72858 - Response to those who say that isbaal (letting the garment come below the ankles) is only haram if it is done to show off

the question

I explained to one of the brothers the ruling on isbaal (letting the garment come below the ankles) and the warning that was narrated concerning it, which implies that it is a major sin, and he was convinced – by Allah's grace – and stopped doing it. Then he discussed it with another brother, who presented specious arguments that confused him. He asked me for refutations and answers that would put his mind at rest, but I told him that I would not respond on my own initiative; rather I would consult shaykhs and scholars. The specious arguments are as follows:

1.

The reports which say that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to a man who let his garment come below his ankles: "|Do you not have an example in me?" They say that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not rebuke the man and did not tell him not to do that, which indicates – or so they claim – that the prohibition and warning mentioned in the other hadiths may be understood as meaning that it is mustahabb not to let the garment come below the ankles or, in other words, that letting the garment come below the ankles (isbaal) is makrooh.

2.

They quote the following two opinions as evidence: it was narrated that Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) used to let his izaar (waist wrapper or lower garment) hang below his ankles. When something was said to him about that, he said: My legs are thin and I lead the people in prayer. And it was narrated that Ma'mar said: Ayyoob was criticised for the length of his chemise and he said: In the past, fame and vanity was connected to how long it is but today it is connected to how much it is cut off. So they say: if isbaal were haram or a major sin, Ibn Mas'ood and Ayyoob would not have made their izaars or chemises long.

3.

They say: How can isbaal be equated with drinking alcohol, for example, in the sense that they are both major sins?

4.

They say: The majority are of the view that isbaal is makrooh. I do not know where they get this idea from.

5.

In the story of the martyrdom of ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), it says: A young man came and said: Be of good cheer, O Ameer al-Mu’mineen, for there are glad tidings from Allah to you; you accompanied the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and you were one of the earliest Muslims, as you know, then you were appointed caliph and you were just, then you attained martyrdom. He said: I wish the outcome of all that will be neither against me or for me. When he (the young man) turned away, ‘Umar saw that his izaar was touching the ground. He said: Bring the young man back to me. He said: O son of my brother, pull up your garment, for it is cleaner for your garment and more fearing of your Lord. They say: This indicates that Sayyiduna ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did not stop enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, even if it was a minor matter or it was makrooh – as was the way of the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them all), or that he saw something in the young man’s heart or the way he conducted himself that would be warded off by means of him pulling up his garment.

6.

They say that the martyr is undoubtedly one of the people of Paradise, yet despite that he may be one who lets his garment come below the ankle, so how can the warnings mentioned in the hadith – “it is in the Fire” and “Allah will not speak to them or look at them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He praise them, and theirs will be a painful punishment” – be applicable to him when he is one of the people of Paradise?

7.

It is proven that Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): My izaar drops unless I not pay attention to it, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “You are not one of those who do that out of

pride.” So they say: this indicates that the warning mentioned in the hadiths applies to those who do that out of pride.
I hope that you can give us responses and answers that will put our brothers’ and others’ minds at rest. May Allah reward you with good.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Before discussing the answer, it is essential to point out two things:

1.

The issue of isbaal (letting the garment come below the ankles) is a matter of ijtihaad concerning which the scholars differed. In fact the majority of them are of the view that it is not haram unless it is done by way of pride.

Their opinions have been discussed previously in the answer to question no. 102260

What is required in all matters concerning which people differ is to refer to the Qur’an and Sunnah in order to find out what is right and what is wrong. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“(And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (SAW), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination”

[an-Nisa’ 4:59].

As this issue is one that is subject to ijtihaad, it is not permissible to denounce those who differed concerning it (on either side), because they are not going against a definitive text or well-known scholarly consensus.

Based on that, if an individual is not qualified to determine which scholarly opinion is more correct, and he follows one of the two groups, trusting in their knowledge or because they are the majority, he is not to be denounced.

Similarly, if a person is qualified to decide which opinion is more correct, and he favours one of the two opinions based on the evidence he has, he is not to be denounced for that either.

