

Third Example

Understanding the Ahadith on *Isbal* (Lengthening and Trailing Clothing)

Ibn Umar narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Allah will not look on the Day of Judgment at him who lets his garment trail on the ground out of pride and arrogance."¹

In another narration Ibn Umar said, "Whoever lets his garment trail [behind him] out of vanity, Allah will not look at him on the Day of Resurrection." Ibn Umar asked the narrator Muhareb, "Did he specify the lower garment?" "No, he did not specify this to a garment or lower garment."²

Ibn Umar also narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Allah will not look, on the Day of Resurrection at the person who drags his garment (behind him) out of vanity. On that Abu Bakr said, "O Allah's Messenger! One side of my *Izar* hangs low if I do not take care of it." The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'You are not one of those who do that out of vanity.'³

Once Ibn Umar saw a person trailing his lower garment, whereupon he said: from which tribes do you come? He described his relationship (with the tribe he belonged) and it was found that he belonged to the tribe of Laith. Ibn Umar recognized him and said: I heard Allah's Messenger (PBUH) with these two ears of mine saying: He who trailed his lower garment with no other intention but pride, Allah would not look toward him on the Day of Resurrection."⁴

Abu Dharr narrated: The Prophet (PBUH) said: "There are three (types of) people to whom Allah will neither speak on the Day of Resurrection nor look at them nor purify

¹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of "Dresses", Chapter: Allah's Saying, " Say: Who has forbidden the adornment with clothes given by Allah which He has produced for His slaves?", Hadith no. 5783; Muslim, *Sahih*, Book of "Dresses and Ornaments", Chapter: The Prohibition of Letting One's Garment trail on the ground out of Pride, Hadith no. 2085.

² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of "Dresses", Chapter: He who drags his garment on the ground out of pride, Hadith no. 5791.

³ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Virtues of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), Chapter: The Prophet's saying, "If I were to take a close friend...", Hadith no. 3665.

⁴ Muslim, *Sahih*, Book of Dresses and Ornaments", Chapter: The Prohibition of Letting One's Garment trail on the ground out of Pride, Hadith no.2085.

them, and they will have a painful chastisement." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) repeated it three times. Abu Dharr remarked: "They are ruined. Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" Upon this, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "One who lets down his lower garments (below his ankles) out of arrogance, one who boasts of his favors done to another, and who sells his goods by taking a false oath."⁵

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: The part of an *Izar* which hangs below the ankles is in the Fire."⁶

Considering all these Ahadith together it becomes clear that the reason for the prohibition of wearing long clothes for men is to avoid arrogance and vanity, as at that time wearing these clothes was a sign of over wealth. Thus, this was a sign of pride over other people. The narration that states "with no other intention but pride" confines the prohibition to pride and arrogance, which means whenever this pride exists, the prohibition is due, and whenever it is absent, the prohibition is not applied. The above mentioned Ahadith no. 1, 2, 3 and 4 clearly state this reason.

As for the Hadith "The part of an *Izar* which hangs below the ankles is in the Fire" and the Hadith that mentions *Isbal* among the three types of people whom Allah does not look at or speak to in the Day of Resurrection, these are general Ahadith. When absolute evidence is combined with the restricting one, the general should be understood in light of the restricting one. So, as long as the restriction is made in some Ahadith that the lengthening garment is connected with arrogance, then the prohibition should be applied to this cause not the mere long cloth.

Al-Nawawi⁷ mentioned that restricting lengthening one's garment to showing arrogance restricts the general prohibition of wearing long clothes. The Prophet

⁵ Muslim, *Sahih*, , Book of Belief, Chapter: Clarifying the emphatic prohibition of letting one's garment hang below the ankles (*isbal*), Hadith no. 106.

⁶ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of "Dresses", Chapter: The part of the garment that hangs below the ankles is in the Fire, Hadith no. 5787; Al-Nasa'i, *Sunan*, Book of Ornaments, Chapter: The part of the garment that hangs below the ankles is in the Fire, Hadith no. 5331.

