171287 - Can a Blind Man Lead the Prayer?

the question

Can a Blind Hafiz (Al-Quran) lead congregation prayer? Please reply with references from Al-Quran and Hadiths.

Summary of answer

The correct view is that it is permissible for a blind man to lead the prayer and it is not disliked, because Prophet Muhammad appointed Ibn Umm Maktum to lead the prayer.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The jurists (may Allah have mercy on them) unanimously agreed that it is acceptable to follow a blind person in prayer, whether he is a Hafidh of Quran or not. Although some jurists regarded his leading the prayer as disliked, the correct opinion is that it is not disliked.

The fact that his leading the prayer is valid is indicated by the report narrated by Abu Dawud (503) from Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) appointed Ibn Umm Maktum to lead the people in prayer, and he was a blind man. (Classed as authentic by Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him)).

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“With regard to one who is blind, we do not know of any difference of opinion concerning the validity of his leading the prayer, apart from what is narrated from Anas, according to which he said: Why do they need him? And it was narrated from Ibn `Abbas that he said: How can I lead them in prayer when they correct my position to face the qiblah? But the authentic reports from Ibn `Abbas state that he led people in prayer when he had become blind, as did `Utban ibn Malik,

Qatadah and Jabir. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) appointed Ibn Umm Maktum to lead the people in prayer and he was a blind man. Narrated by Abu Dawud" (End quote from Al-Mughni, 2/13)

It says in Al-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah (6/42):

"There is no difference of opinion among the jurists concerning the validity of following one who is blind or deaf in prayer, because blindness and deafness are not contrary to any of the actions or conditions of prayer. But the Hanafis and Hanbalis stated clearly that it is disliked for a blind man to lead the prayer, and the Malikis stated that if a sighted man and a blind man are equal in virtue, it is preferable for the sighted man to lead the prayer because he is more able to avoid impurities. The Shafi`is said: The blind man and the sighted man are effectively equal because the blind man will not look at things that may distract him, so he will have more focus and humility in prayer, whereas the sighted man can see unclean things so he is more able to avoid them. This is if the blind man is not careless. But if he is careless, i.e., he does not guard against unclean things, such as if he wears a dirty garment, then the sighted man has more right to lead the prayer than him… (End quote)

The correct view is that it is permissible for a blind man to lead the prayer and it is not disliked, because of what is mentioned above about the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) appointing Ibn Umm Maktum to lead the prayer. If it were disliked, he would not have appointed him to lead the prayer; he would have appointed someone else.

As-San`ani (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "The Hadith indicates that it is valid for a blind man to lead the prayer and that is not disliked." (End quote from Subul As-Salam, 1/383)

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "The correct view according to our companions is that the sighted man and the blind man are equal, as was stated by Ash-Shafi`i. … And they unanimously agreed that there is nothing disliked about a blind man leading the sighted in prayer." (End quote from Sharh Al-Muhadhdhab, 4/181)

Shaykh `Abdullah Al-Fawzan (may Allah preserve him) said: "Ibn Al-Mundhir said: A blind man

leading the prayer is the same as a sighted man leading the prayer. There is no difference between them and they both are included in the apparent meaning of the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “Let the one who has most knowledge of the Book of Allah lead the people in prayer.” So whoever has the most knowledge of the Quran is most deserving of leading the prayer.”

(End quote from Minah Al-`Allam Sharh Bulugh Al-Maram, 3/262)

For more details, please see the following answers: 20219 , 33790 , 142325 , and 1875 .

And Allah knows best.