With regard to these matters that are subject to ijtihaad, each Muslim should act upon what appears to him to be correct, as one of the early generation said: “The one who adheres to the scholarly view that reached him has done well.” These matters should not be a cause of conflict and disputes. People should not join gatherings to dispute about such matters and to denounce one another and challenge one another.

There is nothing wrong with talking about and discussing the matter in a calm and gentle manner, with the aim of finding out the correct view and following it.

See the answer to question no. 70491

2.

Some of what you have quoted of differences does not come under the heading of specious arguments; rather it is evidence that was quoted by leading scholars, such as the hadith of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him). Specious arguments are not like that; rather they have no basis in the Qur’an or Sunnah.

Secondly:

We shall refer – as much as we can – to what the brother who differs mentioned, and we ask Allah, may He be exalted, to enable us to attain beneficial knowledge and help us to understand our religion.

1.

With regard to the first hadith that he quotes as evidence, it is a da‘eef (weak) hadith. There follow

its text and the scholars' verdict on it.

It was narrated from al-Ash'ath, from his paternal aunt Ruhm, from her paternal uncle 'Ubaydah ibn Khalaf, who said: I came to Madinah when I was a young man wearing a fine burdah of mine around my waist that I let drag (on the floor). A man caught up with me and poked me with a stick he had in his hand, then he said: "If you pull up your garment it will last longer and be cleaner." I turned around and saw that it was the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). I said: O Messenger of Allah, it is just a cheap burdah. He said: Even if it is just a cheap burdah; do you not have an example in me? I looked at his izaar and saw that it came above the ankles and beneath the muscle.

Narrated by Ahmad, 22577

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is a da'eef isnaad. The paternal aunt of al-Ash'ath was called Ruhm bint al-Aswad. Al-Haafiz said: She is not known.

As-Silsilah ad-Da'eefah, 4/336, 337, hadith no 1867

Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'oot said in Tahqeeq al-Musnad: Its isnaad is da'eef because of the weakness of Sulaymaan ibn Quram. End quote.

Even if the hadith were saheeh, it could not be used as evidence for the one who differs; rather the opposite is true. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) rebuked the Sahaabi in his actions and words for letting the garment come below the ankle, and the Sahaabi looked at the garment of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and saw that it came to mid-calf. So where in the hadith – if it were saheeh – is there anything to support the view of the one who differs?

2.

The one who differs quoted two reports, from Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) and

from Ayyoob as-Sakhtiyaani (may Allah have mercy on him). The former is one of the Sahaabah and the latter is one of the Taabi‘een.

(a)

With regard to the report of Ibn Mas‘ood, it was narrated from Abu Waa’il, from Ibn Mas‘ood, that he used to let his izaar hang low. When something was said to him about that, he said: I am a man with thin legs.

Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf, 5/166.

Its isnaad is jayyid, as we shall see below in the comment of al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar.

With regard to its meaning, it is – first of all – a report from a Sahaabi; it is not a hadith narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). The words of a Sahaabi can only be taken as evidence to support an opinion if they do not contradict a text from the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Moreover, there is nothing in it to suggest that he used to let his izaar hang below the ankles; rather it may be that he let it come lower than was customary among them.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the report narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah from Ibn Mas‘ood with a jayyid isnaad, according to which he used to let his izaar hang low, and when something was said to him about that he said, I have thin legs, it may be understood as meaning that he let his izaar hang lower than is recommended, which is mid-calf. It should not be thought that he went beyond that and let it come below the ankles, and the reason he gave may indicate that. Moreover, perhaps the story of ‘Amr ibn Zaraarah had not reached him. And Allah knows best. End quote.

Fath al-Baari, 10/264

The story of ‘Amr ibn Zaraarah (may Allah be pleased with him) was narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad (17817). It says that he had thin legs and he let his izaar hang low, then the Prophet

(blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) rebuked him and told him to pull up his izaar, and he said to him: “Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has made beautiful everything that He has created.”

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Silsilah as-Saheehah, 2682 and by Shu‘ayb al-Arna’oot in Tahqeeq al-Musnad.

