

(Contemplation on Consequences of Backbiting (Gheeba

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It has a name of its own to which a particular prohibition is attached. You have already come to know that backbiting describes any statement that speaks ill of others and is hated by others, something which the speaker does not prefer, attracting attention to that statement by something which he writes or to which he points out or through other means. It also indicates the insinuation of one's own evil self, nafs, a pre-meditated intention even if it is not articulated. In this definition, other individuals enter places that are particularly prohibited. This includes the following:

One: Nameema, calumny. It is conveying a statement which someone articulated to another, such as you may say the following to the latter: "So-and-so said such-and-such about you," whether this is indicated orally, in writing, as a reference or through a symbol. Such a quotation is related to a shortcoming or default in the subject of the statement which obligates one to hate or avoid. The latter case is due also to backbiting. Thus, one combines between the transgression of backbiting and of nameema as well. There is no harm to attract attention in this dissertation to nameema, calumny, and how it is particularly prohibited, for it is one of the major sins as you will come to know.

Second: The speech of two contenders which goes on between them, or anything like that, and each contender articulates the same [bad speech, a similar taunting, etc.]. Due to the prohibition related particularly to it, it is rendered to either backbiting or calumny; actually, it is the worst type of calumny according to the tradition of the Prophet (?) who has said, "You will find the most evil of the servants of Alla-h on the Day of Judgment to be one who quotes a statement to these and these about what those had said" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 150). It is a speech which either party hates if he comes to know about it being cited. One does not like anything said that pleases his opponent or assists him in his pursuit. Such an individual is counted among the foes. Thus, hatred ensues because of exchanged statements thus propagated. Let us, then, discuss it briefly and quote the prohibition in its regard.

Third: Envy: It is hating for someone else to enjoy a blessing and desiring its disappearance. Besides being one of the special prohibitions and major sins, it is rendered to unspoken backbiting because one has passed a judgment against another about something relevant to that other which he would very much hate if he comes to hear about it. Thus, one combines two transgressions: envy and backbiting. So, let us quote a group of statements about it and its

prohibition. Actually, it deserves more than any of these three to be mentioned due to its occurrence these days so often and even the elite among people are afflicted by it. Rather, it is their ailment for which they can find no remedy. A wise person's priority is to treat an ailment which he can see. Speech here falls into three categories:

First: Alla-h Almighty has said, "... a slanderer, going about with calumnies" (Qur'a-n, 68:11).

He also says, "... besides all of that, [he is] base-born" (Qur'a-n, 68:13).

Some scholars have said that these verses prove that one who does not keep a statement to himself but goes about committing calumny must have been born illegitimately because the "base-born" is called in Arabic "da'i" (one the name of whose father is claimed by someone else). Alla-h Almighty says, "Woe unto every (kind of) scandal-monger and backbiter" (Qur'a-n, 104:1). It is said that by "scandal-monger" in this verse is one who is guilty of committing calumnies. About the wives of Noah and Lot, the Almighty says, "Alla-h sets forth, as an example to the unbelievers, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot: They were (respectively) under two of Our righteous servants, but they were false to their (husbands), and they benefited nothing before Alla-h on their [husbands'] account but were told, "Enter the Fire along with (others) who enter!" (Qur'a-n, 66:10). It is said that the wife of Lot told others about the two guests whom they had received, while the wife of Noah used to say that her husband was a madman.

The Prophet (?) has said, "Nobody who is guilty of committing calumny enters Paradise" (Al-Targhi-b wal Tarhi-b, Vol. 3, p. 496). In another tradition, he (?) says that no "qattat" enters Paradise (Al-'Awa-li, Vol. 1, p. 266, tradition No. 58). A "qattat" is one who is guilty of committing calumny. The Prophet (?) has also said, "The one amongst you who is the most loved by Alla-h is the one who is the best in his manners, those who humble themselves as they embrace others, who find others to be good company and whom others find to be good company. Those whom Alla-h Almighty hates the most are those who go about committing calumny, who sever the ties between brothers, who look for fault in others" (Al-'Awa-li, Vol. 1, p. 106, tradition No. 21, and Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 146).

The Messenger of Alla-h (?) also said once, "Shall I inform you about the worst evildoers among you?" People said, "Yes, indeed, O Messenger of Alla-h!" He (?) said, "They are the ones who walk about committing calumny, who spoil the good relationship between those who love each other, who seek to find fault even with the innocent" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 146).

See also Al-Khisa-l, Vol. 1, p. 86).

Abu- Tharr has said, "The Messenger of Alla-h (?) has said that if someone articulates a word against a Muslim seeking to shame him without a just cause, Alla-h will shame him in the fire

on the Day of Judgment" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 147). Abu- al-Darda-' has said once that the Messenger of Alla-h (?) said, "If a man propagates a bad statement about someone who is guilty in order to defame him in this life, it will be incumbent upon Alla-h, the most Exalted and the most Great, to penalize him for it on the Day of Judgment with the fire" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 147).

He (?) has also been quoted as saying that when Alla-h Almighty created Paradise, He said to it, "Speak!" It said, "Happy is anyone who enters me." The most Great One said, "I swear by My Exaltation and Greatness, eight categories of people shall find no room in you: None will reside in you if he is a habitual drinker, or one who insists on committing adultery, or one who goes around committing calumny, or one who has no concern about his honor, or one who acts [with others] like a policeman, or a homosexual, or one who severs his ties with his kin, or one who says, 'I pledge to Alla-h to do such-and-such' but does not do it" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 147).

