



GHIBAH IN ISLAM: MEANING, CONSEQUENCES, AND EXPLANATION OF THE HADITH “GHIBAH IS WORSE THAN ZINA”

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to present a clear interpretation of the Ghibah (backbiting) from Islamic perspective, the verses indicating its prohibition, Causes and their treatment, how the repentance of the backbiter (At-Taubah), and the explanation of the hadith “ghibah (backbiting) is worse than *zina* (adultery)”. This research uses the library research method with a descriptive analytical approach, which involves collecting data, considering Muslim scholar`s views and explanation of the hadith “*ghibah* (backbiting) is worse than *zina* (adultery)”. The study begins by explaining the definition of Ghibah from Islamic perspective, indicating verses of its prohibition, answering the question that “Is it permissible to listen to backbiting?” followed by causes of backbiting and how their treatment, the repentance of the backbiter (tawbah of the one who backbit others), and the explanation of the hadith “ghibah (backbiting) is worse than *zina* (adultery)”. The results of this study can be summarized into three main points: First: From several opinions of scholars which according to researchers can representative describing the definition of ghibah, it is as according to Imam Al-Ghazali that ghibah or backbiting as mentioning your sibling in a way he would not appreciate, even verbal backbiting concerning his appearance, family, personality, deeds, words, faith and life, alongside his garments, residence and mount. Second: Some common causes of backbiting are relieving anger, agreeing with peers and pleasing companions, the desire to elevate oneself by belittling others, joking and mockery, envy (*hasad*), deflecting blame or justifying oneself, excess free time and boredom, and seeking favor with superiors. Third: The hadith stating: “Backbiting is worse than adultery”, it is clear that the narration is extremely weak (*da‘if jiddan*) or even fabricated (*mawḍū‘*), according to several well-known hadith scholars. The hadith should not be used as evidence in legal or theological rulings due to its weakness, its message aligns with Islamic moral values. It reminds believers to control their speech, seek sincere repentance, and strive to avoid sins—especially those that harm others

Keyword: *Ghibah, Backbiting, Zina*

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menghadirkan penjelasan yang komprehensif mengenai *ghibah* (menggunjing) dalam perspektif Islam, ayat-ayat yang menunjukkan larangannya, faktor penyebab serta cara penanggulangannya, konsep tobat bagi pelaku *ghibah*, serta penjelasan mengenai hadis “*ghibah lebih buruk daripada zina*”. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis, yaitu dengan mengumpulkan data, mempertimbangkan pandangan para ulama, serta menjelaskan hadis yang dimaksud. Kajian ini diawali dengan uraian tentang definisi *ghibah* menurut perspektif Islam, kemudian dilanjutkan dengan penjelasan ayat-ayat yang menegaskan larangannya, pembahasan mengenai persoalan “apakah diperbolehkan mendengarkan *ghibah*?”, dilanjutkan dengan pemaparan penyebab *ghibah* dan cara menanggulanginya, konsep tobat bagi pelaku *ghibah*, serta analisis hadis “*ghibah lebih buruk daripada zina*”. Hasil penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan ke dalam tiga poin utama. Pertama, berdasarkan berbagai pendapat ulama yang dianggap representatif, definisi *ghibah* sebagaimana dijelaskan oleh Imam al-Ghazali adalah menyebut saudara sesama Muslim dengan hal-hal yang tidak disenanginya, baik berupa ucapan yang menyangkut fisik, keluarga, kepribadian, perbuatan, ucapan, keyakinan, kehidupan, maupun hal-hal lain yang berkaitan dengan pakaian, tempat tinggal, dan kendaraan. Kedua, beberapa faktor umum yang menjadi penyebab *ghibah* antara lain: melampiasikan amarah, mengikuti kehendak teman sebaya, mencari keridhaan sahabat, keinginan meninggikan diri dengan merendahkan orang lain, bercanda dan mengejek, rasa iri (*hasad*), menghindari kesalahan atau membela diri, memiliki waktu luang yang berlebihan, serta mencari simpati atasan. Ketiga, mengenai hadis yang menyatakan “*ghibah lebih buruk daripada zina*”, sejumlah ulama hadis menegaskan bahwa riwayat tersebut sangat lemah (*daʿif jiddan*) bahkan ada yang menilainya palsu (*mauḍūʿ*). Oleh karena itu, hadis ini tidak dapat dijadikan dasar hukum maupun akidah karena kelemahannya. Meskipun demikian, pesan moral yang terkandung di dalamnya tetap sejalan dengan nilai-nilai akhlak Islam, yakni mengingatkan umat beriman untuk menjaga lisan, bertobat dengan tulus, serta berusaha menjauhi dosa—khususnya dosa yang merugikan dan menyakiti orang lain.

Kata Kunci: *Ghibah, Hadis, Zina*

A. INTRODUCTION

In our daily lives, we often engage in conversations that concern other people—whether discussing their behaviour, shortcomings, or personal matters. Sometimes, we don’t realize that what we say actually constitutes an act prohibited in Islam, namely backbiting. Although it may seem trivial, backbiting can have significant consequences: damaging family



relationships, severing friendships, and even leading to the breakdown of marriages.

Islam views this practice very seriously. In the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the prohibition against backbiting is emphasized in strong language. Backbiting is not only a matter of individual sin, but also concerns the honor, rights of others, and social stability.

Islam takes this issue seriously. Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 12:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بََعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Meaning: “O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful”.

This verse illustrates how disgusting the act of backbiting is, to the point that Allah compares it to eating the flesh of one's own dead brother. This imagery should remind us of the devastating impact of backbiting, both spiritually and socially.

However, many in society still don't properly understand the difference between speaking the truth and backbiting. Some believe that if what is said is true, it is not backbiting. In fact, mentioning another person's true faults is what is called backbiting in Islam. Some believe that what they are doing is simply "telling a story" or "just commenting," when in fact, it is already considered backbiting according to Islamic law. Therefore, in this article, the author will attempt to explain in more detail what constitutes backbiting and what does not fall within its scope.

Furthermore, the author will also highlight a hadith that often raises questions among the public: the hadith stating that “backbiting is more serious than adultery”. Many are confused and doubtful about the truth and meaning of this hadith. Is it true that the sin of backbiting can exceed that of adultery? How can a verbal sin be considered more serious than the clearly grave sin of adultery? What is the validity of this hadith? And how do scholars explain it?

Based on this background, the author has compiled this article to comprehensively discuss backbiting: from its definition, forms, exceptions, causes, and how to overcome it, to an in-depth explanation of the hadith stating that backbiting is more serious than adultery.

It is hoped that this discussion will provide us with a better understanding of the nature of backbiting and serve as a reminder to be more careful in guarding our tongues and to refrain from seemingly minor acts that have significant spiritual and social impacts.

The following topics will be discussed in this article: Definition of backbiting (*Ghibah*), Islamic perspective on backbiting, Verses indicating the



prohibition of backbiting, Is it permissible to listen to backbiting, Causes of backbiting and their treatment, Matters that are not thought to be backbiting, but actually are, Cases where backbiting is permissible, Matters that should be observed (when backbiting is islamically permissible), The repentance of the backbiter (*tawbah* of the one who backbit others), Explanation of the hadith: (" الْغَيْبَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنْ الزِّنَا " : “Backbiting is more serious than adultery”) include The text of the hadith, the status of the hadith, and the explanation of the hadith (*sharḥ al-hadith*).

