

## **Chapter 8**

### **Analysis of Hadiths about Prohibitions**

## Introduction

Islam offers set of rulings to liable people to practise them by their free will. The ruling may be a command or a prohibition. In this chapter, some of the prohibitions that take place in hadiths will be covered. Prohibition is a demand issued from a superior authority to an inferior one to avoid committing a certain act.<sup>330</sup> A prohibition can only be made by the Lawgiver who has the authority both to issue a prohibition and to punish violations thereof.

The Arabic language has two typical forms for conveying prohibitions: the first is a direct prohibition for those who are present (*nahy khādir*) for example; “do not draw near to any unlawful sexual intercourse...”<sup>331</sup> The second form is prohibition for those who are absent (*nahy ghāib*). For example; “tell the believing women that they should restrain their gaze and guard their private parts...”<sup>332</sup> Besides these two forms, there are some other Arabic words that can be used to infer prohibition. The most important of which are words which have the meaning ‘abandon’, ‘leave off’, ‘refrain’, etc.’ For example; “O you who believe! When the call is made for the Prayer on Friday, then move promptly to the remembrance of God and leave off business”<sup>333</sup> In this verse, the word ‘leave off’ conveys prohibition.

“...God forbids you indecency, wickedness and vile conduct...”<sup>334</sup>In this verse, the Arabic word ‘*yanha*’ (forbids) conveys prohibition.

“God prohibited usury but made trade lawful”<sup>335</sup> The Arabic word *haram* (prohibited/unlawful) and its derivations may be used to indicate something as prohibited and this verse is an example of it.

Sometimes God may declare something as unlawful and it conveys prohibition; “...They are not (being believers) lawful (as wives) for the unbelievers nor are the unbelievers lawful (as husbands) for them...”<sup>336</sup>

In some cases, God warn people against the violations of some acts and scholars understand them as prohibited;

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<sup>330</sup> Badran, *Uṣūl*, p. 366.

<sup>331</sup> Qur’ān 17: 32.

<sup>332</sup> Qur’ān 24: 31.

<sup>333</sup> Qur’ān 62: 9.

<sup>334</sup> Qur’ān 16: 90.

<sup>335</sup> Qur’ān 2: 175.

<sup>336</sup> Qur’ān 60: 10.

## Commentary on Unforgettable Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad

Those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in God's cause (to exalt His cause and help the poor and needy): give them (O Messenger) the glad tidings of a painful punishment.<sup>337</sup>

If God has assigned a certain punishment for an act it is understood as prohibited;

“For the thief, male or female: cut off their hands as a recompense for what they have earned, and an exemplary deterrent punishment from God”<sup>338</sup> In this verse the assigned punishment for the thief indicates the prohibition of the act of theft.

The principle meaning of prohibition is unlawfulness but some argue that it may also convey dislike (makruh), guidance, reprimand or supplication. The majority of scholars hold that a prohibition by itself establishes the meaning of haram only if there is no other indication. In some cases, a text (a hadith or a verse) may be conveyed in terms of prohibition but actually meant disliked by such expression and the text itself supports this understanding.

The reason for prohibitions in Islam is to prevent harm from people. The consequence for violating prohibitions is punishment in the afterlife, but some of them, such as adultery and theft, also require punishment in this world too. A prohibition can be issued due to harm in its essence, or in its attribute or in its conditions.

Scholars classified prohibited acts into two categories; forbidden acts for its own sake and forbidden acts because of something else. Fasting is a permissible act but it becomes prohibited on the day of Eid. The day of Eid is the external condition that makes the act of fasting prohibited.

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<sup>337</sup> Qur'ān 9: 34.

<sup>338</sup> Qur'ān 5: 38.

## Hadiths about Prohibitions and Their Analyses

### 1.1 Backbiting

#### First hadith

وعن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أتدرون ما الغيبة؟ قالوا: الله ورسوله أعلم. قال: ذكرك أخاك بما يكره قيل: أفرأيت إن كان في أخي ما أقول؟ قال: إن كان فيه ما تقول فقد اغتبتته، وإن لم يكن فيه ما تقول فقد بهتته

Abu Hurayra reports that the Messenger of God (pbuh) said; “do you know what is backbiting?” The Companions said; “Allah and His Messenger know better.” Thereupon he said; “Backbiting is talking about your brother in a manner which he dislikes.” Someone asked; “What if my brother is as I say.” He said; “If he is actually as you say, then that is backbiting; but if that is not in him, that is slandering.”<sup>339</sup>