The father of Ja`far (?) is quoted as saying, "Paradise is prohibited from those who commit calumny, who slander others" (Al-Ka-fi, Vol. 2, p. 365). The father of Abdulla-h (?) cites the Commander of the Faithful (?) saying, "The most evil persons among you are those who spread calumny by slandering, who separate loved ones from each other, who seek fault with the innocent" (Al-Ka-fi, Vol. 2, p. 369).

It has been narrated that Moses (?) prayed for rain for the Israelites during a drought. Alla-h Almighty inspired this to him: "I shall respond neither to you nor to those with you as long as there is one person among you who insists on slandering." Moses (?) said, "Who is he, Lord, so we may get him out of our company?" Alla-h Almighty said, "O Moses! Shall I prohibit you from calumny while I commit it?!" They all repented, and they had all been guilty of it (see Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 147).

It has also been narrated that someone followed a wise man the distance of seven hundred parasangs for the sake of seven statements. When he met him, he said, "I have come to meet you on account of the knowledge which Alla-h Almighty has granted you. Inform me about the heavens, what is heavier than it, about the earth and what is more broad than it, about the stones and what is harder than them, about the fire and what is hotter than it, about the Zamharir (an ice-cold place in hell) and what is colder than it, about the sea and what is more precious than it, and about the orphan and who feels weaker than him."

The wise man said, "Articulating falsehood about someone innocent is heavier [with Alla-h] than the heavens. Right is broader than the heavens and the earth. A contended heart is more precious than the sea. Miserliness and envy are hotter than the Fire. Need for help from

someone close, when it is not met, is colder than Zamharir. The heart of an unbeliever is harder than stones. A slanderer the truth about whom is disclosed feels more needy than an orphan" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 147).

Be advised that calumny is more often applied to what results from someone telling someone else what a third party says, such as, "So-and-so says such-and-such about you." It is not specifically relevant to such a person; rather, it is applied to what is more general, as has already been explained while discussing backbiting and the penalty for committing it in a more general sense.

It is the disclosure of something which someone hates to be disclosed, whether the person cited or the person to whom it is cited, or even a third party, hates its citation, and whether the disclosure is done by word of the mouth or in writing or by a reference, a symbol, or by beckoning, and whether what is cited is an action or a statement, and whether or not it is about a defect or a shortcoming in the particular individual. Actually, the truth about calumny is this: revealing a secret and tearing down a veil to show what is hated to be revealed. In fact, all what one sees of the conditions of another person he must keep to himself except when talking about it is beneficial for any Muslim individual or to prevent the committing of a transgression.

For example, if one sees how someone is mishandling the wealth of someone else, he has to testify to what he sees in order to protect the rights of the wronged person.

But if one sees another person hiding money for himself, so he talks about it, he will then be committing calumny and revealing a secret if the calumny which he articulates is relevant to a shortcoming or a defect in the individual who is the subject of the statement, he will then have combined both backbiting and calumny.

The reason which prompts one to commit calumny may be a desire to harm the person about whom he talks, or to show love for the person to whom he talks, or to see the impact of the narrative on the spectators or simply out of being nosy.

Anyone to whom calumny is carried and he hears that so-and-so said such-and-such about him or did something to him, plotting against him or trying to get close to his opponent, or to tarnish his image, or anything like that..., this necessitates six matters:

First: One must not believe such an individual because anyone who disseminates calumny is evil and his testimony is rejected. Alla-h Almighty has said, "O you who believe! If an evil person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth about it lest you should harm people unwittingly and afterwards become full of regret for what you had done" (Qur'a-n, 49:6).

Second: He must prohibit him from so doing, admonish him and shows him the ugliness of what he does. The Almighty says, "... enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong" (Qur'a-n,

Third: He must hate him out of his own fear of Alla-h, for such an individual is hated by Alla-h, and anyone who is hated by Alla-h must likewise be hated.

Fourth: You must not think ill of your brother just because of what someone says on account of this verse by the Almighty: "O you who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible)" (Qur'a-n, 49:12). Rather, he must remain steadfast till what he hears is confirmed.

Fifth: What is said to you must not prompt you to spy and look for something on account of this verse by the Almighty: "... and do not spy on each other" (Qur'a-n, 49:12).

Sixth: You must not accept for yourself to commit that from the doing of which you prevented the calumny person, so you must not tell what he told you and say, "So-and-so told me such-and-such," for you will thus be committing calumny and backbiting and sinning the same sin against which you admonished someone else.

It is narrated about Ima-m Ali (?) that a man came to him to speak ill of someone. The Ima-m (?) said, "Man! We will inquire about what you have stated. If you are proven to be right, we will hate you, and if you are proven to be a liar, we will punish you. If you wish we retire you, we can do it." The man said, "Retire me, O Commander of the Faithful!" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 148. Also see Al-Ikhtisas, p. 142).

[Caliph] Omer ibn Abdul-Azi-z followed suit in the Ima-m's steps. A man spoke ill to him of another, so Omer said, "If you wish, we look into what we should do about you: If you are a liar, you will be included in this verse: 'If an evil person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth' (Qur'a-n, 49:6). And if you are truthful, you will be included in this verse: 'A slanderer, going about with calumnies' (Qur'a-n, 68:11). And if you wish, we can forgive you." The man said, "Forgive me, O Commander of the Faithful, for I shall never do it again" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 148).

It has been narrated that a man was visited by one of his brethren who told him something about someone else. The wise man said to him, "You did not come here soon enough, and you have brought me three acts of treachery: You made me hate my brother, you put something bad in my empty heart [against him], and you have charged your own soul which is supposed to be safe" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 148).

