

الإِسْبَال

AL-ISBĀL

Dragging the Lower Garment

Adapted by
Abu Khaliyl

دار الكتاب والحكمة

للنشر والتوزيع

DAR AL-KITAB WAL-HIKMAH
PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION
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**IN THE NAME OF ALLĀH, THE MOST BENEFICENT, THE MOST
MERCIFUL**



INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allāh, we praise Him, seek His aid and His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allāh from the evils of our souls and the mischief of our deeds. Whomever Allāh guides, none can misguide him, and whomever Allāh leads to stray, there is no guide for him.

I testify that there is no Lord, and none worthy of worship except for Allāh, and that there are no partners for Him. There are no partners for Allāh worthy of worship, nor partners with Him in His Lordship, nor in His Names and Attributes.

I testify that Muḥammad the son of ‘Abdullāh, was Allāh’s servant, adoring worshiper, humble subject, His last sent Messenger and the last of the true Prophets.

The best and most truthful speech is Allāh’s, His Noble Book the Qur’an, and the best guidance, most enlightening and deserving of adherence is the Sunnah of Muhammad ﷺ.

This book was originally printed as an article based on Fawzī bin ‘Abdullāh bin Muḥammad al-Athari’s, *“Tabṣīratu Uwlil Abṣār fi Ma’rifati Mawḍi‘il Izār”* or, “Enlightening the Insightful as to the Proper Place of the Lower Garment.” His book is well organized, but has

repetitive narrations, so I abridged it, retaining most of the headings. The original article was further revised and published as a small booklet.

Allāh facilitated its acceptance among the English readers, which after exhausting its supply required that it be reprinted. I felt the second edition would be better if presented with the Arabic texts. After this addition to the text, I added a few points and finalized its editing. I hope that the readers will find this a better and more useful form.

Abu Khaliyl
Shawwal 24, 1424H

The Meaning of (الإِسْبَال) *Isbāl*

The term (الإِسْبَال) *al-isbāl* is used in the *Hadīth* and *Fiqh* literature to refer to the act of wearing the hem below the ankles. Linguistically, it is defined as: “To slacken the dress until it covers the feet.”¹

Ibn al-Manzūr said, “(أَسْبَلَ إِزَارَهُ) *Asbala izārahu* means: to slacken his *izār*. It is said, ‘So and so (أَسْبَلَ) *asbala* his clothes,’ when he wears them so long as to flow to the ground.”

Ibn al-‘Arabi and others said, “The (المُسْبِلُ) *musbil* (one who practices *isbāl*) is the one who lengthens his dress and lets it flow to the ground when he walks.”

Other terms to be used in this book include:

(إِزَار) *Izār*: Lower garment; a piece of cloth that is tied at the waist and covers the lower half of the body.

(قَمِيص) *Qamīṣ*: A long shirt that covers most of the body, or all of it as a *thawb* does.

(سَرَاوِيل) *Sarāwīl*: A kind of loose trousers.

(عِمَامَة) *‘Imāmah*: A piece of cloth that covers the whole head; often called a turban, but not limited to what is commonly considered a turban.

¹ For this and the following linguistic quotations see *Lisān ul-‘Arab* by Ibn ul-Manzūr, *al-Qāmūs ul-Muḥīṭ* by al-Fayrūzabādi, *Mukhtār uṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ* by al-Jawharī, etc.

(ثَوْب) *Thawb*: Modern usage refers to a long shirt that covers the entire body. In *Ḥadīth* literature it merely means clothing.

(أَعْقَاب) *A 'qāb*: Heels.

(كَعْبَيْن) *Ka 'bayn*: Ankles.

The Proper Length of the Garment

We demonstrate below that the hem of a man's lower garment may only be worn in the area between the knee and ankle, which is known in English as 'the shin.' It is prohibited to wear it any lower than that. This is the opinion of the majority of the scholars.

