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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

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## What is Payable?

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### 1. What Is Due?

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, enjoined the payment of one *Saa`* of dates, barley, raisins or dried yoghurt as zakat-ul-fitr on every Muslim, young and old, male and female, free and slave. (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.). Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, President of the Fiqh Council of North America indicates that the amount of zakat-ul-fitr approximates 5 pounds of the respective food commodities.

Dr Monzer Kahf a leading Muslim economist and author of a number of articles and books on zakat expands<sup>1</sup>: “We have authentic sayings by the Prophet (PBUH) that the due *zakat-ul-fitr* is one *saa`* (2.176 kg or 4.797 pounds) of barley, dates, raisins, or dried yogurt. These were common foods in Madinah and its surroundings. At the time of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), wheat started to become a food item for the well-to-do families, and was a lot more expensive than barley. They estimated that one *saa`* of barley is equivalent in value to half a *saa`* of wheat.”

Today, with the common foods a commodity, many scholars are of the view that if you wish to pay zakat-ul-fitr through food distribution, you should distribute a minimum of 2.176 kg of the common food in your area.

### 2. Why estimate by saa`?

Dr. Al-Qaradawi explains<sup>2</sup>:

“The wisdom behind estimating it by the *saa`*, in my understanding, is due to two reasons:

“First, money was a rare means of dealing among the Arabs, especially the Bedouins. If you said to one of them “you should pay such-and-such sum of dirhams or dinars,” he would not have such amount of money. He would have only the common food such as dates, raisins, barley. This was what made the Prophet (PBUH) estimate it by one *saa`*.”

“Second, the purchasing power of money varies from one time to the other. Sometimes the value of the riyal, for example, decreases, and therefore its purchasing power decreases too. And sometimes the purchasing power rises in the market. Thus, estimating the amount of zakat-ul-fitr by a fixed amount of money would make it fluctuate and be unstable. That is why the Prophet (PBUH) fixed it by an amount that

does not vary or fluctuate. This amount is the *saa`*, which is usually considered as a sufficient amount of food for one family for a day.

“The Prophet (PBUH) identified the common foodstuffs in his age, which included (but was not limited to) dates and barley. Thus, scholars maintained that paying zakat al-fitr from the staple food in a certain area is permissible, whether this food is wheat, rice, corn, etc.”

### 3. By cash or food?

Many scholars are of the opinion that if possible, zakat-ul-fitr should be paid according to the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) which is by distributing food. The Hanafi school are of the opinion that cash can be paid instead of food being distributed. Dr. Al-Qaradawi states<sup>3</sup>: “According to Imam Abu Hanifah, it is allowed to pay zakat al-fitr in cash. If the one who gives zakat al-fitr is rich, it would be better for him to pay more than the amount of one *saa`*, as the food is not limited to rice, but there should be meat, sauce, vegetables, fruit, etc. along with the rice.”

Dr Monzer Kahf comments<sup>4</sup>: “*Zakat-ul-fitr* can be paid in cash if cash is better from the point of view of the recipient poor.

“We have several reports from the time of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) that they substituted value for the items that are mentioned in the saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

“Ibn Taymiyah, one of the renowned scholars of the early ninth century of *Hijrah*, argued that the payment of *zakat-ul-fitr* in cash in metropolitan areas such as Damascus where he lived, is actually better for the poor.”

Today, most of zakat-ul-fitr is paid in cash to agencies who then distribute the funds to those in need.

<sup>1</sup> Zakat ul-Fitr, Islamonline, 16 October 2005

<sup>2</sup> Does Zakat al-Fitr vary from year to year – Islamonline – 16 October 2006

<sup>3</sup> Does Zakat al-Fitr vary from year to year – Islamonline – 16 October 2006

<sup>4</sup> Zakat ul-Fitr, Islamonline, 16 October 2005