This study uses a library research method with a descriptive analysis approach. This approach was chosen because the main objective of the study is to present a clear interpretation of the *ghibah* (backbiting) from Islamic perspective, the verses indicating its prohibition, Causes and their treatment, how the repentance of the backbiter (Al-Taubah), and the explanation of the hadith “*ghibah* (backbiting) is worse than *zina* (adultery)”. In more detail, this study was conducted with the following steps: *first*, Formulating Research Problems: The researcher will identify and formulate the problems to be discussed in this study, namely regarding the meaning of backbiting (*ghibah*), Islamic perspective on backbiting, verses indicating the prohibition of backbiting, and answering the question whether is it permissible to listen to backbiting. *Second*, Determining the consequences of *Ghibah*: This study will discuss and classify the causes of backbiting and their treatment, matters that are not thought to be backbiting, but actually are, cases where backbiting is permissible, matters that should be observed (when backbiting is islamically permissible), and how the repentance of the backbiter (*tawbah* of the one who backbit others). *Third*, Explaining of the hadith: “*ghibah* is worse than *zina*”: the researches will demonstrate the text of the hadith from hadith books, the status of the hadith, and deep elaboration the hadith from Muslim scholar`s prespectives.

B. DISCUSSION

Definition of backbiting (*ghibah*)¹: -Linguistic Root: The Arabic term for backbiting is “*ghibah*” (الغيبه), which is derived from the root (غ-ي-ب) — the same root as “*ghayb*” (غيب), meaning unseen, absent, or hidden. This connection exists because backbiting involves mentioning someone in their absence — i.e., speaking about a person who is not present to defend themselves.

¹ Abdurrahman Bin Nashir Bin Abdullah As- Sa`di, *Taysir Al- Karim Ar-Rahman Fi Tafsir Al- Kalam Al-Mannan*, 2000; Abu Al-Muzaffar Manshur Bin Muhammad Bin Abdul Jabbar Ibnu Ahmad Al- Maruzy Wathan., *Tafsir Al- Quran*, 1st edn (Dar Al- Wathan, 1997); Abu Muhammad Makky Bin Abi Thalib Hammausi Al- Qairawani Syariqa., *Al- Hidayah Ila Bulugh An- Nihayah Fi `Ilm Ma`any Al- Quran* (Majmu`ah Buhuts Al-Kutub Wa As- Sunnah Kuliyah Syari`ah Wa Ad- Dirasat Al- Islamiyyah Jami`ah As-, 2008).



Ibn Manzur said: “Backbiting comes from “Al- Ightiyab” to (الاغتياب), which is speaking ill of someone behind their back. He views it as a kind of theft, but verbal and moral, which is done in the absence of the victim.

-Terminological Definition of Backbiting: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, defined it by saying: Do you know what backbiting is? They said: *Allah and His Messenger know best*. He said: It is to mention your brother in a way he dislikes. Someone asked: “What if what I say about my brother is true? The Prophet SAW replied: If what you say about him is true, then you have backbitten him. And if it is not true, then you have slandered him. It can be understood from this hadith that Backbiting (*ghibah*): Saying something true about someone *in their absence* that they would dislike and Slander (*buhtan*): Saying something *false* about someone ²

Here are The Scholars Definition of Backbiting: ³

Al Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani (رحمه الله) “They differ among themselves, what sometimes it is the definition of *Ghibah*.” He points out the common ground is the consensus to its prohibition; all express variations of its definition with different focal points. Al Raghīb al Asfahani defines backbiting as to relate to someone’s defect without a necessity of bringing it out. Ibn al-Athīra defines backbiting as speaking ill of someone in his absence regardless if the statement is factual. Imam Al Nawawī (رحمه الله) in *Al-Adhkar* states the definition of backbiting is mentioning a person in a way he does not like, because his body, religion, worldly affairs, self, character, behavior, wealth, children, wife, servant, clothes, movements, speech, any frowning gestures, referred in or out words or insinuation related to him.⁴

Furthermore, Imam al- Ghazali describes backbiting as mentioning your sibling in a way he would not appreciate, even verbal backbiting concerning his appearance, family, personality, deeds, words, faith and life, alongside his garments, residence and mount. Concerning the physique it would be saying blindness, squint, baldness, shortness, height, blackness, yellowness and the list goes on of any description that can be disliked. For character, it may be saying “He is ill mannered, miserly, arrogant, very angry, coward, weak hearted, reckless,” and like utterances. Concerning his religious practices, someone could say “He is a thief, a liar, a drinker or a traitor.” About his worldly acts: “He is ill mannered,” “He talks a lot, eats a lot,” or similar expressions. Regarding garments, one could state “He has wide sleeves, a long tail and dirty clothes”.⁵

Ibn al-Tin said: “Backbiting is when you talk about someone in a way they would not like, especially when they are not around” (Sa`id Bin `Ali Al-Qahthani, 1415). There are certain scholars who assert that there is no

² Abdullah Bin Muhammad Razy., *Al- Ghibah: Ahwaluha Wa Afatuha* (Dar al-Razy, 2007).

³ Mahmud Thahan, *Ilmu Hadist Praktis* (Thariqul Izzah, 2005), p. 1.

⁴ Sa`id Bin `Ali Al- Qahthani., *Afath Al-Lisan Fi Dhau`i Al- Kitab Wa As-Sunnah*, 5th edn (Riasah Idarat Al- Buhuts Al-Ilmiyyah, 1415).

⁵ Raja Taha Muhammad Ahmad, *Min Kunuz As- Sunnah Fi Al- Akhlak Wa As- Suluk Wa Al- Usrah*, 1st edn (Jami`ah Al- Azhar, 2002).



backbiting when it comes to religious matters, as it involves calling out what Allah Ta'ala (Almighty) has condemned. Thus, if one is doing a sin, one can react accordingly. This is testified to in a report in which a woman was brought to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him). Although she was most devout and practiced fasting, she would insult her neighbours with her tongue, and he said, "She is in the Fire." This was reported by Ibn Hibban and Al-Hakim. Al-Hasan underlined that referring to others is of three types: backbiting, slander, and falsehood, all of which are clarified within the Book of Allah Almighty. Backbiting is not just words alone; it can be done with gestures too, like pointing, winking, or even writing—anything that conveys a negative message about another person is backbiting, and it is totally prohibited.⁶

Islamic Perspective on Backbiting:

The Islamic view of backbiting is that it is forbidden in all situations. As noted by Imam al-Nawawi, there is scholarly consensus on this prohibition. Ibn Kathir elaborates on this by explaining backbiting is forbidden without exception apart from those instances where the benefit is apparent, like in criticism or commendation. Ibn Hajar added to al-Qurtubi's explanation by saying that backbiting is harmful to one's soul. Those who indulge in backbiting friends of God or scholars are not comparable to those who backbite ordinary people. Al-Hafiz Ibn Asakir said this as he referenced scholars in his introduction "Tabyeen Kadhb al-Muftara fi ma Nisab ila al-Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari" saying: "It is well-known how God uncovers the veils of those who seek to detract from Him". He also said in the same passage, forbidding this act, based on the Prophet's prohibition of *ghibah*: "Insulting the dead is a great wrong, and those who transgress this command should take heed that they may suffer a trial or a painful recompense." It is narrated in the hadith: "When the last of this nation curses the first of it, then whoever has knowledge should make it known, for keeping in silence on that day will be like keeping silent on what was revealed to Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him."⁷

Verses Indicating the Prohibition of Backbiting:

These are several verses that indicate the reasons for the prohibition of backbiting: ⁸

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بََعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيَحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ . (الحجرات: ١٢)

⁶ Ahmad, *Min Kunuz As- Sunnah Fi Al- Akhlak Wa As- Suluk Wa Al- Usrah*.