Obviously, this ruling applies to men only. Women, on the other hand, are encouraged in the Sunnah to have the hem of their dress as long as possible.

1. 'Amr al-Anṣārī explained that while he was walking with his *izār* dragging behind him, Allāh's Messenger ﷺ caught up with him. He put his hand on his own forehead and said:

«اللَّهُمَّ عَبْدُكَ ابْنُ عَبْدِكَ ابْنُ أُمَّتِكَ»

«O Allāh, I am your servant, son of Your servant, and son of Your female servant.»

'Amr said, "Allāh's Messenger! But I am a man with very skinny shins." He ﷺ replied:

«يَا عَمْرُو إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَدْ أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ يَا عَمْرُو»

«O 'Amr! Surely Allāh has perfected everything that He created – O 'Amr!»

Then Allāh’s Messenger placed four fingers of his right hand below ‘Amr’s knee, and said;

«يَا عَمْرُو هَذَا مَوْضِعُ الْإِزَارِ»

«‘Amr, this is the place of the *izār*.»

Then he ﷺ removed his hand and placed it below the other knee and said;

«يَا عَمْرُو هَذَا مَوْضِعُ الْإِزَارِ»

«‘Amr, this is the place of the *izār*.»¹

2. Abu Hurayrah ﷺ narrated that Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ said,

«إِزْرَةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِلَى عَصَلَةِ سَاقَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِلَى نِصْفِ سَاقَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِلَى كَعْبَيْهِ
فَمَا كَانَ أَسْفَلَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فِي النَّارِ»

«The (extent) of the believer’s *izār* is at his calf, or else to the middle of his shin, or else to his ankles; whatever is past that is in the Fire.»²

3. Huthayfah bin al-Yamān ﷺ narrated, “Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ grabbed my leg – or his leg by his calf – and said:

«هَذَا مَوْضِعُ الْإِزَارِ فَإِنْ أُبَيْتَ فَأَسْفَلَ فَإِنْ أُبَيْتَ فَأَسْفَلَ فَلَا حَقَّ
لِلْإِزَارِ فِي الْكَعْبَيْنِ»

¹ It was recorded by Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarāni in *al-Kabir* (8:288). Al-Albāni graded the *ḥadith ḥasan* in *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah* no. 2682.

² Aḥmad and an-Nasā’i in his *Sunan al-Kubrā*. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi’ aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* nos. 919-921.

«This is the place of the *izār*. If you don't like it here, then lower a little, if you don't like it then lower a little. But the *izār* has no right beyond the ankles.»¹

4. Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri ؓ narrated that Allāh's Messenger ﷺ said,

«إِزْرَةُ الْمُسْلِمِ إِلَى نِصْفِ السَّاقِ وَلَا حَرَجَ أَوْ لَا جُنَاحَ فِيمَا بَيْنَهُ
وَبَيْنَ الْكَعْبَيْنِ مَا كَانَ أَسْفَلَ مِنَ الْكَعْبَيْنِ فَهُوَ فِي النَّارِ مِنْ جَرِّ
إِزَارِهِ بَطْرًا لَمْ يَنْظُرِ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ»

«The *izār* of a Muslim reaches the middle of his shin; and there is no blame if it reaches anywhere between that and his ankles. Anything past the ankles is in the Fire. Allāh will not look at a person who arrogantly drags his *izār*.»²

5. Jābir bin Sulaym ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said,

«ارْفَعْ إِزَارَكَ إِلَى نِصْفِ السَّاقِ فَإِنْ أُبَيْتَ فِإِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ وَإِيَّاكَ
وَإِسْبَالَ الْإِزَارِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنَ الْمَخِيلَةِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمَخِيلَةَ»

«Raise your *izār* to the middle of your shin; if you dislike that then to the ankles; but beware of dragging the *izār*, for it is surely (a sign) of arrogance; and Allāh does not like arrogance.»³

¹ Aḥmad, at-Tirmithi, an-Nasā'i, Ibn Mājah and others. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' aṣ-Ṣaḥīr* no. 7000.

