

## The Sin of Making up Rumours

( Verse 6 )

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

***O' you who have true faith! If one who publicly and openly commits sins brings you any news (concerning another person) then ascertain its truthfulness carefully (before you spread it) lest you harm people through (your own) ignorance (through accepting and following false reports) and then regret what you have done.***

Making up rumours and lying about others is one of the greatest sins that can occur within a society and sometimes can even place the lives of others in danger. This act can also result in one's honour and dignity being stripped from one – thus paralyzing one's life within a society. How many times has information that has absolutely no foundation, ignited the flames of war between two people resulting in a great loss and injury to both sides?

In order to prevent such a great injustice from occurring, Islam has commanded the Muslims not to pay attention to just any piece of news or information that comes to them and not to accept just anything that anyone says to them.

Rather, Muslims are only supposed to accept the reports from those people who possess some inner feelings and the fear of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He). It is the reports from those people who possess the ethical traits of justice, confidence (of their speech) and reliance (in what the person says) which would prevent a person from making up false reports and lying and relating bits of news and information that are unfounded and fabricated.

In some important issues in relation to religion and the society in which the honour and respect of a

person or a group of people is at stake, we have been commanded not to take the word of only one 'just' and truthful person, rather until three other people who are 'just' and have the fear of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) in them support the statement of the first person, then only are we permitted to accept the statement made by them.

Thus, we must make sure that their statements match exactly with one another in all ways. In other issues that may not be as important as those mentioned above, we have been commanded to make sure that those who are providing the information to us are a minimum of two `Adil (just – from the point of view of the Islamic definition) people.

In order to prove that the words of a person are true in a particular issue (to protect and safeguard the honour of a person or a group of individuals and to prevent any sort of negative outcome from taking place), in addition to the two conditions that were mentioned (the righteousness of the person giving testimony and the number of witnesses that must be present when giving witness to a sensitive societal issue such as adultery or theft) the religion of Islam also lays down conditions for the person who is acting as a witness. If these conditions are not fulfilled, then the person's testimony will not have even the slightest worth or value. Some of these additional conditions include:

1. The witness must have good eyesight and must have vigilance such that with good vision and a powerful memory, he would not add or forget anything about that which he is testifying in regards to.
2. Those things which one can differentiate by the senses must be borne witness to through one of the (five) natural senses. Thus, it is not permitted to base one's testimony on an estimate, guess or assumption and according to the words of the Imam (peace be upon him):

بِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَاشْهَدْ أَوْ دَعْ.

*“Those things which you are required to testify concerning must be – just like the sun – plain and clear and in other than this event, you do not have the right to spread any reports.”*

3. A person – who without any basis or foundation – gives testimony to an issue without delay or hesitation (without first confirming the reports) must be whipped and he must also be presented to the people as being one who has given false testimony so that next time people will not accept what he says. 1

These conditions are proof that the religion of Islam – by specifying the prerequisites for the acceptance of any sort of information – is striving to protect the Islamic society from falling into dangers that stem from making up rumours and from evil forces that formulate lies.

Thus, the religion has emphatically commanded its' followers who have true faith that they must carefully

review and study any news that comes to them from people who are open sinners or in whom there is a possibility that they have made up reports or lied about an issue. This is done so that the believers do not unknowingly follow a false report and end up causing harm or damage to another person.

## **Liars During the Period of Prophet Muhammad**

During the time of the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), Walid ibn `Aqbah ibn Abi Mu`it – who belonged to one of the branches of the polluted tree of the Bani Umayyah – was given the authority to go to the tribe of Bani al–Mustaliq and collect the Islamic tax (Zakat) from them and bring it back to Madinah.

When the people of the tribe heard that the representative of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) was coming to their village, all of the people rushed out to meet and welcome him into their village. However, since there was some previous enmity that Walid had with this tribe (before the coming of Islam) or because of the incorrect thoughts he had that the tribe was coming to kill him, without going to meet those who were in charge of welcoming him into the city, Walid turned back from where he had reached and went back to the city of Madinah.

He proceeded to report to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) that the tribe of Bani al–Mustaliq had rejected the teachings of Islam and were not prepared to pay the Islamic tax and even had the intention of killing him! It goes without saying how dangerous such an incorrect report is and to what extent such information is able to cause damage and injury to innocent people.

The Muslims of Madinah reached a stage where they were trying to decide what should be done with this tribe (Bani al–Mustaliq). In the meantime, the chiefs of this tribe were informed as to what had transpired and rushed to the presence of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and told him, ‘We seek refuge in you from the anger of Allah and His Prophet.’

The Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) who was extremely upset said to them, “Turn back from what you have done and return to the teachings of Islam. If you do not, then we will send someone to put you back in line – that person who is my life and soul” and at this time, the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) placed his hand on the shoulder of `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him).