⁷ His full name is Abu Zakariyyah Muhey Al-Din Yahya Ibn Sharaf Al-Nawawi Al-Shafi'i. He was born in the village of Huran in Syria in 631 A.H. He was a prolific scholar of Fiqh and Hadith. Among his most important works are: *Al-Minhaj fi Sharh Sahih Muslim* and *Riyadh Al-Saliheen*. He died in 676 A.H. (See *Al-A'lam* by Al-Zirkli, 8/149).

(PBUH) Allowed Abu Bakr to do so saying "You are not one of those who do that out of vanity."⁸

Ibn Hajar⁹ said, "Mentioning 'vanity' in these Ahadith indicates that the general prohibition is confined to showing arrogance. Thus wearing long clothes is not prohibited if arrogance is not intended."¹⁰

Al-Hafiz Al-Iraqi¹¹ said, "The absolute Ahadith indicating that lengthening garment to lower than the ankles, apply to the case when this is done out of vanity, as understood in light of the restricting Ahadith."¹²

Al-Shawkani said, "It is necessary to understand the Prophet's statement "this is arrogance" as a dominant case. It is a general statement that should be understood in light of the restricting Ahadith."¹³

It is reported that Abu Hanifah¹⁴ once wore a garment of 400 dinars, trailing behind in the ground. He was told, "Have we not been prohibited to do so?" "This is for arrogant people and I'm not one of them," he replied.¹⁵

As we have confirmed that clothing is a matter of customs and is not a ritual act, then the reason of the subject-matter prohibition should be arrogance, vanity and pride. Thus, once these traits are found, the prohibition is due, and once they are lacking, the

⁸ Al-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj fi Sharh Sahih Muslim*, 2/116.

⁹ He is Shaykh Al-Islam, Abu Al-Fadl Shehab Al-Din Ahmad Ibn Ali Ibn Muhammad Al-Asqalani, known as Ibn Hajar, born in 773. Among his most important works are: *Fath Al-Bari* and *Lisan Al-Miazan*. He died in 852 A.H. (See *Al-A'lam* by Al-Zirkli, 1/178).

¹⁰ Ibn Hajar, *Fath Al-Bari Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Dar Al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, 10/263.

¹¹ Abu Al-Fadl Zayn Al-Din Abd Al-Rahim Ibn Al-Husayn Ibn Abd Al-Raman, known as Al-Hafiz Al-Iraqi, born in 725 A.H. He was a leading Hadith scholar of his time. Among his most important works are: *Al-Mughni 'an Haml Al-Asfar fi Al-Isfar fi Takhrij Ahadith Al-Ihya'* and *Al-Alfiyyah fi Mustalah Al-Hadith*. He died in Cairo in 806 A.H. (See *Al-A'lam* by Al-Zirkli, 3/344).

¹² Zayn Al-Din Al-Iraqi, *Tarh Al-Tathrib fi Sahrh Al-Taqrir*, the Egyptian edition, 8/174.

¹³ Al-Shawkani, *Nayl Al-Awtar*, Dar Al-Hadith, Egypt, 2/133.

¹⁴ Abu Hanifah Al-Nu'man Ibn Thabit Al-Taymi Al-Kufi, the Jurist and the great scholar of Iraq. He is one of the four leading Muslim Jurists of *Ahl Al-Sunnah* and the founder of the famous Hanafi School of Islamic law. He was born in 80 A.H. and met some of the Prophet's Companions. (See: *Siyar A'lam Al-Nubala'* 6/390)

¹⁵ Ibn Mufli Al-Maqdisi, *Al-Adab Al-Shar'iyyah*, Alam Al-Kutub, 3/521.

prohibition shall not be the ruling. Besides, general etiquettes should be taken into consideration, including avoiding the dirt of dragging one's clothes behind.

