



Friday Khutba

Backbiting

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Islam is a religion of peace, love and compassion. Lies, suspicion, backbiting, slander and gossip are totally alien to Islam. In fact they are considered amongst the most destructive of major sins. This is so because these sins sow enmity and discord among the Muslim Ummah and lead to its destruction. They cause hostilities between people of the same household, and between neighbours, friends and relatives.

Islam demands that our relationship with mankind should be one of sincerity and responsibility. It should be one where we have respect for the honour, reputation and privacy of others. Islam teaches us that we are not only held accountable for our own attitudes and actions but also for anything else over which we have control or influence over, in our society or the world around us.

Brothers and sisters

One of the sins which corrupts the society and which creates a state of suspicion in society and which sometimes, is likely to creep into human beings in the heinous form of cynicism is backbiting. Quranic verses and traditions have censured it in a very harsh tone. Here are some examples:

" O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for some suspicions are a sin. Do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would abhor it, [so similarly, avoid backbiting]. And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful." Qur'an, [49:12]

"And do not follow that of which you do not have knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - [you] will be asked about all of those." Qur'an, [17:36]

"He does not utter a [single] word, except that there is, with him, [an angel] ready and waiting [to record it]." Qur'an, [50:18]

Imam Nawawi says "It is obligatory for every sane adult to guard his tongue against talking, except when it contains a clear benefit. If talking and remaining silent are of equal benefit, it is sunnah to abstain, for permissible talking might lead to something undesirable or forbidden, as in fact is very often the case, and nothing matches safety."

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should say [something] good, or he should keep silent." [Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah]

Nawawi says, "This hadith is quite explicit that it is imperative to not talk unless the speech is good, which is that wherein there is some benefit. If a person is in doubt as to whether there will be any benefit, then he should remain silent."

On the authority of Sahl Ibn Saad: "Whoever guarantees for me what is between his two jaws and what is between his two legs, I guarantee Heaven for him." [Bukhari, Muslim].

On the authority of `Uqbah ibn `Amir: I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! What is salvation?' He said, "Hold your tongue, let your house contain you, and weep over your sins." [Bukhari, Muslim]

Mu`adh ibn Jabal said, "Are we even going to be held accountable for what we say?!" The Messenger of Allah (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "May your mother be bereaved of you! Is there anything which drags people into the Fire on their faces other than the harvest of their tongues?!" [Tirmidhi (hasan sahih)]

On the authority of Abu Bakrah, from the Farewell Pilgrimage:

"Indeed, your blood, property and honour are sacred to [one another], like the sanctity of this day of yours in this city of yours." [Bukhari, Muslim]

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah: "All of a Muslim is prohibited to another Muslim: his blood, his honour and his property." [Muslim]

"O assembly of those who have believed with their tongues, but into whose hearts faith has not yet reached! Do not backbite the Muslims, nor seek out their secrets! For, whoever seeks out the faults of his brother, Allah will seek out his secrets. And, whoever has his secrets sought out by Allah, Allah will disgrace him, even [if he hides] in the depths of his house. [Abu Dawud in al-Adab,

"Beware of backbiting, for backbiting is more serious than adultery. A man may commit adultery, and drink [wine], and then repent, and Allah will forgive him. But, the backbiter will not be forgiven by Allah until his [backbited] companion forgives him." [Suyuti, Al-Jami` as-Saghir, from Ibn Abid-Dunya, and Abush-Shaykh, Al-Tawbikh.]

Definition of Gheebah (Backbiting)

