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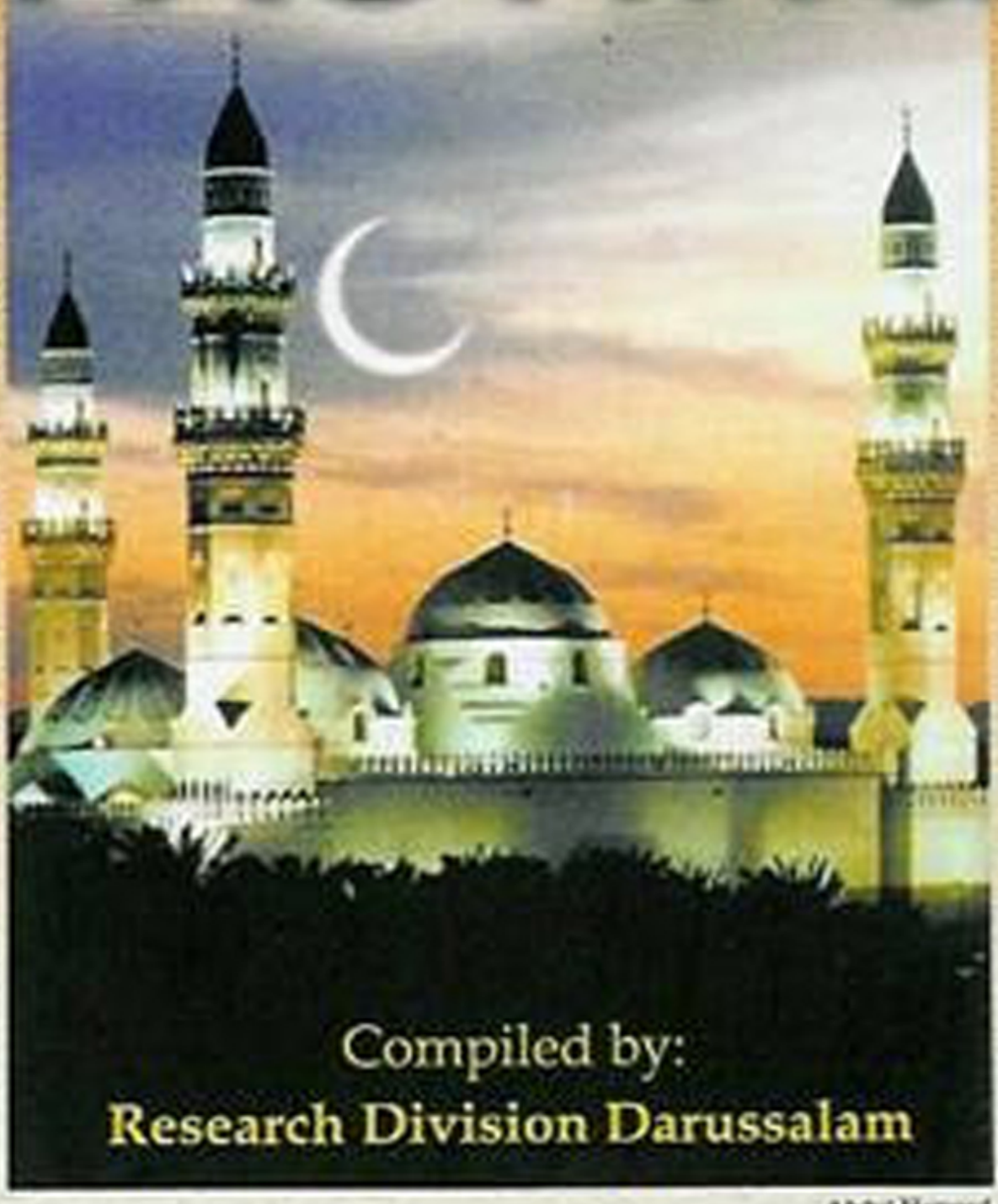


Zakaah and Fasting

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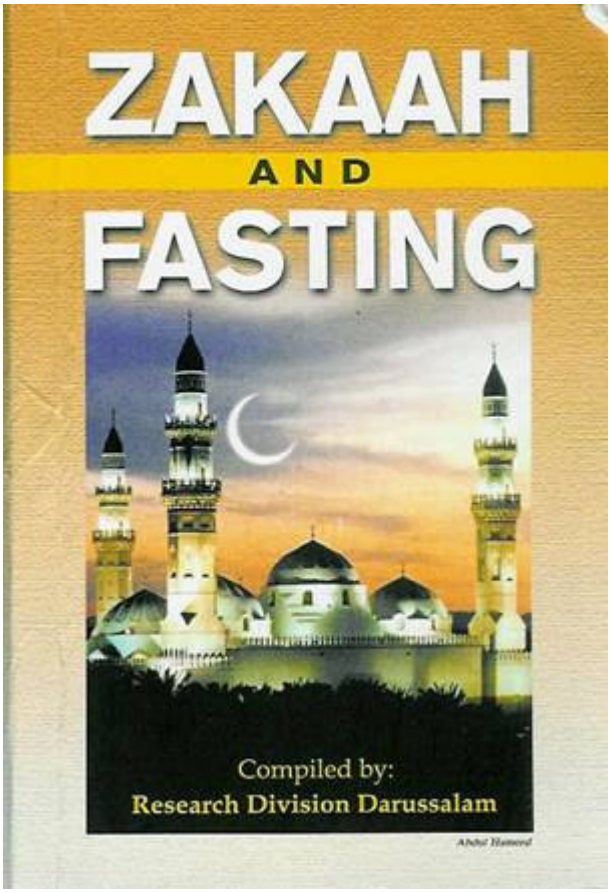
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ZAKAAH AND FASTING



