Understanding Zakah: A Practical Guide

Contents

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Introduction

Islam is the only true way of life and the true religion sent to mankind by Allah, the Most Exalted, the Most High. Allah (SWT) sent numerous Messengers to various nations to convey His message. They called their people to worship and obey Him alone and to reject and abandon false gods, man-made religions, and corrupt ideologies.

Muhammad SAW was the final and seal of the Prophets, to whom Allah the Almighty revealed the final and preserved way of life: Islam. He SAW carried the divine mission that Allah had entrusted to him until his final breath. Allah (SWT) completed this religion for mankind with true guidance and bestowed His blessings upon us. This blessed religion, Islam, is built upon five pillars: the testimony of faith (Shahadah), establishing the prayers (Salah), giving Zakah (Obligatory Charity) , fasting in Ramadan, and performing Hajj [1]. Zakah is one of the foundational pillars which obligates qualified Muslims—those who possess the minimum required amount of wealth (Nisab)—to give a portion of their wealth to the poor and needy. It purifies and increases the wealth of believers and ensures the proper distribution of wealth among those in need.

Through this system, Islam establishes sustainable social and economic welfare in society by addressing both spiritual and material needs. Islam, through Zakah, addresses the material aspects of life that are essential for human well-being, and it facilitates a proper state of mind for the worship of Allah.
This is why Islam is the true religion that balances both spiritual and material life. In contrast, many man-made religions and ideologies are either excessively spiritual—such as Christianity and Buddhism—or excessively materialistic, such as capitalism, secularism, socialism, and communism.

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِم بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ صَلَوٰتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Take from their wealth ˹O Prophet˺ charity to purify and bless them, and pray for them—surely your prayer is a source of comfort for them. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (At-Taubah 9:103)

Purpose of Zakah

Zakah is not merely a financial obligation; it is a comprehensive system designed by Allah to purify individuals, establish justice, and maintain balance within society. Through Zakah, Islam ensures that wealth does not remain concentrated among a few people but circulates throughout the community, supporting those who are in need and strengthening social and economic stability. Allah commanded Rasul ﷺ:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِم

“Take charity from their wealth in order to purify them and cause them to increase.” (At-Tawbah 9:103)

Zakah purifies the believer by removing greed, selfishness, and excessive attachment to wealth. It trains the heart to trust Allah and to care for others in the community. At the same time, Zakah increases wealth through the blessings of Allah and by allowing wealth to circulate in society. When wealth flows from those who have more to those who are in need, poverty is reduced, economic hardship is eased, and society becomes more balanced and stable. Allah also clarifies that the poor and needy have a right in the wealth of the wealthy:

وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

“And in their wealth there is a known right for the petitioner and the deprived.” (Adh-Dhariyat 51:19)

Therefore, Zakah is not simply voluntary charity; it is a divinely ordained right for those in need. By fulfilling this obligation, Muslims establish compassion, justice, and social responsibility within the community. The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes the importance of Zakah, often mentioning it alongside prayer, demonstrating that it is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam. Allah says:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِندَ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“Establish prayer and give Zakah, and whatever good you send forward for yourselves, you will find it with Allah. Indeed, Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.” (Al-Baqarah 2:110)

Zakah is also a defining feature of a righteous society. Allah says:

الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

“Those who, if We establish them in the land, establish prayer, give Zakah, command what is right, and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of all matters.” (Al-Hajj 22:41)

Through this system, Islam creates a society where spiritual devotion and social justice go hand in hand, ensuring both moral purification and economic balance.

