



(Part No. 58; Page No. 65)

From the Fatwas of Shaykh `Abdul-`Aziz ibn `Abdullah ibn Muhammad Al Al-Shaykh

Mufti of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Obligation to pay Zakah is not restricted to Ramadan

Q: When does Zakah (obligatory charity) become obligatory? When should it be paid and who are its deserving recipients?

A: Zakah on wealth becomes obligatory if a Muslim possesses the Nisab (the minimum amount on which Zakah is due) and it is kept in possession for a Hawl (one lunar year calculated from the time a property reaches the minimum amount upon which Zakah is due), provided that the owner is a free person. The amount of Nisab for gold is twenty Mithqal (1 Mithqal = 4.25 grams) which is equal to approximately 92 gm. while the Nisab for silver is 200 Dirhams which is equal to 56 Saudi Riyals. If a person possesses the Nisab and kept it for a full lunar year, Zakah becomes due on it, which is one quarter of one tenth. For example, the Zakah of 100 Riyals is 2.5 Riyals and for 1000 Riyals it is 25 Riyals, and so on.

The due time for Zakah payment depends on the time when the person possesses the Nisab; if a person owns the Nisab in the month of Muharram, for example, Zakah becomes obligatory the following Muharram. It is worthy to mention here that the obligation of paying Zakah is not confined to the month of Ramadan, but some Muslims prefer to pay their Zakah in Ramadan seeking the doubled reward in this month. However, if Zakah becomes due at any other time than Ramadan, it is obligatory to pay it and not to delay it until Ramadan. If one hastens to pay Zakah in advance before the completion of a year in order to pay it in Ramadan, there is nothing wrong with this, In sha'a-Allah (if Allah wills).

As for the deserving recipients of Zakah, they are those specified in the Saying of Allah (Exalted be He): (As-Sadaqât (here it means Zakât) are only for the Fuqarâ' (poor), and Al-Masâkin (the poor) and those employed to collect (the funds), and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islâm), and to free the captives, and for those in debt, and for Allâh's Cause (i.e. for Mujahidûn - those fighting in a holy battle), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allâh. And Allâh is All-Knower, All-Wise.)

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