Compiled by:
Research Division Darussalam

Abdul Hameed



In the Name of Allah,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
All the praises and thanks are due to Allah (S.W.T),
the peace and blessings of Allah (S.W.T) be upon Prophet Muhammad,
his Household, and all of his Companions.

Publisher's Note

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. This series of seven books entitled “Lessons for New Muslims," includes he titles: The Muslim Creed Expounded; Prayer and Purification; *Zakah* and Fasting; Easy ‘*Umrah* and *Hajj; Basic* Muslim Morals and Manners; some selected supplications From the Qur'an; and the Noble Qur'an (part 30). The material for these books was compiled and edited by Sidheeque M.A. Veliankode, Aqeel Nalker, Abu Hamza Al-Arabi, and Abu Khaliyl. Our main objective was only to include information for someone who has recently accepted Islam as their new way of life. This series is accompanied by a cassette with complete instructions about ritual purity and prayer *(Salah),* featuring Dr. Ahmad Saifuddeen, associate professor at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University of Riyadh. We would like to thank all those involved in the preparation of this series.

General Director
Abdul Malik Mujahid
Darussalam

Zakat
(Obligatory Charity)

Zakat is a certain fixed portion of the wealth and property that a Muslim is obliged to pay yearly for the benefit of the poor in the Muslim community. The payment of *Zakat* is obligatory, as it is one of the five pillars of Islam. *Zakat* is the major economic means for establishing social justice and leading the Muslim society towards prosperity and security.

Every Muslim who owns a fixed, minimum amount of wealth (called *Nisab),* and who satisfies certain other conditions, must pay *Zakat.* The Qur'an mentions *Zakat* in many places. For example, Allah (S.W.T) says:

"**Take *Sadaqah* (obligatory charity) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them, and Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower."**

(9:103)

Zakat has also been mentioned by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in many *Ahadith* (recorded statements and deeds of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said:

"Islam was built on five (pillars): testifying that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), is the Messenger of Allah; establishing the prayer (perfectly and on time); paying *Zakat;* performing pilgrimage to the House (the *Ka 'bah);* and fasting Ramadhan" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Furthermore, the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said in his advice to his Companion Mu'ath (May Allah (S.W.T) be pleased with him) when he sent him to Yemen:

"You are going to a People of the (Divine) Book." Then he (Peace be upon Him) continued… "Allah (S.W.T) has enjoined on them *Zakat* that is to be taken from the rich amongst them and given to the poor. If they obey you in that, take *Zakat* from them, yet avoid (don't take) the best property of the people as *Zakat.* "

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Zakat has been made obligatory on Muslims for an honorable wisdom and to bring about many noble benefits. *Zakat* purifies one's property and earnings, increases them and saves them from destructive impurities. *Zakat* fills one's wealth with the blessings of obedience to Allah ~ and honoring His Commandments. It cleanses the human soul from the ills of greed, miserly conduct, covetousness and selfishness. It extends help to the poor, the needy and the deprived. It unites the hearts upon *Iman* (Faith) and *Islam* (submission to Allah). It rids the hearts of the darkness of weak faith and evil doubts, and brings them to the clarity of strong faith and certainty. The Qur'anic Verses and the Prophetic *Ahadith* strongly encourage giving *Zakat* while affirming its great reward and tremendous bounties. It is a means to enter Paradise, and a deed that allows one to taste the sweetness of *Iman* (Faith). Giving this obligatory charity does not decrease a person's wealth, as some stingy people may think.

Whoever refuses to pay *Zakat,* while rejecting its necessity in Islam, is a disbeliever. On

the other hand, whoever refuses to pay the required *Zakat* on his wealth due to stinginess or laziness, while he still believes that it is a necessary act in *Islam,* is a sinner, The Qur'anic Verses and the *Ahadith* have used the strongest terms to warn against refusing to pay *Zakat,* promising ultimate failure and the severest punishment and torment for such an offense, Allah (S.W.T) said:

"And those who hoard up gold and silver (i.e, the money, the *Zakat* of which has not been paid) and spend them not in the way of Allah, announce unto them a painful torment. On the Day when that (wealth) will be heated in the fire of Hell and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, (and it will be said unto them:) 'This is the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard,'"

(9:34-35)

Also, Allah (S.W.T) said:

"And let not those who covetously withhold of that which Allah has bestowed ,on them of His Bounty (wealth) think that it is good for them (and so they do not pay the obligatory *Zakat).* Nay, it will be worse for them; the things which they covetously withheld shall be tied to their necks like a collar on the Day of Resurrection."

(3:180)

Those Required to Pay *Zakat*

Those who satisfy the following conditions are required to pay the *Zakat:*

- Muslims who own a minimum amount of extra wealth (referred to as *Nisab)* beyond the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, places of residence, means of transportation and the tools necessary for work.
- A full year has passed *(hawl)* since one had possession of the minimum amount of wealth liable for payment of the *Zakat.* However, fruits and vegetables are not included in this ruling.
- The *Nisab* is free from debts and thus is not owed to debtors.

Types of Possessions That Require Paying the *Zakat*

*Gold and Silver

This is based on Allah's Statement in the Noble Qur'an:

"And those who hoard up gold and silver (i.e. the money, the *Zakat* of which has not been paid) and spend them not in the way of Allah, announce unto them a painful torment,"

(9:34)

Also, the Prophet (Peace be upon Him), said:

> "There is no charity on what is less than five *Uqiyyah* (of silver),"
> (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

(Note: One *Uqiyyah* of silver is 147 grams, thus five *Uqiyyahis* equal to 735 grams.)

* **Women's Jewelry That is made of Gold or Silver and is Used for Beautification Purposes**

There is a difference of opinion amongst the scholars concerning *Zakat* on gold and silver jewelry that is kept for beautification and not sold for business purposes, The correct view is that there is *Zakat* due on it if it reaches the *Nisab* amount, The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said:

> "Anyone who owns gold or silver and does not pay *Zakat* on them, on the Day of Resurrection they will be made into plates of fire and they will then bum his sides, forehead and back."
>
> (Muslim)

The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) also asked a woman whose daughter was wearing two gold bracelets, if she had paid the *Zakat* on them. When the woman replied that she had not, the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said:

> "Would you be pleased to have Allah make two bracelets of fire from them on the Day of Judgement?"
>
> (Abu Dawud and An-Nasa'i and graded as good)

The *Nisab* amount for gold is twenty *Mithqals,* or 92 grams. The *Nisab* for silver is one hundred and forty *Mithqals,* or 735 grams. If the amount of gold and silver jewelry that a woman owns is less than these amounts, there is no *Zakat* due upon her jewelry.

****Rikaz*** **(Buried Precious Metals or Minerals)**

These are any precious metals, stones or minerals that are buried in the earth (such as buried treasures or mines) When they are found, 1/5th (20%) *Zakat* is due upon the find. The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said:

> "There is no compensation for one killed or wounded by an animal, or by falling in a well, or due to working in mines: and one-fifth *(Zakat)* is compulsory on *Rikaz,"*
>
> (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

* **Livestock Animals: Camels, Cows, and Sheep**

Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said:

> "Whoever had camels or cows or sheep, and did not pay their *Zakat* those animals will be brought on the Day of Resurrection far bigger and fatter than before, They will trample him with their hooves and butt him with their horns, When the last has its turn, the first will start again, and this punishment will go on until Allah has finished the judgements amongst the people,"
>
> (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

* **Food Grains and Fruit**
Certain crops and grains that could be kept or stored require *Zakat* to be paid on them. The grains that require *Zakat* are barley and wheat. The fruits that require *Zakat* to be paid are dates (fresh and dried) and raisins, However, this does not include the fruit and grains that one intends to feed oneself and one's family with, This ruling applies to a person like a farmer who harvests and sells fruit and grains that he does not intend to use for his own needs and the needs of his family, Allah (S.W.T) said:

"… but pay the due thereof on the day of its harvest..."

(6: 141)

Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said:

"On a land irrigated by rain water or by natural water channels or land that is wet due to a nearby water channel. One-tenth (10%) is compulsory (as *Zakat);* on the land irrigated by a well. half of a tenth (5%) is compulsory (as *Zakat* on the yield of the land)."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

He (Peace be upon Him) also said:

"There is no *Zakat* due on what is less than five *Wasqs* (of grains or vegetation)."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

(Note: Five *Wasqs* are approximately 900 kg; One *Wasq* = 60 *Sa`* of measured grain.)

Types of Wealth That do not Require *Zakat*

***Fruits, Vegetables and Grains Other Than Dates, Raisins, wheat and Barley**
There is no evidence that other produce requires *Zakat.* The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) never levied *Zakat* on any produce or grain other than these four items. Yet, it is preferred to give away some of this produce to the poor and neighbors. Allah (S.W.T) said:

"O you who believe! Spend of the good things which you have (legally) earned, and of that which We have produced from the earth for you..."