It has been narrated that a caliph said the following to a man: "It has come to my knowledge that you said such-and-such about me." The man said, "I neither said so nor did so." The caliph said, "The person who informed me is truthful." Al-Zuhri, who was at the time present there and then, said, "A person who goes about spreading calumny cannot be truthful." The caliph said, "You have spoken the truth." Turning to that man, the caliph said, "Go; may you be

accompanied with safety" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 148).

Ima-m al-Hassan (?) has said, "One who conveys calumny to you does the same about you" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 148).

This points out to the fact that one who spreads calumny ought to be hated and not trusted as a friend. How can he not be hated while he keeps lying, backbiting, being treacherous, betraying others, bearing grudge towards others, being envious, hypocritical, tricky and spoiling relations among people? How can he not be hated while he remains to be among those who sever the ties which Alla-h ordered to remain connected? Alla-h Almighty says, "Those who break God's covenant after its confirmation, and those who sever what Alla-h has ordered to be joined and make mischief on earth..." (Qur'a-n, 2:27).

Alla-h has also said, "Blame is only against those who oppress men with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds throughout the land, defying what is right and just" (Qur'a-n, 42:42).

The Prophet (?) has said, "Among the most evil of people is one who is shunned by people because of his mischief" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 148). He (?) has also said, "One who severs [sacred] ties shall not enter Paradise" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 148). It is said that such an individual severs ties between people, one who spreads calumny. It is also said that one who severs his ties with his kinsfolk is included in such description.

Luqman the Wise said to his son once, "O son! I admonish you about attributes which, if you adhere to them, shall keep you a master: Be nice to those who are near [in kinship] to you as well as those who are far; withhold your ignorance from men of honor and from mean men; safeguard your brethren; stay in touch with your relatives and protect them from the statement of one with evil intentions or from listening to a mischief-maker who wants to corrupt you and deceive you; let your brethren be those who, when you are away from them, neither backbite you nor you backbite them" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 149).

Some wise men have said, "If what a person going about disseminating calumny transmits to you is true, he would cause you to be condemned. The person whom he cites is more worthy of your clemency because he did not taunt you face-to-face" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 149).

On the whole, the evil brought about by one who disseminates calumny is great and ought to be avoided. It is narrated that someone sold a slave and said to the buyer, "There is no fault in him other than spreading calumny." The buyer said, "I agree to buy him." He bought him. The slave remained there for days. Then he said to his master's wife: "Your husband does not love you, and he wants to cheat you in secrecy; so, take this razor blade and shave hairs from his

back so I may apply magic to him and he will thereafter love you."

He then went to the husband and said, "Your wife has taken a lover to herself and wants to kill you; so, pretend that you are asleep so you may come to know this fact for yourself." He pretended to be asleep. The woman brought the razor blade in her hand, whereupon her husband thought she wanted to kill him with it, but he killed her instead. The woman's family came and killed the husband, and fighting kept raging between both tribes for a long time.

The other discussion is that of one having two tongues: He goes between two persons, especially if there is enmity between them, telling each one of them something which he believes, thus, seldom can there be two persons bearing such animosity towards each other. This is hypocrisy, and it is one of the major sins regarding which there are specific warnings. Amma-r ibn Ya-sir has quoted the Prophet (?) saying, "One who has two faces in this life will have two tongues of fire on the Day of Judgment" (Al-Khisa-l, Vol. 1, p. 38, tradition 18 and Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 149).

He (?) is also quoted as having said, "You will find among the most evil of Alla-h's servants on the Judgment Day one who has two faces: He brings these folks what those others say" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 150). In another tradition, he (?) describes such an individual as "facing these with one face and those with another" (Ibid.).

It has been said that the following is written in the Torah: "Trust is now nil, and a man treats his fellow with two different lips" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 150).

The Prophet (?) has also said, "The most hated from among Alla-h's creation on Judgment Day are the liars, the haughty, and those who harbor hatred in their hearts against their brethren. If they meet them, they behave nicely to them, and if they are invited towards Alla-h and His Messenger, they are slow, but if they are invited towards Satan and his scheming, they are swift" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 150).

Through his isna-d to Ima-m Ali (?) , al-Sadu-q has narrated saying that the Messenger of Alla-h (?) said, "On the Day of Judgment, the one having two faces will come with his tongue outstretched all the way to his back, dragging another tongue behind him, both are aflame till they burn his body. It will then be said, 'This is the one who used to have in his lifetime two faces and two tongues.' He shall thus be identified on the Day of Judgment" (Al-Khisa-l, Vol. 1, p. 37, tradition No. 16).

Through isna-d to Ima-m al-Ba-qir (?) , the Ima-m said, "The worst type of a servant [of Alla-h] is one who has two faces and two tongues. He praises his brother when he faces him and chews him when he is absent. If his brother is given something, he envies him, and if he is afflicted, he betrays him" (Iqa-b al-A`ma-l, p. 317, tradition No. 3).

Through his isna-d to him (?), the Ima-m says, "The worst type of a servant [of Alla-h] is one who goes around with calumny, slandering others. He faces one with a face and leaves him with another" (Iqa-b al-A`ma-l, p. 317, tradition No. 4).

Also through isna-d to him (?), he (?) said, "Alla-h Almighty said this to Jesus son of Mary: 'O Jesus! Let your tongue be in secrecy and in open one and the same tongue, and so should be your heart. I warn you against your own soul, and you know it sufficiently. Two tongues do not fit in one month, nor two swords in one scabbard, nor two hearts in one chest, and so are the minds" (Iqa-b al-A`ma-l, p. 317, tradition 5).

Be informed that one is proven to have two tongues through matters which include the following: He carries what one person says to the other, and it is nevertheless calumny and more so, for calumny is committed when one quotes one person to another only.

Another is that one must be good to each one of them with regard to the enmity each bears towards the other even if he does not report what they say about each other.