Allah: The True Owner of Wealth

One of the most important principles behind Zakah is understanding that Allah is the true owner of all wealth. Everything that people possess—money, gold, businesses, land, and resources—ultimately belongs to Allah, and human beings are only trustees of what He has placed in their hands. Allah says:

وَآتُوهُم مِّن مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ

“And give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you.” (An-Nur 24:33)

This verse clearly reminds believers that the wealth they possess is “the wealth of Allah” that He has granted to them. Therefore, when a Muslim gives Zakah, he is not giving away something that is purely his own; rather, he is fulfilling the trust placed upon him by Allah. Similarly, Allah says:

آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُم مُّسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ

“Believe in Allah and His Messenger and spend from that over which He has made you trustees.” (Al-Hadid 57:7)

This verse emphasizes that humans are successors and trustees (مستخلفين) over wealth, not its ultimate owners. True ownership belongs to Allah alone, while people are entrusted with wealth for a limited time and will be accountable for how they used it. Because of this, when a Muslim gives Zakah, he should not feel that he is losing something from his own wealth. Rather, he is returning a portion of Allah’s wealth to those whom Allah has given a right over it. Wealth is distributed among people according to Allah’s wisdom and decree. It is not merely the result of intelligence, hard work, or personal skill.

Many people work hard, yet they may not attain the same level of provision as others. This shows that wealth is not simply earned; it is granted by Allah as a test and responsibility. The one who has been given more wealth is being tested in how he uses it and whether he fulfills the rights that Allah has placed within it.
The Prophet ﷺ also warned that people will be questioned about their wealth on the Day of Judgment. He said:

لَا تَزُولُ قَدَمَا عَبْدٍ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتَّى يُسْأَلَ عَنْ أَرْبَعٍ… وَعَنْ مَالِهِ مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَهُ وَفِيمَ أَنْفَقَهُ

“The feet of a servant will not move on the Day of Resurrection until he is asked about four things… including his wealth: how he earned it and how he spent it.” (Reported by At-Tirmidhi)

Understanding this principle removes arrogance from the heart and cultivates humility and gratitude. A believer recognizes that whatever he possesses is a trust (Amanah) from Allah, and that he will be accountable for how he uses it. Therefore, Zakah constantly reminds Muslims that wealth should not be hoarded or used selfishly. Instead, it should be used responsibly to support the needy, strengthen the community, and fulfill the commands of Allah. In this way, Zakah reinforces the belief that Allah alone is the true Owner and Provider, and that all wealth ultimately returns to Him.

Definition of Zakah

1. Linguistic definition of Zakah

The word زكاة (Zakah) comes from the root letters ز-ك-و. It's a Masdar (مصدر) noun, زكا which means to purify, to remove impurities and to increase. It implies that to purify something by removing impurities from it and to increase it in quality and quantity.

2. Share'e (Islamic Jurisprudence) definition of Zakah

Zakah is the third pillar of Islam. It is an obligatory act that requires a Muslim who possesses the Nisab amount of wealth for an entire Islamic (lunar) calendar year to donate 2.5 percent of his or her wealth to eight categories of people as stipulated by Allah. There are numerous verses in the Qur’an and hadiths regarding the obligation of Zakah. Zakah has been mentioned alongside the prayer in eighty-two verses of the Qur’an [2]. Allah says:

وَأَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُوا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَٱرْكَعُوا۟ مَعَ ٱلرَّٰكِعِينَ

And establish prayer and give zakāh and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience]. (Al-Baqarah 2:43)

Definition of each Share'e term mentioned above in the definition:

A. Nisab Amount:

The minimum amount upon which Zakah becomes due for gold and silver is twenty dinars for gold and two hundred dirhams for silver. Historically, one gold dinar weighs approximately 4.25
grams of gold, and one silver dirham weighs approximately 2.98–3 grams of silver. Therefore, the Nisab amount in modern measurements is approximately:

- 20 dinars (gold) ≈ 85 grams of gold.
- 200 dirhams (silver) ≈ 595 grams of silver.

They could slightly be different depending on the calculation methods and parameters but not more than 5 to 10 grams of variations. Rasul SAW says,