(2:267)

***Servants, Horses, Mules and Donkeys**
Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said:

"There is no charity required from the Muslim regarding his horse or servant."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Further, it has not been reported that the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) ever collected charity on mules or donkeys.

***The Money that does not Reach the Amount of Nisab**
Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said:

"There is no *Zakat* on less than five *Wasqs* (approximately 900 kilograms of grain). There is no *Zakat* on less than five *Uqiyyah* of silver (735 grams). And there is no *Zakat* on less than five camels

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

***The Property That is not Used for Commercial Purposes**
These include rugs, homes, cars, furniture, precious stones, pearls, and diamonds that are not used for commercial purposes. These personal items do not require payment of *Zakat.*

***Women's Jewelry That is used for Beautification Purposes**
This applies to any precious stones, such as pearls, diamonds and so forth. There is no *Zakat* due on them Therefore, any necklaces, bracelets broaches or rings that are made a materials other than gold and silver do not require payment of *Zakat.*

The Required Amount *(Nisab)* for *Zakat*

***Gold**
The amount of gold that requires *Zakat* is around 92 grams, when this amount or more has remained unchanged in one's possession for one full year. The required *Zakat* in this case is one-fourth of a tenth (2.5%), which is approximately 2.3 grams.

***Silver**
Silver requires *Zakat* to be paid when it reaches 735 grams or more and when this amount remains unchanged in one's possession for a full year. The amount of *Zakat* required in this case is also one-fourth of a tenth (2.5%), which is approximately 18.4 grams.

***Cash at One's Disposal**
When it is worth the amount of gold or silver that requires *Zakat* and when this amount remains above the *Nisab* value for a full year. *Zakat* in this case is also one-fourth of a tenth, or 2.5%.

***Items Used for Business Transactions and Commercial Purposes**
This requires a fourth of a tenth (2.5%) *Zakat* to be paid on them, when they remain a full year without decreasing below the *Nisab* amount. The minimum amount of the value of business merchandise that requires *Zakat* to be paid is the same as gold and silver, and the merchant could use either standard to estimate how much *Zakat* he should pay.

*Treasures

When the Muslim finds any treasures hidden in his land, he is required to give a fifth (20%) of that treasure in charity as *Zakat.*

* Mines

Mines, such as gold and silver mines, require *Zakat* to be paid on them whenever the minerals are discovered and extracted, just as the case with produce. Mines for extracting precious metals and minerals fall under the ruling of *Rikaz* and thus 1/5th (20%) *Zakat* is due upon them just as with buried treasure.

*Returns on Investments

If the investment is merchandizing transactions or animal products, then the *Zakat* for these returns on investment should be paid in addition to, and at the same time when the *Zakat* is paid on the principal, even if these profits did not remain for a full year. For instance, if the animal gives birth when the *Zakat* on the animals is due, then the owner should add all of these animals together and pay the *Zakat* due on all of them, and such is the case with monetary investments. When one earns money from inheritance or gifts, the *Zakat* becomes due if such inheritance reaches the minimum amount that requires *Zakat* and remains for a full year in one's possession without decreasing below the *Nisab* amount.

*Livestock

Grazing camels, grazing cows and grazing sheep and goats are eligible for *Zakat* payment. Each category of the above mentioned livestock animals has a set *Nisab* amount based upon the number of animals owned. These figures can be researched from the appropriate books of Islamic Jurisprudence.

*Fruits and Grains

When the produce is ready for harvest and the fruits become ripe, then the *Zakat* on them is due. Allah (S.W.T)says:

"...but pay the due thereof (their *Zakat)* on the day of their harvest..."

(6:141)

As for fruit, every type of fruit has its own standard as to when it is ripe and ready to eat. For instance, dates are ripe when they become red or yellow, while grapes are ripe when they become sweet.

The amounts of fruits and grains that require *Zakat* is five *Wasqs,* each of which is sixty *Sa',* and a *Sa'* is slightly less than three kilograms. Hence, the minimum *Nisab* that requires *Zakat* on dates. raisins, wheat and barley is three hundred *Sa'* (or approximately 900 kg). If the crop is watered without much effort, such as by spring water or by rain, it requires one-tenth (10%) as *Zakat* payment. This means that half of a *Wasq* (90 kg) is due for every five *Wasqs.* If such produce is watered with effort. such as from wells or irrigation channels, it requires a half of a tenth (5%) as *Zakat* payment. This means for every five *Wasqs,* there is a quarter of a *Wasq* (45 kg) due for *Zakat.*

Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said:

"On a land irrigated by rain water, or by natural water channels, or if the land is wet due to a nearby water channel, one-tenth is compulsory (as *Zakat).* On the land irrigated by a well. half of one tenth is compulsory (as *Zakat* on the yield of the land),"

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The Recipients of *Zakat*

Zakat is spent on eight groups of people, as mentioned in the Qur'an:

***"As-Sadaqat* (here it means *Zakat)* is only for the *Fuqara* '(poor), and *Al-Masakin* (the needy who do not beg) and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allah's cause (i.e., for *Mujahidun* -those fighting in a battle for the cause of Islam), and for the wayfarer (a traveler who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise."**

(9:60)

How to Pay *Zakat*

We have discussed who must pay *Zakat,* how much is to be paid and who are its recipients. Now, the issue remains as to how the *Zakat* is to be paid.

