

104659 - Ruling on one who pronounces “ض” as “ظ” leading people in prayer

the question

If the imam makes a mistake by pronouncing the letter “ض” as “ظ” in Surat al-Fatiyah in the prayer, in the verse {*Ghayr il-maghdubi 'alayhim wa lad-dallin*}, should I correct him, or does my prayer become invalid? Please note that I told him the difference in meaning between az-zallin (الظالين) and ad-dallin (الظالين).

Detailed answer

The worshipper should differentiate between the letters “ض” and “ظ” and pronounce each of them from its point of articulation (*makhraj*).

But, if he does not pronounce it as it should be, his prayer is still valid according to the correct view, because the articulation points of these letters are very close. You do not have to correct him during the prayer, because this is not a mistake that the reciter rarely makes; rather this happens because this is how he learned to pronounce it.

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his *Tafsir*, 1/143: The correct view among the leading scholars is that if someone does not differentiate in pronunciation between the letters “ض” and “ظ”, it may be overlooked, because their articulation points are very close. That is because the articulation point of “ض” is the front side of the tongue and the molars that are next to it, and the articulation point of “ظ” is the edge of the tongue and the edges of the upper incisors. Moreover, other characteristics of these letters dictate that using one of them in the place of the other may be overlooked in the case of someone who is unable to distinguish between them. And Allah knows best. End quote.

Al-Bahuti (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Kashshaf al-Qina'*, 1/482: The ruling on one who replaces one letter of al-Fatiyah with another, such as one who pronounces “ج” as “خ” and the like, is the same as the ruling on one who mispronounces any word in al-Fatiyah that alters the meaning: it is not valid for one who replaces any letter with another to lead the prayer,

except in the case of the “ض” in the words “المفظوب” and “الضالين”，if he replaces it with “ظ”. It is permissible for such a person to lead in prayer people who do not make this replacement, because the letters “ض” and “ظ” are both pronounced with the edge of the tongue and between the teeth, so the articulation point is more or less the same. This was stated by the Shaykh in *Sharh al-'Umdah*. End quote.

It says in *Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Da'imah*, 4/24: Firstly: the articulation point of “ض” is before the articulation point of “ي” and after the articulation point of “ل”，next to the molars. The letter “ل” is pronounced from the edge of the tongue that is closest to the front of the mouth, and the sound of “ض” comes from a point between the articulation points of “د” and “ظ”.

Secondly:

Whoever is able to pronounce the letter “ض” well, from the correct articulation point, must do that. Whoever is unable to pronounce the letter “ض” or other letters correctly is excused, and his prayer is valid, but he should not lead anyone in prayer except others who are like him or who are less able to pronounce correctly. But mistakes in pronouncing the letters “ض” and “ظ” may be overlooked in a way that does not apply to mistakes in pronouncing other letters, because their articulation points are close together and it is difficult to differentiate between them in pronunciation, as was stated by a number of scholars, including al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir in his commentary on al-Fatihah. End quote.

‘Abd al-'Aziz ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Baz, ‘Abd ar-Razzaq ‘Afifi, ‘Abdullah ibn Ghadyan, ‘Abdullah ibn Qa`ud

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The one who replaces one letter with another is one who replaces “ر” with “ل”，so he says: “*Al-hamdu Lillahi labb il-'alamin.*” Such a person is regarded as illiterate, because he has replaced one letter of al-Fatihah with another.

An exception to that is made in the case of one who replaces “ض” with “ظ”. That is overlooked according to the more correct scholarly view, which is also our view. That is because the difference between them is subtle, especially for an ordinary, uneducated person, because the

uneducated person can barely differentiate between “ض” and “ظ”. So if he says “ghayr il maghzubi ‘alayhim wa la az-zallin,” he has replaced “ض” with “ظ”. This is overlooked, because it is too difficult to avoid it, and it is hard to differentiate between these two letters, especially for ordinary, uneducated people.

End quote from *ash-Sharh al-Mumti`*, 4/246.

Thus it becomes clear that not being able to differentiate properly between “ض” and “ظ” is overlooked; the prayer of one who does that is valid and he may lead in prayer others who also do that.

And Allah knows best.