Another is that he promises to support and assist each of them.

Another is that one praises each of them even during his hostility, and it is better if he praises him to his face even though he may speak ill of him once he leaves his company, while he ought to keep silent or praise righteousness in the presence of the individual as well as during his absence and even before his opponent. Both tongues will not be the same with regard to opponents.

Speaking nicely to each of them even in honesty, one may be a friend of both opponents, but it will be a weak friendship which does not reach the limit of brotherhood. If there is real friendship, such friendship would require hostility towards the foe as is well known: The friends are three types: the friend, the friend of the friend, and the enemy of the enemy. And the enemies, too, are three types: an enemy, an enemy of a friend, and a friend of an enemy (refer to Nahjul-Bala-gha, p. 527, axiom No. 295).

We say that if one does not have to meet the person in authority or mix with the creed's enemy, and if he chooses to meet with him and accompany him, seeking prominence and wealth beyond what is necessary, he will fit the description of one having two tongues, a hypocrite, as al-Dahha-k states.

The Prophet (?) has said, "Love for power and wealth plants the seed of hypocrisy in the heart just as water helps the growth of beans" (Ihuya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 150). If one has a need to do so in order to avoid a necessity, he is excused and there is no harm in him. Avoiding evil is permissible.

Abu- al-Darda- has said, "We quite often smile for some people while our hearts hold them in

contempt."

It is narrated that a man was excessive in flattering the Prophet (?), so he said, "How bad the Bedouin is!" But when the man visited the Prophet (?) again, the Prophet (?) was very nice to him. He (?) was asked about it, so he said, "The most evil person is one who is honored in order to avoid his evil" (Ihuya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 151).

The third type of envy is one of the greatest ills and transgressions, the most evil and the worst spoiler of one's heart, and it is the first sin that was committed on earth when Iblis envied Adam, so envy caused Iblis to commit a transgression. Thus, catastrophe happened from that time and it continues for eternity. Alla-h has ordered His Prophet to seek refuge with Him against such evil saying, "[... seek refuge with the Lord of the Dawn] from the mischief of the envious one as he envies" (Qur'a-n, 113:5).

The Messenger of Alla-h (?) has said, "Envy consumes good deeds just as the fire consumes firewood" (Tanbi-h al-Khawa-tir, Vol. 1, p. 126; see also Ja-mi` al-Akhba-r, p. 186). He (?) has also said, "Six persons shall enter the fire on account of six reasons [respectively]: rulers because of inequity, Bedouin Arabs because of fanaticism, merchants because of haughtiness, business people because of betrayal, paper sellers because of ignorance, and scholars because of envy" (Tanbi-h al-Khawa-tir, Vol. 1, p. 127).

He (?) is quoted as having said, "The disease of the nations that have preceded you has crept into your community: envy, hatred and the shaver, and by the shaver I do not mean shaving the hair but shaving the creed. By the One Who holds the soul of Muhammad (!)! You shall not enter paradise till you believe, and you shall not believe till you love each other. Shall I inform you about what firms love among you? It is the dissemination of greeting" (Ihuya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 177 and Tanbi-h al-Khawa-tir, Vol. 1, p. 127).

In a narrative by Mu'a-th [ibn Jabal], the Prophet (?) said, "The recording angels ascend with reports about a good deed done by a servant of Alla-h like a bride is wedded to her new family till they reach the fifth heavens with that good report about acts of righteousness such as jiha-d or hajj, and it has a light like sunshine. An angel would say, 'I am the angel in charge of recording envies. The doer of this deed used to envy people for what Alla-h had granted them out of His favor, and he used to feel displeased about what pleases Alla-h; my Lord has ordered me not to permit his good deed to bypass by me" (Uddat al-Da-`i, p. 228).

Ima-m al-Sa-diq (?) has said, "The envious person harms himself before harming the person whom he envies just like Iblis who left for himself, because of his envy, a curse and to Adam, peace be with him, the distinction, guidance and prominence to a station of the facts of the covenant and selection. So, be an envied person and do not be the envious one, for the scales

of the envious person shall always be light on account of the scales of those whom he envies.

Sustenance is already pre-determined; so, what good can envy do to the envious person, and what harm shall the envied person receive? Envy originates in the blindness of the heart and the denial of the favor of Alla-h, and they both are two wings of disbelief. It is due to envy that the son of Adam fell in deprivation for eternity, perishing in a way from which he shall never be saved. No repentance can be accepted from an envious person because he is habitual, believing in envy, being accustomed to it, so much so that he sees none as opposing him, nor is there a reason for his envy, either. Of course, one's nature can never change even if it may be treated" (Misba-h al-Shari-`a, p. 104). Suffices envy as an illness its hurling scholars into the

Fire as the previous tradition indicates.

Be informed that envy stirs five things:

First: It undermines acts of obedience to Alla-h. The Messenger of Alla-h (?) has said, "Envy consumes good deeds just as fire consumes firewood" (Tanbi-h al-Khawa-tir, Vol. 1, p. 126).

Second: It stirs the doing of transgressions and evilness. Some men of virtue have said, "An envious person has three marks: He flatters someone when the latter is present, he backbites someone when he is absent, and he feels good when someone is afflicted. Suffices you the fact that Alla-h has commanded us to seek refuge with Him from his evil, likening him to Satan and the wizard who blows on knots, as has already been indicated.

Third: Envy stirs weariness and distress in vain, rather, in addition to any burden or transgression. Someone has said, "I have never seen an oppressor whose condition is similar to an oppressed person more than the envious person: He continuously envies, his mind always wanders about, and distress never parts with him."

