

An Imaam who Cannot Pronounce the Letters Properly

Q: Salaah-15: A learned man leads the salaah in the Masjid but because of a disability, he cannot pronounce some letters correctly. He therefore substitutes some letters with others, e.g. he pronounces the 's' (seen) sound as a 'ch'. Despite much effort and treatment, there is no difference. As a result, many people feel that because the Imaam is reciting incorrectly, the salaah is invalid, while others say that it is valid. Could you please explain.

Answer: There is a difference of opinion with regard to whether a person who substitutes one letter for another is fit for leading the salaah or not. The most cautious and Muftaa Bihi opinion (the one according to which Fataawaa are issued) is that such a person cannot lead in salaah such people who do not have the disability. One of the six conditions for being an Imaam is that a person must not have any defect in his pronunciation of letters. The person in question does therefore not qualify to be an Imaam. Fataawas Khayriyyah (Vol.1 Pg.10) makes it clear that a person with a speech difficulty cannot lead in salaah someone who does not have the difficulty. The same is stated in Fataawaa As'adiyyah (Vol.1 Pg. 10).

Because salaah is such an important act of worship, one should not be obstinate and it is necessary to be as cautious as possible. The salaah of the worshippers will of course not be invalidated if the Imaam recites in his salaah such Surahs or verses of the Qur'aan that do not contain words that he cannot pronounce.

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