

Who is Most Qualified to be an Imaam?

Q: Salaah-23: Who is most qualified to be an Imaam? Between a person who is a Sayyid (from the family of Rasulullaah SAW.) but who is not learned and not a practising Muslim and a person who is not a Sayyid but is learned and a practising Muslim, which of the two most deserves to be an Imaam?

Answer: An Imaam should be one who is sane, mature, holds the correct beliefs, who knows the rulings and regulation of salaah, who can recite Qur'aan properly and who is generally a religious person 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." Another Hadith states that the best of you should be as your Imaams because they serve as amassadors before Allaah.

The famous book of jurisprudence Nurul Idhaa (pgs.82-83) states that the person most qualified to be an Imaam is the person who is most learned, followed by the one who recites with the best Tajweed, followed by the one who is most pious' followed by the on" who is the eldest followed by the one who has the best character, followed by the one who is most good looking, followed by the one who has the most noble lineage, followed by the one who has it, best voice, followed by the who?s clothing is cleanest.

The point is that the person with the most of these qualities in the stated sequence will be most deserving of the post of being an Imaam. It is therefore a grave mistake to appoint someone less qualified when there is someone more qualified available' Rasulullaah SAW. stated that when someone leads people in salaah when there is a person more worthy of the position than him, such people will always remain lowly and degraded.

Another Hadith states that when a person appoints a person to a position of public service when there is someone else who will be more capable of pleasing Allaah in the post and who will be more particular about fulfilling the commands of Allaah, then the person who has appointed him will, be Mu?mineen have entrusted to him.

Therefore, if a sayyid neither knows the rulings of salaah well nor can recite the Qur'aan properly, he will not be more deserving of the post than a person who is not a Sayyid, but is an Aalim, a Qaari and a pious person. In fact, the guide of ail the sayyids, Rasulullaah SAW. said, ..The person whose deeds have slowed him down wit not be speeded up by his lineage Naturally, a person who has knowledge and good deeds coupled with noble lineage will certainly be a perfect candidate. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah vol.2