Fourth: Deprivation and disappointment are his lot; so, he hardly achieves his objective or wins victory over his foe. It is said that an envious person is never supported. How can he achieve his goal while his goal is actually the removal of a blessing which Alla-h bestowed upon one of His servants?! How can he win victory over his foes while they are the servants of Alla-h to whom Alla-h cast His look and upon whom He bestowed His blessing especially since this blessing is knowledge?!

The talk about envy is quite lengthy due to the "scholars of the hearts" having looked into it, researched it and diagnosed its strong illness in the hearts of the elite folks, let alone the :commoners; so, let us confine our research here to certain topics

First: The Truth about Envy, Rulings in its Regard, Types and Phases

The truth about it is coveting what others possess, their status, etc. and its removal from others. It is set in motion concurrently with the force of anger, with an assertion of anger, its

perpetuation and increase according to the increase in the status of the envied person to which envy is attached.

For this reason, Ima-m Ali (?) has said, "The envious person is angry against one who has committed no sin" (Ja-mi` al-Akhba-r, p. 186). And it is a type of injustice and inequity. The Ima-m (?) has also said, "There is no comfort with envy" (Ghurar al-Hikam, p. 525; There is no comfort for the envious person"). The envious person's desire and way of thinking about how to get the status of the one whom he envies and how it is removed from that person dominates the movement of his bodily parts, a movement which deprives him of comfort.

The men of wisdom have agreed that envy, besides being psychologically harmful to a great extent, is one of the great causes for the world's destruction. The envious person mostly moves and schemes in order to destroy those who enjoy blessings, prominence and wealth upon whose existence the earth stands. Envy is not attached to others, such as men of lowliness or poverty. The effort of the envious person never falters in his effort till the status of the envied person is removed. He himself will in the end perish due to the actual movements dictated by his senses or by what he says. For this reason, it is said that "One who envies a bliss is never pleased till it disappears" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 178). Since the motive in the power of anger stands, such power keeps mobile and mobilizing.

Quite often, the effort of mischief-makers between those in authority and their subjects proves to be quite effective due to the mischief-maker's knowledge that they, the men in authority, are capable of accepting what he says about others due to both parties having the same nature, their powers of desire and of anger being similar. But quite often, the endeavor of the envious person, who aspires to remove the bliss enjoyed by the persons whom he envies, brings about another bliss of the Almighty Who safeguards these envied persons and gives them an increase of His blessings. Hence, the envious person will have no way to harm them. Rather, harm will afflict those who oppress people and make corruption in the land without a just cause. The mischief of such persons will be a cause for the destruction of the land; the earth and those living on it will thus be corrupted, and Alla-h does not love corruption.

Now, since you have come to know that only a blessing brings about envy, when Alla-h bestows a blessing upon your brother, you have one of two options: One of them is that you hate that blessing and love its disappearance, and this status is called envy. The other is that you do not like to see it disappearing, you do not like to see it there and that it perpetuates, but you wish you have the same blessing, and this is called "commendable envy" and may be termed as "competition".

Alla-h Almighty has said, "... and for this, let those who have aspirations aspire" (Qur'a-n,

Competition may be labeled as envy, or envy as competition, such as this statement by Abdulla-h al-Fadl and Qatham ibn al-Abba-s to Ima-m Ali (?) when the Ima-m advised them not to go to the Prophet (?) to ask him about placing them in charge of administering charity, and they were of the view to do just that: "What you say is only by way of competition; by Alla-h, he married you to his daughter and we did not envy you for it!" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 180).

It is also similar to this statement of the Prophet (?): "Nobody should envy anyone except when it comes to the creed: Alla-h grants wealth to someone, making it a cause for his perdition for the cause of the truth, to a man whom Alla-h granted knowledge, so he acts upon it and teaches it to people" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 180). What is prohibited is the first of both these cases, whereas the first is held as contemptible. The Prophet (?) has said, "A believer articulates commendable jealousy, whereas a hypocrite envies" (Ihya- Ulu-m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 179). But if a blessing reaches a sinner who uses it to harm people, fuel dissension, harm the creed and the like, hating it and desiring to see it disappear do not harm him so long as it is not looked upon as a blessing but a tool for corruption. The previously cited verse and tradition prove that the second case is not prohibitive.

Alla-h Almighty has said, "Race in (seeking) forgiveness from your Lord" (Qur'a-n, 57:21). Racing with time like that stems out of concern lest the opportunity should pass by. It is like two slaves racing with each other to serve their master. Each of them hopes he will out-race his fellow and thus earn a status with his master which the other does not. Competition may even be obligatory if what is being competed for is an obligation. If one does not like to race towards it, he will be contented with the prohibited transgression. Or it may be eagerly sought, such as with regard to virtues like spending money for a good cause or for ethical virtues, or it may be described as permissible if it is with regard to something permissible.

On the whole, it depends on the object of "competition". But in competition there is precision and a mysterious danger against which those who seek salvation must guard themselves. It is this: If one loses hope for acquiring a blessing similar to what is being competed for, and he hates to lag behind others and thus remain deficient, there is no option for him other than desiring the removal of such shortcoming. It is removed by one of two ways: He earns a similar blessing, or the blessing enjoyed by the competitor disappears. If one of the paths is blocked in the face of the endeavoring person, his heart will almost covet the other path, for with the removal of the blessing, the undesired shortcoming will disappear. He must put himself to test: If he feels he has a choice, and if he chooses to do his best so the blessing may be removed

from his competitor, this is contemptible envy. But if his piety prevents him from doing anything at all to remove it, he will be forgiven for what he finds within him of the feeling of content regarding the disappearance of the blessing so long as his mind tells him that his rational power tells him he hates to see it disappearing.