² Aḥmad, Abu Dāwud, an-Nasā'i, Ibn Mājah and others. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' aṣ-Ṣaḥīr* nos. 919-921.

³ Abu Dāwud, an-Nasā'i in his *Sunan al-Kubrā* and others. See al-Albānī's *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abu Dāwud* no. 4084.

6. Ibn ‘Umar ؓ said, “I visited Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ one time while my *izār* was loose, so he said:

«يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ ارْفَعْ إِزَارَكَ»
«‘Abdullah! Raise your *izār*!»

I raised it. Then he ﷺ said,

«زِدْ»
«More!»

So I raised it more. And I continue to do that since then.”

Some people asked, “To where (did you raise it)?” He answered, “To the middle of the shins.”¹

In another narration Ibn ‘Umar ؓ said, “I visited the Prophet ﷺ wearing an *izār* that was rattling, so he said,

«مَنْ هَذَا»
«Who is this?»

I replied, “‘Abdullāh.’ He responded,

«إِنْ كُنْتَ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ فَارْفَعْ إِزَارَكَ إِلَى نِصْفِ السَّاقَيْنِ»

«If you are truly ‘Abdullāh (Allāh’s servant) then raise you *izār* to the middle of the shins!»”

And this became the way he wore his *izār* until he died.²

7. Anas bin Mālik ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said,

¹ Muslim and others.

² Aḥmad, at-Ṭabarāni and others. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi‘ aṣ-Ṣaḥīr* no. 1465.

«الإِزَارُ إِلَى نِصْفِ السَّاقِ وَإِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ لَا خَيْرَ فِي أَسْفَلَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ»

«The *izār* belongs at the middle of the shin down to the ankles; there is no good in having it lower than that.»¹

8. Abu Hurayrah ؓ narrated that Allāh's Messenger ﷺ said,

«إِزْرَةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِلَى أَنْصَافِ سَاقَيْهِ فَمَا أَسْفَلَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ إِلَى فَوْقِ
الْكَعْبَيْنِ فَمَا أَسْفَلَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَفِي النَّارِ»

«A Muslim's *izār* reaches down to the middle of his shins; lowering it beyond that [is allowed] to above his ankles; whatever is past that is in the Fire.»²

Dragging the Garments Arrogantly

On the Day of Resurrection, Allāh ﷻ will punish the disbelievers, and those who committed specific major sins, in that He will not look at them – a look that carries mercy and forgiveness. This is in itself a severe punishment. The following *ḥadiths* indicate that the one who drags his garment arrogantly is liable to suffer this punishment.

1. Abu Hurayrah ؓ narrated that Allāh's Messenger ﷺ said,

«لَا يَنْظُرُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِلَى مَنْ جَرَّ إِزَارَهُ بَطْرًا»

¹ Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarāni. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* no. 2769

² An-Nasā'i in his *Sunan al-Kubrā*, the last part is with al-Bukhāri as well.

«On the Day of Resurrection, Allāh will not look at the person who arrogantly drags his *izār*.»¹

2. Ibn ‘Umar ؓ narrated that Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ said,

«لَا يَنْظُرُ اللَّهُ إِلَى مَنْ جَرَّ ثَوْبَهُ خِيَلًا [يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ]»

«Allāh does not look at a man who drags his dress out of conceitedness [on the Day of Resurrection]»²

3. Review Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri’s narration in the previous section.
4. Ibn ‘Umar ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said,

«الْإِسْبَالُ فِي الْإِزَارِ وَالْقَمِيصِ وَالْعِمَامَةِ مَنْ جَرَّ شَيْئًا خِيَلًا لَمْ يَنْظُرِ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»

«*Isbāl* applies to the *izār*, the *qamīṣ*, and the *‘imāmah*. On the Day of Resurrection, Allāh will not look at one who drags something out of arrogance.»³

Dragging the Garment without Arrogance

The following *ḥadīths* demonstrate that a man who drags his garment, even with no intention of arrogance (as some claim), deserves some punishment in the Fire.