The Noble Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) did not stop at that – rather, he secretly dispatched a person to the tribe of Bani al–Mustaliq to watch over how they conduct the affairs of their religion. It was through this person that the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) realized that the report that Walid had brought back was a lie since during the time of Salat, they were busy in their `Ibadat and were ready and willing to pay their Islamic taxes.<sup>2</sup>

## Who was Walid?

Walid was the son of `Aqabah ibn Abi Mu`it and just as it is known, `Aqabah was one of the staunch enemies of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny). He was also one of the four people who always used to irritate and annoy the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny)<sup>3</sup>

`Aqabah was also the person who showed no shame in throwing garbage at the door of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and anytime he came face to face with the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), he would use the most indecent curse words in front of him.

In addition, anytime he saw the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) in Sajdah, he would try to harm him violently. His enmity to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) reached to such a level that the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) once said: “If I ever see you outside of the precincts of the Haram, I will definitely punish you for all the actions you have done to me.”

Incidentally during the Battle of Badr which happened to be the first war between the Muslims and the Polytheists, `Aqabah was killed after being captured in the war.

Walid was one of the branches of this evil tree (of the Bani Umayyah) and was not too far away from the wickedness of his own root (his father). According to the rulings of the verses of the Qur’an, he was a sinful and unclean person who due to the grudges and past hatred that he had for the tribe of Bani al-Mustaliq, or due to his own carelessness – wanted the blood of the Muslims to be shed. Not only has the Qur’an referred to him as an open sinner in this verse, rather in other verses too he has been referred to with this same attribute, as it has been mentioned:

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ فَاسِقًا لَّا يَسْتَوُونَ

***“So then is he who is a true believer similar to the person who is an open sinner – never can these two be considered as equal.”<sup>4</sup>***

A majority of the commentators of the Qur’an if not all of them have said that, “The meaning of a true believer in this verse is Amir al-Mu’minin `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) and the meaning of an open sinner is Walid.”<sup>5</sup>

This verse was revealed at a time when the manifestation of true faith and the manifestation of pure debauchery – meaning Amir al-Mu’minin `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) and Walid (respectively)

were boasting about their own selves. Walid spoke proudly (of his family) and was boasting to `Ali (peace be upon him), however `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) considered his true faith and belief in Islam as being his pride and honour and thus said to Walid, “Be quiet! You are a man whose heart has not yet had true faith enter into it...” It was at this time that the above verse of the Qur’an was revealed about these two personalities.<sup>6</sup>

The inner wickedness and enmity that Walid had did not stop here. It was during the succession of `Uthman ibn al-Affan that the Islamic leadership fell prey to even more divisions and wars and since he (Walid) was the foster brother of the Khalifah of that time, he was appointed as the governor of Kufah. During those days, only those people who were amongst the family of the Khalifah would be appointed to major positions within the government.

The day that Walid entered into the city of Kufah, `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud was the head of the public treasury. Walid proceeded to take an exorbitant loan from Ibn Mas`ud in the amount of approximately 300,000 dinar since even before him, the previous governors of Kufah used to take loans from the public treasury and then later on, pay them back.

Even though the treasurer impressed on him the importance of paying this money back to the public treasury which was repeatedly mentioned, Walid wrote a letter to the Khalifah of the time – who was his foster brother – and asked him to let the person in charge of the public treasury know that he should overlook the money that had been taken. The Khalifah, who was under the influence of the love of his brother wrote a letter to `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud and said, “You are **my** treasurer! Do not interfere with Walid!”

The treasurer happened to be a true follower of the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and a righteous person and became extremely upset with the actions of the Khalifah and wrote him a reply stating: “I had always assumed that I was the treasurer of the public treasury of the Muslims! Now it is clear to me that I am the treasurer of the Khalifah. I have no need for such a position and from today, I officially tender my resignation.”

Thereafter in a heated speech that he proceeded to give, Ibn Mas`ud informed all of the people of Kufah about what had transpired (between him and the Khalifah).<sup>7</sup>

## **Walid Performs Four Rak`at of Salat al-Fajr**

In addition to being the leader of the region, the Governor was also given the responsibility of being the Imam of the Salat al-Jama`at in the central Masjid. One evening, Walid drank an excessive amount of alcohol and in the state of being intoxicated, went into the Masjid and performed four Rak`at of Salat al-Fajr and in place of the dhikr of the Ruku` and Sujud, he said the following:

## أَشْرَبِي وَأَسْقِينِي

*“(O’ the one who loves me) Drink me (the alcohol) and satiate yourself with me!”*

In addition, he recited the following poem in a loud voice which showed the burning passion and lust he felt for a woman named Rubab:

عَلِقَ الْقَلْبُ الرَّبَابَا بَعْدَ مَا شَابَتْ وَ شَابَاً

*“The heart is attracted to Rubab, after it drinks (alcohol) and is drunk.”*

After he finished his Salat, he turned towards the people and said, “If you desire, we can add a few more Rak`at to the previous ones that we just performed!”

The state that he was in and because of the excess amount of alcohol that he had drunk, he lost control of his bodily functions and soiled the Masjid, Mihrab<sup>8</sup> and Mimbar<sup>9</sup> by vomiting everywhere.