Since you by now know the truth about envy, be informed that it has four stages:

First: One wishes a blessing to depart from another even if it does not go to him, and this is meanness and the worst degree of envy.

Second: He loves the blessing to depart and go to him due to his desire for it, so much so that his pursuit is the blessing itself and not just its departure from the other person who has it.

Third: He does not covet it in particular but wish for himself the like. If he cannot obtain its like, he loves to see it disappear so the difference between both of them will disappear, too. This third case is prohibitive and it ranks in strength as it ranks in pronouncement.

Fourth: He wishes for himself the like. If this cannot happen, he does not like it to part from that individual. This in particular is the commendable envy; actually, the creed praises it, and "we call it "permissible envy

Second: Causes Stirring Envy

These are Quite Few, but they are rendered [mainly] to seven causes:

1. enmity, 2. self-love, 3. pride, 4. conceit, 5. concern about missing pursuits, 6. love for authority, 7. corruption of the soul and miserliness of the "nafs"

1. The man is his enemy; therefore, he does not wish him any good, and this does not apply only to peers.

2. He is concerned the other person will feel superior to him on account of the blessing which he has, and he cannot tolerate this person's superiority and greatness because of his feeling of esteem which we describe as self-love.

3. It is his own nature to feel superior to the one whom he envies, but this cannot be due to the other person's blessing, and this is what is described as pride.

4. A blessing may be great and the position huge, so he wonders why someone else like that person wins them while he himself does not, and this is called conceit.

5. He may be concerned that he will miss his opportunity to achieve his pursuit because of that person's bliss, so he competes with him with regard to his own affairs.

6. It may be due to love for power and authority. This love is based on one having a blessing in which no two persons are equal.

7. It may not be due to any of the above-stated causes but to one's own soul being corrupt and to having no pleasure in seeing the servants of Alla-h enjoying a blessing.

The most Praised One has pointed to the first cause in this verse: "... Hatred has already appeared from their mouths..." (Qur'a-n, 3:118). Referring to the second, He says, "They also say, 'Why is not this Qur'a-n sent down to some leading man in either of the two (main) cities?'" (Qur'a-n, 43:31). In other words, "In that case, it would not have been hard on us to humble ourselves to him and follow him if he is such a great person."

Some people (pagans) had already said, "How can an orphaned young man be advanced over us, and how can we bow our heads to him?!" In reference to the fourth, the Almighty says, "(People) said, 'You are only men like ourselves...!'" (Qur'a-n, 36:15); "They said, 'Shall we believe in two men like ourselves?!'" (Qur'a-n, 23:47); "... If you obey a man like yourselves, behold, you will certainly be lost" (Qur'a-n, 23:34). They were amazed about a human being like themselves winning the status of carrying the divine message and inspiration and be so close to Alla-h Almighty; therefore, they envied him and said in astonishment: "... Has Alla-h sent a man like us to be (His) Prophet?!" (Qur'a-n, 17:94). The Almighty, thereupon, said, "... Do you wonder that, through a man of your own people, a message has come to you from your Lord to warn you?!" (Qur'a-n, 7:63 and 7:69).

The most damaging causes are the fifth and sixth above because they are relevant to evil scholars and their likes. The fifth is rendered to two persons competing for one pursuit. Both of them envy each other in every blessing which helps one become distinguished over the other. Included in this category is the envy among fellow wives who compete with each other for married life's pursuits.

And there is competition among brothers to earn a status with the Almighty. People crowd around members of a select group with each person trying to earn a status in their hearts so he may achieve his objectives. The sixth is rendered to love for people desiring to monopolize power, win praise only for their own selves, feel happy when people praise them, etc. They think that they are unequalled, having no peers. If one of them hears about someone in the furthestmost part of the world speaking ill of him, he loves to see that person dead or the blessing which he enjoys disappear so he may not share his status.

Add to this what the hearts of some scholars conceal: They seek prominence and a status in the heart of people in order to reach their goals and be the masters. Jewish scholars knew about the message of the Messenger of Alla-h (?), but they denied and disbelieved in it for fear it would foil their mastership, and they would thus become followers after having been followed, regardless of the fact that their knowledge is now history. One or more of these causes, or most of them, or even all of them, may be incorporated in one

and the same person: Thus, the illness of envy in him is magnified manifold. It takes control of his heart and becomes so strong, he cannot hide it or try to be nice about it. Instead, he tears off the veil of nicety and openly reveals his hostility. This can hardly be removed except through death. It is quite seldom one single cause is behind such envy.

The root of enmity and envy is more than one person seeking the same objective, and one objective cannot incorporate two contradictory matters but, rather, parallel ones; therefore, you can see envy spreading among like-minded persons, peers, brothers, cousins and relatives. It is much less among others except in the case when they all are combined in one particular goal.

Yes, due to one's extreme desire for power and fame in all corners of the world, he envies everyone in the world who is regarded as his peer in the merit about which he brags. And the origin of all of this is love for this world. To the competitors, this world is too narrow. As for the Hereafter, there is now narrowness in it. Rather, its similitude is knowledge: One who knows Alla-h Almighty, His angels, prophets, the domains of His land and heavens, will not envy others if he also knows that knowledge is never too narrow for those who seek it. Rather, the One Who is known is also known by a million scholars. Each person feels happy when he knows Him, finding such knowledge to be delicious, and there will be no joy lacking because of others. Rather, when those who have such knowledge, closeness and the fruit of knowledge and of benefiting are all there, there can be no envy among the scholars of religion because their pursuit is a wide ocean which has no narrowness, and their goal is a status with Alla-h where also there is no narrowness: The more there are such seekers, the more joy there is. Yes, if scholars seek in return for their knowledge money and power, they will envy each other because money is a material thing; it is tangible. If it falls in the hand of one person, it does so because it leaves the hand of another. So is power: It implies domination over the hearts. When someone's heart is filled with glorification for one particular scholar, or if one's heart is empty of it, there will definitely be a reason for envy.