A backbiter is called Mughtaab. *Gheebah* is to talk about your brother/sister in such a manner that he/she would dislike it if told about it. Whether you talk about a physical defect, lineage, manners, conduct, faith or even his clothes, house or mode of transportation - all those constitute Gheebah. With reference to a person's body, it could be stated that he is bald, short, tall, black, yellow, or giving any physical description the person does not like. In regards to family tree, it could include stating that his father is a Bedouin, a garbage collector, cobbler, or anything that he may dislike. In regards to manners and conduct, it could include stating that he has bad manners, is stingy, arrogant, a coward, is weak-hearted, irresponsible or the like. In regards to his deeds associated with religion, it could include statements such as he is a thief, a liar, drunkard, treacherous, an oppressor, careless about Salah or Zakah, saying he doesn't perfect his Ruku' or Sujood, he is not careful about avoiding Najasah (impurities), isn't dutiful to his parents or he doesn't pay Zakah to the right persons, doesn't distribute Zakah correctly, or he doesn't guard his Sawm (fasting) from obscenity, backbiting, or talking ill about others. In regards to his deeds associated with daily living, it could include statements such as he has no manners with people, he talks too much, he always sleeps even when it is not time to sleep, or he sits where he shouldn't. Gheebah statements about someone's clothing could include statements such as his sleeve is wide, his thebe (shirt) is long, or that his clothes are dirty.

The Prophet (pbuh) defined backbiting when he said: "Do you know what is meant by backbiting?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "To say something about your brother which he dislikes." One asked, "Even if what I say is true about my brother?" He replied, "If such defects you say are true about him, then you have backbitten him, and if he doesn't have what you say, then you have committed slander against him." (Related by Muslim, Abu Dawood, and Tirmidhi)

Hence, it is not allowed to talk about somebody in his/her absence, even if what was narrated was true. If it was not true, then it would be a bigger sin and it is called *Buhtan* (false accusation).

Talking about someone else's fault - even in the absence of that person - with the intention of saving someone from that person's harm or of getting someone's help in correcting these faults or of recording one's grievances with the authorities or of any other imaginable positive reason to discuss such faults, should not be considered as Gheebah.

It is important to note that to find other's faults or to talk sarcastically or to defame a person is called '*Lumz*'. In the Qur'an, Allah states: "Do not defame one another." (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:11)

It means that when you find faults in others, they will turn around and find faults in you.

The beauty of this wording of the Qur'an is that it says that finding faults in others is like finding faults in you.

Just like Allah states: "Do not kill yourself." Hence, if you kill others, they will try to kill you. Allah also says in the Qur'an: "Woe to every slanderer and back-biter!" (Surah Al-Humazah, **104**: 1)

Allah (SWT) made it clear that defaming another Muslim in his/her absence is like eating the flesh of one's dead brother (**49**:12), which obviously, everybody hates. Hence, it is the most dreadful sin. Note that if the person is present, he/she may have a chance to defend himself/herself, although everybody does not have the courage to defend themselves in these circumstances. If, however, he/she is defamed in his/her absence, the damage is deep and somewhat permanent.

The tongue alone does not do backbiting; it can also be done with the eyes, hands and other movements. For example, imitating somebody who is limping, in order to insult him/her.

Muhammad Rasool Allah (SAS) said: "Backbiting is a worse sin than adultery." It is further explained in a saying of the Prophet (SAS), narrated by Abu Sa'eed and Jubair in Bayhaqi: "Allah may forgive a person if he/she repents after committing adultery. However, Allah will not forgive the one who backbites, till his/her victim forgives him/her."

One time, the Messenger of Allah pointed towards two graves and said to his companions that both of these people are being punished in their graves. One of them used to backbite people and the other was not careful about spilling drops of urine of his clothes and body whilst urinating.

The Prophet (SAS) during his Me'raj journey saw some people who had nails made of red copper. They were tearing apart their faces and chests with these nails. The Noble Prophet asked the Angel Jibrail (AS) about them, He said, "They are being punished because they used to eat people's flesh in their lives, i.e. used to backbite and defame others.

Abu Hurayra (RA) narrates that the Noble Prophet (SAS) said, "The killing of a Muslim by another unjustly, usurping others' wealth or defaming other Muslims is totally forbidden (or Haram)." (Sahih Muslim)

Note that listening to backbiting is the same as backbiting somebody. It is better to walk away from such individuals.

Backbiting violates the rights of Allah and the rights of people simultaneously. Hence, it is necessary to ask for forgiveness from the victim first, since Allah will not forgive until the victim forgives. If the victim has died or is untraceable, then ransom has to be paid. Anas (RA) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (SAS) said, "The ransom for backbiting is to pray to Allah for forgiveness by saying, "O Allah! Forgive my sins and his too."