عَنْ عَلِيٍّ، - رضى الله عنه - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِبَعْضِ أَوَّلِ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ قَالَ " فَإِذَا كَانَتْ لَكَ مِائَتَا دِرْهَمٍ وَحَالَ عَلَيْهَا الْحَوْلُ فَفِيهَا خَمْسَةُ دَرَاهِمَ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ شَىْءٌ - يَعْنِي فِي الذَّهَبِ - حَتَّى يَكُونَ لَكَ عِشْرُونَ دِينَارًا فَإِذَا كَانَ لَكَ عِشْرُونَ دِينَارًا وَحَالَ عَلَيْهَا الْحَوْلُ فَفِيهَا نِصْفُ دِينَارٍ فَمَا زَادَ فَبِحِسَابِ ذَلِكَ " . قَالَ فَلاَ أَدْرِي أَعَلِيٌّ يَقُولُ فَبِحِسَابِ ذَلِكَ . أَوْ رَفَعَهُ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم " وَلَيْسَ فِي مَالٍ زَكَاةٌ حَتَّى يَحُولَ عَلَيْهِ الْحَوْلُ " . إِلاَّ أَنَّ جَرِيرًا قَالَ ابْنُ وَهْبٍ يَزِيدُ فِي الْحَدِيثِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ
صلى الله عليه وسلم " لَيْسَ فِي مَالٍ زَكَاةٌ حَتَّى يَحُولَ عَلَيْهِ الْحَوْلُ " .

'from Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him), from the Muhammad ﷺ with part of the beginning of this hadith. He said: “If you possess two hundred dirhams and a year passes over them, then five dirhams are due from them. And there is nothing upon you—meaning regarding gold—until you possess twenty dinars. If you possess twenty dinars and a year passes over them, then half a dinar is due, and whatever exceeds that is calculated according to that proportion.” He said: “I do not know whether Ali said ‘according to that proportion’ or whether he attributed it to the Prophet ﷺ: ‘There is no zakah on wealth until a year has passed over it.’” However, Jarir said that Ibn Wahb used to add in the hadith from the Prophet ﷺ: “There is no zakah on wealth until a year has passed over it.” (Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith 1573 - Shahih)

One should keep track of how much these amounts are worth in the current market value, because the price of gold and silver fluctuates over time. As of recent market estimates in Ramadan of 2026, gold is roughly around $161 per gram, while silver is around $2.7 per gram. Based on these approximate prices:

- Gold Nisab (85 g) ≈ $13,600–$13,700 USD
- Silver Nisab (595 g) ≈ $1,600 USD

So if a person own more than 1600 $ or 13,600 $ (whatever standard you choose) either in cash, bank account, worth of gold and silver in dollars (could be easily converted as shown above) and other assets in the form of money or convertible combined or anyone of them then it would make him qualified for zakah.

Currently, the difference between the value of gold and silver is very large. Because of this, there is a difference of opinion among contemporary scholars regarding whether the Nisab should be calculated based on the gold standard or the silver standard when determining a person's zakah obligation. Some scholars prefer the silver standard, as it benefits the poor by making more people eligible to pay zakah, while others prefer the gold standard, as it more accurately reflects the value of wealth in the modern economy. The silver standard is closer to Taqwa but if one chooses to take gold as a standard there is no blame on him. Allah knows best.

B. One Islamic calendar year:

This means from the day a person possesses the Nisab amount of wealth, and as long as he maintains that amount or more until the same day in the following year, it completes one year. At that point, he must give zakah on the total amount he owns on that day.
An important point to clarify is that as long as a person maintains the Nisab amount, whatever additional wealth is acquired—even shortly before the due date—will be included in the total amount on which zakah must be paid.

For example, if Karim possessed the Nisab amount on the 21st of Rajab 1445 and maintained at least that amount while accumulating more wealth throughout the year, and he had 40k until the 11th of Rajab 1446, then acquired an additional 20k on the 14th of Rajab, he must pay zakah on 60k. This is because all the wealth accumulated within the year after reaching the Nisab is included in the zakah calculation on the due date.

C. Recipients of Zakah — Eight Categories of People:

Eight categories of people are eligible recipients of Zakah, as Allah (SWT) states in the Qur’an. These groups are: the poor, the needy, those employed to administer it, those whose hearts are inclined toward Islam, for freeing slaves, for those in debt, for the cause of Allah, and for needy travelers.
Zakah cannot be given to anyone outside of these eight categories.
During the time of the Messenger of Allah SWT and the Khulafāʾ al-Rashidi, zakah was collected by the Islamic Khilafah and distributed in accordance with the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah SWT. If there is no Islamic authority to

collect it, then it becomes an individual obligation for each Muslim to calculate their zakah according to the Shariah and distribute it responsibly. Allah says,