¹ Al-Bukhāri, Muslim and others.

² Al-Bukhāri, Muslim and others. The addition is from one of the narrations with Muslim and others.

³ Abu Dāwud, Ibn Mājah, an-Nasā’i in his *Sunan al-Kubrā* and others. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi‘ aṣ-Ṣaḡhir* nos. 2770.

1. Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

«فَمَا أَسْفَلَ مِنَ الْكَعْبَيْنِ فِي النَّارِ»

«Whatever is lower than the ankles is in the Fire.»¹

2. ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها narrated that Allāh’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

«مَا تَحْتَ الْكَعْبِ مِنَ الْإِزَارِ فِي النَّارِ»

«The part of the *izār* that is below the ankle is in the Fire.»²

3. Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri’s *ḥadīth*, mentioned earlier, makes a clear distinction between the two cases of (a) dragging the *izār*, and (b) dragging it out of arrogance, the latter act being more prohibited.

The Meaning of (في النَّارِ) “In the Fire”

What did the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mean when warning that what is below the ankles is in the Fire? The scholars have different opinions, which can be summarized in the following two reports.

Al-Khaṭṭābi said, “The statement,

«فِي النَّارِ»
«is in the Fire»

¹ Al-Bukhāri, Aḥmad, an-Nasā’i and others.

² Aḥmad and Ibn Abi Shaybah, there is some weakness in its chain but its meaning is supported by the others.

has two possible explanations:

- a. that the portion of the feet below his ankles will be punished in the Fire.
- b. That the action itself is an act of the people of the Fire.

‘Abdul-‘Aziz bin Abu Rawwād said,

‘I asked Nāfi‘; “Concerning the Prophet’s statement,

«فَمَا تَحْتَ الْكَعْبَيْنِ مِنَ الْإِزَارِ فِي النَّارِ»

«Whatever of the *izār* is lower than the ankles is in the Fire»

Does it apply to the *izār* or the foot?” He said, “The *izār* does not commit the sin!”¹

The Companions’ Understanding

THE COMPANIONS’ PRACTICE

Abu Ishāq narrated, “I saw Usāmah, Zayd bin Arqam, al-Barā’ bin ‘Āzib, and Ibn ‘Umar, all wearing their *izārs* to the middle of their shins.”²

‘UMAR’S AMAZING ACTION

When ‘Umar ؓ the Commander of the Believers, was wounded, he was dying in his bed; the anxiety of leadership after him was troubling him and the other companions. A young man came to visit and show his

¹ Al-Khaṭṭīb in *Tārīkh Baghdād*, and *Sharḥ as-Sunnah* by al-Baghawī.

² Aṭ-Ṭabarānī and others. Al-Atharī said, “This chain is *ṣaḥīḥ*.” Al-Haythimī said, “It is recorded by aṭ-Ṭabarānī, and its narrators are trustworthy.” (5:126)

compassion for him. As the young man was leaving ‘Umar noticed that his *izār* was touching the ground, so he called him back and said;

“O nephew! Pull up your *izār*, it will be cleaner for your clothing and more mindful of your Lord!”¹

Ibn Abi Shaybah reported an authentic chain to Ibn ‘Umar, that he used to comment on this incident saying, “‘Umar’s affair is really amazing! Once he saw Allāh’s right upon him (to enjoin good), his condition did not stop him from saying it.”