Making Fun

Backbiting (*Gheebah*) can even be making fun of a person. The Prophet (SAS) vigorously opposed all aspects of backbiting even when it occurred in his own family. For example, once a woman visited Aishah (RAa) and when the woman got up to leave, Aishah Siddiqua (RAa) made a sign with her hand indicating to the Prophet (SAS) that the woman was short of stature. The Prophet (SAS) immediately chastised her, saying, "You have backbitten!" (Tirmidhi)

Imam Al- Nawawi, a great scholar, commented regarding the above Hadith saying, "This Hadith is paramount with regard to backbiting and I don't know anything more severe than this."

Nameemah (Tale carrying)

Nameemah is the use of speech by people against each other, wishing to cause corruption. ALLAH says in regard to this matter:

"...Neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it [so hate backbiting]"
(Surah Hujurat, 49:12)

The Prophet (SAS) has clearly stated, "The gossip-monger will not enter paradise" (Bukhari, Muslim). Further, when the sin is injurious to others, Islam does not distinguish between a Muslim and a non-Muslim victim. The Muslim scholars generally consider backbiting of a non-Muslim unlawful. Defamation, therefore is a crime punishable by the courts in addition to being a matter of reckoning in the hereafter...

Guarding the Tongue

"And follow not that of which you have no knowledge. Verily! The hearing, and the sight, and the heart of each of those ones will be questioned." (17:36)

"Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created. He has created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not."
(96:1-5)

It is well known that whoever guards his/her tongue will make fewer mistakes. He will be in control of himself and avoid from falling into something wrong. The Prophet (pbuh) guaranteed Paradise for one who guards his/her mouth. He is reported to have said:

"Whoever gives me surety to safeguard what is between his jaws and what is between his legs, I guarantee for him (entrance into) Paradise." [What is between one's jaws is the Lisan (tongue); and what is between the legs is the Farj (private parts)]."

Imam Nawawi said, "Be aware that it is incumbent upon every *Mukallaf* (competent person in full possession of his faculties) to guard his tongue against all kinds of talking except when it is evident that talking will be a means of beneficence. When talking and being quiet are both equal as a prudent measure, and then the Sunnah is to abstain from talking. Sometimes even a lawful talking may lead to unlawful or distasteful matters. This is a common practice, but there is nothing equivalent to safety." If your tongue is right and straight then the extremities will be straight. But if your tongue disobeys and indulges in the private affairs and honor of people, then the extremities will disobey and Allah's prohibitions will be violated. The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said:

"When the son of Adam gets up in the morning, all parts of his body deny the tongue saying, 'Fear Allah regarding us, we follow you. If you are right we shall also be right, and if you go astray, we shall also go astray.'" Nawawi said that denying the tongue means to humiliate and submit. Al-Albani said, "It means that the members consider the tongue as the one denying the favors."

The tongue is a great gift from Allah (SWT) and a marvelous creation. The size may be small, but its capacity to obey or disobey can be great. The Kufr (disbelief) can't be distinguished from Iman (faith) except through the testimony of the tongue. Iman and Kufr are the ultimate capacity to obey or disobey. The tongue has a very broad range of functions. It has a large measure of good that can be performed and a large measure of evil that can be inflicted. If one let go one's tongue, Shaytaan will take him everywhere and lead him to an edge, then allow him to fall for his own downfall. The only way to be saved from the evils of the tongue is to restrain it with the bridle of the Shari'ah (Islamic law). It should be used, but only for what is beneficial in this life and the Hereafter.