⁷ Razy., *Al- Ghibah: Ahwaluha Wa Afatuha*; Husein Al-`Uwaitsah., *Hashaid Al-Alsun*, 1st edn (Dar Ammar, 1989).

⁸ Razy., *Al- Ghibah: Ahwaluha Wa Afatuha*; Ahmad, *Min Kunuz As- Sunnah Fi Al- Akhlak Wa As- Suluk Wa Al- Usrah*; Qahthani., *Afath Al-Lisan Fi Dhau`i Al- Kitab Wa As- Sunnah*.



Meaning: “O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allāh; indeed, Allāh is Accepting of Repentance and Merciful”. (Al-hujurat: 12).

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ ۚ

Meaning: “Woe to every scorner and mocker”. (Al- Humazah: 1).

مَا يَلْفِظُ مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ (ق: ١٨)

Meaning: “He [i.e., man] utters no word except that with him is an observer prepared”. (Qaf: 18)

Is It Permissible To Listen To Backbiting?

It is not permissible to listen to backbiting. Our prophet Muhammad SAW forbade listening to it and ordered anyone who heard forbidden backbiting to refute it and denounce the speaker. If he is unable to do so or it is not accepted from him, then he should leave that gathering if he is able to.⁹

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا تَبْغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ: القصص: ٥٥.

Meaning: “And when they hear ill speech, they turn away from it and say, “For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace will be upon you; we seek not the ignorant”. (Al-Qashas: 55).

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا: الإسراء: ٣٦

Meaning: “And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned”. (Al- Isra: 36).

Asma bint Yazid said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Whoever defends the honor of his brother in his absence, Allah will have the right to free him from the Fire.” In another narration, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Whoever defends the honor of his brother in his absence, Allah will protect him from the Fire on the Day of Resurrection.” These two hadiths encourage us not to listen to backbiting and to defend those in their absence with kind and pleasant words so that Allah may reward us with the bliss of Paradise in the Hereafter and protect us from the torment of the fire.¹⁰

Imam al-Nawawi (may Allah be merciful to him) clarified: “Know that whoever hears someone backbiting a Muslim should respond to it and admonish the one who said it. If he is not able to admonish him with his tongue, he has to admonish him with his hand. If he is unable to admonish him with his hand or tongue, then he has to leave the gathering”. If he hears a person backbiting his sheikh or a man who has a right over him, or

⁹ Abu Al-Hasan Nuruddin Ali Bin Abu Bakar Bin Sulaiman Al- Haitsami Qudsy., *Majma` Az- Zawaid Wa Manba` Al- Fawaid* (Maktabah Al- Qudsy, 1994).

¹⁰ Ahmad, *Min Kunuz As- Sunnah Fi Al- Akhlak Wa As- Suluk Wa Al- Usrah*.



another righteous and virtuous person, then to pay more attention to what we have stated is all the more obligatory. Or in another manner Imam al-Nawawi explained the responding to backbiting are: *First*: Mandatory to confront: If you see someone backbiting, you must object—preferably verbally, something like: “Stop bad-mouthing your brother”. *Second*: Do something if talking won't work: if they won't halt, you must do something physically—e.g., cover their mouth or try to divert conversation. *Third*: Leave if you can't act: If neither speech nor action is feasible, leave the event at once.

Fourth: Greater seriousness if a righteous scholar is assaulted: If the victim is your shaykh (scholar), the one who has authority over you, or a righteous man, then you must take even stronger action—not merely with your words or physical might, but more determined to defend yourself or depart.

It was narrated from ‘Utbah (may Allah be pleased with him) in his long and famous hadith that he said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stood up to pray, and they said: Where is Malik ibn al-Dukhshin or Ibn al-Dukhshin? Some of them said: He is a hypocrite who does not love Allah and His Messenger. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Do not say that. Do you not see that he said: There is no god but Allah, seeking thereby Allah’s face? They said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He said: We only see his face and his advice to the hypocrites. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Allah has forbidden the Fire to anyone who says: There is no god but Allah, seeking thereby Allah’s face. And Also it was narrated from Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah and Abu Talhah (may Allah be pleased with them) that they said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: “There is no man who abandons a Muslim in a situation where his sanctity is violated and his honour is attacked, except that Allah will abandon him in a situation where he would like to be supported. And there is no man who supports a Muslim in a situation where his honour is attacked and his sanctity is violated, except that Allah will support him in a situation where he would like to be supported”.¹¹

Causes of Backbiting and Their Treatment:¹²

Backbiting—spreading defamation about a person in his absence—is spiritually and morally universally condemned in religious as well as moral doctrine as a very bad moral flaw. In Islam, backbiting is a major sin that poisons the soul, invites the anger of Allah Ta'ala, and injures people as well as communities. Apart from its religious aspect, backbiting damages one's relationships and causes the heart to become hard. Its causes need to be identified and appropriate remedies applied in order for individuals to grow up, repent sincerely, and nurture wholesome, spiritually conscious

¹¹ Qahtani., *Afath Al-Lisan Fi Dhaw'i Al- Kitab Wa As-Sunnah*.

¹² Al-`Uwaitsah., *Hashaid Al-Asun*.



society. Below are some common causes of backbiting, along with practical treatments based on self-purification and ethical reform: *First, Relieving Anger:* A person may be driven to backbite another when something has occurred that stirs up his anger. As his anger intensifies, he seeks relief by speaking ill of the one who caused it. The treatment: he should remember the words of Allah Ta'ala the Almighty:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ: آل عمران: ١٣٣

Meaning: “And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous”. (Al-Imran: 133).

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُطُومِ وَالْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ: آل

عمران: ١٣٤

Meaning: “Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people — and Allah loves the doers of good”. (Al-Imran: 134).

And he should reflect on the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “*Whoever suppresses his anger while being able to act upon it, Allah will call him before all of creation and allow him to choose from among the wide-eyed maidens of Paradise, and marry him to whomever he wishes*”.

Second, Agreeing with Peers and Pleasing Companions: A person may fall into backbiting by agreeing with their peers and supporting them in speaking ill of others, fearing that if they object, their friends may dislike or distance themselves from them. The treatment: the remedy is to remember the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “*Whoever seeks the pleasure of people at the cost of Allah’s displeasure, Allah will leave him to the people*”.

Third, The desire to elevate oneself by belittling others, such as saying, “So-and-so is ignorant and his understanding is weak”. One way to treat this is to believe that what is with Allah is better and more lasting, and that this servant may be better than you in the sight of Allah, the Almighty, and that you are a traitor who mentions him behind his back in a way that he dislikes, elevating him and lowering yourself in the sight of Allah, the Almighty. *Fourth, Joking and Mockery* A person may speak about others in a humorous way, imitating them to make people laugh. Do not forget—may Allah have mercy on you—the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him): “Woe to the one who tells lies to make people laugh. Woe to him, woe to him”.