A SPECIAL MERIT OF ABU BAKR

On hearing the Prophet’s warning as reported by Ibn ‘Umar earlier, Abu Bakr ﷺ said, “Allāh’s Messenger! One side of my *izār* falls down unless I am extremely careful with it.” The Prophet ﷺ replied,

«لَسْتَ مِمَّنْ يَصْنَعُهُ خِيَلًا»

«You are not one who does it conceitedly.»²

Clarifying Some Doubts

EXPLAINING ABU BAKR’S CASE

Based upon the last *hadith*, some people have thought that it is permissible to extend the garments beyond the ankles as long as that is not done out of conceitedness. This is incorrect for the following reasons:

1. Abu Bakr ﷺ said, “One side of my *izār* falls down...” meaning that it was above his ankles, but sometimes it fell down to his ankles. Then

¹ Al-Bukhāri.

² Al-Bukhari, Aḥmad, Abu Dāwud and others.

he would raise it when he noticed it. The reason his *izār* fell was because of his slender build as is authentically reported by Ibn Sa‘d in *at-Ṭabaqāt*, “...Qays bin Abu Ḥāzim said, “I entered with my father to Abu Bakr, and he was a skinny man with a thin white beard.””

In another narration which al-Bukhārī recorded, Abu Bakr ﷺ said, “But my *izār* falls on one side?” The Prophet ﷺ replied:

«أَنْتَ لَسْتَ مِنْهُمْ»

«Surely you are not one of them.»

2. This clarifies that Abu Bakr’s *izār* fell to his ankles, that he did not wear it there purposely or regularly, and that he did not feel that such dragging was excused, so he raised it above his ankles.
3. Furthermore, Abu Bakr’s action was specifically endorsed by the Prophet ﷺ as not being out of arrogance or conceitedness. Does anyone after him have claim to a similar endorsement?

Thus those who like to lower their hem purposely can by no means take Abu Bakr’s action as an excuse. In *as-Siyar* (3:234), al-Ḥāfiẓ ath-Thahabi said (slightly summarized here),

“It is required from a person to liberate himself from any clothing that instills a sense of conceitedness or arrogance, even if it were not gold or silk. We see a young man wearing cheap wool, walking with obvious pride and conceitedness. Similarly, we see an extravagant person with claim to knowledge wearing his clothes down to his ankles. If you advise them they respond by saying, ‘the Prophet’s admonitions refer to dragging the *izār* out of conceitedness!’ They become arrogant and claim they are blameless for their behavior...They license themselves with the Prophet’s statement to (Abu Bakr) aṣ-Ṣiddiq,

«لَسْتَ يَا أَبَا بَكْرٍ مِمَّنْ يَصْنَعُهُ خِيَلًا»

«You are not one who does it out of conceitedness Abu Bakr.»

We say: Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه did not tie his *izār* so that it was around his ankles to start with; he tied it above them, then it crept down afterwards. This prohibition also applies to those who wear *sarāwil* down to the ankles, excessively long sleeves, or *'imāmahs* with long tails; all of this originates from a conceitedness latent in their spirits.”

IS THE RECOMMENDED PLACE OF THE *THAWB* DIFFERENT THAN THAT OF THE *IZĀR*?

Some have said;

“It is not a Sunnah to shorten the (ثوب) *thawb* to the leg’s calf, nor to the middle of the shin. This is contrary to the *izār*...”

And;

“The narrations about wearing the *izār* to the calves or to the middle of the shin, all have the word (إزار) *izār*, none of them have the word (ثوب) *thawb*...”

They add that an *izār* does not rise the same way a *thawb* does when bowing in prayer. This is because the *thawb* covers the upper part of the body as well as the lower part, so when bending over it will naturally rise. Due to these reasons, and with the objective of keeping the private area covered, they claim that the place for the *thawb* is above the ankles, not at the middle of the shin.