Indeed the tongue controls the rest of your body. A well-controlled tongue will keep us within Islam but a loose tongue will destroy us. Instead of swearing, lying and engaging in useless talk we can use our tongues in better ways and what better than telling people about Islam. Allah says "Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah and works righteousness and says I am one of those who bow down in Islam" (41:33)

Shaikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah

Shaikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah bless his soul, said: "It is strange that a person may find it easy to protect himself from eating Haraam, oppression and injustice, adultery, theft, drinking Khamr, and from unlawful looking, but it is hard for him to restrain the movement of his tongue. How often do we see people who are very cautious about falling into shameful deeds or injustice, but their tongue lashes against the living and the dead and they don't mind it."? He further said: "Some people have the disease of criticizing all the time. They forget the good about others and only mention their faults. They are like flies that avoid the good and pure places and land on the bad places and on wounds. This is because of the evil within the self and the spoiled nature."

Prohibition of Gheebah

Allah has said:

"And spy not, neither backbite against one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so

hate backbiting). And fear Allah. Verily Allah is the One Who accepts repentance, Most Merciful." (49:12)

"And follow not that of which you have no knowledge. Verily! The hearing, and the sight, and the heart of each of those ones will be questioned." (17:36)

"Not a word does he (or she) utter, but there is watcher by him ready (to record it)." (50:18)

It was narrated by Abu Musa: "Some people asked Allah's Messenger (pbuh) whose Islam is the best?" (i.e., who is a very good Muslim?) The Prophet (SAS) replied, "One who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongues and hands." He is also reported to have said, "Whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should talk what is good or keep quiet. Sometimes a person may utter a word to which he attaches no importance and by it he falls into Hell farther than the distance between the East and West."

"And the person may utter a word which displeases Allah without thinking how serious it is, as a result of which Allah will record His wrath for him, because of His displeasure until the Day when he meets Him." (Related by Mu'atta Imam Malik and Tirmidhi).

'Uqbah Bin 'Aamer asked, "O Allah's Messenger (pbuh), what is salvation?" He said: "Control your tongue, keep inside your house, and weep for your sins." (Related by Tirmidhi)

In one Hadith, Allah's Messenger (pbuh) took hold of his tongue and then said, "Keep this under control." When the Sahaba asked, "will we be called to account for what we say?" He replied, "Won't the people be thrown face down into Hell on account of the produce of their tongues." (Related by Tirmidhi).

Now let us see the punishment of the person that backbites in this life and the Hereafter. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "O you people who believe with their tongues (meaning those who pay lip-service to faith), when faith has not entered their hearts, do not backbite the Muslims and do not expose their faults. Whoever exposes the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will expose his faults. And if Allah exposes his faults, his faults will be open for everyone even if he would hide inside his house." (Related by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi). Backbiting is prohibited by Ijmaa' (consensus). Imam Qurtubi said, "The Ijmaa' is that Gheebah is a major sin and it necessitates repentance, it is Wajib (obligatory) to turn to Allah in repentance from it."

Backbiting by writing

Gheebah can also be through writing, for the pen is one of two tongues. This is the case when the person tells the truth about others. It is Gheebah and he is Mughtaab, a backbiter. By doing this he disobeys his Lord and he eats the flesh of his brother. But if he is lying then he combines Gheebah and *Kidhib* (lying).

"When people mention others they may commit one of these three: Gheebah, Buhtan and Ifk, and all are in the Book of Allah. Gheebah is to say what is true about a person. Buhtan is to say what is not true about a person. And Ifk is to say what was conveyed to you." Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said: "All things belonging to a Muslim are unlawful for another Muslim: his blood, his property and his honor." (Muslim, Ahmad and Bayhaqi) Gheebah deals with honor and Allah has combined honor with property and blood.

Types of Gheebah

Gheebah has different forms and may take all kinds of means. The worst type of Gheebah is the one that combines gossip and riyaa'. An example would be when some person is mentioned and a man would say: "Al-hamdu lillah that He didn't try us, we would have been tempted to enter the doors of the sultan, or that we don't demean ourselves in seeking the ruins of this world." Or one may say, "I seek refuge with Allah from shamelessness. I ask Allah to protect me from such." The intention here is to criticize the other person and it is done in the form of a Du'a (supplication).

