



PSSST...!



MODULE 9: HALAL & HARAM



MISC

Can you backbite an entire tribe or people?

Nahlawi: ‘If a person spoke about the people of a certain tribe, it would not be considered backbiting because he only intended some of them and not all of them, and those about whom he spoke are unidentified...’

- ‘New Yorkers are rude.’
- ‘You have to watch out for the shopkeepers in Karachi; they’ll cheat you.’
- ‘French people are xenophobic.’

These statements don’t apply to every New Yorker, Karachian, or Frenchman; rather it is a person’s general assessment—right or wrong—and not targeted at specific people.

TWO PEOPLE CONVERSING SO A THIRD CANNOT HEAR

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, ‘When there are only three of you, two of you may not speak together apart from the third unless you join a group of others, lest you doing so sadden him.’

Nahlawi: This hadith prohibits two individuals conversing privately when a third is present, and likewise prohibits three or more people from doing so when there is a single person apart from them. The prohibition indicates its unlawfulness, it being impermissible for a group to converse apart from a single individual unless he gives his permission...as for when there are four people and two of them speak privately in low tones apart from the other two, scholars agree that there is no harm in this.

LYING

Nawawi: Primary texts of the Quran and the Sunna that it is unlawful to lie are both numerous and explicit, it being among the ugliest sins and most disgusting faults.

Definition: The intentional affirmation of something knowingly that is contrary to its reality.

EXPLANATION

1] The condition “**intentional**” excludes unintentional speech, such as a slip of the tongue. For example, if someone says, “Zaid visited yesterday.” But they meant to say ‘Amr visited. This is unintentional and one is not accountable for such a slip of the tongue.

2] The condition “**knowingly**” excludes a statement that is merely incorrect unbeknownst to the person.

For example, if someone says, “Zaid is American.” However, what he didn’t know was that Zaid is actually from the UK and merely moved to the US later in his life. This is merely an error in speech – this also is excused and not considered a lie.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “Mistakes, forgetfulness, and that which one is forced to do (under threat or dire necessity) is excused for my community (ummah).” [Tabarani]

If one’s mistaken or errored speech is of little to no consequence, one is not obliged to recant or correct their statement. If it is something of religious or worldly importance, one must clarify the mistake, if possible.

LYING

Imam al-Ghazali: ‘Speaking is a means to achieve objectives. If a praiseworthy aim is attainable through both telling the truth and lying, it is unlawful to accomplish through lying because there is no need for it. When it is possible to achieve such an aim by lying but not by telling the truth, **it is permissible to lie if attaining the goal is permissible** (when the purpose of lying is to circumvent someone who is preventing one from doing something permissible), **and obligatory to lie if the goal is obligatory**... it is religiously precautionary in all cases to employ words that give a misleading impression...’

PERMISSIBLE LYING

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, ‘He who settles disagreements between people to bring about good or says something commendable is not a liar.’

Umm Kulthum said: ‘I did not hear him permit untruth in anything people say except for three things: war, settling disagreements, and a man talking with his wife or she with him [in smoothing over differences].’

Because lying is not intrinsically prohibited. Rather, it is prohibited due to the harm that it causes to the listeners and others (and possibly the liar themselves). Such harms can include deception, misinformation, confusion, etc... [Ghazali, *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*]

However, since it is not intrinsically prohibited, there are situations where lying may be permitted and may even be obligatory.

PERMISSIBLE LYING

An example of permission is a small mistruth in order not to hurt someone's feelings, such as 'the food was good.' An example of obligation is if an oppressor is searching for someone to kill them unjustly. If they ask you where that person is, and you know, it is obligatory to lie to protect that person's life.

EXAGGERATIONS

Customarily exaggerations are not deceiving, such that they may mislead someone to understand an untruth. For example, if someone stated, ‘This pizza is 1,000 times better than that’ it is understood that this is an exaggeration used for additional emphasis.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and give him peace) said when asked about a possible spouse for a woman, “As for Mu’awiya, he is poor and does not have any wealth. As for Abu Jahm, he doesn’t put his stick down from his shoulder...” [Ahmad, Musnad Ahmad]

The expression about Abu Jahm has been interpreted in a few ways; one of them is that he travels a lot, hence the emphasis.

