more like a classroom where the audience was even allowed to ask questions in order to clarify issues. Even when necessary messages were delivered from the *minbar* through the *khutbahs*, people used to ask questions and sometimes even correct the *khatib*, as was the case when the caliph Umar proposed to restrict the amount of *mahr* (dowry) that a woman could claim. He was criticized by an eminent *sahabiyyah* as she objected on the ground that he had no authority to propose such a restriction, as Allah has said, “Even if you were to give them a mountain of gold as a dower, you have no right to take it back!” Umar simply confessed to his mistake and recanted his statement (Reported by Ibn Abi Shaybah and others).

Since the *khutbah* is mainly an educational medium, how can it serve its purpose when it is simply chanted in Arabic, as if it were a formal ritual, when most of the audience, and often even the one who delivers it, does not understand the content? This is indeed one of the greatest ironies of the Muslim Ummah. It has reduced the *minbar* to

a dead piece of wood rather than the lively medium of instruction it was intended to be by the Prophet (PBUH).

In light of this, there is no reason why one should insist on delivering the *khutbah* in Arabic, especially in countries where the majority of people do not speak or understand Arabic. Thanks to awareness of this issue, the preferred ruling of scholars and juristic councils in Al-Azhar University and elsewhere have stipulated that *khutbah* should reflect the language of the local people and their needs.

While saying this, however, they have also advised that the *khutbah* should consist of essential components that include the following: hamd (praising and glorifying Allah), proclaiming the testimony of the Oneness of Allah and the apostleship of the Prophet (PBUH), benedictions on the Prophet (PBUH), advising people and reminding them to develop mindfulness of Allah, and, finally, offering *Du'as* or prayers for the Ummah as well as exhortations based on the texts of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. By failing to adhere to these rules, we are reducing the *khutbah* to ordinary political sermons and rehashing the contents of the latest newspapers, with the result that people, instead of being spiritually uplifted by the *khutbah*, return home feeling distracted from the remembrance of Allah. The solution is to deliver *khutbahs* that convey lessons based on the authentic sources with the double purpose of softening people's hearts while raising their sense of Islamic consciousness by relating the sermons to their daily experiences.

When the Eid and Jumu'ah Fall on the Same Day

If *Jumu'ah* and Eid happen to fall on the same day, according to three imams (Abu Hanifah, Malik, and Al-Shafi'i), one should pray both prayers at their customary times. Imam Ahmad, however, said that *Jumu'ah* is not binding on he who has prayed Eid, if they occur on the same day. If one skips *Jumu'ah*, he must pray *Dhuhr Salah*.

The first view is based on the fact that while *Jumu'ah* is *fardh*, Eid Prayer is a *Sunnah*, and the order to attend *Jumu'ah* is made obligatory by the order of Allah in the Qur'an: "O you who believe, when the call to prayer is rendered on Friday, hasten you all to celebrate the remembrance of Allah, leaving aside other business" (Qur'an 62:9).

Imam Ahmad relied on a number of traditions from the Prophet (PBUH) and the *salaf* (righteous predecessors) which show that there was an allowance given to people to skip *Jumu'ah* after praying Eid. The various views held by scholars on this issue have been summed up by Imam Ibn Taymiyyah as follows:

There are three views held by scholars on this issue:

1. *Jumu'ah* Prayer is *fardh* on those who attend Eid as it is *fardh* on them every Friday. Scholars holding this view have based their opinion on the general evidence that makes *Jumu'ah* Prayer obligatory.

2. Those living in suburbs and rural areas are exempt from *Jumu'ah* Prayer, as the caliph Uthman allowed them to skip it.

3. *Jumu'ah* Prayer is not obligatory for those who have attended Eid *Salah* the same day. However, the imam is still obliged to establish *Jumu'ah* Prayer, and it is obligatory on everyone who did not attend the Eid *Salah* to attend *Jumu'ah*. This view has been attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) and a number of Companions, including Umar, Uthman, Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn Abbas, and others.