Fifth, Envy (Hasad) Backbiting someone to lower them in people's hearts and lower their eyes, due to their high status and lofty position. Let the envious person reflect on the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): “Faith and envy cannot coexist in the heart of a servant”. Let the envious person remember that with this negligence, the envied person will be placed above him on the Day of Resurrection, not just in this world.



Sixth, Deflecting Blame or Justifying Oneself: When a man is accused of something and wants to disavow it, he mentions what he did to escape, or reminds someone else that he participated in the act, thus paving the way for his own excuse. He should have cleared himself of wrongdoing, not mentioned who did it or participated. *Seventh*, Excess Free Time and Boredom: When someone has too much free time and feels bored or weary, they may start talking about others—their faults and private matters. The treatment: The remedy is to fill one's time with acts of worship, obedience, learning, and beneficial knowledge. *Eighth*, Seeking Favor with Superiors: Appealing to employers and officials by criticizing those who work with him, in order to advance to a better position, or to be described as diligent, or something similar. The cure for this is for the Muslim to remember the verses and hadiths on provision and reflect upon them carefully, and to realize that what is with Allah cannot be attained through what Allah has forbidden.

Matters That Are Not Thought To Be Backbiting, But Actually Are¹³:

First, A person may say something negative about his brother. When advised against it, he responds, "I'm ready to say it in front of him!" This response is incorrect for several reasons: *First*: you have already mentioned something he dislikes behind his back. This is the very definition of backbiting. *Second*: your willingness to say it to his face is a separate issue and does not excuse talking about him behind his back. *Third*: there is no need to speak about him behind his back if you can say it to him directly. *Fourth*: you cannot be sure that he will forgive you for what you said. *Fifth*: real-life experience shows that this so-called "readiness" is often just a claim and a trick of Shaytan (Satan) to justify backbiting. *Fifth*, When someone says in a group, indirectly referring to another person, "We seek refuge in Allah from shamelessness," or "May Allah protect us from such things," they hint at someone else's faults in the form of a du'a (supplication). This combines criticism of the person with self-praise in a subtle and deceptive way. *Sixth*, Listening to backbiting with feigned surprise can also be harmful. For example, someone might say, "Wow! I didn't know he was like that!" or "I've only ever known him to be good—this surprises me!" or "May Allah protect us from such things!" Such remarks encourage the backbiter, confirm the gossip, and draw out more information. Even silence can be seen as approval, making the listener complicit in the sin.

Seventh, Saying things like "Some people," "Some scholars," or "One of those we've seen..." can lead to backbiting if the listener understands exactly who is being referred to. Even indirect references can be considered backbiting if the identity is known or suggested. *Eighth*, When someone is asked about another and says: "May Allah rectify us," or "May Allah forgive us," or "We ask Allah to guide him," these vague phrases often carry an implied blame or criticism. They suggest fault while pretending to be pious.

¹³ Al-`Uwaitsah., *Hashaid Al-Alsun*; Ahmad, *Min Kunuz As- Sunnah Fi Al- Akhlak Wa As- Suluk Wa Al- Usrah*.



Ninth, Saying, “So-and-so is afflicted just like we all are,” or “He can’t help it—we all do this,” appears to show humility but actually shifts blame to someone else. In doing so, the speaker commits three sins at once: backbiting, showing off, and self-praise, all while believing they are pious. *Tenth*, Using sarcastic titles like “His Excellency” or “The Honourable Gentleman” when the intent is clearly to mock or belittle can be considered backbiting. Context and tone reveal whether such titles are sincere or disrespectful.

Twelfth, Saying, “He’s just a child—you can backbite him,” is completely incorrect. There is no justification for backbiting based on age. The Qur'an and prophetic texts prohibiting backbiting apply to everyone, regardless of age, gender, or status. *Eleventh*, Being careless about backbiting sinners is wrong. It is not permissible to backbite someone simply because they have sinned. If that were the case, it would be allowed to backbite all Muslims, as everyone sins. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Every son of Adam sins, and the best of sinners are those who repent.” If we consider the Prophet’s words, “Backbiting is mentioning your brother with something he dislikes,” isn’t the sinner still your brother in faith? For those who allow this, we ask: Is the sinner’s blood or wealth lawful to you? Certainly not. Then why treat his honour as lawful? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Every Muslim’s blood, wealth, and honour are sacred.” *thirteenth*, Saying, “He’s Indian,” or “Egyptian,” or “Palestinian,” or “Jordanian,” or “non-Arab,” or “Arab,” or “Bedouin,” or “villager,” or “carpenter,” or “blacksmith,” with the intent to belittle or mock is considered backbiting. If the person saying it dislikes being labelled this way, then it falls under that definition. The guiding principle remains: “Backbiting is to mention your brother with something he dislikes.”

Cases Where Backbiting Is Permissible:

Imam al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Backbiting is allowed when there is a valid Islamic reason for it. Here are some of those cases¹⁴: *first*, Seeking Justice (Complaint of Oppression): A wronged person can complain to a ruler, judge, or anyone who has the authority or ability to help him get justice. He may say: “So-and-so has wronged me in this matter”. *Second*, Seeking Help to Remove an Evil or Correct a Wrongdoer: If someone is doing something wrong, it is allowed to mention their actions to someone who can stop it, such as by saying: “So-and-so does this; please advise or stop him”. This is only allowed if the intention is to stop the wrongdoing. If there is no such intention, then it is forbidden. *Third*, Seeking a Fatwa (Religious Ruling): A person may ask a mufti (Islamic scholar qualified to give legal opinions): “My father, or my brother, or my husband, or someone else has wronged me in this way. Is he allowed to do that? What is my right in this matter?” This is allowed when necessary. However, it is safer and better to ask the question anonymously, such as: “What is your

¹⁴ Ahmad, *Min Kunuz As- Sunnah Fi Al- Akhlak Wa As- Suluk Wa Al- Usrah*.



opinion about someone who did this?” This achieves the same purpose without naming the person, though naming is still allowed if needed.

Fifth, Warning Muslims and Offering Advice (Naseehah): This is allowed in several situations, such as: Criticizing unreliable narrators or witnesses: This is unanimously permitted by scholars and even required when necessary; Consultation about marriage, partnership, business dealings, or neighborhood: If someone asks about another person’s character or reliability, one must mention the faults honestly if it is for the sake of advice; If a person is in a position of authority but is not fit for it: Whether due to incompetence or corruption, it is required to inform someone who can replace him or take necessary action—or to warn others so they are not deceived and can deal with him accordingly. This can also encourage the person to improve or be replaced with someone more suitable; Public Sinner or Open Innovator (Mujahir): If someone publicly commits sins or innovations—such as openly drinking alcohol, unjustly collecting money, or holding invalid positions—it is allowed to talk about what he does publicly. However, it is not allowed to mention other faults that are not publicly known; Identification Purposes: If a person is known by a nickname or title like “the blind one,” “the deaf one,” “the lame one,” “the squint-eyed one,” etc., it is okay to use those terms for identification—not for mockery or insult. If it is possible to identify him without using such terms, that is better.

Matters That Should Be Observed (When Backbiting Is Islamically Permissible) (Husein Al-`Uwaitsah, 1989): Sincerity of Intention: Ensure your intention is purely for the sake of Allah. Do not misuse the allowance of backbiting in certain cases to express personal anger, seek revenge, or belittle your fellow Muslim; Maintain Anonymity When Possible: Try not to mention the person’s name if you can. Anonymity is better whenever possible. Refrain from naming the individual if you can achieve your goal without it. Speaking in general terms is preferable when it serves the same purpose; Limit to What Is Necessary and True: Only mention what is true and relevant to the situation. Do not let your ego take over by listing faults beyond what is necessary; Assess the Outcome: Make sure that the harm of speaking does not outweigh the intended benefit. Consider the consequences carefully to avoid causing a larger problem.