In an Islamic state, the Muslim leader *(Khalifah, Ameer,* etc.) is responsible for the collection of *Zakat.* His duty is to make sure that those Muslims who possess the minimum amount of wealth *(Nisab)* pay their *Zakat* in a timely manner. The ruler will deputize certain trustworthy men to go about amongst the Muslims and collect the *Zakat* from those upon whom it is due. He is also responsible for making sure that the *Zakat* is distributed amongst those who are worthy of receiving it.

In a situation where the Muslim lives in a land (i.e. country. state, province. etc.) where there is no Muslim ruler, and the governing authorities are non-Muslims, then it is left to the individual to pay his *Zakat* as he *sees* fit. The person must keep up with his own earnings and savings, and determine for himself, based upon the previously mentioned conditions, when *Zakat* is due upon his wealth. Likewise, he must decide who is most deserving of receiving his *Zakat.* He may either distribute it amongst those whom he knows to be qualified recipients or he may give it to a local mosque to be distributed amongst those who are needy.

In a non-Muslim society, no Muslim (individual or group) has the right to demand *Zakat* from others by force, violence or any such threats. This is a right that is specifically for the Muslim rulers in the lands of the Muslims.

Zakatul-Fitr

There is a *Zakat* payment due at the end of the month of fasting, called Ramadhan. The day that it is due is called *'Eidul-Fitr,* which is a day of celebrating the end of the fast. One of the Prophet's Companions named Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, said:

"Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) enjoined the payment of one *Sa*' of dates or one S*a'* of barley as *Zakatul-Fitr* on every Muslim, slave or free, male or female, young or old, and he ordered that it be paid before the people went out to offer the *'Eid* prayer."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The best time to pay *Zakatul-Fitr* is the time from dawn on *'Eid* Day (the first day of the month following Ramadhan) until just before the *'Eid* prayer. However, those who give it before the morning of the *'Eid* (i.e. a day or two before the *'Eid)* have properly fulfilled the obligation. Those who give it away after the *'Eid* prayer, it is considered as a voluntary charity *(Sadaqah)* only. In other words it is not counted as *Zakatul-Fitr.*

What Should be Given as *Zakatul-Fitr*

The Prophet's Companion. Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri said: "In the lifetime of Allah's Messenger we used to give *Zakatul-Fitr* on behalf of the young and the old, the free man and the slave, as one *Sa'* of food, or one *Sa'* of cottage cheese, or one *Sa'* of barley, or one *Sa'* of dates or one *Sa'* of raisins."

(Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawud)

The Wisdom Behind *Zakatul-Fitr*

Zakatul-Fitr purifies the fasting person from whatever shortcomings, such as foul or unnecessary speech, that he might have indulged in during his fast. It also saves the poor people from the humiliation of asking people for help on the day of the *'Eid.* One of the Prophet's Companions named Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, said:
"The Messenger of Allah enjoined *Zakatul-Fitr* as a redemption for the fasting person from unnecessary or foul speech and as a food for the poor."

(Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah)

The Recipients of *Zakatul-Fitr*

Zakatul-Fitr is paid to the same eight categories of people who are eligible to receive the *Zakat* on wealth, as we explained before. The poor and the needy are the most deserving people for *Zakatul-Fitr,* as we mentioned above:

"Allah's Messenger~ enjoined *Zakatul-Fitr* as a redemption for the fasting person, from unnecessary and foul speech, and as food for the poor,"

(Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah)

Fasting

In Ramadhan

Fasting In Ramadhan

Allah has blessed the month of Ramadhan with numerous advantages and virtues over other months. This is the month in which the noble Qur'an was revealed. Allah (S.W.T) says:

"The month of Ramadhan in which was revealed the Qur'an."

(2:185)

In one of the odd nights of the last ten days of this month is the Night of Decree, in which worshipping Allah (S.W.T) is better than worshipping Him for a thousand months. Allah (S.W.T) says:

"The Night of *Al-Qadr* (Decree) is better than a thousand months,"

(97:3)

When Ramadhan begins, the gates of Paradise are opened, and the gates of Hell are closed. All the devils are chained during this month. At the end of every night of Ramadhan, Allah(S.W.T)will forgive all the sins of those who really observed fasting in a proper manner, and rid them of every act of disobedience, The angels will continue to

seek mercy and forgiveness for those who observe fasting until they break their fast, The smell coming from the mouth of a fasting person is better with Allah (S.W.T) than the fragrance of musk.