إِنَّمَا ٱلصَّدَقَٰتُ لِلۡفُقَرَآءِ وَٱلۡمَسَٰكِينِ وَٱلۡعَٰمِلِينَ عَلَيۡهَا وَٱلۡمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمۡ وَفِي ٱلرِّقَابِ وَٱلۡغَٰرِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱبۡنِ ٱلسَّبِيلِۖ ۝
فَرِيضَةٗ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ

Zakah is only for the poor and the needy, for those employed to administer it, for those whose hearts are attracted ˹to the faith˺, for ˹freeing˺ slaves, for those in debt, for Allah’s cause, and for ˹needy˺ travellers. ˹This is˺ an obligation from Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (At-Taubah 9:60)

This Ayah explicitly states the 8 groups to whom the zakah should be distributed.

Ruling Regarding Zakah

1. Upon Whom Zakah Becomes an Obligation

The books of fiqh discuss this topic in great detail, as it requires an extensively precise description. However, the scope of this writing is to provide a high-level overview. Therefore, readers should refer to the books of fiqh for detailed discussions. The key requirements are listed below.

- One must be a Muslim.
- One must reach the age of puberty and adulthood as defined by Islamic law.(Many scholars have ruled that the guardian of a child or an insane person who possesses more than the Nisab amount should pay zakah from their wealth on his or her behalf.)
- One must be sane and of sound mind.
- One must possess the Nisab amount of wealth for a full Islamic lunar calendar year, as described above. Zakah doesn't become obligatory in Ramadan by default rather whatever day one possess Nisab amount of wealth.
- The zakah must be distributed to the eight categories of recipients mentioned above.
- If a person possesses different types of zakatable wealth, their combined value is considered when determining whether they have reached the Nisab amount. It is important to understand that each individual asset does not necessarily have to reach the Nisab on its own. Even if separate assets are individually below the Nisab threshold, if their combined total exceeds the Nisab, then zakah becomes obligatory. For example, if someone has $3,000 worth of gold, $10,000 in cash, and $1,000 worth of trading stocks, the total value of their zakatable wealth would be $14,000. Since this amount exceeds the gold Nisab standard of approximately $13,500 mentioned above, that person becomes eligible to pay zakah. This clarification is important because many people mistakenly think that each type of asset must individually exceed the Nisab amount, whereas in reality the combined value of zakatable assets is what determines the obligation of zakah.

2. Types of Wealth That Are Zakatable

Zakah is not due on every type of wealth a person owns. Rather, it becomes obligatory on specific types of wealth that meet the conditions of Nisab (minimum amount) and completion of one lunar year.

A. Gold and Silver:

Gold and silver are among the primary forms of wealth upon which zakah is obligatory. This includes:

- Physical gold and silver
- Gold or silver coins
- Bullion and stored precious metals

When the amount reaches the Nisab (85 grams of gold or 595 grams of silver) and one lunar year passes while maintaining that amount, 2.5% must be given as zakah. These two metals historically served as the primary monetary standard in Islam, which is why they are specifically mentioned in many classical fiqh discussions regarding zakah.

B. Zakah on Jewelry:

There is a difference of opinion among scholars regarding whether zakah must be paid on gold and silver jewelry used for personal adornment.

- Hanafi scholars generally hold that zakah must be paid on gold and silver jewelry if it reaches the Nisab.
- Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali scholars often state that jewelry used for permissible personal use does not require zakah.

However, many scholars state that paying zakah on jewelry is the stronger and safer opinion, based on several hadiths that warn against withholding zakah from gold and silver. For this reason, many scholars advise Muslims to pay zakah on jewelry to avoid falling into doubt.

C. Any Form of Money (Cash or Bank Balance):

In the modern world, wealth is often held in the form of currency rather than gold or silver. Therefore, contemporary scholars state that zakah must be paid on:

- Cash savings
- Money in bank accounts
- Checking and savings balances
- Digital money or electronic funds
- Foreign currency holdings

All forms of money are treated similarly to gold and silver, because they serve the same function as a medium of exchange and store of value. If the total amount of money a person possesses reaches the Nisab value and remains above that threshold for one lunar year, then 2.5% zakah becomes obligatory.

