

## Backbiting

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi

Translated



## Backbiting

*"Ye have been forbidden to commit murder or adultery, or to engage in backbiting or calumny; shun ye, then, what hath been prohibited in the holy Books and Tablets."*<sup>1</sup>

*"O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me."*<sup>2</sup>

*"O Son of Being! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness."*<sup>3</sup>

*"Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men."*<sup>4</sup>

*"... That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of those that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit."*<sup>5</sup>

"If some people come to thee alone complaining against each other, don't listen to them, don't let them breathe the faults of others in thy presence. Tell them: 'I have not come here to engage my time with these things. I am not a judge. I have come to summon the people to the Kingdom of Abha, to call you to unity and accord, to raise the dead, make mindful those who are unaware, awaken those who are asleep, breathe new life into the mouldering bones and sound the trumpet of resurrection. Friends, it is high time for you to throw away these tales, these barren stories. God is not pleased with them, humanity is not pleased with them. Your time is too costly to be expended on these trifling events. You are made in the image and likeness of God. Your birthright is more valuable than all the treasures of the empires. Arise with heart and

1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para

2. Baha'u'llah, Arabic Hidden Words no. 26

3. Baha'u'llah, Arabic Hidden Words no. 27

4. Baha'u'llah, Book of My Covenant

5. Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Iqan



TRANSLATION

soul and let not these golden days slip by without results. This day is the day of the splendors of the Sun of Reality. This day is the day of the Lord of the Kingdom. This day is the day of the fulfillment of glorious promises. This day is the day of joy and fragrance. These petty backbitings and jealousies make one lose all the traces of spirituality, excommunicate a person from the divine company of the worthy ones, submerge one in the sea of phantasms, suffer one to become cold and pessimistic and throw him headlong into the death of despair and haunting hopelessness.'

You must not listen to anyone speaking about another, because no sooner do you listen than you must listen to someone else and thus the circle will be enlarged endlessly. Therefore, O friends! Let us come together, forget all our self-thoughts and be in one accord, and cry at the top of our voices 'Ya-Baha-el-Abha!'"<sup>6</sup>

"It is obvious that if we listen to those who complain to us about the faults of others we are guilty of complicity in their backbiting. We should therefore, as tactfully as possible, but yet firmly, do our utmost to prevent others from making accusations or complaints against others in our presence."<sup>7</sup>

"As regards backbiting, i.e., discussing the faults of others in their absence, the teachings are very emphatic. In a Tablet to an American friend the Master wrote: 'The worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting, more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting were shut eternally and each one of the believers unsealed his lips in praise of others, then the teachings of His Holiness Baha'u'llah would spread, the hearts be illumined, the spirits glorified, and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.' (Quoted in Star of West, Vol. IV. p. 192) Baha'u'llah says in the Hidden Words: *'Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command ACCURSED ART THOU.'* The condemnation of backbiting could hardly be couched in stronger language than in these passages, and it is obviously one of the foremost obligations for Baha'is to set their faces against this practice. Even if what is said against another person be true, the mentioning of his faults to others still comes under the category of backbiting, and is forbidden."<sup>8</sup>

### **"backbiting**

**or**

### **calumny**

Backbiting, slander and dwelling on the faults of others have been repeatedly condemned by Bahá'u'lláh. In the Hidden Words, He clearly states: *"O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me."* And again: *"O Son of Man! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness."* This strong admonition is further reiterated in His last work, *"the Book of My Covenant"*: *"Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly*

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<sup>6</sup>. Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West, vol. 7, issue 11, pp. 105

<sup>7</sup>. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 11, 1925, Lights of Guidance, no. 325

<sup>8</sup>. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 11, 1925, Lights of Guidance, no. 305

*talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men.””<sup>9</sup>*



## Babi Dispensation

The Bab forbade his followers to backbite. See The Commentary on Surih Joseph, Chapters 100, 105 & 106



## Islamic Dispensation

*“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful.”<sup>10</sup>*

*“Heed not the type of despicable man ready with oaths A slanderer going about with calumnies.”<sup>11</sup>*



## Christian & Jewish Dispensation

*“Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.”<sup>12</sup>*

*“The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.”<sup>13</sup>*

*“Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.”<sup>14</sup>*



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<sup>9</sup>. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 37

<sup>10</sup>. The Holy Qur'an, Al-Hujurat 49:12

<sup>11</sup>. The Holy Qur'an, Al-Qalam 68:10-11

<sup>12</sup>. The Holy Bible, James 4:11

<sup>13</sup>. The Holy Bible, Proverbs 25:23

<sup>14</sup>. The Holy Bible, Psalm 101:5