Fasting

The best deed of this month is fasting, Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said: "Whoever observes fasting in Ramadhan with firm belief and hope of a reward, his past sins will be forgiven,"

(Al-Bukhari)

Fasting is to abstain from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, and the rest of what breaks the fast from dawn until sunset, with the intention of drawing closer to Allah(S.W.T).

Fasting during the lunar month of Ramadhan is obligatory, according to the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* and the consensus of Muslim scholars, Allah (S.W.T) says:

"O you who believe! Observing *As-Sawm* (fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you."

(2: 183)

After mentioning fasting as an obligation in this Verse of the Noble Qur'an, Allah (S.W.T)mentions the purpose of observing the fast. He concludes the Verse by saying:

"in order that you may become pious."

(2:183)

It is mandatory for every Muslim to fast during Ramadhan and it is one of the well-established pillars of the religion. The month of Ramadhan has many great virtues that are not found in any of the other months. Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said:

"Whoever fasts Ramadhan with firm belief and hope of a reward (from Allah(S.W.T)), his past sins will be forgiven."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Allah (S.W.T) multiplies the reward for the good deeds performed during certain special occasions, such as during the month of Ramadhan. There are also some specific good deeds that are highly recommended during Ramadhan. Performing voluntary prayers at night, and performing *'Umrah* during Ramadhan are such deeds.

Fasting itself has numerous virtues. The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said:

"There is a gate in Paradise called *Ar-Rayyan,* and those who observe fasting *(Sawm)* will enter through it on the Day of Resurrection and none except them will enter through it. It will be said, 'Where are those who used to observe fasting?' They will stand up, and none except them will enter through it. After their entry, the gate will be closed and no one else will enter through it."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

*When to Begin Fasting

The first day of Ramadhan can be confirmed by one of the following:

1. By sighting the moon on the night of the 29th of Sha'ban (the month which precedes Ramadhan) , When the new crescent is sighted, the fast becomes an obligation on the following day from dawn to sunset. Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said: "Fast when you sight the moon (of Ramadhan) and break your fast when you sight it (meaning the moon for Shawwal, which comes after Ramadhan)," (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

2. By completing thirty days of Sha'ban, in which case the following day will be the first day of Ramadhan. Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said: "If you were not able to see it (the crescent of Ramadhan), then complete the month (of Sha'ban) as thirty days." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

*Who Must Fast

Fasting is mandatory for all sane, healthy, adult Muslims, male and female. People who are insane, physically ill, minors (under the age of puberty), travelers, menstruating women, women experiencing post childbirth bleeding, breastfeeding women and pregnant women are all not required to fast. For some of these people, fasting is not obligatory at all, while others are required to make up for the missed days of fasting at a later date.

*Those Who are not Obliged to Fast

The following groups of people are not required to fast and they do not make up for- the missed days of fasting. Likewise, they are not required to do anything as a compensation or atonement for missing the fast.

- **The Person who is Insane:** Fasting is not obligatory for the insane because of their inability to understand what they are doing. Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said: "The pen (that records deeds and sins) is lifted (from writing) for three people: the insane until they regain their sanity, those who are sleeping until they awaken, and the young until they reach puberty." (Ahmad, Abu Dawud and At-Tirmithi)

- **Children:** Those who have not reached the age of puberty are not required to fast as evidenced by the *Hadith* mentioned above. However, it is recommended that their guardians encourage them to fast so that they become accustomed to it at an early age. They may fast as long as they are able and then break the fast if it becomes too difficult for them.

*Those who must make up Missed Fasting

There are some persons who are fallowed to abstain from fasting and make up for it by fasting later. They are as follows:

- **The ill Person:** A person who is sick, but not terminally ill, is allowed to abstain from fasting and is required to make up for missed days. Allah(S.W.T) said: **"... but if any of you is ill or on a journey, the same number (should be made up) from other days."** (2:184)

- **The Traveler:** If one travels as far as the distance that requires shortening the prayer, it is allowed for him to abstain from fasting, but he is required to make up for missed days. This is proven in the previous Verse of the Qur'an.
- **Pregnant and Breast-feeding Women:** Such women are allowed to abstain from fasting if they fear for their health, their infants, fetuses, or both. Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said: "Allah has relieved the traveler of the fast and a part of the prayer, and has relieved the pregnant and the breast-feeding woman from the fast." (Ahmad and As-Sunan Collections) The pregnant and breast-feeding women make up for the missed days of fasting when the circumstances that allowed them to abstain have ended.

*Those Who Are not Obliged to Fast but Must Pay some Compensation

Elderly men and women, the terminally ill (who have no hope of being cured of their illness) and all those in comparable situations who find it difficult to fast are allowed to abstain from fasting. They do not have to make up for the missed days, but are required to feed a poor person a *Mudd* of food for each day of fasting that they missed. Allah (S.W.T) says:

"And as for those who can fast (but) with difficulty (e.g. an old person, etc.), they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a poor person (for every day of their missed fast)."

