



## BACKBITING

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 3

## الغيبة

### Objectives >>>

#### Students should:

- Understand what it means to backbite
- Be able to recognise backbiting
- Understand that backbiting (or listening to it) is forbidden in Islam
- Understand the consequences of backbiting in this world and the next
- Learn basic tips on avoiding backbiting

## BACKBITING

Abu Dhar, a very close companion of the Prophet, once asked the Prophet (SAW):

*“O Messenger of Allah, what is ghibah (backbiting)?”*

The Prophet (saw) replied:

*“It is to mention about your brother that which he detests”*

Abu Dhar asked:

*“O Messenger of Allah, what if that which is mentioned about a person is true?”*

To which the Prophet (saw) replied:

*“Know that when you mention that which is in him, you have committed ghibah (backbiting), and when you mention that which is not in him, then you have slandered him”<sup>i</sup>*

Backbiting means to talk negatively about someone when they are not there. If, for example, you tell your friend Ahmad about the faults of your other friend Ali when Ali is not present, then this is backbiting. The person saying these words and the person listening to them are both committing a sin.

### AVOIDING BACKBITING

Avoiding backbiting is one way of guarding the tongue. Just like minding the tongue, backbiting is not *only* physically talking and saying bad things behind someone’s back, but also includes when you say something about someone that they would not like on Facebook, email, Twitter etc...

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (SWT) tells us that the reality of backbiting is like eating your brother's flesh. So before we say anything negative about anyone, we should try to picture this reality and stop ourselves from saying these words.

*"...nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah..." (49:12)*

## BACKBITING LEADS TO HATRED



Backbiting creates many problems within families and communities. Many families break up and get involved in family conflict because of backbiting. Our communities often also face problems and break up because of backbiting.

Another consequence of backbiting which we learn from the Prophet (saw) is that when someone backbites, their good deeds are transferred to the person they have spoken badly about. Here is a story to help explain this a little better:

In the time of our first few Imams, there were two men; for the sake of the story let's call them Haroon and Khalid.

One day Khalid started telling everybody bad things about Haroon. After a few days Haroon heard about this. The first thing he did was to go home and put all his money and gold and silver in a big bag and then took the bag to Khalid's house.

When Khalid saw Haroon coming he became scared because he thought that Haroon had come to beat him up. Khalid came out of his house and fell on his knees and

begged to Haroon: 'O Haroon, I am really sorry, I did not mean to tell tales about you, O please do not beat me!'

Haroon said: 'I have not come to beat you, I have come to give you this money!'

Khalid stood up and asked: 'Why are you giving me wealth when I have insulted you and spoiled your name among the people?'

Haroon replied: 'The Holy Prophet (saw) has said that if one person backbites of another, the rewards of the first person gets transferred to the second.' he continued, "So now that you have spoken bad of me behind my back, I am thanking you for giving me all your Thawāb. This money is too little for the amount of Thawāb that you have given me.'

Think about it – is it worth losing all the rewards we have gained for our good actions because of our backbiting?

## PRACTICAL TIPS ON AVOIDING BACKBITING

- If you are going to a gathering/party try to pre-plan topics you are going to talk about. For example, talk about football, school, what you did during the holidays etc. When you pre-plan you will always find something to talk about rather than letting the conversation steer towards a conversation about someone else who is not there.
- If you are not the one backbiting but others around you are; then there are a few different ways this can be handled. Here are a few:
  - 1) Defend the person who is being criticised. For example, if you go to your friend's party and they are talking behind your other friend's back then try and stand up for your friend. This is the best option.
  - 2) Very politely tell the person talking that it is bad to talk about someone behind their back and that we should talk about something else. Remember to be polite and not insult him in front of others.
  - 3) Leave the gathering – unless we really cannot for e.g. we are with parents or we are in the car



## Class Activity

Think of ways you can avoid backbiting or being part of a gathering where backbiting is taking place. Brainstorm your ideas and then share it with the class so that we can all get ideas. <sup>ii</sup>

Remember, if Allah (SWT) wanted he could have shown our faults to people – however He conceals our faults. Therefore, in order to practice this attribute of Allah (SWT) let us try to stop backbiting and spreading other people's faults.

## Review Questions

### Q1. Ghībah or backbiting is:

- To say something about someone that is not true
- To say something about someone that they would not like us to say behind their back
- To insult someone to their face

### Q2. Saying something negative about someone on the internet is:

- Not backbiting
- Is an example of backbiting
- Is okay because we are not saying it physically

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#### <sup>ii</sup> Bibliography:

- <http://www.madressa.net/akhlaq/class-8/264-gheebat-a-tohmat-backbiting>

- <http://www.islamic-laws.com/backbiting.htm>
- <http://quran.al-islam.org/>
- <sup>ii</sup> <http://www.islamic-laws.com/backbiting.htm>