

An Imaam who Trims his Beard

Q: Salaah-587: Zaid leads the salaah but trims his beard to less than a fist's length. What is the ruling with regards to appointing him as an Imaam and performing salaah behind him? When this was brought to the attention of the Imaam, he took no heed. What length should the beard be? Please explain.

Answer: It is Waajib (compulsory) for men to have a beard. This is amongst the important hallmarks of Islaam. Imaam Muhammad RAH. writes in his Kitaabul Aathaar that it is Sunnah to have the beard a fist's length, which means that a person may hold his beard (from beneath the chin) and then trim off whatever exceeds the fist. This is also according to Imaam Abu Haneefah RAH.

Durrul Mukhtaar (Vol.2 Pg.155) also states, "To him the beard to a length less than a fist as the western people and effeminates do has not been permitted by any of the scholars. Shaving off the beard is a practice of the Hindus of India and non-Arab fire-worshippers."

Faydhul Baari (Vol.4 Pg.380) states that trimming the beard to a length shorter than the fist is Haraam according to all the Imaams of jurisprudence.

Tajnees wal Mazeed and Hidaayah state that it is not permissible to shave the beard because Rasulullaah SAW. instructed that moustaches be trimmed and beards allowed to grow.

The above make it clear that it is Waajib (compulsory) to wear a beard and Sunnah Mu'akkadah to have it a fist's length to longer. It is Makrooh Tahreemi to trim it to a length shorter than the fist and doing so will render the person a Faasiq (flagrant sinner). Fataawaa Dasrul Uloom (Vol.3 Pg.128) states that trimmning the beard to a length shorter than the fist is tantamount to shaving it off.

Keeping the beard contrary to the Sunnah method opposes the sanctity and importance of the post of an Imaam. One who does this is an open Faasiq and it is necessary for him to repent and to grow the beard to the required length. if he does not do so. it will be Makrooh for him to be the Imaam and he should be fired from the post.

Shaami (Vol.1 Pg.523) states that the reason for not appointing a Faasiq as an Imaam is that he does not give importance to the injunctions of the Shari'ah. The post of an Imaam will accord him status and honour whereas he really deserves to be humiliated.

An Imaam must be religious and abstain from public sins. A Hadith reported by Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. states that the best of you should be appointed as your Imaams because they serve as ambassadors before Allaah. Another Hadith states that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "If you wish that your salaah reach the highest levels of acceptance, you should appoint your learned ones as your Imaams so that they could serve as messengers between you and your Rabb.

A fornicator is guilty of a major sin and is therefore a Faasiq. He will not be worth of the post of an Imaam because Rasulullaah SAW. said that a Faasiq cannot lead a Mu'min in salaah .

Kabeeri (pg.479) also states that people will be guilty of a sin if they appoint a Faasiq as their Imaam.

It is necessary to keep a beard that is at least equal to one's fist in length. The commentator of Mishkaatul Masaabeeh, Shah Abdul Haqq Muhaddith Dehlwi RAH. writes that it is Waajib (compulsory) to keep a beard that is equal in length to one's fist. It is said to be Masnoon only because it was a practice of all the Ambiyaa ALY. and of Rasulullaah SAW. as well. It can therefore not be said that one is not sinful for not keeping a beard because leaving out this Sunnah is a sin and continuously doing so is a major sin. It is Haraam to trim the beard to less than a fist's length. The Imaam is therefore a Faasiq from this point of view also and for him to lead the salaah is Makrooh.

The Imaam must be fired and if the trustees of the Masjid do not do so, you should perform your salaah at another Masjid. If there is no other Masjid, you will be forced to perform salaah behind this Imaam because it is improper to forsake salaah with Jamaa'ah on account of the emphasis the Ahadeeth place on it. In fact, Ulema state that performing salaah in Jamaa'h is Waajib (compulsory). It must therefore not be left out, but a concerted effort should be made to have the Imaam relieved of his post.

The following appears in Fataawaa Daarul Uloom (Vol.3 Pg.181):

Q: Salaah-588: Zaid trims his beard to a length shorter than the fist. Is salaah valid behind him?

Answer: Durrul Mukhtaar states that it is Haraam to trim the beard to a length shorter than four fingers. Salaah behind such a person is therefore Makrooh even though the salaah will be valid. However, such a person should not be appointed as an Imaam.

And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah vol.2