



FIRTAH

AT A GLANCE

Adapted from Fitrah At A Glance by Sheikh Faaik Gamieldien

THE THIRD PILLAR is the research, training and publications division of SANZAF!
P.O. Box 42565, Fordsburg,

INTRODUCTION

Baihaqi and Daraqutni report on the authority of Ibn'Umar (RA) who said: The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him, enjoined Zakatul Fitr and said: Satisfy (the needs of the poor) on this day (i.e. the day of 'Id). And in a narration of Baihaqi: See to their needs so they do not beg on this day.

Similar to regular Zakah, the Zakah of 'Id-ul-Fitr (Fitrah) is unanimously recognized by all schools of Islamic Law as a religious duty imposed on every Muslim: man and woman, an obligation on all Muslims who are by the means without causing embarrassment to themselves or to their dependants.

The Zakah of Id-ul-Fitr is detailed in a number of Ahadith, the most important of which are related on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (RA) and of Abu Sa'id Al Khudri (RA). Of these, the following one establishes the fundamental rules that apply to Fitrah.

“The Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) enjoined the Zakah of 'Id-ul-Fitr on all Muslims, either a saa of dates or a saa of barley, to be paid by or on behalf of every Muslim: the slave and the free person (of independent means), the male and the female, the child and the adult. And he commanded that it be discharged before the people go forth to the 'Id prayer.” [Bukhari]

WHO PAYS ZAKAT-UL-FITR? (FITRAH)

From the above Hadith the following can be deduced:

- i) That payment of the Firtah is incumbent on every Muslim man or woman possessing means of his/her own over and above the indispensable daily requirements of food, shelter, clothing etc. for himself/herself and his/her dependants.
- ii) If the person is dependant, then the obligation of payment devolves on the person responsible for his/her maintenance. In other words a Muslim must satisfy the Fitrah on his/her own behalf and on behalf of his/her minor or adult dependants, according to the Shafi'i School.
- iii) According to the Hanafi School, a woman does not have to satisfy the Fitrah on behalf of her minor children, nor is a parent or guardian obliged to discharge Fitrah on behalf of ones adult dependants.
- iv) A Muslim employee who receives remuneration for services in the form of a fixed wage, paid in cash or kind, is responsible for the payment of his/her own Fitrah.
- v) The unsalaried Muslim employee who receives remuneration for his/her services in the shape of his/her full livelihood as a regular member of the household, his/her Fitrah is the responsibility of his/her employer.

THOSE EXEMPTED FROM PAYING FITRAH

The obligation to satisfy the Fitrah lapses in respect of every economically independent Muslim whose means of livelihood are either just sufficient for or fall short of his/her lawful daily necessities. These persons are the deserving beneficiaries of the Fitrah.

THE FITRAH OF ORPHANED CHILDREN

The Fitrah of orphaned children possessing no wealth of their own, is to be discharged on their behalf by the person (man or woman) on whom they depend for their livelihood (Shafi'i view). The Fitrah of orphaned children possessing wealth of their own, is to be discharged out of the said wealth by the person responsible for the administration thereof.

THE FITRAH OF MARRIED WOMEN

According to Imam Abu Hanifa, women possessing wealth of their own, be they married or unmarried, are personally responsible for discharging their Fitrah.

Imams Shafi'i, Malik and Ghazali are of the opinion that the Fitrah of a married woman must be paid by her husband, who is legally responsible for all her expenses.

THE FITRAH OF INSANE PERSONS

Discharge of the Fitrah on behalf of dependant insane persons is not compulsory. The Fitrah of insane persons possessing wealth of their own is to be satisfied out of the said wealth by the person responsible for the administration thereof.

TO WHOM FITRAH MAY NOT BE GIVEN

In no case may Fitrah be given to any person known to be a habitual or professional beggar. It may also not be given to ones parents, grandparents, children or grandchildren.

WHEN DOES FITRAH BECOME PAYABLE?

It is related on the authority of Ibn 'Umar (RA), (who said) that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) commanded that the Zakah of Id-ul-Fitr be discharged before the people go forth to the ('Id) prayer." [Bukhari]

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) exhorted his followers to satisfy the Zakah of 'Id-ul-Fitr at the latest before the 'Id prayer, this is another good example of the deep concern that Islam has for the welfare of its needy members. A concern that must ever pervade a truly Muslim Society.

