169899 - Delaying payment of zakah in order to pay it in the month of Ramadan

the question

First of all, I would like to thank you – after Allah – for the efforts you are making, and I ask Allah to place it in the balance of your good deeds and to benefit thereby everyone who reads it, Muslim or otherwise. My question may be summed up as follows: I found a job three years ago and I get a good salary from it, praise be to Allah. But after I worked out the time when my wealth reached the nisaab (minimum threshold at which zakah becomes obligatory) it became clear that it was due in the month of Jumaada al-Aakhir, but without meaning to, I paid it in the month of Ramadan, thinking that I could choose the time to pay it. This continued for two years, but now I would like to ask about this year: can I pay zakah in the month of Ramadan as I did in the two previous years, or should I pay it in the month of Jumaada al-Aakhir? Are there any consequences as a result of having delayed it in the two previous years; in other words, should I work out the value of zakah for each month and pay zakah for the months during which I delayed it? Please note that in the month of Ramadan I paid zakah on all the wealth that I had my possession including that which I had obtained after the month of Jumaada al-Aakhir.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is obligatory to pay zakah immediately, once one’s wealth reaches the nisaab (minimum threshold) and one full (Hijri) year has passed since then, because delaying it with no excuse is a sin; but if it is delayed for a legitimate reason, such as not being able to find any poor people to give it to, there is nothing wrong with that.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It is obligatory to pay zakah immediately once it becomes due and it is possible to pay it, and it is not permissible to delay it. This was stated by Maalik, Ahmad, and the majority of scholars, because Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “and give Zakat” [al-Baqarah 2:43]; this command implies that is to be paid immediately.

End quote from Sharh al-Muhadhdhab (5/308)

It says in Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah (9/398):

If the time for paying zakah is the month of Jumada al-Oola, can we delay it until the month of Ramadan with no reason or excuse?

Answer: it is not permissible to delay payment of zakah after one full year has passed, unless there is a legitimate shar‘i excuse, such as not being able to find any poor people at the time the year is completed, or not being able to get it to them, or because the wealth is not to hand, and so on. As for delaying it because of Ramadan, that is not permissible unless the time period is short, such as if the year is completed in the latter half of Sha‘baan. In that case there is nothing wrong with delaying it until Ramadan. End quote.

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Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about the ruling on delaying zakah until Ramadan.

He replied: Zakah, like other good deeds, if done at a time that is regarded as having special virtue, that is better, but when zakah becomes due and the year has passed, it becomes obligatory to pay it, and it should not be delayed until Ramadan. If the zakah year ends in Rajab, he should not delay it until Ramadan; rather he should pay it in Rajab. If the zakah year ends in Muharram, he should pay it in Muharram and not delay it until Ramadan. But if the zakah year ends in Ramadan, then he should pay it in Ramadan. The same applies if some emergency arises

among the Muslims and he wants to bring forward his zakah and give it before the year has passed; there is nothing wrong with that.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (18/295)

Secondly:

The questioner delayed giving the zakah of his wealth until Ramadan based on a mistaken notion, so there is no sin on him because he was unaware of the correct ruling. Then if he paid it after that in Ramadan, then he has done what is required of him, and he does not have to do anything because of this delay. But this year he must pay it in Jumaada al-Aakhirah and not delay it until Ramadan.

And Allah knows best.