(b)

With regard to the report of Ayyoob as-Sakhtiyaani, the Prophet’s Sunnah takes precedence over the view of anyone else, and the words of anyone may be accepted or rejected except the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Moreover, it may be that Ayyoob made his garment longer than mid-calf but not so long as to come below the ankle, as was said about what Ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him) did, as stated above.

3.

With regard to the opinion of those who say “How can isbaal be equated with drinking alcohol, for example, in the sense that they are both major sins?” the response is: that sins and acts of disobedience undoubtedly vary in degree; some of them are minor and some of them are major, and some are grave major sins. Moreover, minor sins, major sins and grave major sins may vary within each category. But this variation does not indicate that something is not haram. Drinking alcohol is a major sin, zina (fornication or adultery) is a major sin, and killing a believer wrongfully and unjustly is a major sin, but these sins vary in degree one from another; that does not mean that any of them are not haram.

4.

With regard to his saying that the majority are of the view that it is makrooh, yes, that is correct and we do not deny it. We stated this at the beginning of our answer. But the fact that it is the view of the majority does not necessarily mean that it is in accordance with what is correct. We do

not worship our Lord, may He be exalted, on the basis of what the majority of scholars say. Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded us in the case of differences of opinion to refer to the Qur'an and Sunnah, not to the opinion of the majority. This is quite clear, praise be to Allah.

5.

With regard to his quoting as evidence the fact that 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him) rebuked the one whose garment was hanging below his ankles when he was in pain after he had been stabbed, this is an argument against them, not for them, because 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) only rebuked this young man when he was in that state (between life and death) because he knew that what this young man was doing was something that it was not appropriate to keep quiet about, and was not an insignificant matter. The fact that 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) rebuked him indicates that this action is reprehensible according to Islam. But from where did this one who differs get the idea that it is makrooh and not haram?

'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) could not see what is in people's hearts, and there is nothing in the story to suggest that he saw in the case of the young man that which was mentioned by this one who differs; rather it is mere speculation that needs evidence to prove it.

6.

With regard to what he mentioned about the virtue of the martyr and that he is in Paradise, and his thinking that this contradicts the punishment for the one who lets his garment come below his ankles, this is unacceptable. If he thinks that this proves that isbaal is not haram, then let him say the same with regard to lying, severing ties of kinship, drinking alcohol and other major sins that bring the warning of Hell. How can we reconcile between the warning for his sins and the promise of Paradise for the martyr who commits these sins or some of them?

The warning for committing sin may be retracted for reasons that we cannot go into here.

7.

With regard to what it says in the hadith of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq about one side of his garment

slipping and how he used to pay attention to that, and that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to him: “You are not one of those who do that out of pride,” this does not give them any proof. Rather it counts against them, not for them. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) used to pull up his garment and not let it drag; rather it used to slip but he did not ignore it; rather he used to pay attention to it. And one who is like Abu Bakr is excused.

Al-Imam adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Similarly, you see the faqeeh who is living a life of ease, when he is criticised for wearing a garment that comes below his ankles and it is said to him: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whatever is below the ankles of the izaar is in the Fire,” – he says: He only said that concerning the one who lets his izaar drag out of pride, but I am not doing that out of pride. So you see him showing arrogance and defending his foolish action, taking a hadith that is general in meaning and quoting another hadith so as to limit the meaning of the first one to pride, and he thinks that he can get away with his isbaal on the basis of what (Abu Bakr) as-Siddeeq said: O Messenger of Allah, my izaar slips, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, “O Abu Bakr, you are not one of those who do that out of pride.” But we say: Abu Bakr did not put on his izaar in such a way that it came below the ankles from the outset; rather he put it on so that it came above the ankles, then after that it slipped. And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The izaar of the believer comes to mid-calf and there is no problem with the area between that and the ankle.” End quote.