As for knowledge, there is no end to it, nor can anyone imagine absorbing it. One who exerts his effort to attain it and occupies himself with thinking about the Greatness and Glory of the Almighty, this will become sweeter to him than all material blessings. He will not prevent anyone else from enjoying the same, nor will he compete with anyone else in this regard. So, there will be no envy in his heart towards any human being. If someone else gets to know similarly to what he knows, this will not decrease his pleasure. Rather, his pleasure is increased by finding out that someone else feels the same way. Rather, the similitude of those who know the truth and who follow the path is just as Alla-h Almighty has said in this verse: "And We shall remove any lurking sense of injury from their hearts: (They will be) brothers (joyfully)

facing each other on thrones (of dignity)" (Qur'a-n, 15:47).

Such is their condition in the life of this world. What do you think will happen, then, when the veil is removed and when the Loved One is seen at the time of receiving the rewards?! There shall be nobody envying another in Paradise because there is neither limit to it nor competition in it. So, Brother, may Alla-h enable us and your own self, if you have the insight and if you are concerned about your own soul, to seek a bliss that has no narrowness in it and a pleasure that .can never be spoiled, and surely Alla-h is the One Who grants success

Third: A Brief Reference to the Medicine that Cures the Sickness of Envy from the Heart

Be informed that envy is one of the illnesses that greatly affect the hearts, and that the illnesses of the heart cannot be cured except with knowledge and with acting upon such knowledge. The knowledge which cures the sickness of envy is that you should know for sure that envy harms you in the life of this world and harms your creed while it does not harm the one whom you envy, neither in his life nor in his creed; rather, he actually benefits from it. When you come to know this out of true insight, and you are not your own enemy or the friend of your enemy, envy will definitely part with you. As regarding its being harmful to you with regard to your creed, it is due to the fact that through envy, you angered Alla-h Almighty with regard to what He decrees and hated His blessing which He distributes to His servants as well as His justice which He has established in His domain due to His knowledge: You have found this to be too much and too awful.

Such an attitude is unfair towards the concept of Tawhi-d and an eyesore to conviction, i-ma-n, let alone its being injustice against the creed. Moreover, you have cheated a believer, abandoned his advice and parted with the friends of Alla-h and His prophets in their love for goodness for Alla-h's servants. You have shared with Iblis and the rest of unbelievers their love for affliction for the believers and for blessings parting with them.

All these are heart-filled impurities that consume good deeds just as fire consumes firewood, wiping them out just as night wipes out daytime.

As regarding its being harmful to you in the life of this world, it is so due to pain consuming your body. Thus, you are tortured, and you continue to be depressed because Alla-h does not take away from others the blessings which He bestows upon them abundantly. For this reason, you continue to be tortured by each of these blessings which you see, and you feel the pain whenever any tribulation leaves them. You remain sad, deprived, your heart heavy, your soul strained, just the same status which you wish for your own enemies, and just as your enemies wish for you.

You wanted calamity to befall upon your enemy, whereupon immediately your own affliction

and distress fell upon you. A blessing does not leave someone whom you envy. Had you not believed in resurrection and judgment, ultimate discretion, if you are wise, dictates a warning to you against envy due to the pain it causes to the heart, to you being one day questioned about it, to its being futile; so, how so since you know about the extreme pain envy carries for you in the hereafter? How amazing it is when a rational person is exposed to the wrath of Alla-h without gaining anything in return but a harm which he has to suffer and a pain which he has to endure, thus destroying his creed and life without any gain or benefit whatsoever! With regard to the fact that it causes no harm to the one who is envied with regard to his creed and life, it is quite obvious because a blessing does not leave him when you envy him. Rather, whatever Alla-h decrees of acceptance and a blessing have to endure till a time which Alla-h Almighty determines; there is no way they can be otherwise lifted. If he has earned a blessing on account of knowledge, or due to an act of righteousness for which he endeavored, there is no way it can be lifted, too. Rather, you ought to blame your own self because he exerted an effort whereas you sat still; he was fired with energy while you remained lazy; he remained vigilant while you slept. Your condition fits the description implied in a verse of poetry that says, "They energetically labored, as good people do, so they achieved their pursuit, and they were safe as fates lied in ambush for them, too."

Since a blessing is not removed no matter how much its owner is envied, the envied person will not be harmed in this life, nor will he bear a sin on its account in the hereafter. You may tell yourself how you wished that blessing to part from the one whom you envy through your envy. This is the ultimate ignorance and stupidity: Your desire brings affliction to your own self first and foremost, since you, too, are not without an enemy who envies you! Had blessings been removed through envy, Alla-h would not have kept one blessing which you yourself enjoy, nor will all people have had one blessing, not even the blessing of belief #299;ma-n) in Him, for the unbelievers envy the believers for having believed. Alla-h Almighty says, "Some of the People of the Book wish to lead you astray. But they shall lead (only) themselves astray, and they do not perceive!" (Qur'a-n, 3:69).

And if you desire a blessing to depart from someone else who does envy you but does not depart from you on account of others envying you for it, this is the ultimate ignorance and stupidity, for every stupid envier wishes the same, and you are not better than others! Alla-h's blessing on you is that the blessing which you have is not removed on account of someone envying you, a blessing which you should thank Him for whereas you, due to your ignorance, dislike it.