As for his claim that it is not Sunnah, then we have the following statement from Shaykh ‘Abdul-‘Aziz bin Bāz, he was asked:

“We see some shortening their *thawbs* and lengthening their pants. What is your view about that, may Allāh bless you?” He replied:

“The Sunnah is that (الملابس) the clothing – all of it – is to be worn at what is between the middle of the shin to the ankles. It is not allowed for it to be worn below the ankles because of the saying of the Prophet ﷺ:

«مَا أَسْفَلَ مِنَ الْكَعْبَيْنِ مِنَ الْإِزَارِ فَهُوَ فِي النَّارِ»

«The part of the *izār* that is below the ankles is in the Fire.» It was recorded by al-Bukhari in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

There is no difference between the pants, the *izār*, the *qamiṣ* or the *busht* – or what the Arabs call an *‘abā’*. The Prophet ﷺ only mentioned the *izār* as an example, not to specify it. So it is best that the clothing be at the middle of the shin due to his ﷺ saying:

«إِزْرَةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِلَىٰ أَنْصَافِ سَاقَيْهِ»

«The believer’s *izār* is at the middle of his shin.»¹

As for the claim that

“...the narrations about wearing the *izār* to the calves or to the middle of the shin all have the word (إزار) *izār*, none of them have the word (ثوب) *thawb*...”

This is not actually so upon consideration.

¹ *Arkān al-Islām* p. 149, in the section *Fatāwā Muḥimmah Tata‘llaq biṣ-Ṣalāh*. This is a collection of the Shaykh’s books, compiled by Muḥammad Luqmān as-Salafi.

1. In his *Shamā'il*, at-Tirmithi recorded the following narration from al-Ash'ath bin Sulaym who said that he heard his aunt¹ narrating to him from her uncle,² "I was walking in al-Madinah when someone was behind me saying:

«ارْفَعْ إِزَارَكَ [تُوبَكَ] فَإِنَّهُ [أَتَقَى] وَ [أَتَقَى]

«Raise your *izār* [*thawb*]³ for it will be [more pious and] cleaner.»

So I looked and saw that it was Allāh's Messenger ﷺ. I said, 'O Messenger of Allāh! It is only a *malḥā' burdah*."⁴ He said:

«أَمَا لَكَ فِي أُسْوَةٍ»

«Certainly I am a good example for you.»⁵

So I looked and saw that his *izār* was at the middle of his shin."⁶

This *ḥadīth* has some weakness in its chain,⁶ but there is a similar one recorded by Aḥmad from 'Amr bin ash-Sharīd who narrated that his

¹ Her name is Ruhm bint al-Aswad bin Khālid. See *at-Taḥthīb*.

² He is 'Ubayd bin Khālid al-Muḥārabi, the companion. See *at-Taḥthīb* and *al-Iṣābah*.

³ The additions are from the narration of Shu'bah recorded by at-Ṭayālisi.

⁴ It is a black and white stripped cloak.

⁵ It was also recorded by at-Ṭayālisi, al-Bayhaqī in his *Sunan aṣ-Ṣuḡhrā*, Ibn Sa'd in *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, al-Bukhāri in *at-Tārīkh*, an-Nasā'ī in *al-Kubrā*, Aḥmad in his *Musnad* and in *al-'Ilal*, Abu ash-Shaykh in *Akhlāq an-Nabi* ﷺ al-Khaṭṭib in *al-Jāmi' Akhlāq ar-Rāwī* and others. All of the narrations come from Ash'ath (or al-Ash'ath) with the chain mentioned. From him it is narrated through three routes, from Shu'bah, from Sufyān, from Abu 'Awānah, from Shaybān, and from 'Amār bin Raziq. At-Tirmithi's is the via at-Ṭayālisi's.

⁶ Shaykh al-Albāni graded the text *ṣaḥīḥ* in *Mukhtaṣar ash-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyyah*, no. 97, but this grade is for the saying of the Prophet ﷺ that it contains, not the saying of the companion.

father¹ said that the Prophet ﷺ was following a man from Thaḳīf such that he was walking in his tracks until he grabbed his *thawb* and said:

«ارْفَعْ إِزَارَكَ»

«Raise your *izār*.»