Under certain circumstances, the Shariah allows the discharge of the Zakah, including that of Firtah, before the time when it actually falls due. Imam Abu Hanifa holds that Zakah, including Fitrah may even be paid lawfully two years in advance! Imam Shafi'i holds that Fitrah may be discharged from the first day of Ramadaan. Undoubtedly, an early discharge of the Fitrah, be it in cash or preservable kind, can only be to the advantage of all concerned: Fitrah givers, Zakah officials and beneficiaries alike, by giving ample time and opportunity to estimate the quantity and kinds of Fitrah available and to arrange the distribution thereof as fairly and equitable as possible.

DELAY IN PAYMENT OF FITRAH

Should the payment of Fitrah be delayed beyond the established time limit, the obligation remains and must be fulfilled as soon as possible. Fitrah paid after the due date is considered in Shariah as ordinary charity, based on the following hadith:

It is reported by Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah and Daraqutni that Abbas (R.A) said: The Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.), enjoined Zakatul Fitr as a means of purification to the fasting person from (any) vain talk or deeds or obscene language and as sustenance to the poor. Whosoever discharges it (i.e. pays his Fitrah) before the salaah (i.e. the 'Id salaah) then it is an accepted Zakah (i.e. Zakatul Fitr) and whosoever discharges if after the 'Id salaah then it becomes an ordinary charity.

WHAT and HOW MUCH IS FITRAH?

It is related on the authority of Abdullah Ibn 'Umar: In the time of the Messenger (p.b.u.h) of Allah, the people used to give in payment of the Zakah of 'Id-ul-Fitr a saa of barley or of dates or of "sult" (a kind of barley) or of raisins. And when in the time of 'Umar (RA) wheat became more plentiful, he ruled that half a saa of wheat was equal to one saa of the things (mentioned above) [Abu Dawud]

Abu Said Al Khudri (RA) said: When the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) was among us, we used to give as Zakah of Id-ul-Fitr for every child and adult (person of) independent (means) or slave, a saa of food, or a saa of cheese or a saa of barley, or a saa of dates, or a saa of raisins. And we did not cease doing this until Muawiya (RA) came to us as a pilgrim or visitor and spoke to the people from the pulpit. And among other things he told the people: I am of the opinion that two "mudds" (i.e. half saa) of Syrian wheat are equivalent to a saa of dates. Henceforth the people adhered to that. Then Abu Said said: As for myself throughout my life I have never ceased giving (Fitrah) in the same way as I used to do in the Prophet's (p.b.u.h.) time."
[Muslim]

From the above hadith the following can be deduced:

i) During the Prophet's (p.b.u.h.) lifetime, barley, dates, raisins, food and cheese were given as Fitrah, and in the time of Umar (RA) wheat became amongst the lawful foods to offer as Fitrah.

ii) The quantity of any of the above foodstuffs given as Fitrah was one saa.

NB! Imam Shafi'i holds that Fitrah is a saa of any of the foodstuffs mentioned - including wheat, and it is not permissible to convert it into its cash value. In this matter Imam Ghazali lays down that each individual should preferably give the Fitrah in the shape of whatever kind constitutes his/her own staple food. In South Africa this would include rice, maize, flour, etc.

iii) Umar (RA) and later Muawiya (RA) decreed that a half saa of wheat was equal to a saa of the other foodstuffs mentioned.

NB! On the basis of this, the Hanafi School rules that the Fitrah is a half saa of wheat or its cash equivalent.

However if any of the other foodstuffs are given, a full saa or its equivalent in cash must be given.

FOOD GIVEN AS FITRAH

As a rule, Fitrah should be given in the shape of food, reasonably preservable by nature, and preferably of whatever kind constitutes the staple food of the country's inhabitants or if the person involved. When Fitrah is paid in kind, foodstuff of the best quality must be given, in conformity with the Qur'anic injunction.

"O you ho believe! Spend of the good things which you have earned and of what We bring forth from the earth for you, and seek not the bad (with intent) to spend thereof (in charity) when you would not take it for yourselves save with disdain; and know that Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise." (Surah 11 verse 26)

Never and in no case may foodstuffs of bad quality be offered in payment of Fitrah.

CALCULATING FITRAH

According to Imams Shafi, Ibn Hanbal and Maalik, a saa is equal to 2,166.80 grams of wheat. The Hanafi School hold that a saa is equal to 3,296.80 grams of wheat. This is because of the different value they attach to a mudd, a volumetric measure used at the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). The jurists of Arabia value the mudd as a quarter saa whereas the jurists of Iraq (Hanafi's) value the mudd at two rattles.

HOW TO CALCULATE FITRAH

Shafi' Madhab = 1 Saa or 5½ Baghdadi Artaal
= 2,166.80 grams
= ±2.20 kg

Hanafi' Madhab = ½ Saa or 4 Iraqi Artaal
= 1,632.9 grams
= ±1.7 kg