When this occurred, Abu Zainab and Jundub ibn Zahir Azdi who were both present in the Salat, took the ring off of the finger of Walid, which he did not notice (since he was drunk) that was used to sign and stamp all of the official letters and books in relation to the government. Along with four noble and respected people from Kufah, `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud went to Madinah to meet the leader and Khalifah of the time with the ring of Governor (Walid) and complained to him (about the actions of Walid).

They informed the Khalifah of what had transpired however `Uthman did not accept their words and rejected the testimony of these people and in addition, warned them (of their actions).

These people then went to see `Ayesha bint Abu Bakr who was also involved in the political affairs of Madinah and informed her of the actions of the Governor of Kufah and of the warning that the Khalifah (`Uthman) had given them. She went out amongst the people and proclaimed that: “`Uthman has stopped meting out the punishments ordained by Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and has also warned these people who have come to him bearing witness (of crimes being committed by his Governor)” however this act as well did not solve the problem.

This group of Muslims then went to Amir al-Mu`minin `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) and complained to him about what had transpired. `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) met with `Uthman and said to him, “Why have you stopped meting out the punishments ordained by Allah and have instead warned these people who have witnessed (a crime)?

Have you forgotten the admonition that `Umar gave to you when he said, ‘Do not make the Bani

Umayyah and the children of Abi Mu`it preside over the people! O' `Uthman! It is incumbent upon you to remove this person from the governorship of Kufah and you must not appoint him to any other religious position. You need to investigate into the testimony of these witnesses. If they are people of faith, then summon Walid from Kufah and apply the punishment that Allah has designated for those who drink wine.”

The pressures of the common people reached to such a level that `Uthman was forced to summon his governor from Kufah and (after investigating) was finally ready to impose the Islamic penalty upon him – meaning that he was ready to lash him 80 times. However, not a single person had the courage to whip the brother of the Khalifah. Whoever went close to Walid (to try to hit him) would be warned by Walid of his close family ties to the `Uthman.

It was at this time that Amir al-Mu`minin `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) himself took the whip and with the full power and strength that he had, whipped Walid 80 times on his body; and according to some of the ahadith, `Abdullah bin Ja`far was the one who whipped Walid by the command of `Ali (peace be upon him).<sup>10</sup>

## **Rumour Mongering in Our Time**

The printing and publishing industry is one of the most valuable gifts of the industrial era. In addition to alleviating the high cost of printing, it is through the blessing of this industry that mankind has been able to print and spread the sciences and various branches of knowledge throughout the world in a very short time span. Unfortunately however, this industry has also struck a blow to humanity through the spreading of lies and rumours which has enabled it to make a profit through untruths and dishonesty via the printing of deception.

Today, the spreading of rumours, fabrication of lies, levelling accusations and other inappropriate things upon others, is one of the most active missions of the Western press. However we cannot say that all of the publications that come from the West are inflicted with this societal disease, because not being careful and observing precaution and negligently narrating reports to some newspapers and magazines has also been unintentionally done by us (the Muslims) as well.

How many people have lost their honour and respect through the negligent reporting and printing of wrong reports? Even after apologizing and making amends later on, this wrong can never be made right. How many times have we seen the esteem and honour of a group of people fall victim due to the lack of communication between the various news reporters?

Today is the day that we must say: “The print media must take the pen away from those people who feel that they are free to write whatever they wish to write and feel that they can attribute whatever they wish to attribute to whoever they wish.”

Thus, the fourth article in the Constitution (of Iran) which can lead to the (spiritual) illumination of the minds and thoughts of a nation must be saved and liberated from those authors who either write for no purpose, for a hidden benefit or for some personal gain.

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1. al-Khilaf (Section of giving Witness), Page 235.
  2. al-Kashhaf, Volume 3, Page 149.
  3. The other three people include: Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab and Hakam ibn al-`As ibn Umayyah.
  4. Surah al-Sajdah (32), Verse 81.
  5. Hisan ibn Thabit, the poet of the Messenger of Allah (S), wrote the following lines of poetry in reference to this person:  
أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَ الْكِتَابُ عَزِيزٌ فِي عَلِيِّ وَ فِي الْوَالِدِ قُرْآنًا  
فَتَبَّوْا الْوَالِدُ إِذْ ذَاكَ فَاسِقًا وَ عَلِيٌّ مَبُوءٌ إِيمَانًا
  6. "Allah has revealed – in the indisputable Book –  
About `Ali and al-Walid a verse,  
Through which wickedness has been attributed to al-Walid  
While faithfulness has been attributed to `Ali."  
Commentary of Nahjul Balagha, Volume 2, Page 103.
  7. `Aqd al-Farid, Volume 2, Page 172.
  8. The place where the Imam of the Salat al-Jama`ah stands to lead the congregation – usually semi-circle in shape.
  9. The pulpit upon which the orator would stand or sit upon to deliver a lecture.
  10. Ansab al-Ashraf, Volume 4, Page 23; Sahih al-Muslim, Volume 2, Page 52.

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