ACTING

Role-playing, in most cases, does not constitute lying. Lying, again, is prohibited for specific reasons, one of them being deception. When someone is watching, role-playing, or acting, they are aware that this is not real.

Likewise, in fictional stories. People are generally aware that the story they are hearing or reading is fictional. For this reason, one must not make it appear that this is a real story.

CONVERSING ABOUT THE IMMORAL

Nahlawi: Conversing about what is useless or immoral means discussing acts of disobedience, such as stories about drinking sessions and fornicators when there is no legitimate purposes connected with the conversation, which is unlawful because it manifests one's own disobedience or another's without there being any need to.

RIDICULE AND SARCASM

Nahlawi: Ridicule entails showing disdain, sarcasm, or contempt for another in a way that causes laughter, whether by mimicking another's words or actions, by a gesture, or by allusion. It is unlawful. Allah says: *'Those who demean believers who voluntarily give charity—ridiculing those who find nothing but their own effort—it is Allah who ridicules them, and they shall suffer a painful torment.'*

RIDICULE

Ridicule is only unlawful when it hurts others' feelings. As for someone who purposely makes himself a laughingstock, perhaps such a person enjoys it, and jokes about him are considered mere humor. What is unlawful **is the sarcasm that offends the person ridiculed**, because of the insult and disdain involved, such as by laughing at his way of speaking, what he does, how he looks, or his physique because of a defect therein. To laugh at any of these is to commit ridicule which is unlawful.

PICKING APART ANOTHER'S WORDS (MIRA')

Nahlawi: This consists of attacking another's speech by revealing the mistakes in it, whether it is weak Arabic, meaning, or the intention of the speaker, as when one says, 'This is true, but you do not intend the truth with it' when such an attack involves no other motive than contempt for the other and displaying one's cleverness. It is unlawful.

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, 'Whosoever forgoes cavil (mira') when he is in the wrong will have a home built for him on the edge of Paradise, and whosoever forgoes it when in the right will have a home built for him in the middle of Paradise...'

ASKING ABOUT ANOTHER'S MISTAKES

Nahlawi: It is forbidden to ask about another's errors and blunders in order to tell them they made a mistake or to embarrass them, being unlawful because it entails injury to another and belittling him in front of people. But when one's asking about mistakes is to learn or teach, to test or sharpen students' minds or make them reflect, then it is recommended and desirable, because it facilitates the comprehension of religious knowledge.

OBSCENITY

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, ‘A believer is not given to reviling, cursing, obscenity, or vulgarity.’

Nawawi: Obscenity and vulgarity are forbidden, as attested to by many well-known sound hadith; obscenity meaning to express ugly or vulgar matters in plain words, even if they are true and the speaker is being honest. One should instead express such things by **alluding to them in a polite way that nevertheless conveys what is mean**, as is done by the Holy Quran and authentic noble hadiths.

Allah says: *‘It is permitted to you on the night of the fast to enter unto your wives.’*

EXCEPTIONS?

‘When ‘Urwa b. Mas’ud, who came as a negotiator on behalf of the idol-worshippers at al-Hudaybiyah, said to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace): “By Allah I see faces, and I see a mixture of people who are most likely going to flee and desert you,” Abu Bakr said to him: “Suck the @*%\$! of al-Laat! Would we flee and desert him?” He said: “Who is that?” They said: “Abu Bakr.”’ (Bukhari)

IBN HAJAR:

It was the custom of the Arabs to revile one another in this manner, but by mentioning the mother, so Abu Bakr wanted to go further in reviling ‘Urwa by referring to his object of worship instead of his mother. What made him do that was his anger towards him when he accused the Muslims of being cowards and saying that they would flee. **This also indicates that it is permissible to say words that are regarded as foul or bad for the purpose of rebuking one who behaves in a manner that leads to him deserving that.** Ibn al-Munayyir said: ‘In the words of Abu Bakr we see an insult to the enemy, a rejection of their beliefs, and highlighting the flaws in their belief when they said that al-Laat was the daughter of Allah – exalted be Allah far above that – by suggesting that if she was a daughter that she would have what every female has.