D. Business Wealth (Trade Goods):

Zakah must also be paid on business assets and trade goods. This includes wealth that is used for buying and selling with the intention of profit, such as:

- Merchandise in stores
- Wholesale inventory
- Online business inventory
- Commercial goods stored in warehouses

At the end of the zakah year, the market value of all trade goods is calculated and added to the business's cash holdings. If the total value reaches the Nisab threshold, then 2.5% zakah is due.

E. Agricultural Produce (Crops):

Zakah is also due on agricultural crops and produce that are harvested from the land, such as wheat, barley, dates, rice, and other staple crops. The rate of zakah differs from monetary zakah:

- 10% (one-tenth) if the crops are irrigated naturally (rain, rivers, etc.)
- 5% (half of one-tenth) if irrigation requires human effort or cost.

Unlike money or trade goods, agricultural zakah does not require the passing of one year. It becomes due at the time of harvest.

F. Livestock (Cattle and Animals):

Zakah is also obligatory on certain types of livestock if they reach the required minimum numbers. These include:

- Camels
- Cattle
- Sheep and goats

Detailed rules exist in fiqh regarding the minimum numbers (Nisab) and the amount to be given, which vary depending on the number of animals owned.
These rulings are based on numerous hadiths in which the Prophet ﷺ specified the zakah due on livestock.

3. Wealth That Is Not Zakatable

There are many types of wealth that do not require zakah, particularly items that are used for personal needs and daily living.

A. Personal Use Items

Zakah is not obligatory on things that a person uses for their basic needs, even if they are valuable. These include:

- Personal house or residence
- Personal car or transportation

- Personal devices such as phones or computers
- Clothing
- Furniture
- Household appliances

These items are considered necessities (حاجات أصلية) and are therefore exempt from zakah.

B. Land

Land itself is generally not subject to zakah if it is owned simply as property and not intended for trade.
Examples include:

- Land kept for personal ownership
- Land used for residence
- Land used for farming (though zakah applies to crops produced from it)

However, if land is purchased with the intention of resale for profit, then it becomes trade wealth, and zakah may become due on its market value.

4. Other Important Rulings

A. Zakah on Retirement Funds (401k, Pension, etc.)

Modern financial systems include retirement savings such as:

- 401(k)
- Pension plans
- Retirement investment funds

Scholars differentiate based on accessibility of the funds.

- If the funds are fully accessible, then zakah should be paid annually like any other savings.
- If the funds are not accessible (for example, withdrawing them results in heavy penalties or restrictions), then zakah may be paid when the funds are withdrawn.

Since many retirement accounts are not easily accessible until retirement or emergencies, some scholars state that zakah becomes due after withdrawal, when the money becomes fully owned and accessible.

B. Debts

If a person owes significant debts, scholars differ regarding how those debts affect zakah calculations.
Some scholars allow debts to be deducted from zakatable wealth, while others maintain that zakah should still be paid if the remaining wealth still reaches Nisab.

C. Rental Property

Zakah is not paid on the value of the property itself if the property is owned for rental purposes.
However, zakah is paid on the rental income if that income remains in one's possession and reaches the Nisab amount after one lunar year.

D. Stocks and Investments

Modern scholars generally classify stocks in two ways:

- Stocks purchased for trading: zakah is paid on their market value
- Stocks purchased for long-term investment: zakah may be paid on dividends or zakatable assets of the company

Practical Example: How to Calculate Zakah

To better understand how zakah is calculated in real life, let us look at a practical example.
In this example, we will use a person named Hasan. Hasan is 24 years old and recently started working. In his first month, he earned $5,000, and in the second month, he earned another $5,000, bringing his total savings to $10,000.

At this point, Hasan remembered that he might soon reach the Nisab threshold, so he checked the current market value of 85 grams of gold, which is the Nisab amount according to the gold standard. He found that the value was approximately $13,500.
In the third month, Hasan earned another $5,000, bringing his total savings to $15,000. Since this amount is above the Nisab, zakah became potentially obligatory for him if he maintained at least the Nisab amount for a full Islamic lunar year.This occurred on 5th of Sha‘ban, 1447 AH, so Hasan wrote down this date. This date became the starting point of his zakah year.

