*BACKBITING*

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱجۡتَنِبُواْ كَثِيرٗا مِّنَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعۡضَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِثۡمٞۖ وَ لَا تَجَسَّسُواْ وَلَا يَغۡتَب بَّعۡضُكُم بَعۡضًاۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمۡ أَن يَأۡكُلَ لَحۡمَ أَخِيهِ مَيۡتٗا فَكَرِهۡتُمُوهُۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ تَوَّابٞ رَّحِيمٞ ١٢

*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. Surely God is One Who truly returns repentance with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, All-Compassionate (particularly towards His believing servants).* [49:12]

إِذۡ تَلَقَّوۡنَهُۥ بِأَلۡسِنَتِكُمۡ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفۡوَاهِكُم مَّا لَيۡسَ لَكُم بِهِۦ عِلۡمٞ وَتَحۡسَبُونَهُۥ هَيِّنٗا وَهُوَ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ عَظِيمٞ ١٥

*Just think how you welcomed it with your tongues from one another and uttered with your mouths something about which you had no knowledge. You deemed it a trifle whereas in God’s sight it was most grave.* [24:15]

وَلَوۡلَآ إِذۡ سَمِعۡتُمُوهُ قُلۡتُم مَّا يَكُونُ لَنَآ أَن نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهَٰذَا سُبۡحَٰنَكَ هَٰذَا بُهۡتَٰنٌ عَظِيمٞ ١٦

*Why did you not say, when you heard of it, "It is not for us to speak of this. All-Glorified are You (O God)! This is a grievous slander."*

HADITH

Narrated by Abu Huraira:  Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should talk what is good or keep quiet, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt (or insult) his neighbor..." (SahihBukhari)

All this goes to preface the idea that we have to care about each other in a way that is in line with Islam, not the lessor standards of the non-believers. Let them follow us.  Let’s first look at the definition of ***gheebah*** (gossip, backbiting) as defined by the Noble Teacher [asw]:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ ‏"‏ أَتَدْرُونَ مَا الْغِيبَةُ ‏"‏ ‏.‏ قَالُوا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ ‏.‏ قَالَ ‏"‏ ذِكْرُكَ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَكْرَهُ ‏"‏ ‏.‏ قِيلَ أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ فِي أَخِي مَا أَقُولُ قَالَ ‏"‏ إِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ مَا تَقُولُ فَقَدِ اغْتَبْتَهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ فَقَدْ بَهَتَّهُ ‏"‏ . م

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Do you know what is backbiting?" The Companions said: "Allah and His Messenger know better." Thereupon he said, "Backbiting is talking about your (Muslim) brother in a manner which he dislikes." It was said to him: "What if my (Muslim) 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." (Sahih Muslim)

Concerning Backbiting

In the Fifth Point of the First Ray of the First Light of the Twenty-Fifth Word, a single Qur’anic verse having the effect of discouraging and restraining was shown to induce repugnance at backbiting in six miraculous ways. It was shown too how abominable a thing is backbiting in the view of the Qur’an, and that there is therefore no need for any further explanation of the subject. Indeed, after the Qur’an has made its declaration, there is neither the possibility nor the need for anything further.

The Qur’an reproaches the backbiter with six reproaches in the verse:

Would any among you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?(49:12)

and forbids him to commit this sin with six degrees of severity. When the verse is directed to those persons actually engaged in backbiting, its meaning is the following.

As is well-known, the “hamza” at the beginning of the verse has an interrogative sense. This interrogative sense penetrates all the words of the verse like water, so that each word acquires an additional meaning. Thus the *first word* asks, with its “hamza:” “Is it that you have no intelligence capable of discrimination, so that you fail to perceive the ugliness of this thing?”

The *second word* “like” asks: “Is your heart, the seat of love and hatred, so corrupted that it loves the most repugnant of things?”

The *third word* “any among you” asks: “What befell your sense of social and civilized responsibility that you are able to accept something poisonous to social life?”

The *fourth word* “to eat the flesh” asks: “What has befallen your sense of humanity that you are tearing your friend apart with your fangs like a wild animal?”