As regarding the envied person earning benefits in his creed and life (when he is envied), it is

quite clear: Regarding benefiting in his creed, he is being wronged by you especially if your envy prompts you to articulate and act upon backbiting and slandering him, unveiling his faults, shortcomings and secrets, for these are gifts which you give him: You are giving him gifts from your own good deeds and you keep doing so till you meet this person on the Judgment Day having become bankrupt, deprived of blessings just as you had exited this life. It is as though you wanted the blessing to depart from him, but it did not, and your desire was a curse on you, for Alla-h enabled you to succeed in earning good deeds but you transferred them to him, thus losing blessings which He had bestowed upon you, adding to your own self pain upon pain.

As regarding its worldly benefit, the most important concern among humans is to harm their enemies, cause them agony and pain and keep them tortured and agonized. There is no torture worse than the one from which you yourself suffer. The ultimate hope of your enemies is that they enjoy bliss while you remain in agony and sigh because of them, and you have done to your own self what these enemies seek.

Ima-m Ali (?) has said, "An envious person never sees comfort" (Ghurar al-Hikam, p. 525). He (?) has also said, "The envious person is always angry with someone who has not sinned against him" (Ja-mi` al-Akhba-r, p. 186).

You have come to know from these researches the meanings of both expressions, and for this sake, you ought not let your enemies desire your death but that your lifespan prolongs as the torture of envy keeps consuming you: When you cast a look at the blessings which Alla-h has bestowed upon them, your heart will be torn to pieces by your envy. It is for this reason that the poet has said, "Your enemies did not die but live forever till they see something in you that pleases their hearts so long as you remain envied on account of a blessing, for only a perfect person is envied."

Your enemy is happier when you are distressed and envious than his happiness with his own blessing.

If you contemplate on all of this, you will come to know that you are the enemy of your own self and the friend of your own foe. You achieved what caused you harm in the life of this world and in the hereafter while your foe has benefited from it in this life and will benefit from it in the life hereafter. You have become a wretch among people and their Creator with regard to your condition and possessions.

Moreover, you did not confine yourself to earning your enemy's pursuit till you brought the greatest pleasure to Iblis who is the most avowed enemy among all your enemies because you did not love what the people of righteousness love for their own selves in order that you may be counted among them. This is so because one keeps company with those whom he loves, so

Iblis loved you; thus, you became his companion. Reports about the Prophet (?) are consecutive in saying that a person keeps company with those whom he loves (see Ihya- Ulu-
m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 186).

Although you are neither a scholar nor a learned person, you must be a loving person. Due to your envy, you have missed out on the rewards of love and those who love. You may envy a man of knowledge and wish he may err with regard to Alla-h's creed and his error will be revealed so he may be scandalized. And you may love to see something happen to him that prevents him from seeking knowledge or from teaching. What a greater sin is there than that?! How lucky you would have been had you joined their company then you felt sad because you could not, and due to your sadness you may be exempted from the sin and the torture in the hereafter!

Traditions tell us that the residents of Paradise are three categories: one who is a doer of good deeds, one who loves such a doer, and one who spares his harm from such a doer (Ihya- Ulu-
m ad-Di-n, Vol. 3, p. 187), that is, one who spares him harm, envy and grudge. So, look and see how Iblis has distanced you from all these three Gates of Paradise! Iblis has caused your envy to harm you more than it harmed your enemy.

Had your condition been revealed to you when you are awake or asleep, you would have seen yourself, you envious person, in the shape of one who tries to throw a rock at his enemy to harm his eyes, but the rock returns to harm his own right eye, blinding it. He will thus be angrier, so he goes back to throwing it harder than the first time, and it returns to his other eye, blinding it, too. His anger is now more intense, so he returns to try a third time, when this time the rock returns to his head to split it, while his enemy remains safe all the time while his own enemy is happy about what has happened to him, laughing at him.

Such are the conditions of the envious person. No, actually, his condition is uglier because if the stone misses a portion of the eye, that portion will eventually be gone at the time of death, whereas the sin committed by the envious person does not disappear by death but is driven towards the Wrath of Alla-h and ultimately to the fire. So, if his eye is gone in the life of this world, it is better than he has an eye whereby he enters the Fire the flame of which blinds it. So, look at how Alla-h Almighty seeks revenge against the envious person: While he wishes the disappearance of a blessing from someone whom he envies, he causes its disappearance from himself. Safety from committing a sin is a blessing, and safety from grief is another. Now they both are gone by token of this verse of the Almighty: "... But the plotting of evil will harm only its own doers" (Qur'a-n, 35:43).

He may be afflicted by what he wishes his enemy to get. A wise saying states that whenever

someone feels happy about someone else's calamity, he will be afflicted by the same. These are the scientific medicines. If one thinks about them with a clear mind and an attentive heart, the fire of envy in his heart will be put out, and he will come to realize that he is ruining his own soul, making his enemy happy, causing his Lord to be angry with him and turning his life into hell!

As regarding the practical medicine, if one contemplates on what has already been stated, he ought to exert himself in doing the opposite of what his envy [Satan] dictates to him: He will then praise the same person whom he envies when he is told to speak ill of him, humbles himself to him when he thinks he is greater than him, and increases his favors on him when he is told to withhold them. These will be preludes to a complete harmony: The envy stuff is circumvented, the heart becomes free of the pain and agony such envy brings about. These medicines are quite useful, but they are very bitter. Yet there is benefit in a bitter medicine, and if one is not patient about the bitterness of medicine, he will never earn the sweetness of cure. What prompts to undertake the effort to earn these commendable merits is the desire to earn rewards from Alla-h Almighty and fear from His penalty. May Alla-h grant us and your own selves success to apply such an effort through the medium of Muhammad and the progeny of .Muhammad, peace and blessings be with them all