

The Age of Discernment

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا ۗ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ خُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۗ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ ۗ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ ۗ مِن زِينَتِهِنَّ ۗ وَتَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil, gloves, head cover, apron), and to draw their veils all over *Juyoobihinna* (i.e. bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islaam) or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigor, or small children who have no sense of the feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allaah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful.

[Soorah an-Noor (24): 31]

In reference to the part of the ayah above,

« أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ »

“Or small children who have no sense of the feminine sex”

Imaam ibn Katheer said regarding it:

Because they are so young they do not understand anything about women or their 'Awrah or their soft speech or their enticing ways of walking and moving. If a child is small and does not

understand that, there is nothing wrong with him entering upon women, but if he is an adolescent or approaching adolescence, so that he understands these things, and can make a distinction between who is beautiful and who is not, then he should not enter upon women. The Messenger ﷺ of Allaah said:

« إِيَّاكُمْ وَالذُّخُولَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ »
 “Avoid entering upon women”¹

Imaam as-Sa’dee said regarding this same portion of the ayah:

It is permissible for small children under the threshold of being able to distinguish to look at women who are outside of his immediate family and Allaah justifies this since they are not looking at the ‘Awhrah of the women.

It is not for the ones which are knowledgeable (of women) to intermingle with them after this (knowledge) is pointed out. The woman must cover herself in front of him if he is able to distinguish the ‘Awhrah of women.²

So how did Muhammad ﷺ, the best of mankind, implement this ayah among his wives and younger companions? From the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ is the hadeeth:

Yahyaa ibn Sulaymaan told us that Ibn Wahb told us that Yoonus informed me upon the authority of Ibn Shihaab who said that Anas ibn Maalik informed me that he said:

I was ten years old when the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ arrived in Madeenah. Then I served the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ for ten years of his life. I was the most knowledgeable concerning the affair of the head-covering (Hijaab) when it was revealed. Certainly, Ubay ibn Ka’b used to ask me about it. The first verses revealed concerning it descended when the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ had consummated his marriage with Zaynab bint Jahsh. When the morning arrived, the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was a bridegroom and he invited the people to a banquet, so they came, ate, and then left. A few stayed with the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. A lot of time passed then the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ got up and left. I left with him so that the people might leave, too. The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ walked (for a while) and I proceeded with him until he came to the threshold of 'Aa'ishah's home. Then, he thought that those people had left by then, so he returned and I returned along with him until he entered upon Zaynab and behold, they were still sitting and had not left. Hence, the Prophet ﷺ again left and I left along with him until he reached the threshold of 'Aa'ishah's home, then he thought that they had left, and so he returned and I returned with him and found that those people

¹ Tafseer ibn Katheer [7/72] *English Version

² Tayseer al-Kareem ar-Rahmaan [566]

had left. Then the verses of the head-covering (Hijaab) were revealed and he drew a curtain between him and me.³

﴿ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَرِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا
وَلِيَضْرِبْنَ خُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ
بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ
نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ
يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ
الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil, gloves, head cover, apron), and to draw their veils all over *Juyoobihinna* (i.e. bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islaam) or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigor, or **small children who have no sense of the feminine sex**. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allaah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful.

[Soorah an-Noor (24):31]

From this ayah, we extract that the child who comprehends these things (i.e. sense of the feminine sex) it is impermissible to show your adornments.

From the 'Ulamaa, this is a child who is unable to distinguish black from white, pretty from ugly, cannot distinguish tall from short, small from big, hip size, breast size, flat or round stomach, hair color, and/or length.

In the above ayah, Allaah says **الطِّفْلِ** "small children" so this definitely excludes large children.

³ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree [22/11]

Q. Is there a particular age?

A. There is no specific age.

Q. How do we know when child knows how to tell?

A. A mother knows when this occurs. Intelligence from each child is different. This is something parents must be up to date concerning. Parents must test their child to see if he can distinguish. If a child can distinguish and is in a room where women are, it is waajib for women to cover. It is permissible for woman to speak to this child, but it must be from behind a veil.

The voice of a woman can be heard as long as it is her normal speaking voice. We, as mothers, should get our children used to being separated from women. We must train our boys to lower their gazes. A child can be easily taught and will do what you teach them upon with ease.

The *fitnah* of women is great to the men as Rasool Allaah said regarding women:

« مَا تَرَكْتُ بَعْدِي فِتْنَةً أَضَرَّ عَلَى الرَّجَالِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ. »

“I have not left after me any trial more harmful to men than women.”⁴

« إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا حُلْوَةٌ خَضِرَةٌ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مُسْتَخْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ، فَاتَّقُوا الدُّنْيَا وَأَتَّقُوا

النِّسَاءَ، فَإِنَّ أَوَّلَ فِتْنَةٍ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَانَتْ فِي النِّسَاءِ. »

“Indeed this world is a verdant pleasure and certainly Allaah has entrusted you with it. So be considerate of how you interact in it. Be mindful of how you treat the women for indeed the first affliction to befall the children of Israel was the affliction of the women.”⁵

Effects of Boys Left Unrestrained

A boy⁶ which is without the guidance from his parents and left unrestrained to mingle with women may unintentionally tell information to full grown men who may even elicit such information since he (the grown man) is aware this child is allowed to mingle amongst women.

⁴ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree [5096/9], Muslim [2097/4] and At-Tirmidhee [2780] reported this and said it is “Hasan/Saheeh” (Sound/Authentic) and Ibn Maajah [3998].

⁵ Saheeh Muslim [2098/4], Ibn Maajah [4000/2]

⁶ This boy may be 4 or 5 years old, but usually prior to the age of 7.

And from the effects of living amongst the Kuffar is we (Muslims) do not view our young men as being men. Unfortunately, some still want to view young men⁷ as being boys, although he is fully capable of marriage and working to support his family, as this was the case during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ as well as other than during his lifetime.

Stages of Youth

- **الطِفْلُ** — This is usually a newborn to usually 4 years of age. This child is small and cannot distinguish between things.
- **الْعُلَامُ** — This usually is a child prior to the age of puberty. Although he is young, he is able to distinguish things. This boy is usually 4-5 years old, but usually prior to the age of 7.
- **الْفَتَى** — This is an adolescent who has entered puberty. The signs of puberty for males are: pubic hairs, nocturnal emission, or having reached the age of 15 if the other signs are not present.⁸
- **الرَّجُلُ** — This is a man



⁷ **الْفَتَى** and the meaning will come shortly

⁸ Please note that any one of these signs being present is the onset of puberty, and all of these signs do not have to be present.