One may also praise another person but the intent is to criticize, such as saying: "How good such-and-such person is, he never had a shortcoming in his worship but now he is being lazy. He was tried with something everyone of us is tried with, which is lack of patience." One would criticize oneself but his/her intention is to criticize others by doing this. At the same time he praises himself by showing that he is righteous since he criticizes himself. In this case, he is Mughtaab, Muraa'ee and praising himself. He combines three shameful deeds and because of his ignorance he thinks that he is a righteous person who would not make Gheebah.

Another form of Gheebah is that one criticizes another person, but the people don't pay attention to what has been said. So he says, "Subhaan Allah. How amazing!..." so the people may listen to him and know what he is saying. Or he may say, "I was hurt to hear about our friend and how he was humiliated. I ask Allah to relieve him." He is actually lying about his concern regarding the friend, in his pretense of making Du'a. If he meant to pray for him, he would have prayed for him while alone.

The Motives for Gheebah

There may be numerous reasons to motivate one to make Gheebah. The following examples are among these reasons:

1. Lack of fear of Allah. Whoever feels the greatness of Allah and acknowledges that Allah is watching all his deeds and utterances, he would avoid anything that may displease Allah.
2. Getting things off one's chest. A person may do something to upset another. Every time the aggrieved person feels angry about it, he alleviates the anxiety by making Gheebah about the other person.
3. Joining a group of friends. When a group is engaged in a loose talk aimed at slandering others, a person may think that if he speaks out and tries to stop them they may dislike him and exclude him. So, he joins them in talking ill about others, assuring that this is the only way to be acceptable to them.
4. Seeking to raise one's own status by putting down others. A person may say: "So-and-so person is ignorant, he is not smart." The intention is to praise oneself and show that he has more knowledge than the other person.
5. Envy and jealousy. Some person may be praised by people who like him. A jealous person may hear them and make Gheebah of the other person, criticizing and insulting him, so that the people may think differently about the person they have just praised.

Types of Permissible Gheebah

Gheebah is permissible for a sound religious purpose that cannot be achieved except by using it. These permissible types of Gheebah are as follows:

1. Complaint because of an injustice, such as complaining to a ruler, judge or others in authority. A person may say in this case: "I was treated unjustly by so-and-so in such and such matter."
2. Seeking help to change a Munkar (wrong deed) and to correct the wrongdoers. A person may say: "A person does such and such, so stop him." His intention should be to check the Munkar. If this is not the case, then the statement is Haraam.
3. Seeking a Fatwa. A person may state to the Imam, Mufti or Shaikh, "My father, brother or so-and-so has treated me unfairly. Is that act permissible? And

how do I get out of this situation? How do I obtain my rights?" This way of seeking a Fatwa is permissible. However, it is safer and more preferable to say whatever would be said about a non-specific person as doing such and such, as anonymously as possible.

4. Warning Muslims against evil and advising them. This could include criticism of untrustworthy narrators or witnesses. This is permissible by Ijmaa', rather it is mandatory and the benefit is very clear. Such as consulting in the matters of marriage or a business partnership. In this case, the person consulted should not hide anything about the concerned person. He should mention the faulty qualities only with the intention of benefiting the consultant.

5. Mentioning the person who indulges in Haraam or Bid'ah openly. This would include mentioning those who openly drink Khamr or those in positions of authority doing wrong. It is permissible to mention the sin of such a person. However, it is prohibited to mention the person with a different sin unless there is a reason that makes it permissible to do so for that sin.

6. Identifying a person. If a person is known by a descriptive nickname, such as Al-A'mash (squint-eyed), Al-A'raj (one who walks with a limp), or Al-Asamm (deaf), then it is permissible to use these names for identification purposes. But it is not permitted to use these names if the intention is to insult the person. If it is possible to identify such person by using another descriptive name, then it is better and preferable.

Kaffarah (Expiation) of Gheebah

Committing Gheebah is forbidden by the Ijmaa' of the scholars, and considered a major sin. Scholars differ in the Kaffarah of the Mughtaab (backbiter), but they all agree that he/she must make Tawbah as the first step. Repentance itself has three conditions: refraining from the sin, regret for the commission of the sin, and determination not to commit it ever again. Repentance from Gheebah, however, has an additional condition, a fourth one because the Mughtaab has actually committed two offenses:

1. One offense is towards Allah (because he committed an act which Allah has prohibited). The expiation is to turn to Allah in repentance and to regret what has been done.