What Happened During the Year
Over the next few months, Hasan continued working and earning money. During this period:

- He purchased 100 grams of gold.
- He also invested $2,000 in trading stocks.
- Throughout the year, his total wealth never dropped below the Nisab amount.
- After about ten months, Hasan received a $15,000 bonus

from his job on the 1st of Sha‘ban. He knows that even though he received 15k just 4 days before the Sha'ban 5th, this amount will be added to his total wealth and Zakah will be paid on it as well.

A few days later, he checked the calendar and noticed that it was now 5th of Sha‘ban, meaning one full Islamic lunar year had passed since he first reached the Nisab amount. Therefore, it was time for Hasan to calculate his zakah.

1. Step-by-Step Zakah Calculation

On the 5th of Sha‘ban, Hasan calculated the total value of all his zakatable assets. He found the following:

- Cash in hand: $5,000
- Bank balance: $25,000
- Gold (100 grams): approximately $18,000
- Stocks: $6,000

Now he added all of these together:
5,000 + 25,000 + 18,000 + 6,000 = $54,000 total zakatable wealth

Calculating the Zakah Amount

- Zakah is 2.5% (1/40) of the total zakatable wealth.

So Hasan calculated:

- 54,000 × 2.5% = $1,350

Therefore, Hasan must pay $1,350 in zakah.

2.Distributing the Zakah

After calculating the amount, Hasan distributed his zakah among the eight categories of recipients mentioned by Allah in the Qur’an.
For example:

He gave some of the zakah to poor and needy people.
He gave some for the sake of Allah, such as supporting Islamic work and da‘wah.
He also helped people who were in debt and travelers in need.

By doing so, Hasan fulfilled his obligation and purified his wealth, as Allah has commanded.

Key Lesson from This Example

- This example shows the simple steps for calculating zakah:
- Determine when your wealth first reaches the Nisab.
- Mark that date in the Islamic calendar.
- Ensure your wealth remains above the Nisab for one lunar year.
- On that same date the following year, calculate the total value of all zakatable assets.
- Pay 2.5% of the total amount as zakah.

The Consequences of Withholding Zakah

The Qur’an and the Sunnah warn that withholding Zakah brings severe consequences both in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah condemns those who hoard wealth and refuse to spend it in His cause. Allah says,

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ ٱلۡأَحۡبَارِ وَٱلرُّهۡبَانِ لَيَأۡكُلُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَ ٱلنَّاسِ بِٱلۡبَٰطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِۗ وَٱلَّذِينَ يَكۡنِزُونَ ٱلذَّهَبَ وَٱلۡفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ فَبَشِّرۡهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۝

“O believers! Indeed, many rabbis and monks consume people’s wealth wrongfully and hinder ˹others˺ from the Way of Allah. Give good news of a painful torment to those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah’s cause.”(At-Taubah 9:34)

Allah further describes the punishment awaiting those who withhold their wealth. Allah says,

يَوۡمَ يُحۡمَىٰ عَلَيۡهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكۡوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمۡ وَجُنُوبُهُمۡ وَظُهُورُهُمۡۖ هَٰذَا مَا كَنَزۡتُمۡ لِأَنفُسِكُمۡ فَذُوقُواْ مَا كُنتُمۡ تَكۡنِزُونَ

“The Day ˹will come˺ when their treasure will be heated up in the Fire of Hell and their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it. ˹It will be said to them,˺ ‘This is the treasure you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste what you hoarded.’” (At-Taubah 9:35)

These verses show that wealth which is hoarded and withheld from the rights of the poor becomes a source of punishment rather than blessing. In this world, when people refuse to give Zakah and only focus on accumulating and spending for themselves, wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of a few, causing the rich to become richer while the poor become poorer. This destroys social balance, spreads injustice, and weakens the brotherhood that Islam establishes in society. Zakah was legislated precisely to prevent this imbalance by purifying wealth, circulating resources among people, and ensuring that the needs of the poor and vulnerable are met. Therefore, neglecting Zakah is not only a sin against Allah but also a cause of social corruption and hardship in the world, while in the Hereafter it leads to a severe punishment for those who hoarded their wealth and denied the rights of others.

