

145564 - Is it permissible to give dates and dried yoghurt for zakat al-fitr to people who do not regard them as staple foods?

the question

Is it permissible to give zakat al-fitr in the form of dates and dried yoghurt even though these are not regarded as staple foods in many countries?

Detailed answer

What should be given for zakat al-fitr is that which is the local staple food. If their staple food is dates or dried yoghurt or raisins, it is permissible to give it. Whatever is not regarded as a staple food is not acceptable as zakat al-fitr. This is indicated by the words of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him): At the time of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) on the day of (Eid) al-Fitr, we used to give (as zakat al-fitr) a saa' of foodstuff, and our food at that time was barley, raisins, dried yoghurt, and dates.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (1510) and Muslim (985).

The Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) gave these kinds of food because that was their staple food at that time.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The more correct view in our opinion is that zakat al-fitr must be given in the form of the usual staple food of the country. This is also the view of Maalik. Abu Haneefah said: One has the choice. One view was narrated from Ahmad that nothing is acceptable except the five kinds mentioned in the texts: dates, raisins, wheat, barley and dried yoghurt.

End quote from al-Majmoo' (6/112)

Al-Baaji said in Sharh al-Muwatta': Of what should the saa' be? Ibn al-Qaasim said, narrating from Maalik, that it should be the usual staple food of the country. This was also the view of Abu 'Ali ibn Abi Hurayrah among the companions of ash-Shaafa'i. End quote.

In al-Mawsoo 'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (23/343) it says: ... The Maalikis are of the view that it should be given in the form of the usual local staple food, such as lentils (daal), rice, fowl (fava beans), wheat, barley, dates, dried yogurt, and pearl millet. Anything other than that is not acceptable, unless the people use it as a staple food and do not use the kinds of food mentioned above. End quote.

This view was favoured by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him), as stated in al-Fataawa al-Kubra (2/157). Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about giving barley for zakat al-fitr, as we have heard from you that it is not acceptable, as appears to be the case. We hope that you can explain?

He replied: You said that you heard from us that giving barley for zakat al-fitr is not acceptable, as appears to be the case, but we said that regarding people for whom barley is not a staple food. That is because the wisdom behind prescribing zakat al-fitr is that it should be food for the poor, and that can only be achieved if it is a staple food eaten by the people. Dates and barley are mentioned in the hadeeth of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) not because there is a connection between them, rather it is because they were the usual staple foods eaten by people at that time. That is based on the report narrated by al-Bukhaari in his chapter on charity before Eid, from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: At the time of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) on the day of (Eid) al-Fitr, we used to give (as zakat al-fitr) a saa' of foodstuff. And Abu Sa'eed said: And our food at that time was barley, raisins, dried yoghurt, and dates.

End quote from Majmoo' al-Fataawa (18/282)

What the Muslim must do is give zakat al-fitr in the form of whatever is regarded as staple food in his country, so as to fulfil the wisdom behind this zakaah, which is to make the poor independent of means so that they do not have to ask of people on the day of Eid.

And Allah knows best.