#### The analysis of the hadith

The hadith is *sahīh* and is about prohibition of backbiting. Muslim recorded it in his authentic hadiths collections. Scholars define backbiting as speaking about an absent person in a way that would repel or annoy him /her if he/she were present and were to hear. If the words uttered are true, that is backbiting; if they are not, this is both backbiting and slandering, therefore, is a doubly loathsome sin.<sup>340</sup> While delivering the sermon during the Farewell Pilgrimage on the day of Sacrifice at Mina, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said; “verily your blood, your property and your honour are sacred and inviolable as the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours and in this town of yours. Verily! I have conveyed this message to you.”<sup>341</sup> Backbiting is violating Muslims’ honour in their absence therefore forbidden in Islam. God explained its evilness in the Qur’ān as follows;

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for some suspicion is a grave sin (liable to God’s punishment); and do not spy (on one another), nor backbite (against one another). Would any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety.”<sup>342</sup>

Based on this verse, Said Nursī expressed the evilness of backbiting eloquently;

“This statement reprimands the backbiter with six degrees of reprimand and restrains him or her from this sin with six degrees of severity: The Arabic letter *hamzah*, in the verse marking the interrogative (and here translated as would) at the beginning of the sentence reaches into all the words of the verse, so that each of them carries an interrogative accent. Thus, at the very beginning the *hamzah* in itself asks, ‘Do you

<sup>339</sup> Muslim, *Sahīh*, Birr, 70.

<sup>340</sup> Said Nursī, *The Letters*, 22. Letter, pp. 76-78

<sup>341</sup> Bukhari, *Sahīh*, ‘Ilm, 9; Muslim, *Sahīh*, Haj 147.

<sup>342</sup> Qur’ān 49: 12.

have no intelligence with which you ask and answer, so that you fail to perceive how abominable this thing is?’ The second word, love, asks through hamzah, ‘Is it that your heart, with which you love or hate, is so spoiled that you love a most repugnant thing like backbiting?’ Third, the phrase, any of you, asks, ‘What has happened to your sense of the nature and responsibility of society and civilization that you dare to accept something so poisonous to social life?’ Fourth, the phrase, to eat the flesh, asks, ‘What has happened to your sense of humanity that you are tearing your friend to pieces with your teeth like a wild animal?’ Fifth, the phrase, of his brother, asks, ‘Do you have no human tenderness, no sense of kinship, that you sink your teeth into some innocent person to whom you are tied by numerous links of brotherhood? Do you have no intelligence that you bite into your own limbs with your teeth, in such a senseless fashion?’ Sixth, the word, dead, asks, ‘Where is your conscience? Is your nature so corrupt that you commit such a disgusting act as eating the flesh of your dead brother who deserves much respect?’ According, then, to the total meaning of the verse and the indications of each of these words, slander and backbiting are repugnant to the intelligence, and to the heart, to humanity and conscience, to human nature, the Religion, and social brotherhood/sisterhood. You see, then, that the verse condemns backbiting in six degrees in a very concise and exact manner and restrains people from it in six miraculous ways. Backbiting is a shameful weapon and most commonly used by people of enmity, envy, and obstinacy; no self-respecting, honourable human being would ever demean themselves by resorting to such a vile weapon.”<sup>343</sup>

## Second hadith

وَعَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَمَّا عُرِجَ بِي مَرَرْتُ بِقَوْمٍ لَهُمْ أَظْفَارٌ مِنْ نُحَاسٍ يَخْمِسُونَ بِهَا وُجُوهَهُمْ وَصُدُورَهُمْ، فَقُلْتُ: مَنْ هَؤُلَاءِ يَا جِبْرِيْلُ؟ قَالَ: هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ لُحُومَ النَّاسِ، وَيَقَعُونَ فِي أَعْرَاضِهِمْ

Anas reports that The Messenger of God (pbuh) said; “During the Night of Ascension, I saw a group of people who were scratching their chests and faces with their copper nails. I asked, ‘Who are these people, O Jibril?’ Jibril replied; ‘these are the people who ate flesh of others (by backbiting) and trampled people’s honour.’”<sup>344</sup>

## The analysis of the hadith

Abū Dāwud reports this hadiths in his Sunan and consider it ḥasan in terms of authenticity. The Prophet witnessed some extra ordinary things during his night journey to the heavens and this hadith depicts one part of it. Indeed, scratching face was a custom that belonged to time of ignorance and was practised by women in that time. They used to weep and shout when they lost close relatives. Backbiting will consequence a punishment that its doer will scratch his/her chests and faces with coper nails. Because, they ate the flesh of their brothers/sisters and trampled their honour.

<sup>343</sup> Said Nursī, *The Letters*, 22. Letter, pp. 76-78

<sup>344</sup> Abū Dāwud, *Sunan*, Adab, 35.