(2:184)

The Essential Elements of The Fast

- Abstaining from eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse.
- Making intention in the heart to fast during the preceding night. Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) said: "Whoever does not make intentions to fast before *Fair* (dawn) (i.e. during the preceding night) will have no fast." (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, ibn Majah and At-Tirmithi)
- Fasting starts at dawn (about an hour and twenty minutes before sunrise) and lasts until sunset. Allah (S.W.T) says: **"...and eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night), then complete your *Sawm* (fast) till the nightfall."** (2:187)

*The Recommended Acts of the Fast

- Eating the *Suhur* meal, which is a breakfast (eating and drinking) eaten during the latter part of the night until dawn with the intention of fasting.
- Hastening to break the fast at sunset and breaking it by eating some dates or sipping water.
- Invoking Allah while fasting, especially when breaking the fast.

*Acts Disliked During the Fast

- Exaggerating while rinsing the mouth and cleaning the nose is disliked during performing the *Wudhu'* (ablutions for prayer). This action might allow some water to enter the person's stomach and thus spoil his fast.
- Kissing and embracing the wife with sexual desire (i.e. fondling, etc.) are disliked.
- Tasting food or drinks without a valid excuse is disliked.

*Actions that Void the Fast

Certain actions void the fast and require the fast to be made up for. The following is a list of such acts:

- Intentional eating and drinking.
- When one swallows water because of exaggerating while rinsing the mouth or the nose during *Wudhu*'. This type includes allowing the food to reach the stomach by any means, such as taking injections that nourish the body.
- Ejaculating by masturbating, fondling the wife or looking at her with sexual desire. As for wet dreams, or uncontrollable ejaculation, they do not break the fast because they are not intentional.
- Intentional vomiting.
- Those who intend to break their fast will have their fast voided even if they do not actually eat or drink anything.
- Reverting from Islam.

All of the above mentioned acts require the fast to be made up for. However, there is one act that voids the fast and requires making up for the missed days and paying a compensation for atonement:

- Having sexual intercourse intentionally. The compensation in this case entails freeing a believing slave, and if unable, fasting sixty consecutive days, and if unable, feeding sixty poor persons from what one usually feeds his household.

***Acts Permissible For the Fasting Person**

- The fasting person is allowed to bathe and submerge himself in water to cool off.
- One is allowed to wake up while in a state of sexual impurity (such as after having sexual intercourse or a wet dream) during Ramadhan and thus, would take a bath and begin fasting.
- Eating, drinking and having sexual intercourse with the wife during the night of Ramadhan until the *Adhan* for *Fair* prayer is also allowed.
- Using the *Siwak* (tooth stick for cleaning the mouth) for the fasting person during the day or the night is allowed.
- Taking any permissible medicine that does not reach the stomach or nourish the body is also allowed (i.e. eye drops, skin medications, etc.).
- Tasting food is allowed (for one who must do so due to necessity), providing that none of it is swallowed.
- Wearing perfumes and smelling good scents is also allowed.

*Things Forbidden to a Fasting Person

- Fasting person must abstain from the following evil deeds and speech:

- False speech.
- Vain speech and foul language.
- Anything that is irrational and unrealistic.
- Every action and word expressing sexual desire or its connotations.
- Whoever attempts to quarrel, dispute, utter obscenities and foul words, or is harshly abusive, then a fasting person must show perseverance and patience towards such an evil doer. A fasting person must abstain from arguments, disputes and hostilities, and face those situations with a polite and moderate composure.
- Lying and doing evil deeds are prohibited and must be avoided. The fasting person must refrain from telling lies and engaging in vain arguments.

The Voluntary Fast

Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) has encouraged the Muslims to fast the following days:

- Six days during the month of shawwal (the month that immediately follows Ramadhan).
- Fasting Mondays and Thursdays.
- Fasting three days of every lunar month. In the Islamic calendar they are the 13th, the 14th and the 15th.
- Fasting on the 9th day of Thul-Hijjah -the Day of `A*rafah* -for those who are not performing *Hajj.*
- Fasting the day of `*Ashura,* which is the 10th day of Muharram. It is preferred that the Muslim observes fast on the 9th day and the 10th day of Muharram, or the 10th day and the 11th day, in contrast to the practice of the Jews who used to fast this day also (i.e. lath Muharram).

***Days That the Muslims Are Forbidden to Fast**

- During the days of the two *'Eids* (i.e. the festivals of the Day of the Sacrifice on the lath day of Thul-Hijjah, and the Day of Breaking the Fast on the 1st day of Shawwal).
- The Days of *Tashriq,* the 11th, the 12th, and the 13th of the month of Thul-Hijjah for the pilgrims.
- Those who are not performing the *Hajj* and *'Umrah,* are exempt from this prohibition.
- The days in which the woman is still in her menses or experiencing post childbirth bleeding. Further more, there is a consensus between the scholars that the fast of such women is void.
- The woman should not fast while her husband is present except with his permission, excluding the obligatory fast of Ramadhan.