The Repentance Of The Backbiter (Tawbah Of The One Who Backbit Others):

Repenting for backbiting a fellow Muslim requires genuine efforts to fix the damage done. If it is safe and possible, the backbiter should ask for forgiveness directly from the person he wronged. However, if this might cause more harm, conflict, or hostility, he should instead make amends by speaking positively about the wronged person in the same gatherings where he spoke negatively and defending their honour as much as he can.¹⁵

¹⁵ Qahtani., *Afath Al-Lisan Fi Dhau`i Al- Kitab Wa As-Sunnah*.



According to the majority of scholars, the correct path to repentance for a backbiter includes: Stopping the sin immediately; Deciding never to commit it again, and Feeling genuine regret for having done it (some scholars believe this is necessary for a valid repentance).

There is disagreement among scholars about whether informing the person who was backbitten is mandatory. Some scholars believe it is not required, especially if it would cause that person further harm or distress. In these situations, the backbiter should compensate by: Honestly praising the individual in the same settings where the backbiting happened, and Actively defending him in future discussions to make up for the previous harm done.

This approach reflects the main principles of Islamic repentance: sincerity, reform, and the desire to restore justice without causing further harm.¹⁶ It is also mentioned in the book “Al-Ghibah Wa Ahwaluha Wa Afatuha” that backbiting, like all other major sins, requires repentance, which is a religious obligation.

Allah Ta`ala the Almighty says:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَعْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (النور: ٣١)

Meaning: “And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed”. (Surah An-Nur: 31)

Sincere Repentance (At-Tawbah An-Nasuh) Requires Fulfilling These Conditions: Regret (An-Nadam): Regret is repentance. Abu al-Jawza' said: “By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the expiation for sin is sincere regret.”; Abandoning the Sin: Ibn al-Qayyim said: “True repentance is impossible if one continues to commit the sin”; Firm Resolve Not to Return:

¹⁶ Ibrahim Muhammad Al- Jamal, *Amradh An-Nufus*, 1st edn (Dar Al- Kitab Al-`ARABI, 1985).



It was narrated from al-Nu'man ibn Bashir that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said regarding the verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم مِّنْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Meaning: "O you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincere repentance. It may be that your Lord will remove from you your misdeeds and admit you into gardens beneath which rivers flow on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will proceed before them and on their right; they will say, 'Our Lord, perfect for us our light and forgive us. Indeed, You are over all things competent'. (At- Tahrim: 8). He said: "It is the man who commits a sin and then does not return to it" (Abdullah Bin Muhammad, 2007).

Explanation Of The Hadith: "الْغِيْبَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزِّنَا":

The Text Of The Hadith:

Below are the exact wording of the hadith as found in the classical hadith sources:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَبِي أُيُوبَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَصْبَاطُ، عَنْ أَبِي رَجَاءٍ الْخُرَّاسَانِيِّ، عَنْ عَ بَادِ بْنِ كَثِيرٍ، عَنْ الْجُرَيْرِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي نَضْرَةَ، عَنْ جَابِرٍ، وَأَبِي سَعِيدٍ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: « إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغِيْبَةَ؛ فَإِنَّ الْغِيْبَةَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزِّنَا، إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ يَزْنِي فَيَتُوبُ فَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ، وَإِنَّ صَاحِبَ الْغِيْبَةِ لَا يُعْفَرُ لَهُ حَتَّىٰ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ»

Meaning: "Narrated by: 'Abdullāh said: Yahyā ibn Ayyūb narrated to us, Asbāt narrated to us, from Abū Rajā' al-Khurāsānī, from 'Abbād ibn Kathīr, from al-Jurayrī, from Abū Naḍrah, from Jābir and Abū Sa'īd (may Allah be pleased with them), who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Beware of backbiting, for indeed backbiting is worse than adultery. A man may commit adultery and then repent, and Allah will accept his repentance. But the one who engages in backbiting will not be forgiven until the person he backbit forgives him"¹⁷

أخبرنا أبو سعيد عبد الله بن محمد بن عبد الوهاب الرازي. بمرو، أنبا أبو يعقوب يوسف بن عاصم بن عبد الله البزاز الرازي، ثنا أبو علي الحسن بن قزعة الباهلي، ثنا أسباط بن محمد، ثنا أبو رجاء الخراساني، عن عباد بن

¹⁷ Abu Fadhl Zainuddin Abdurrahim, *Al- Mughny An Haml Al- Asfar Fi Al- Asfar Fi Takhrij Ma Fi Al- Ihya Min Al-Akhbar*, ed. by Al- Iraqi (Dar Ibnu Hazm); Ibnu Abi Ad- Dunya Abu Bakar Abdullah Bin Muhammad., *Dzam Al-Ghibah Wa An- Namimah*, 1st edn (Maktabah Al- Muayyad, 1992); Ibnu Abi Dunya Abu Bakar Abdullah Bin Muhammad., *Al- Shumt Wa Adab Al-Lisan*, 1st edn (Dar Al- Kitab Al- Arabi, 1410); Jalaluddin al-Mahally and Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti, 'Tafsir Jalalain'.



كثير، عن الحريري، عن أبي نضرة، عن جابر بن عبد الله ١ لأنصاري رضي الله عنه قال : قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: (إياكم والغيبة فإن الغيبة أشد من الزنا، فكيف الغيبة أشد من الزنا؟ قال : إن الرجل قد يزني فيتوب فيتوب الله عليه، وإن صاحب الغيبة لا يغفر له حتى يغفر له صاحبه).

Meaning: Narrated by Abū Sa'īd 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Rāzī in Merv: Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf ibn 'Āsim ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Bazzāz al-Rāzī informed us, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn Qaz'ah al-Bāhilī narrated to us, Asbāṭ ibn Muḥammad narrated to us, from Abū Rajā' al-Khurāsānī, from 'Abbād ibn Kathīr, from al-Ḥarīrī, from Abū Naḍrah, from Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Beware of slandering others (backbiting), for indeed backbiting is worse than adultery". They asked, "O Messenger of Allah, how is backbiting worse than adultery?" He replied: "A man may commit adultery and then repent, and Allah will accept his repentance. But the one who commits backbiting will not be forgiven until the person he backbit forgives him".

أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْحَافِظُ، أَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الصَّيْدَلَانِيِّ، نَا أَبُو يَعْقُوبَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الصُّنَابِحِيِّ، أَنَا أَبُو مُحَمَّدٍ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الْمُبَارَكِ، نَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ الْعَسِيلُ الْبَغْدَادِيُّ، نَا الْحَسَنُ بْنُ قُرْعَةَ الْبَاهِلِيِّ، نَا أَسْبَاطُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، قَالَ : وَنَا أَبُو رَجَاءِ الْخُرَّاسَانِيُّ، عَنْ عَبْدِ بْنِ كَثِيرٍ ، عَنْ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ الْجُرَيْرِيِّ، ح، وَأَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْحَافِظُ، أَنَا أَبُو بَكْرٍ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْقَاسِمِ بْنِ أَبِي حَيَّاةٍ الْبَطَّائِيُّ، نَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو بْنِ مَعْقِلٍ، نَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ حِدَاشٍ، نَا أَسْبَاطُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ ، نَا أَبُو رَجَاءِ الْخُرَّاسَانِيُّ، عَنْ عَبْدِ بْنِ كَثِيرٍ، عَنْ الْجُرَيْرِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي نَضْرَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي سَعْدٍ، وَجَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : الْغَيْبَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزَّانَا ، قَالُوا : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَكَيْفَ الْغَيْبَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزَّانَا؟ قَالَ : إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَزْنِي فَيَتُوبُ فَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ . وَفِي رِوَايَةِ حَمْزَةَ فَيَتُوبُ فَيَغْفِرُ لَهُ، وَإِنَّ صَاحِبَ الْغَيْبَةِ لَا يُغْفَرُ لَهُ حَتَّى يَغْفِرَهَا لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ لَيْسَ فِي رِوَايَةِ إِسْحَاقَ ذِكْرُ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، ذَكَرَهُ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ وَحْدَهُ.

Meaning: "Narrated by Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ: Aḥmad ibn Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ṣayḍalānī informed us, Abū Ya'qūb Ismā'īl ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣunābiḥī narrated to us, Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak narrated to us, Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq al-Anṣārī al-Ghasīl al-Baghdādī narrated to us, al-Ḥasan ibn Qaz'ah al-Bāhilī narrated to us, Asbāṭ ibn Muḥammad narrated to us, and Abū Rajā' al-Khurāsānī narrated from 'Abbād ibn Kathīr, from Sa'īd, from al-Jurayrī. And Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ also reported): Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim ibn Abī Ḥayyah al-Baṭā'ī informed us, Aḥmad ibn 'Amr ibn Ma'qil narrated to us, Muḥammad ibn Khidāsh narrated to us, Asbāṭ ibn Muḥammad narrated to us, Abū Rajā' al-Khurāsānī narrated from 'Abbād ibn Kathīr, from al-



Jurayri, from Abū Naḍrah, from Abū Sa'd and Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh — they said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Backbiting is worse than adultery". They asked: "O Messenger of Allah, how is backbiting worse than adultery?" He replied: "A man may commit adultery, then repent, and Allah will accept his repentance."

But the one who engages in backbiting will not be forgiven until the one he spoke against forgives him". In the narration from Ḥamzah, the wording is: "He repents, and Allah forgives him. But the one who commits backbiting will not be forgiven until the person he backbit forgives him." Note: In the narration of Ishāq, Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh is not mentioned; it is only attributed to Abu Sa'id alone¹⁸

وَأَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْحَافِظُ، أَنَا أَبُو النَّيْسَابُورِيِّ، نَا عِيسَى بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، نَا الْعَبَّاسُ بْنُ مُصْعَبٍ، نَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ جَبِيلٍ أَبُو حَاتِمٍ، عَنْ سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ ابْنِ الْمُبَارَكِ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ السَّجْزِيِّ، عَنْ رَجُلٍ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: «الْغِيْبَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزَّنا، فَإِنَّ صَاحِبَ الزَّنا يُتُوبُ، وَصَاحِبَ الْغِيْبَةِ لَا يُسَلِّحُ لَهُ تَوْبَةٌ».

Meaning: Narrated by Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ: Abū al-Naysābūrī informed us, 'Isā ibn Muḥammad narrated to us, al-'Abbās ibn Muṣ'ab narrated to us, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Jamīl Abū Ḥatīm narrated to us, from Salamah, from Ibn al-Mubārak, from 'Abd Allāh al-Sijzī, from a man, from Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him), from the Prophet ﷺ who said: "Backbiting is worse than adultery. For the one who commits adultery may repent, but the one who engages in backbiting has no repentance"¹⁹

وَعَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ قَالَا: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - : «الْغِيْبَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزَّنا . فَقِيلَ : وَكَيْفَ؟ قَالَ : الرَّجُلُ يَزْنِي ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ، فَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ».

Meaning: "Narrated by Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh and Abū Sa'id al-Khudrī (may Allah be pleased with them both): They said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Backbiting is more severe than adultery". It was said: "How is that?" He ﷺ replied: "A man may commit adultery, then repent, and Allah accepts his repentance"²⁰

عن أبي نضرة، عن جابر بن عبد الله وأبي سعيد الخدري قالا: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «إياكم والغيبة، فإن الغيبة أشد من الزنا»، قيل: يا رسول الله، وكيف الغيبة أشد من الزنا؟ قال: «الرجل يزني فيتوب فيتوب الله عليه، وإن صاحب الغيبة لا يغفر له حتى يغفر له صاحبه». ولفظ ابن مندة: «التوبة من الزنا أيسر من التوبة من الغيبة، إن صاحب الزنا إذا تاب تاب الله عليه، وصاحب الغيبة لا توبة له حتى يأتي صاحبه»

¹⁸ Ahmad Bin Al- Husein Bin Ali Al- Khusrawjirdi Al- Khurasan Rusydi., *Syab Al- Iman*, 1st edn (Maktabah Rusydi, 2003).

¹⁹ Rusydi., *Syab Al- Iman*.

²⁰ Qudsy., *Majma' Az- Zawaid Wa Manba' Al- Fawaid*.



فَيَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُ». وفي الطيوريات: «الغيبَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزَّنا»، قالوا: وكيف؟ قال «إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ يَتُوبُ فَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ، وَإِنَّ صَاحِبَ الْغِيْبَةِ لَا يُغْفَرُ لَهُ حَتَّى يَغْفِرَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ».

Meaning: “Narrated from Abu Nadrah, from Jabir ibn Abdullah and Abu Sa’id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with them both): The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Beware of backbiting, for indeed backbiting is more severe than adultery”. It was said: “O Messenger of Allah, how is backbiting more severe than adultery?” He ﷺ replied: “A man commits adultery and then repents, and Allah accepts his repentance. But the one who backbites is not forgiven until the one he backbit forgives him”. According to the wording of Ibn Manda: “Repentance from adultery is easier than repentance from backbiting. When the adulterer repents, Allah accepts his repentance, but the backbiter has no repentance until he goes to the one he backbit and asks for forgiveness”. In the At-Thuyuriyyah narration, it is said: “Backbiting is more severe than adultery” They asked: “How?” He said: “The man repents and Allah accepts his repentance, but the backbiter is not forgiven until the one he backbit forgives him” ²¹

The Status Of The Hadith:

Evaluating the authenticity of a hadith is a key part of Islamic scholarship, especially when it deals with serious ethical issues, like the well-known report: “Backbiting is more severe than adultery.” Although this hadith often appears in sermons and moral discussions, its authenticity has come under scholarly question. Many hadith scholars, known as ‘ulama’ al-hadith, have looked into its chain of transmission (isnad) and the trustworthiness of its narrators. Some have labelled the hadith as weak or even fabricated because of concerns about specific transmitters who are known for unreliable reporting. In this section, we will examine the different scholarly evaluations regarding the reliability and classification of this hadith, referencing views from both classical and contemporary hadith authorities. Below are the assessments of notable hadith scholars regarding the reliability and classification of this hadith:

In Al-Mu’jam al-Awsat, al-Tabarani (Abu al-Qasim Sulayman ibn Ahmad) notes that this hadith was transmitted from al-Jurayri only through ‘Abbad ibn Kathir, and was exclusively narrated by Abu Raja al-Khurasani. Additionally, this narration is only reported from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through this particular chain.²²

²¹ Nabil Sa’aduddin Salim Jarrar Salaf., *Al-Ilma Ila Zawaid Al- Amali Wa Al-Ajza*, 1st edn (Adwa Salaf, 2007).