The *fifth word* “of his brother” asks: “Do you have no fellow-feeling, no sense of kinship, that you are able to sink your teeth into some wretch who is tied to you by numerous links of brotherhood? Do you have no intelligence that you are able to bite into your own limbs with your own teeth, in such lunatic fashion?”

The *sixth word* “dead” asks: “Where is your conscience? Is your natureso corrupt that you abandon all respect and act so repugnantly as to consume your brother’s flesh?”

According then to the total sense of the verse, as well as the indications of each of its words, slander and backbiting are repugnant to the intelligence and the heart, to humanity and conscience, to nature and social consciousness.

You see then that the verse condemns backbiting in six miraculous degrees and restrains men from it in six miraculous ways. Backbiting is the vile weapon most commonly used by the people of enmity, envy, and obstinacy, and the self-respecting will never stoop to employing so unclean a weapon. Some celebrated person once said: “I never stoop to vexing my enemy with backbiting, for backbiting is the weapon of the weak, the low, and the vile.”

Backbiting consists of saying that which would be a cause of dislike and vexation to the person in question if he were to be present and hear it. Even if what is said is true, it is still backbiting. If it is a lie, then it is both backbiting and slander and a doubly loathsome sin.

Backbiting can be permissible in a few special instances:

*First*: If a complaint be presented to some official, so that with his help evil be removed and justice restored.

*Second*: If a person contemplating co-operation with another comes to seek your advice, and you say to him, purely for the sake of his benefit and to advise him correctly, without any self-interest: “Do not co-operate with him; it will be to your disadvantage.”

*Third*: If the purpose is not to expose someone to disgrace and notoriety, but simply to make people aware, and one says: “That foolish, confused man went to such-and-such a place.”

*Fourth*: If the subject of backbiting is an open and unashamed sinner; is not troubled by evil, but on the contrary takes pride in the sins he commits; finds pleasure in his wrongdoing; and unhesitatingly sins in the most evident fashion.

In these particular cases, backbiting may be permissible, if it be done without self-interest and purely for the sake of truth and communal welfare. But apart from them, it is like a fire that consumes good deeds like a flame eating up wood.

If one has engaged in backbiting, or willingly listened to it, one should say: “O God, forgive me and him concerning whom I spoke ill,” and say to the subject of backbiting, whenever one meets him: “Forgive me.”

[The Risale-iNur Collection/The Words/The Twenty-Fifth Word.]

***…We Should not be Involved in Backbiting, Defamation, Conflicts or Sedition:***

“Once there is a quake in a society, people start blaming each other for the sake of pinning the blame on others. If they have no basis for such claims, this is slander. Slander is two levels closer to the Hell than backbiting; where our noble Prophet identifies backbiting as “More violent than adultery.” Adultery is licentiousness; it is depravity and bohemianism, for which Islamic law has imposed severe punishments and taken extraordinary precautions against. Some types of backbiting are even more violent than adultery since they make vicious statements about someone when that person is not present, even if you tell the truth.

Something as simple as criticizing somebody’s clothes is considered backbiting in Islam; or making a comment about how someone trimmed their mustache is also backbiting. In this accord, making vicious statements about someone for their opinions, beliefs, attitudes, lifestyles, and so forth, are considered as violent backbiting. Finally, doing so about a group of people, or a leader who represents a group of people, is not equal to backbiting one person, but equal to backbiting several people. This means, unless such a backbiter asks for, and is granted, forgiveness by each individual in that group, the backbiter cannot enter the gate of Paradise.

Please be reminded that the comments above are not my personal opinions, but an Islamic rule. Again, such a backbiter is doomed even if he delivers Islam from annihilation. May God protect us from it. As mentioned before, backbiting and slander are like the aftershocks of such an earthquake; because, once this vicious circle starts, it is difficult for a true Muslim to not get involved. Fending off this cycle means such a person is considered a person of stature and high standing by the Guardian Angels and in the eyes of God.”

[by FethullahGülen on 12July 2013. Posted in Breezes of Revival]