So the man exposed his (lower) legs and said, “O Messenger of Allāh! I am thin and have skinny legs.” So he said:

«كُلُّ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَسَنٌ»

«All of Allāh’s ﷻ creation is good.»

He said, “That man would not be seen except with his *izār* at the middle of his shin until he died.”²

In the narration of at-Tirmithī it was a *burdah* that was worn, yet the Prophet told him to raise his *izār*, and showed him how it should be worn.

In the *ḥadīth* of Aḥmad – which is certainly authentic – he said that the Prophet grabbed his *thawb*, yet he told him to raise his *izār* supporting what Shaykh Ibn Bāz said, that the Prophet used the word *izār* as an example not making it specific.

The weakness in the narration of at-Tirmithī is only because the circumstances of the aunt of Ash‘ath are unknown.³ Yet it is authentic to him, and before him to Shu‘bah. So what is correct is that there is a narration from Shu‘bah and from Ash‘ath with the meaning that the Sunnah for the place of the *thawb* is the Sunnah for the place of the *izār*. It also proves that the meanings are interchangeable, because the narration comes from Shu‘bah with both words.

¹ Ash-Sharīd bin Suwayd ath-Thaḳafī.

² This narration was graded authentic according to the conditions of Muslim by al-Arnā‘ūṭī in his notes on *al-Musnad*.

³ As Ibn Ḥajar stated in *at-Taqrīb*.

In addition to this, Ibn ‘Umar said, “What Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ said about the *izār* also applies to the *qamiṣ*.”¹

The word *thawb* as it is used now, means the same as the word *qamiṣ* in the past. That is, a long shirt that covers most or all of the body. So this proves that Ibn ‘Umar ﷺ understood the rulings that applied to the *izār* also apply to the *qamiṣ* or what is now called the *thawb*.

Indeed the meaning of this is that the place for the garments is the place for the *izār*, and that the place for the *izār* is the place for the garments.

This *ḥadīth* is also referenced for the definition of the word *malḥā’* in *Lisān al-‘Arab* by Ibn al-Manzūr.

2. Ibn Ḥibbān recorded the *ḥadīth* of Umm Salamah ﷺ which appears later. But in it she said:

(قَالَتْ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ حِينَ ذَكَرَ الْإِزَارَ)

I asked Allāh’s Messenger when he mentioned the (الْإِزَارَ) *izār*:

“What about the women Messenger of Allāh?” He said;

«تُرْنَحِي شِبْرًا»

«Lower it a hand-span»

She said, “That will leave them exposed.” He ﷺ replied,

«فَذَرَاةً لَا تَزِيدُ عَلَيْهِ»

¹ Recorded by Abu Dāwud. It was graded *ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abu Dāwud* no. 4095.

«Then a forearm's length, no more than that.»¹

Here she asked him about the *izār* but it is understood that it refers to any garment that a woman wears, and the other narrations are more general proving that as seen below.

3. The woman is to adjust her clothing to cover what she is not allowed to reveal. Similarly one wearing his *thawb* too close to his knee would adjust it if he feared that he would reveal something that was not allowed. As logical as the claim is that one bending for the bowing position in prayer will cause his *thawb* to raise – running the risk of exposing what he is not allowed to expose – it is equally logical to say that if his *thawb* is just above his ankles he runs the risk of lowering the front of it below his ankles when he bends for the bowing position in prayer. This is because the *thawb* rises only in the back, yet it lowers in the front when bending. So if it was not Sunnah to wear it at the middle of the shin because of the risk of exposing the back of the knee, then it would equally not be Sunnah to wear it over the ankles because the same action would cause the front of it to go below the ankles, which is also prohibited. This is obvious because the back of it rises equal to the length that the front of it lowers!

All of this is to say that the Sunnah of the Prophet is the middle way, that is, in this case, the middle of the shin. Too high is not as good, because of the risk, and too low is not as good because of the risk. Indeed there is some wisdom in the Sunnah!