The Rewards and Benefits of Giving Zakah

Zakah is not merely a financial obligation; it is a divine system established by Allah to purify wealth, strengthen society, and create economic balance among people. When Muslims properly fulfill this obligation, it produces immense benefits both in this world and in the Hereafter. In this world, Zakah helps maintain social and economic justice by redistributing wealth from those who have abundance to those who are in need. It prevents wealth from being concentrated in the hands of a small group of people and ensures that the poor, the needy, and the vulnerable members of society are supported. Through Zakah, the gap between the rich and the poor is reduced, resentment and jealousy in society are minimized, and compassion and solidarity among believers are strengthened. It reminds the wealthy that their wealth is a trust from Allah and that the poor have a right in their wealth. As a result, Zakah creates a balanced society where resources circulate, poverty is alleviated, and communities remain stable and united.

On a spiritual level, Zakah purifies both the wealth and the heart of the believer. Allah mentions that charity purifies and increases wealth, even though it may appear to decrease it outwardly. Allah says:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِم بِهَا
"Take from their wealth charity by which you purify them and cause them increase."(Surah At-Tawbah (9:103)

Similarly, Allah promises that spending in His path will never reduce a person's wealth but instead brings barakah and divine blessings. The Prophet said,

مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ، وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلَّا عِزًّا، وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ

"Charity does not decrease wealth."
(Reported by Muhammad in Sahih Muslim)

In the Hereafter, the rewards of Zakah are even greater. Those who give charity sincerely for the sake of Allah will find their wealth multiplied many times over. Allah says:

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَٰلَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٍ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٍۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۗ

"The example of those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah is like a seed that grows seven ears; in every ear are one hundred grains. And Allah multiplies the reward for whom He wills." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:261)

Furthermore, charity will serve as a protection and shade for the believer on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet said,

كُلُّ امْرِئٍ فِي ظِلِّ صَدَقَتِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتَّى يُقْضَى بَيْنَ النَّاسِ

"The believer's shade on the Day of Resurrection will be his charity."
(Reported in Jami` at-Tirmidhi)

Thus, Zakah benefits the believer in multiple ways: it purifies wealth, strengthens faith, supports the needy, and builds a just society in this world, while also becoming a source of immense reward, protection, and mercy in the Hereafter. By fulfilling this obligation sincerely, a Muslim not only helps others but also secures everlasting success with Allah.

Conclusion

Zakah is one of the five pillars of Islam and an essential act of worship that purifies wealth and strengthens faith. It reminds Muslims that all wealth ultimately belongs to Allah and that those in need have a rightful share in what He has given. By understanding the Nisab, keeping track of wealth throughout the lunar year, and properly calculating assets such as cash, gold, and investments, fulfilling this obligation becomes clear and manageable.

Unfortunately, Zakah is one of the most neglected obligations among many Muslims today. While much attention is given to other acts of worship, the careful calculation and payment of Zakah is often overlooked or delayed. This should not be the case for an obligation that Allah repeatedly mentioned alongside prayer in the Qur'an. When Zakah is fulfilled correctly, it purifies wealth, supports the poor and needy, and helps maintain balance within society by ensuring that wealth circulates among people. Most importantly, what a believer gives sincerely for the sake of Allah becomes a lasting source of reward and mercy in the Hereafter.

Friday Khutbah, 03-06-2026
Islamic Cultural Center of Middletown, CT
17th of Ramadan, 1447 AH

Reference

[1] Recorded by Bukhari, Muslim,Tirmidhi and Nasa'i (similar wording)
[2]Dinars and dirhams were thc currency existing at the time of the Prophet
[3] The Concise Presentation of the Fiqh
General Reference
[4] Kitabul Zakah - Al Bukhari & Muslim
[5] Al Hidayiah
[6] Fiqh-Ul-Sunnah
[7] Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-arb'a