# 138684 - Is it permissible to give items as zakah instead of cash?

**the question**

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has told us the eight categories of people to whom zakah may be given in His holy Book. Are the following activities regarded as coming under the categories of zakah: distributing food hampers, distributing blankets in the winter, hooking up water supply to the houses of poor people, building wooden roofs for them, providing trousseaux for brides who are orphans or poor, and providing medical aid for the sick – on condition that the zakah funds are given to a trustworthy charity, and the charity takes charge of these activities? Please note that the charity checks up on cases before offering the help to them. Please advise us, may Allah reward you with good, as to whether the things mentioned above come under the categories of zakah or not. If I give zakah in this manner, will I have given it in the form of wealth as is required of me? Or is giving the zakah on one’s wealth in the form of money not obligatory at all?

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

What is required in the case of zakah on one’s wealth is that it should be given in the form of money, and it is not permissible to give it in the form of items or food. It is obligatory for the one who is giving zakah to hand over the zakah money to those who are entitled to it, but after that he does not have any say in how the poor person is to dispose of this money or to tell him how to spend it in the was that will bring him most benefit according to his view; rather he should give the money to a poor person who is deserving of it and who knows better what he needs and what is in his best interests than anyone else.

It is well-known that the person can get what he wants by means of money, unlike specific items that he may or may not need, and he may be compelled to sell it for a cheap price in order to make use of its price.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

Is it permissible to turn the zakah money into specific items, such as food or other things, and distribute it to the poor?

He replied:

That is not permissible; zakah must be given in cash.

End quote from al-Liqa’ ash-Shahri (41/12)

He also said:

zakah on money must be given in cash; it cannot be given in the form of other items, unless the poor person made a request of you and said: If you receive money for me, then buy me such and such with it. In that case there is nothing wrong with it. End quote.

Majmoo‘ Fatawa wa Rasaa’il Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (18/303)

Secondly:

If there is a specific poor person who needs either medicine or food, or similar needs, and it is known that if zakah is given to him in the form of cash it will clearly be detrimental, or if his interests dictate that that poor person should not be given cash, then in this case some of the scholars regard it as permissible to give him zakah in the form of specific items instead of cash. For example, if the poor person is insane or feebleminded, and does not handle money well, or he is foolish and will waste money, or he is an evildoer who will spend the money on that which is of no benefit, then he and his dependents will remain in need.

Shaykh al-Islam said:

Giving items of equivalent value when there is no need and no obvious interest to be served is not allowed… Because if it were made permissible to give items of equivalent value, then the giver may give bad quality items or the evaluation may not be correct. zakah is intended to help the poor, and the zakah is connected to the amount of wealth one owns and its type. However, with regard to giving items of equivalent value when there is a need for that or an interest to be served thereby, or to achieve fairness, there is nothing wrong with that.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fatawa (25/82)

Shaykh Ibn Baz said in al-Fatawa (14/253):

It is permissible to give, instead of cash, goods such as fabric, food and the like, if it is thought that the interests of the recipients of zakah may be best served in that manner, so long as what is given is evaluated correctly. For example, if the poor person is insane, feebleminded, foolish or immature, and there is the fear that he may mess about with the cash, and his interests are best served by giving him food or clothing equal in value to the amount of money due to him, bought with zakah funds, that he can benefit from. All of this is according to the most correct scholarly opinion. End quote.

Better than that is to buy on behalf of the poor (with their consent) the things that they need.

Shaykh Muhammad as-Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If the people of this household are poor, but if we give them cash they will mishandle it by buying luxuries and things that are of no benefit, then if we buy necessities for them and give them to them, is that permissible?

The well-known view among the scholars is that this is not permissible, i.e. it is not permissible for the individual to buy items with his zakah and give them instead of cash. They said: That is because this cash is more beneficial to the poor, because they can spend the cash however they wish, unlike specific items for which they may have no need, in which case they would sell them for a lower price.

But there is an alternative: if you are afraid that if you give zakah to this household they will spend it on things that are not necessary, then you may say to the head of the household – whether that is the father or the mother or the brother or the paternal uncle – you can say to him: I have zakah to give; what items do you need so that I can buy them for you and send them to you?

If you do it in this way, then it is permissible, and the zakah will be given appropriately.

End quote from Majmoo‘ Fatawa Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (18/question no. 643)

Conclusion: giving zakah in the form of items and goods instead of cash is not permissible, unless there is a need for that and an interest to be served thereby.

And Allah knows best.