THE INTENTION OF *ISBĀL*

The Prophet ﷺ distinguished between a person who drags his *izār* out of conceitedness, and one who drags it without it. Allāh does not look at the first on the day of Resurrection. But the second one is also threatened with punishment in the Fire. This is supported by the understanding of the *Salaf*. Ibn ‘Umar ؓ narrated, “Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ said,

¹ This version was recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān and al-Arnā‘ūṭī (no. 5451) commented on its chain, “It meets the criteria of Muslim.”

«مَنْ جَرَّ ثَوْبَهُ خِيَلًا لَمْ يَنْظُرِ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»

«On the Day of Resurrection Allāh will not look at a person who drags his dress out of conceitedness.»

So Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها said, “What should the women do about their hems?”
He said;

«يُرْخِيْنَ شِبْرًا»

«Lower them a hand-span»

She said, “That will leave their feet exposed.” He رضي الله عنه replied,

«فِيْرْخِيْنُهُ ذِرَاعًا لَا يَزِدُّنَ عَلَيْهِ»

«Then lower it a forearm’s length and no more than that.»¹

In *Fath al-Bāri*, Ibn Ḥajar commented,

“This report points to the length of hem permitted for the excused (i.e. women). This refutes the claims that, ‘The general *ḥadīths* that prohibit dragging the garment are restricted by other *ḥadīths* which refer to doing it out of conceitedness.’ Otherwise, there would not have been any meaning for Umm Salamah’s inquiry. She understood that the prohibition was general – whether the dragging was done out of conceitedness or not. So she asked about the ruling for women in that matter, since they need to lengthen their hems to cover the *‘awrah*, because their

¹ Aḥmad, Abu Dāwud, at-Tirmithī, an-Nasā’i, Ibn Mājah and others. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi’ aṣ-Ṣaḡīr* no. 6188.

feet are 'awrah. He ﷺ clarified to her that their ruling on this matter is different from that for the men.”

WHERE ARE THE (كَعْبَيْنِ) KA‘BAYN?

Some claim that the Arabic term (كَعْبَيْنِ) *ka‘bayn* not only refers to the ankles but to the feet and heels as well. This claim is based on their understanding of the *āyah*:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ﴾

«O you who believe! When you intend to offer prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, rub your heads, and wash your feet up to the (*ka‘bayn*) ankles.» (*Al-Mā'idah* 5:6)

Here the ankles are clearly expressed as entities separate from the feet. Contrary to this, the heels (أَعْقَاب) or “*a‘qāb*” are clearly considered part of the feet, as the Prophet ﷺ told his companions, who were performing *wuḍū’* and washing their feet but missing their heels,

«وَيْلٌ لِّلْأَعْقَابِ مِنَ النَّارِ»

«[Protect] your heels from the Fire.»¹

¹ At-Tirmithi. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi‘ aṣ-Ṣaḥīr* no. 7132.

We must further take into consideration the evidence that has been mentioned earlier, especially the authentic *ḥadīth* of Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها in which her statements clarify the difference between the heel and the ankle in the case of *isbāl*.

Conclusion

Some of our brothers wear their slacks tailored to a length that reaches below their ankles. Albeit they live in a society that labels pants worn above the ankles with the term, “high waters.” Logically, this abuse would lead any humble Muslim to jump at the opportunity to lower his pants if he was convinced that it was allowed to do so.

It has ever been the attitude among the *Salaf* to correct themselves on an issue when presented with the proper evidence. This is only natural when we consider the love they had for Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, and their adherence to Allāh’s command that they must yield to the Prophet ﷺ in matters of difference:

﴿فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾

﴿But no by your Lord! They do not truly believe until they accept you (Muḥammad) as the judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept them with full submission.﴾ (An-Nisā’ 4:65)

From what has been mentioned, lowering the garment below the ankles is prohibited for men, whether that is done out of pride and conceitedness or not. The hem is to be worn in the shin area. And only Allāh provides true understanding.

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