

**Gheebah****Umm Abdillaah al-Wadi'iyah**

From Naseehatee lin Nisaa(My Advice to Women)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The meaning of Gheebah (backbiting) has become clear in that which has been related by Muslim (4/2001): *It has been related to us by Yahyaa bin Ayyoob, Qutaibah, and ibn Hajr that they said: It has been related to us by Ismaa'eel on al-'Alaa' on his father on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, has said: Do you all know what Gheebah (backbiting) is? They said: Allaah and His Messenger knows best. He said: Mentioning your brother in a manner that he dislikes. It was said: Even if what I have said about my brother is true? He said: If what you have said about him is true, then you backbit him. And if what you have said about him is not true, then you have slandered him.*

As for his statement: *You have slandered him*: An-Nawawi has said in Sharh Muslim (16/142): "The ' Haa ' is pronounced lightly with a Fat'hah. I say: Derived from it is Buhtaan (slander) and it is (i.e. its meaning is) falsehood." The end of his statement.

So Gheebah (backbiting) is prohibited, the least of it and the greatest of it: And in Sunan Abee Dawood on the authority of 'Aaishah that she said: *O Messenger of Allaah, it suffices you about Safiyyah that such and such – one of the narrators said that she means Safiyyah is short, so the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: Surely you have said a word that if it were mixed in the water of the sea, it would have overtaken it and spoiled it.*

And in the Sahihain (i.e. Bukhari and Muslim) from the Hadeeth of Abu Bakrah that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: *Verily, your blood and your wealth is sacred to one another just like the sanctity of this day of yours in this month of yours in this city of yours.*

And in Sunan an-Nisaa'ee on the authority of ibn 'Umar that he said: *The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam, ascended the pulpit and called out with a raised voice: O group of people, whoever secures his tongue and his heart is not void of Eemaan (faith) then he should not harm the Muslims, nor should he condemn them, nor should he follow their faults. For surely, he who follows the faults of his Muslim brother then Allaah will follow his faults, and whoever Allaah follows his faults then he will be exposed even if*

he is in the crevices of his home. And the Hadeeth is in as-Saheeh al-Musnad (1/508).

And in Sunan Abee Dawood on the authority of Anas bin Maalik that he said: *The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: When I ascended (through the heavens), I passed by a people who had nails of brass scratching their faces and their chests. So I said: Who are they, O Jibreel? He said: They are those who eat the flesh of the people and disparage their honor. And the Hadeeth is Saheeh.*

al-Haafidh ibn Katheer has said in his Tafseer (4/215): “Gheebah (backbiting) is prohibited by unanimous agreement. There is nothing excluded from this except that which the benefit of it outweighs the harm such as criticizing and praising (Jarh and Ta’deel) and sincere admonition (Nasee’hah) such as his saying, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, to Faatimah bint Qays when Mu’aawiyah and Abu Jahm had proposed to her: As for Mu’aawiyah, he is poor. And as for Abu Jahm, his stick does not leave his shoulder. And this is that which is permissible (Gheebah) and the remainder of it is prohibited harshly.” The end of his speech.

I say: The exceptions to Gheebah (backbiting) are collected in the saying of the poet: “Dispraising is not Gheebah (backbiting) in six cases: When one suffers injustice and oppression, description, warning, one who openly indulges in disobedience, one who is seeking a religious verdict, and one who is seeking aid in dissolving an evil.” These two verses can be reviewed in Subul as-Salaam no. 1584.

And the scholars have differed whether it (Gheebah) is from the major sins or minor sins. As for Qurtubee, he has mentioned that there is unanimous agreement that it is from the major sins. This Ijmaa’ (unanimous agreement) is not correct since Haafidh ibn Hajr has mentioned that the authors of ar-Rawdah and ar-Rafaa’ee both have said: It is from the minor sins.

And the proofs that support it being from the major sins:

And in Sunan Abee Dawood on the authority of Sa’eed bin Zaid that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: *Surely that which is worse than Ribaa (usury) is to display arrogant behavior concerning the honor of a Muslim without right. And the Hadeeth is Saheeh and can be found in as-Saheeh al Musnad (1/313).*

And in Sunan Abee Dawood on the authority of Anas that he said: *The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: When I ascended (through the heavens), I passed by a people who had nails of brass scratching their faces and their chests. So I said: Who are they, O Jibreel? He said: They are those who eat the flesh of the people and disparage their honor. And the Hadeeth has preceded.*

And Allaah says:

*“And neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). And fear Allaah. Verily, Allaah is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful.”* (Surah Hujuraat 49: 12)

See Fathul Baaree (10/470) and Subul as-Salaam no. 1583. Is Gheebah (backbiting) only when it is done behind someone’s back?

That which is apparent from his statement: *Mentioning your brother in a manner that he dislikes*: It seems to encompass mentioning him in his absence as well as in his presence. But Haafidh has said: It is weightier to say that it (Gheebah) is specific to when the person is absent. This is in respect to where the word itself is derived from (since the root word of Gheebah means to be absent), and due to this the scholars of the language are decided<sup>1</sup>. Then he said: Yes, encountering that which has been mentioned (i.e. Gheebah) is not permissible due to that which is in it from revilement and abuse. The end of his speech, may Allaah have mercy upon him.

In our time, Gheebah (backbiting) has become jesting and amusement amongst many of the women today except for whomever Allaah has had mercy upon.<sup>2</sup> So that which is obligatory upon us is that we submit to the legislation of our Lord.

He has said:

*“It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allaah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allaah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed into plain error.”* (Surah Ahzaab 33: 36)

And He has said:

*“The only saying of the faithful believers, when they are called to Allaah and His Messenger to judge between them, is that they say: ‘We hear and we obey’. And such are the successful. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, fears Allaah, and keeps his duty to Him, such are the successful.”* (Surah Noor 24: 51 – 52)

And He has said:

<sup>1</sup> [Translators Footnote] decided : that gheebah is behind a persons back and not in his presence due to the nature of the root word which means to be absent.

<sup>2</sup> [Translators Footnote] This is true for men as well. Only women are mentioned here as the author is writing the book for women.

*“But no, by you Lord, they can have no faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no disputes against your decisions, and accept them with full submission.”* (Surah Nisaa 4: 65)

And He has said:

*“Follow what has been sent down to you from you Lord, and do not follow any Awliyaa besides Him. Little do you remember!”* (Surah A’raaf 7: 3)

And He has said:

*“And whatever the Messenger gives you then take it, and whatever he forbids you from then abstain from it.”* (Surah Hashr 59: 7)

So do not be like the people of the Book (i.e. the Jews and the Christians) who say: “We hear and we disobey”, but we should say: “We hear and we obey”.

And whoever desires more proofs regarding adherence to the legislation then review the book al-‘Tisaam by ash-Shaatibee, may Allah have mercy upon him.

So the affair of Gheebah (backbiting) is dangerous. That is because people fall into it without realizing it, so beware of it and it is upon you to repent to Allaah from that (i.e. Gheebah).