Siyar A‘laam an-Nubala’, 3/234

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to those who quote to us the hadith of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), we say to him: You have no proof in this hadith for two reasons:

(i)

Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “One of the two sides of my izaar drop unless I pay

attention to it…” So he (may Allah be pleased with him) was not letting his garment drag deliberately; rather it used to loosen and drop, yet he would still pay attention to it. Those who let the garment come below the ankles and claim that they are not doing that out of pride are letting their garments hang low deliberately.

(ii)

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) praised Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and testified that he was not one of those who did that out of pride. Have any of these people attained such praise and such testimony? But the Shaytaan prompts some people to follow ambiguous texts of the Qur’an and Sunnah so as to justify what they are doing, and Allah guides whomever He will to the straight path. We ask Allah to guide us and keep us safe and sound.

Majmoo‘ Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (12/question no. 223)

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said: With regard to the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him), when he said: O Messenger of Allah, my izaar slips unless I pay attention to it, and he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to him: “You are not one of those who do that out of pride”, what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) meant is that the one who pays attention to his garment if it slips, and pulls it up, is not regarded as being one of those who let the garment drag out of pride, because he did not let it hang low deliberately. Rather it may slip, so he pulls it up and pays attention to it. Undoubtedly such a person is excused. As for the one who deliberately lets it drag, whether it is a (man’s) abayah or pants or an izaar (waist wrapper) or a thobe, he is included in this warning and he is not excused for letting his garment come below the ankles, because the saheeh hadiths that forbid isbaal include him in their meanings. What every Muslim should do is guard against isbaal and fear Allah with regard to that; he should not let his garment hang below his ankles, following this saheeh hadith and seeking to avoid the wrath and punishment of Allah. And Allah is the source of strength.

Majmoo‘ Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baaz, 6/383

With regard to their saying that the warning only applies to the one who lets his garment hang below to the ankles out of pride, it does not seem that it is correct, because there is a warning against merely letting the garment come below the ankles, and there is another warning against letting the izaar drag out of pride. It is not possible to interpret the general report in terms of the specific report in this case because there are two different actions with two different punishments, and those whom the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) rebuked were not people of arrogance and pride.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

In these hadiths we see that letting the garment come below the ankles out of pride is a major sin; as for letting the garment come below the ankles for a reason other than pride, the apparent meaning of the hadiths is that it is also haram.

Fath al-Baari, 10/263

Ibn al-'Arabi al-Maaliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is not permissible for a man to let his garment come past his ankle and say, "I am not doing that out of pride," because the prohibition on that was clearly stated (in the hadith) and the reason for it was stated. So he cannot say, "I am not among those to whom the hadith refers because the reason for the prohibition does not apply to me," because this is going against sharee'ah and it is a claim that cannot be accepted. Rather because of his pride he is making his garment and izaar long, so he is definitely lying in his claim.

'Aaridat al-Ahwadhi, 7/238

This was quoted, with some slight differences in wording, by Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him), who commented on it by saying:

The point is that isbaal implies letting the garment drag, and letting the garment drag implies pride, even if the one who is wearing it did not intend it as such. This is supported by the report narrated by Ahmad ibn Munayyi' via another isnaad from Ibn 'Umar in the hadith which he

attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “Beware of letting the izaar drag, for letting the izaar drag is a sign of pride.”

Fath al-Baari, 10/264

As-San‘aani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The hadiths indicate that whatever is below the ankles is in the Fire, which signals that it is haram; they also indicate that the one who lets his izaar drag out of pride, Allah will not look at him, which also signals that it is haram and that the punishment for pride is a specific punishment, which is that Allah will not look at him. This demonstrates that the view that it is not haram unless it is done out of pride is not valid.

Isteefa’ al-Aqwaal fi Tahreem al-Isbaal ‘ala ar-Rijaal, p. 26

This is a summary of the response to what you mentioned in your question. What the Muslims should do is strive to reach the correct conclusion with regard to matters concerning which the scholars differed, by means of research and study if he is qualified to do that. If he is not qualified to do that, then he should follow (a scholar) whose religious commitment and knowledge he trusts, and he should refrain from denouncing, debating, and arguing. We ask Allah to teach us that which we do not know and to benefit us by means of what He teaches us.

And Allah knows best.