²² Sulayman ibn Ahmad Ibn Aiyub ibn Mathar Abu Al-Qasim Al-Thabraniy, *Al-Mu’jam Al-Kubra*, ed. by Hamdiy ibn Abd al-Majid Al-Salafiy, 2nd edn (Maktabah Al-’Ulum wa al-Hikam, 1983).



Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Asbahani stated in his book "Al-Lata'if min Daqa'iq al-Ma'arif fi 'Uloom al-Huffaz al-A'arif": "This is a ghareeb (isolated/rare) hadith. I do not know it in this form except through this chain. It was narrated by Abu Raja' 'Abdullah ibn Waqid al-Harawi from 'Abbad, who reported it from Jābir and Abu Sa'id (may Allah be pleased with them both) from the Prophet ﷺ"²³.

Al-'Iraqi mentioned that this hadith (about backbiting being worse than adultery) was reported by several scholars, including Ibn Abi al-Dunya in his book *As-Samt* (Silence), Ibn Hibban in his book on weak narrators (*al-Du'afa'*), and Ibn Marduwayh in his *Tafsir* (Qur'anic commentary). The author also noted that: Ibn Abi al-Dunya included the hadith in his book *Dhamm al-Ghibah* (Condemnation of Backbiting), and Abu al-Shaykh al-Asbahani mentioned it in *At-Tawbikh* (Rebuke). Furthermore, al-Tabarani narrated it from Jabir alone, using the same wording: "Backbiting is worse than adultery." However, the hadith's chain of narration includes 'Abbad ibn Kathir, whom hadith scholars consider unreliable and have abandoned (*matruk*) as a source. Because of this, the hadith is termed very weak or even unacceptable.²⁴

Ibn al-Qaysarani said: "Backbiting is worse than adultery": this hadith includes 'Abbad ibn Kathir al-Kahili, who is a rejected narrator. It was narrated by 'Abbad ibn Kathir al-Kahili from al-Hasan, from Abu Nadrah, from Jabir and Abu Sa'id. Since 'Abbad is a rejected narrator, the hadith is abandoned"²⁵

In the book "Al-Tuyurat", it is narrated that Ahmad told us, Ja'far told us, 'Abdullah told us, Yahya told us, Asbat ibn Muhammad told us, and Abu Raja al-Khurasani narrated from 'Abbad ibn Kathir, who narrated from al-Jurayri, from Abu Nadrah, from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah and Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with them). They reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Backbiting is worse than adultery." They asked, "How is that?" He replied, "A man commits adultery and then repents, and Allah accepts his repentance. But the one who commits backbiting will not be forgiven until the person he has wronged forgives him". Regarding Abu Raja al-Khurasani, Ibn Hibban said in his biography that he was from Basra and narrated from Thabit al-Banani, but is known to report from unreliable transmitters, distort chains, and elevate suspended reports. Al-'Aqili described him as 'Abdullah ibn al-Fadl al-Khurasani, a denier of hadith. 'Abbad ibn Kathir al-Thaqafi al-Basri lived in the 7th century AH and died after forty. Ibn Ma'in rated his narrations as weak and with little significance. Well-known scholars like 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak,

²³ Abu al-Qasim Isma'il ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Fadhal al-Ashbahaniy Al-Taimiy, *Al-Tarhib Wa Al-Tarhib*, 1st edn (Dar al-Hadith, 1993).

²⁴ A. R. H. Al-'Iraqi, *Al-Tabsirah Wa Al-Tazkirah Fi 'Uloom Al-Hadis; Alfiah Al-'Iraqi*, III (Maktabah al-Malak Fahd, 2021).

²⁵ Abu Fadhl Muhammad Bin Thahir Bin Ali Bin Ahmad Al-Maqdasy As-Syaibani Ibnu Al-Qaisarani, *Tazkirah Al-Huffaz* (Dar As-Shami, 1994); Abū al-Fadhl Muhammad ibn Tāhir al-Maqdisi, *Shurūth Al-A'immat Al-Sittah* (Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1984).



al-Thawri, and Shu'bah warned against trusting narrations from him. Abu Hatim also found his narrations weak. Both Al-Bukhari and An-Nasa'i abandoned his hadith, while al-Daraqutni and Ibn Hajar considered it weak or abandoned. Ahmad ibn Hanbal said he narrated fabricated hadiths. Al-Jurayri is Sa'id ibn 'Iyas al-Jurayri, and Abu Nadrah is Al-Mundhir ibn Malik ibn Qut'ah, known by his nickname. The hadith is very weak because it includes both Abu Rajā' al-Khurasani and 'Abbad ibn Kathīr, who are both unreliable narrators. The chain relies heavily on 'Abbād ibn Kathīr al-Thaqafi al-Basri, who is rejected. Therefore, this hadith is considered extremely weak because of significant weaknesses in its chain of transmission. Al-Haythami pointed out in *Al-Majma'* (8/91-92) that the hadith was narrated by al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat* and includes 'Abbad ibn Kathir al-Thaqafi, who is rejected.²⁶

In the book *Da'eef al-Jami' al-Sagheer wa Ziyadatuhu*, Imam Al-Albani ruled that the hadith states: "Beware of backbiting, for backbiting is more severe than adultery. A man may commit adultery and then repent, and Allah accepts his repentance; however, the one who commits backbiting will not be forgiven unless the person he backbites forgives him." Imam Al-Albani classified this hadith as weak (*Dha'if*).²⁷

In conclusion, after reviewing the various evaluations and explanations from hadith scholars about this narration, we conclude that the hadith has significant weaknesses in its chain of transmission. Many authorities classify it as weak (*da'eef*), while some consider it fabricated (*mawdu'*). Thus, even though it conveys important ethical lessons, its authenticity is doubtful and should be approached with caution in scholarly discussions.

Explanation of The Hadith (*Syarh Al-Hadith*):

This hadith is not often detailed in classical commentaries. However, there is a significant explanation in *Fayḍ al Qadir Sharḥ al Jami' al Ṣaghir* by 'Abd al Ra'uf al Munawi al Qahiri. He interprets the Prophet's warning, "Beware of backbiting," as including any mention of someone's faults when they are not present. This includes words, gestures, mimicry, and even thoughts, as emphasized in *Iḥya' 'Ulum al Din* by al Ghazali. The hadith continues, stating, "Backbiting is more severe than adultery," which refers to the greater spiritual harm caused by backbiting. The Prophet explains that a person who commits adultery may sincerely repent and have their sin forgiven by Allah. In contrast, the person who engages in backbiting will not be forgiven unless the victim of the backbiting forgives them. This requirement makes seeking forgiveness much harder. An example involves

²⁶ Abu Abdurrahman Muhammad Nashuruddin Al-Asyqudary Al- Bany Islamy., *Dhaif Al- Jami' As- Shagir Wa Ziyadatuh* (Al-Maktabah Al-Islamy); Abu Bakar Ahmad Bin Marwan Ad-Dinury Al- Maliki Hazm, *Al- Mujalasah Wa Jawahir Al- Ilm* (Dar Ibnu Hazm, 1419).