2. The other one is against Allah's creatures. If the Gheebah has reached the person, then forgiveness must be sought from him and regret must be expressed to him for what has been said. But if the Gheebah didn't reach the person, then he should pray for the person's forgiveness and not tell him something he didn't know anyway, fearing that some evil may result from telling him.

The Cure for Gheebah

The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said: "Do you know who is bankrupt?" The Companions replied, "The bankrupt amongst us is the person who has no money or property." The Prophet (pbuh) said, "The bankrupt from amongst my Ummah is the one who will come on the Day of Resurrection with a good record of Salah, Sawm and Zakah. But he also had cursed someone, slandered against someone, unlawfully took the property of another, killed someone or beat someone. Then all of these abused persons will receive parts of his (abuser's) Hasanaat. When all of his (abuser's) Hasanaat have been removed from his record after he (abuser) pays back for what he owes, then the aggrieved persons' sins will be transferred to and thrown on him (abuser) and he (abuser) will be thrown into the Fire." (Related by Muslim and Tirmidhi)

The Virtue of Opposing Gheebah

It is the right of a Muslim to speak up and oppose Gheebah made against his brother Muslim. He should protect his brother's honor and defend his reputation in his absence. Should a person fall short in fulfilling this right, he will be punished sooner or later. To defend your brother against Gheebah is not something minor. There are clear and sound Daleels (evidence) that tell us of the virtue of one who fulfills this obligation. Asmaa' Bint Yazeed said that Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said: "Whoever defends the honor of his brother in his absence, will be entitled to Allah's protection from the Fire." (Related by Ahmad) The Prophet (pbuh) is also reported to have said: "Whoever defends the honor of his brother, Allah will protect his face from the Fire on the Day of Resurrection." (Related by Ahmad and Tirmidhi)

The person who listens to Gheebah is also a sinner unless he opposes with his tongue or with his heart if he fears harm. If he can leave the gathering or interrupt and change the subject, then he should do so. If he says to the Mughtaab, 'be quiet' but he relishes the gossip in his heart, then such is hypocrisy. He will not be excused unless he rejects the gossip with his heart. One should take it seriously and defend his brethren quite explicitly. The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said: "Whoever witnesses the humiliation of a believer and doesn't support him while being capable of supporting him, Allah will humiliate him before all the creatures (on the Day of Judgment)." (Related by Ahmad). Let not the Mughtaab pollute your gatherings and dishonor the Muslims. You should defend the honor of the Muslims. If you do not do so, you may be absent one day and this Mughtaab will be eating of your flesh and you may not find anyone protecting your honor.

JOKING

"I was only joking". We treat lies as being trivial. However we are told, "Allah's messenger did not hate anything more than lying"(Ahmed). The Prophet (SAS) was once asked "Can a Muslim be a coward?" He (SAS) replied "Yes." and then was asked "Can a Muslim be a miser?" and the reply was "Yes." The Prophet (SAS) was then asked, "Can a Muslim be a liar?" The Prophet (SAS) replied "NO! A Muslim can never be a liar". Furthermore, he said, "Truth leads to virtue and virtue leads to paradise...Lying leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to the hellfire." (Bukhari). As we know that one lie leads to another ten lies, which lead to bad actions. Remember you can lie and think that you have got away with it but on the day of Judgement your hands, tongue and feet will bear testimony against you and tell the truth.

The Best Example

As we know that the best person to have ever lived is the Prophet Muhammad (SAS) and he is the best of example for mankind. If we follow him we can never go wrong. Aisha (RAa) the Prophet's wife described the Prophet's conduct as follows: "He was neither a obscene talker nor a user of bad words. He did not shout nor did he repay evil with evil. He used to forgive people and overlook their sins." (Tirmidhi). Final Advice: A beautiful saying of the Prophet (SAS) that will ensure the protection of our tongue. The Messenger of Allah (SAS) said: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last day let him either speak good or keep silent".