

# GHEEBAH A SUBTLE YET LETHAL SIN

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## What is Gheebah?

The arabic word gheebah translates into English as backbiting. Nabi ﷺ has defined gheebah as to make such mention of a fellow brother which - if he were to hear it - he would dislike it. Upon hearing this, a saḥābi ﷺ enquired, “And what if the thing I said is actually in my brother?” Nabi ﷺ said, “If this thing is present in his life, then you have committed gheebah, and if it is not present (and you are associating lies with him then this is not gheebah), then you have slandered him.” (Abu Dāwud)

Allāh ﷻ has stated in the Qur’ān, “And do not backbite one another. Does any one of you wish to eat the meat of his deceased brother?” (Al-Hujurāt) Allāh ﷻ has compared backbiting to eating a deceased person’s meat to show how filthy this sin is.

## The Dangers of Backbiting

It is a common misconception that backbiting is merely a minor sin, and not much significance is given to the severity of the sin. However, we learn how lethal it is from the hadeeth of Nabi ﷺ, “Backbiting is worse than zinā (fornication).” (Bayhaqi)

The muḥadditheen (commentators of the ahādeeth) have explained how backbiting is worse than zinā:

- 1) The chance of realisation that one has committed a sin is far higher in zinā than in backbiting. Thus, the chance of one repenting to Allāh ﷻ is far less in backbiting than in zinā.
- 2) At the time of zinā, one only violates the right of Allāh ﷻ. However, at the time of backbiting, one violates the right of Allāh ﷻ as well as the right of the servant of Allāh ﷻ.
- 3) Therefore, even if one is blessed with the ability to repent from zinā, then solely repenting to Allāh ﷻ will suffice and be accepted. However, when it comes to backbiting, repenting to Allāh ﷻ will not suffice, one must also ask that person for forgiveness who was the victim of his gheebah. Only then his repentance can be accepted.

## A Frightening Story

Hadhrat Mufti Muhammad Taqi Uthmāni hafizahullāh has mentioned an incident regarding a tābi’ee named Rib’ee ﷺ. He narrates that once he decided to take part in a gathering. At first, the people were just talking and there was no harām taking place. However, one thing led to another and

eventually gheebah started to take place. Hadhrat Rib’ee ﷺ immediately realised that this is harām. He stood up and left that gathering. He waited for a while and when he thought that the topic must have changed by now, he rejoined the gathering.

When he rejoined, he saw that the topic of backbiting had stopped. However, after a few moments the topic was revisited. This time, he did not have the strength to leave the gathering. So he remained seated and listened to them backbiting. However, in the end he himself also got involved in this sin.

When Hadhrat Rib’ee ﷺ went to sleep that night, he had a dream. He saw a man with a dark complexion holding a large tray of meat. When he looked closely at the tray, he realised it was the meat of a swine. He said, “I am a muslim, how can I eat the meat of a swine?” The man replied, “No! You must eat it.” He refused again but the man got the meat and forced it into the mouth of Hadhrat Rib’ee ﷺ. He carried on forcing it in to his mouth to the extent that Hadhrat Rib’ee ﷺ began to gag and vomit, but the man still did not stop.

Hadhrat Rib’ee ﷺ then awoke from his dream. After waking up, he sat down to have his breakfast. However, the taste that he experienced in his dream while eating the meat of the swine, he experienced that same revolting taste in his food. This condition remained for 30 days! Hadhrat Rib’ee ﷺ said, “Allāh ﷻ is showing me what can happen from indulging in backbiting for just a minute.” (Islāhi Khutubāt)

## How to Save Oneself from Gheebah

My beloved father and teacher Hadhrat Mawlānā Ismail Dhorat hafizahullāh has advised some essential steps to save oneself from backbiting:

- 1) If one has a position of authority and there is backbiting taking place, one should immediately stop the person who is backbiting in a sensible and polite manner.
- 2) If the above is not possible, then one should attempt to change the topic.
- 3) And if this is not possible too, then one should excuse himself from the gathering.

May Allāh ﷻ grant us the ability to understand the severity of this sin and the ability to stay away from it. Āmeen.