²⁷ Muhammad Nasir al-Din Al-Albani, *Silsilah Al-Ahadith Al-Dha'ifah Wa Al-Mawdu'ah Wa Athruha Al-Sai'iy Fi Al-Ummah*, 1st edn (Dar al-Ma'arif, 1992).



Ibn Jalla, who once backbit a companion. When asked to seek forgiveness from the person he wronged, he refused, saying: “There is no good deed in my record more beloved to me than this—why would I erase it?” This illustrates the ironic tragedy of backbiting: the sinner may unknowingly give away their good deeds to the person they harmed. Al Ghazali compares backbiting to a destructive force that obliterates one's righteous deeds, as if launching them away like a catapult. He recounts how Ḥasan al Basri once sent a tray of dates to someone who had spoken poorly of him, stating: “You have gifted me some of your good deeds, and I wish to repay you.” Al Mubarak reportedly remarked: “If I had to backbite anyone, I would choose my mother—she is the most deserving of my good deeds.” Al Ghazali also reflects on the irony of people who spend their days speaking ill of others, unaware of the serious implications of the Prophet’s words. He advises that for those who cannot hold their tongues, isolation is better than socializing while sinning; patience in solitude is easier than controlling one’s speech in company. Lastly, Imam al Qurtubi confirms that scholars agree: backbiting is a major sin (kabirah), not a minor one.²⁸

Many people wonder if backbiting is a more serious sin than adultery. In response, Shaykh ‘Atiyyah Saqr (may Allah have mercy on him), former head of the Fatwa Committee at al-Azhar al-Sharif, stated: In “Al-Tarhib wa al-Tarhib” by Al-Hafiz Al-Mundhiri, it is narrated from Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah and Abu Sa’id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with them both) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Backbiting is worse than adultery.” When they asked, “How is that so?” He replied: “A man may commit adultery, then repent, and Allah accepts his repentance. But the one who engages in backbiting will not be forgiven until the person he backbit forgives him.” This narration was recorded by Ibn Abi al-Dunya in his book “Dhamm al-Ghibah” (Condemnation of Backbiting), by al-Ṭabarani in his Mu‘jam al-Awsaṭ, and by al-Bayhaqi. Al-Bayhaqi also narrated a version from an unnamed man on the authority of Anas. Additionally, a version from Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah is narrated without attributing it directly to the Prophet (i.e., it is mawquf, not marfu’), which is more likely to be accurate. This shows that the hadith is not confirmed as a direct saying of the Prophet ﷺ and is probably from the sayings of some Companions, meant as a strong warning and moral guide. The idea that backbiting is not forgiven until the victim pardons the wrongdoer also applies to adultery when it occurs through coercion or assault. In such cases, forgiveness is not granted until the victim or their guardian forgives. In conclusion, all sins, whether minor or major, should be avoided. There should be no complacency

²⁸ Zainuddin Muhammad Abdurrauf Bi n Taj Al- ‘Arifin Bin ‘Ali Bin Zainal Abidin Al-Haddad. (1356). Faydh Al- Qadir Syarh Al- Jami As- Shaghir (1st ed.). Al- Maktabah At-Tijariyah Al- Kubra., *Faydh Al-Qadir Syarh Al- Jami As- Shaghir*, 1st edn (Al- Maktabah At-Tijariyah Al- Kubra, 1356).



in distinguishing between “small” and “big” sins. Every sin has its own conditions for sincere repentance, especially major sins.²⁹

One must also be cautious, as continuing in a minor sin can elevate it to the level of a major one. It has been suggested that the severity of backbiting compared to adultery is not absolute but relative. Specifically, sincere internal repentance from adultery, when it meets all its conditions (such as remorse for the sin, immediate cessation, and a firm resolve not to return to it, occurring before death or sunrise from the west), can be enough to erase the sin of adultery on its own. However, in the case of backbiting, even if a person meets all these internal conditions of repentance, they are not enough to cancel the sin. The person must also seek forgiveness from the one they backbit and gain their pardon. Therefore, backbiting is viewed as more severe in this particular aspect, though not in an absolute sense.

Accordingly, the hadith does not contradict the correct view. From this, we learn that repentance for adultery does not require seeking the pardon of others. This is affirmed by various leading scholars. Nonetheless, adultery still falls under the category of violations of human rights. It directly impacts personal honour and lineage. When scholars say that adultery does not involve the rights of others, they mean that it typically does not involve material rights like wealth or property. The fact that seeking forgiveness is not required does not mean that it is not a sin involving human rights in general. Rather, seeking pardon is not required in adultery because of potential harm from disclosing it—such as increased disgrace or the likelihood that a spouse or relative might be driven to commit murder upon hearing of it. Given these risks, how can we say that confession is required? This was stated by Imam al-Ghazali in his book “Minhaj Al-`Abidin. He discussed this in detail, and al-Adhra`i (a later scholar) stated: “This view is both profound and precise.” When it comes to sins committed within sacred realms (Haram), if someone wrongs another’s family or children, there is no justification for public confession or direct requests for forgiveness, as that would cause greater harm and resentment. Instead, one should ask Allah to make the wronged person pleased and to reward them abundantly. If a person is sure that no harm or fitnah will arise from disclosure—and this is rare—then seeking pardon from the wronged individual becomes appropriate.³⁰

After carefully examining the hadith stating, “Backbiting is worse than adultery,” it is clear that the narration is extremely weak (Dha`if Jiddan) or even fabricated (Mawduhu) according to several well-known hadith scholars. Among them is Imam al-Albani, who classified it as weak in his work *Dha`if al-Jami`*, and al-Saghani, who labeled it as fabricated. The main narrators—‘Abbad ibn Kathir and Abu Raja al-Khurasani—have been widely

²⁹ July). Hal Tu`tabar Al- Ghibah Asyaddu Jarman Min Az- Zina? <https://www.alwafd.news/2749663>. www.alwafd.news. (2025, ‘No Title’, *Hal Tu`tabar Al- Ghibah Asyaddu Jarman Min Az- Zina?*, 2025 <<https://www.alwafd.news/2749663>>).

³⁰ Al- Alusi, *Tafsir Ruh Al- Ma`ani* (Al- Alusi. (2025, July). *Tafsir Ruh Al- Ma`ani*. www.altafsir.com, 2025) <www.altafsir.com>.



criticized for being unreliable and for narrating rejected or fabricated reports. However, despite the weakness of the chain of narration, the conceptual meaning of the hadith has been discussed by various scholars. In Fayd al-Qadir, al-Munawi and others explained that backbiting can be seen as more serious than adultery in certain ways—especially due to its social and ethical consequences and the challenge of achieving forgiveness. While adultery is a major sin, a person can sincerely repent and be forgiven by Allah. In contrast, backbiting infringes on another person's rights, and forgiving is only complete when the victim also forgives. Thus, this hadith, while not authentic in its isnad (chain of transmission), can still serve as a valuable ethical reminder. It highlights the serious moral implications of backbiting and the importance of safeguarding others' honor. This adheres to broader Islamic teachings that uphold individual dignity and stress the significance of sins that involve the rights of fellow human beings (Huquq Al-'Ibad). In conclusion, while the hadith should not be used as evidence in legal or theological rulings due to its weakness, its message aligns with Islamic moral values. It reminds believers to control their speech, seek sincere repentance, and strive to avoid sins—especially those that harm others.

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