***When is Fasting Discouraged**

- Fasting the Day of `A*rafah* for those who are performing *Hajj* and standing at 'Arafat.
- Fasting on Friday alone except if one observes fast a day before or a day after it.
- Fasting on Saturday alone, except when it is making up for a day of obligatory fasting.
- Fasting everyday without any break.
- Intentionally fasting two or more days continuously without breaking the fast.

- Fasting 'the Day of the Doubt', which is the 30th day of Sha'ban. Also, fasting the day or two which immediately precede Ramadhan, except for a person who is observing his regular fast.

Meritorious Acts During Ramadhan

*The Night Prayer or *Tarawih* Prayers

Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) has encouraged offering prayer at night regularly. This prayer is known as the 'night prayer' *(Qiyamul-Layl)* or *(Tahajjud).* During Ramadhan this prayer is also call *Tarawih.* It is allowed to offer the *Tarawih,* at any time starting from the conclusion of' *Isha* (Night) prayer until the commencement of the *Fajr* (Dawn) prayer. The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) always prayed eleven *Rak'ahs* (units of prayer) for the optional night prayer, whether it was during Ramadhan or any other time of the year. *Tarawih,* is a voluntary prayer by which a true believer intends to seek the pleasure of Allah and draw near to Him. The Prophet said (Peace be upon Him):

"Whoever performed the night prayer in Ramadhan with sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his past sins will be forgiven."

(Al-Bukhari)

*Giving Charity And Donations

One of the good deeds of this blessed month of Ramadhan is charity and benevolence, which is more virtuous than during the other months. The goal of giving charity and donations is to attain the pleasure of Allah(S.W.T).

*Increasing One's Recitation of The Qur'an

The blessed month of Ramadhan is the month of the Qur'an, in which reciting the Qur'an according to one's ability is strongly recommended. The Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon Him) recited the Qur'an with the utmost concentration and deep contemplation of its meanings. For Ramadhan is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed. Allah (S.W.T) says:

"The month of Ramadhan, in which the Qur'an was revealed; a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong)."

(2:185)

Everyone must endeavor to the best of his ability to fear Allah ~ with a conscious heart. In order to generate such a fearful mind, the best method is to recite the Noble Qur'an with due concentration, understanding, and contemplation of its meanings. Moreover, while reciting the Qur'an, he should reflect upon the supreme Omnipotence and absolute Majesty of Allah (S.W.T).

*Seclusion in the Mosque *(I`tikaf)*

One of the special deeds of Ramadhan is *I`tikaf.* Performing *I`tikaf* means to confine oneself in seclusion in a mosque for the purpose of worshipping Allah alone, leaving

every worldly and personal affair. The mind of the person who observes *I`tikaf* concentrates exclusively on the goal of pleasing Allah (S.W.T). He is engaged in various types of worship, repentance, and beseeching Allah's forgiveness. He offers as many voluntarily prayers as he can, saying words of remembrance and invocations, etc. to Allah (S.W.T). In this sense, practicing I`*tikaf* is a combination of many acts of worship.

*Searching for the Night of Decree

The Night of Decree *(Laylatul-Qadr)* is more virtuous and meritorious than one thousand months. It is the night of Ramadhan in which the Qur'an was brought from the highest heavens down to mankind. Allah ~ says in the Noble Qur'an:

"Verily, We have sent it (this Qur'an) down in the Night of Decree *(Al-Qadr).* And what will make you know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months."

(97:1-3)

This night occurs every year during one of the five odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadhan. The exact time of its occurrence is unknown. The only thing that is clear concerning its time is that it occurs during the last ten nights of Ramadhan. Many scholars hold the view that it fluctuates from year to year between the odd nights of the last ten nights. This means that one year it may occur during the 21st night (for example) and the next year it may fall on the 27th night. One of the possible reasons behind its concealment is that a true believer should endeavor in worshipping Allah during those odd numbered nights so as to attain all the rich reward and virtue of that tremendous time. Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon Him) has described its superiority and said:

"Whoever prays during the Night of Decree, with firm belief and expecting a reward for it, his previous sins are forgiven."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

In other words, whenever you endeavor in worshipping in the odd nights of the last ten nights, then you will definitely attain the virtues of the Night of Decree.

*Performing `*Umrah* During Ramadhan

Performing *'Umrah* (lesser pilgrimage to Makkah) in Ramadhan is especially virtuous because it is equal in reward to *Hajj* (the major pilgrimage to Makkah). The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said:

"Umrah in Ramadhan is equal (in reward) to *Hajj* -or he said "equal to (performing) *Hajj* with me."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)