124965 - Types of food that may be given as zakat al-fitr

the question

What are the types of food that may be given as zakat al-fitr?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Zakat al-fitr may be given in the form of any staple food, such as wheat, corn, rice, beans, lentils, chickpeas, foul (fava beans), pasta, meat and so on. The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) enjoined giving one saa‘ of food, and the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) used to give it in the form of the local staple food.

Al-Bukhaari (1510) and Muslim (985) narrated that Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) said: We used to pay zakat al-fitr at the time of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) on the day of al-Fitr, a saa‘ of food. Abu Sa‘eed said: And our (staple) food was barley, raisins, dried yoghurt and dates.

According to another report, he said: When the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was amongst us, we used to pay zakaat al-fitr on behalf of everyone, young and old, free and slave, a saa‘ of foodstuff or a saa‘ of dried yoghurt or a saa‘ of barley or a saa‘ of dates or a saa‘ of raisins.

A number of scholars interpreted “foodstuff” in this hadeeth as referring to wheat; others are of the view is that what is meant is the foodstuff of a region, no matter what it is, whether it is wheat or corn or something else. This is the correct view, because zakaah is a means by which the rich help the poor, and the Muslim is not required to help with anything other than the staple food of his country. Undoubtedly rice was a staple food in the land of the two Holy Sanctuaries, and it was a good and precious food, and superior to barley, which the text says is acceptable. Thus it is known that there is nothing wrong with giving rice for zakat al-fitr. End quote.

Majmoo‘ Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (14/200)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (25/68):

If the people of a region eat one of these types of food as a staple food, it is undoubtedly permissible to give it for zakat al-fitr. But can they give staple foods other than that, such as if they eat rice and corn as staple foods, can they give wheat or barley, or is it acceptable for them to give rice and corn? There is a well-known difference of opinion concerning that, but the most correct view is that it should be given in the form of what he eats as a staple food, even if it is not one of these types. This is the view of the majority of scholars, such as ash-Shaafa‘i and others, because the basic principle with regard to charity is that it is enjoined as a means of helping the poor as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “on a scale of the average of that with which you feed your own families” [al-Maa’idah 5:89]. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) enjoined zakat al-fitr: a saa‘ of dates or a saa‘ of barley, because that was the staple food of the people of Madinah. If that had not been their staple food, and their staple food had been something else, he would not have obliged them to give something that was not their staple food, just as Allah did not enjoin that in the case of expiation [for broken oaths, as mentioned in al-Maa’idah 5:89].

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said in I‘laam al-Muwaqqi‘een (3/12): That was the usual staple food in Madinah. But if the staple food of the people of a region or locality is something other than that, then they have to give a saa‘ of their staple food, such as those whose staple food is corn or rice or some other kind of grain. If their staple food is something other than grains, such as milk or meat or fish, they should give their zakat al-fitr in the form of their staple food, no matter what it is. This is the view of the majority of scholars, and it is the only correct view, because the aim behind it is to meet the needs of the poor on the day of Eid, and to help them by giving them the staple food of the local people. Based on that, it is acceptable to give flour, even if there is no saheeh hadeeth that mentions it. End quote.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said in ash-Sharh al-Mumti‘ (6/183):

The correct view is that anything that may be a staple food, whether it is grains, fruit, meat and so on, is acceptable. End quote.

Ends.