60375 - Can prayers be led by one who is suffering from urinary incontinence?

the question

Can one who is suffering from urinary incontinence lead the prayer?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is permissible for a person who is suffering from urinary incontinence to lead in prayer one who is similarly afflicted, but with regard to him leading a healthy man in prayer, there is a difference of scholarly opinion as to whether it is permissible for him to do so.

Some scholars are of the view that it is not permitted and that the prayer is invalid, and others are of the view that it is permitted.

It says in al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (25/187):

The fuqaha' are unanimously agreed that if the imam is sick and suffering from incontinence, and the person praying behind him is similarly afflicted, then his prayer is valid. But if the imam is sick and suffering from incontinence, and the person praying behind him is healthy, then there is a difference of opinion among the fuqaha' as to whether it is permissible for a sick person to lead healthy people in prayer. There are two opinions:

1 – The view of the Hanafis and Hanbalis is that it is not permissible, because those who have limitations may pray with hadath (impurity) in a real sense, but the hadath in their case is regarded as if it does not exist, because they need to perform their duties; this is an exception which applies only to them, as the degree of necessity should not be overestimated. The healthy man is in a stronger position than the one who has limitations, and something strong cannot be built on something that is weak.

2 – The view of the Maalikis and Shaafa'is is that it is permissible, because their prayer is valid and does not have to be repeated, and because if they are excused, others may be excused also. But the Maalikis stated that it is makrooh for people with limitations to lead healthy people in prayer. End quote.

See al-Majmoo', 4/160

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas were asked: What is the ruling on prayers being led by one who is suffering from urinary incontinence?

They replied:

If a person is suffering from urinary incontinence and the like, his prayer by himself is valid because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"So keep your duty to Allaah and fear Him as much as you can"

[al-Taghaabun 64:16]

"Allaah burdens not a person beyond his scope"

[al-Baqarah 2:286]

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "If I command you to do a thing, then do as much of it as you can."

But there is a difference of scholarly opinion concerning the validity of a prayer in which such a person leads healthy people. The correct view is that it is valid, but it is better for someone else who is healthy to lead the prayer, so as to avoid an area of scholarly dispute. End quote.

'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz, 'Abd al-Razzaaq 'Afeefi, 'Abd-Allaah ibn Qa'ood.

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah, 7/397

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen said in al-Sharh al-Mumti' (4/172, 173):

His prayer – i.e., the prayer of one who is suffering urinary incontinence – when led by an imam who is free of this problem is valid, and his prayer when he leads another who has the same problem is also valid. These are two scenarios.

The third scenario is when he prays as an imam leading someone who is free of this problem. Some of the scholars said that his prayer is not valid; if a person who is suffering from urinary incontinence leads a man who is free of this problem in prayer, the prayer of the one who prays behind him is invalid and his prayer is also invalid, because he intended to lead in prayer one for whom it was not valid for him to lead, unless he was unaware of his condition.

The reason why it is not valid for him to lead the prayer is that the condition of the one who has urinary incontinence is inferior to that of one who is free of this problem, and the condition of the one who is led in prayer should not be superior to the condition of the one who is leading the prayer.

But the correct view on this matter is that it is valid for the one who is suffering from urinary incontinence to lead both a person who is like him and one who is healthy.

The evidence for that is the general meaning of the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “The people should be led in prayer by the one among them who has most knowledge of the Book of Allaah.” This man’s prayer is valid, because he is doing what is required of him, and if his prayer is valid, it follows from that that his leading the prayer is also valid.

Their view that the person who is led in prayer cannot be in a better situation that the imam is refuted by the fact that the prayer of one who has done wudoo’ behind one who has done tayammum is valid. They say that even though the one who has done wudoo’ is in a superior situation, but they say that the tahaarah of the one who has done tayammum is valid. We say: the tahaarah of one who is suffering from urinary incontinence is also valid. End quote.