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## Imaam who smokes in public

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

**Shaykh Abdul-Azeez ibn Baaz** (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)<sup>1</sup>: All Praise is due to Allaah Alone. May the Peace and Blessing of Allaah be upon His Messenger, all his family, and Companions.

I was asked by some brothers about the ruling on smoking cigarettes and the validity of the Imaamah (leading Muslims in the prayer) of a person who does so publicly. Also, they mentioned that this evil has become prevalent and has afflicted many people.

As for the validity of the Imaamah of the smoker or any other disobedient person, it is not befitting that their likes be taken as an Imaam (the one who leads congregational Prayer). Rather, it is legislated that one chooses for that duty a person who is known for their uprightness and piousness, for the matter of Imaamah is indeed a great one. For this reason, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **[The one who is most versed in Allaah's Book should act as Imaam for the people; if they are equally versed in reciting it, then the one who is most knowledgeable in Sunnah. Again, if they are equal regarding the Sunnah, the earliest immigrant; if they emigrated at the same time, then the earliest one to embrace Islaam.]**<sup>2</sup>

It is mentioned in the Two Saheeh (authentic) Books of Hadeeth (i.e. Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Maalik ibn Al-Huwayrith and his companions: **[When the time for Prayer is due, one of you should announce Adhaan (call to Prayer) and the oldest among you should lead Prayer.]** However, scholars (may Allaah have mercy upon them) differed regarding the validity of the Imaamah of the evildoer. Some scholars maintain that the Prayer performed behind him is not valid, due to the weakness of his religion and the shortcoming of his faith. However, others state that it is valid, giving the reason that he is a Muslim and his own Prayer is valid; thus, the Prayer of those following him is also valid. Also, many Companions prayed behind governors and rulers who were known for their oppression and sinfulness. Ibn `Umar (may Allaah be pleased with them both) prayed behind Al-Hajjaj, who was notorious for being of the most wrongful of people. This is the preponderant opinion, i.e., the validity of the Imaamah of a person who smokes and the Prayer of those following him. However, it should be known that it is not befitting that his likes be taken as an Imaam, while there are others from the righteous people that can be

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<sup>1</sup> (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Muslim in his Saheeh

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chosen instead. This reply is indeed concise, as we only intended to mention the principle ruling on these two matters and to clarify some of the evidences in this regard. Scholars have clarified the ruling concerning these two matters. Hence, whoever wants elucidation in this subject will surely find it. We ask Allaah to rectify the affairs of the Muslims, guide them all to be upright in religion, and be wary of whatever opposes it. Verily, He is the Most Generous. May the Peace and Blessings of Allaah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions.