

Bulugh Al-Maram: Hadith on:

Suspicion

Hadith number 1284:

وعن ابي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال : قال رسول الله
<< اياكم والظن, فان الظن اكذب الحديث >>

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Messenger said, "I warn you of suspicion, for suspicion is the most false form of talk." (Agreed upon).

1. Definition and terms:

اياكم (iyyakum): I warn you

الظن (At-than): suspicion

Suspicion is thoughts, doubts, or imaginations that usually end up in one accusing others or taking a stance against them without any proof or basis.

الحديث (hadith): has two meanings:

- 1) When someone speaks, it is called **حديث**.
- 2) What the Rasul (salla Allahu alayhe wasalam) has said.

Why would the Rasul (salla Allahu alayhe wasalam) refer to suspicion as talk (حديث)?

Even though one may not necessarily say the suspicion that he has aloud, he is talking to himself. In Arabic this is called حديث النفس.

The Rasul (salla Allahu alayhe wasalam) said:

"Anything that one has in his mind, or speaks to himself, Allah will not take him into account for that." (This ruling applies as long as it is not spoken to others, or done in actions).

2. Is all **ظن** prohibited (haram)?

The wording in the hadith implies that all **ظن** is haram. But one has to look at both the Quran and the hadith in order to know if it is or not. In the Quran, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

49:12 O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin.

After reading the verse, it becomes clear then, that the hadith doesn't imply that all suspicion is haram.

In this aya, Allah states that suspicion in "some cases is a sin." (This will be talked about more in detail).

There are a few cases where it is allowed to be suspicious of someone. They are:

- a. If a person has a history of doing a certain act, then it is permissible to be suspicious of him. For example, if a person is known to be a thief, then it is obvious that people might suspect him if something were to be stolen and he had a similar thing that was stolen. (They lack credibility).
- b. If one is in a situation where it is obvious there may be haram taking place. For example, if a man and a woman were in a room alone, then someone passing may suspect something is going on. We know from the Rasul (in a hadith) that if a man and woman are alone together, that shaytan is their third. Therefore, suspicion in this case might be valid.

3. Reasons behind **ظن**:

A. Ignorance in Islamic matters or particular situations.

If one is ignorant, he interprets everything according to his low mental level and whenever he doesn't comprehend something, he becomes suspicious.

For example:

There was a man who saw the Rasul dividing the wealth among the rich while there were poor. This ignorant man said to the Rasul, "This division has not been made to please Allah." When one of the companions of the Prophet informed him about it, he became so furious that one could notice the signs of anger on his face. He then said, "May Allah bestow His Mercy on Moses, for he was hurt with more than this, yet he remained patient." (Al-Bukhari)

The Rasul was distributing the money to the rich, since they had just embraced Islam, and it was an act to win their hearts. This man who made the comment to the Rasul was ignorant and that is why he accused the Rasul. This man was suspicious about the Prophetic action and he disclosed his suspicion about the Rasul. Indeed, his suspicion was a bad **ظن** and it was full of ignorance.

B. Jealousy and hatred

Filthy hearts breed jealousy and hatred. When one is jealous of another person, he is very watchful over that person. Any move or act of the other person causes him to be suspicious. Just like saying: "Oh, he did that because he wanted to get more money"; or "He did that because he wanted to do this or that..."etc.

C. Following desires

The person who follows his desires believes he is the correct one, whereas everyone else around him is wrong in their doings. Since these people are away from Islam, they don't have a scale to balance their desires and notions. They think badly of others even if there is no need.

D. Not raising oneself according to what Islam wants

If a generation is not raised on Islamic good manners (which emphasizes on thinking good of fellow Muslim brothers and sisters), it is always going to be suspicious of Muslims around it. For instance, if a person is raised properly on Islam, he is not going to think bad about Sahaba even if he learns they're in error.

E. Falling in matters of doubt

One should be very careful to not put oneself in a situation where it could cause doubt and suspicion in other's minds. For instance, for a man to be alone with a non-mahram woman may cause suspicious in people's heart, so he should avoid such situations.

F. Two people excluding a third person.

If three people are in a group, and two walk away to talk, the third is excluded and begins to feel suspicious about what the other two are talking about. The Prophet referred to this as: **النجوى** (najwa). This is NOT allowed in Islam.

4. The effects of **ظن**:

1) It will cause one to become mentally ill and deter him from doing good deeds.

For example, when someone is consistently suspecting others, it is going to hurt his mind. Further, constantly doubting and suspecting if one has prayed the correct number of rakah, or whether he is on wudu or not, the person may be deterred from doing good deeds.

2) Regret

When someone suspects another of something, and it proves to be false, then that person may feel regret afterwards. This can be seen in the story of Aisha and al-I'fk (when the hypocrites accused Aisha's honor). Some started to doubt Aisha, and be suspicious of her. When she was cleared, those Sahaba who accused her, regretted being suspicious of her.

If a person does not regret in this world, he will regret it in the Hereafter.

3) Causes one to sin

When a person is suspicious of another, he chooses to talk about that person or act upon the suspicion, therefore bringing sin to himself. (gheeba and nameema)

4) Division and hatred

When people start to suspect and accuse each other, this causes hatred and division among the community. Most of the organizations collapse because of the spread of suspicion and jealousy among their people.

5) *Tends to occupy oneself with others*

A person who is suspicious of another might become obsessive to prove the suspicion; therefore, he may even follow the person to find out if the suspicion has any basis.

The Prophet said, "Whoever follows an error, Allah will embarrass him even in his own house."

5. Cure

A. *To think good of others*

Thinking good of people is the natural disposition of a human being. One can see this among children. They are very accepting and trusting of others, including strangers.

B. *Find excuses for your fellow brothers/sisters*

Umar radiya Allahu anhu said, "If your brother makes a mistake, try to find him 70 excuses. If you run out of 70 excuses, then say maybe he has an excuse."

C. *Leave sins and repent for them*

Consistency in sins makes one's heart black. The Rasul said:

"The black heart is like a cup that is upside down." This means that one whose heart has turned black (from sins) is hardened and will not accept the truth. The suspicious person has a hardened heart and he always tends to think bad of others.

D. *Deal with people with that which is apparent and leave the internal to Allah.*

Proof:

Usama bin Zayd was fighting during a battle. He was about to kill a kafir, when he pronounced the shahada. Usama still killed him. When the matter came to the Rasul, he was very angry with what Usama did. Usama said the man had only pronounced the shahada to protect himself. The Rasul replied to him by asking him, "Did you open his heart to see what he meant?"

So in Islam, we do not judge others internally, but rather, leave that to Allah to judge. If somebody says something, we should believe him; we don't need to go in depth and be suspicious if he is right or wrong.

E. *Occupy oneself with own problems*

The Prophet said:

من حسن اسلام المرء تركه ما لا يعنيه

"Part of a man's good observance of Islam is that he leaves the things which do not concern him."

F. *Raise oneself like the Quran ordered us- when one suspects someone without proof, then think the opposite.*

لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ

24:12 Why did not the believers - men and women - when ye heard of the affair, - put the best construction on it in their own minds and say, "This (charge) is an obvious lie" ?

When the hypocrites spread the lie about Aisha (radiya Allah anha), Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and his wife were discussing it. Um Ayyub asked her husband if he was there alone with Aisha, would he do any haram. He answered no. She replied by saying that the sahaba that was accused is better than her husband. Then Abu Ayyub asked his wife if it was her with the sahaba, would she commit any haram. She replied in the negative. Abu Ayyub answered by saying that Aisha is more righteous than his wife. So these two people stopped any suspicion there may have been.

The above aya (24:12) was revealed about Abu Ayyub and Um Ayyub, as an example for the Ummah to follow. They killed their suspicion right when they heard about it. May Allah help us in following their example (ameen).

6. Kinds of ظن :

- A. واجب (Obligatory): This is *good* suspicion in Allah and the believers.
- B. حرام (Forbidden): Thinking bad about Allah and the Muslims who are just.
- C. مندوب (sunnah): Thinking good about the Muslims. (Some scholars say it is wajib, while others say it is a sunnah act; meaning it is not required to be done).
- D. مباح (neutral): When there is reason to suspect that has neither positive nor negative effects. For example, Aisha (radiya Allah anha) suspected her mother was pregnant with twins.

7. Examples of suspicion

- A. Not knowing the reality of a situation so one accuses.

This is like the story mentioned previously about the Rasul giving out money to the wealthy.

The Rasul said about someone, "This man is no good". Then that person walked into the room, and the Rasul greeted him warmly. One might think that Prophet was a hypocrite if one doesn't know the *مصلحة* (divine wisdom) behind this act of the Prophet. The bold Aisha questioned why the Rasul had warned about him, then treated him a friendly way. The Prophet answered, "A bad person is the one whom people leave because of his evil tongue." (Al-bukhari)

So this shows us the Rasul had a reason to greet him the way he did.

8. Is ظن haram?

Sufyan said, "If you just suspect something in your heart, even if you do not speak or act on it, then it is still haram."

Ibn Al-Jawzi mentioned this story in one of his books but does not agree with this statement. This is the correct opinion on the subject because of the hadith of the Prophet: "Anything that one has in his mind, or speaks to himself, Allah will not take him into account for that." (This ruling applies as long as it is not spoken to others, or done in actions).

9. ظن in Allah

وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّانِّينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

48:6 And that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Polytheists men and women, who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round of Evil: the Wrath of Allah is on them: He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them: and evil is it for a destination.

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا

33:10 Behold! they came on you from above you and from below you, and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ

38:27 Not without purpose did We create heaven and earth and all between! that were the thought of Unbelievers! but woe to the Unbelievers because of the Fire (of Hell)!

Hadith Qudsi:

(أنا عند ظن عبدي بي ، وأنا معه إذا ذكرني ، فإن ذكرني في نفسه ذكرته في نفسي ، وإن ذكرني في ملأٍ ذكرته في ملأٍ خير منهم ، وإن تقرب إلي بشبر تقربت إليه ذراعاً ، وإن تقرب إلي ذراعاً تقربت إليه باعاً ، وإن أتاني يمشي أتيته هرولة)

"I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assemble better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed."

One should think good of Allah and suspect everything good regarding Allah.

10. Practical ways of suspicion in Allah

1) Problems in life

Each person faces numerous problems in life. The person either can think good of Allah or negatively

about Him when confronting the problems. Thinking good of Allah means that one accepts what Allah has chosen for him to happen. He is thankful for whatever Allah sends his way, and knows that if he is patient, Allah will reward him manifold.

The Rasul said:

عجبا لامر المؤمن امره كله خير وليس ذلك لاحد الى للمؤمن ان اصابته سراء شكر فكان خيرا له وان اصابته
ضراء صبر فكان خيرا له

“The case of a believer is wonderful; there is good for him in everything, and this characteristic is exclusively for him alone. If he experiences something pleasant, he is grateful to Allah and that is good for him; and if he comes across some adversity, he is patient and submissive and that too is good for him.” (Muslim)

One of the grandchildren of Zubair bin Awwam had a sickness of some sort where his leg needed to be amputated. The doctors suggested that he get drunk so to lessen the pain he would feel. Zubair refused to do so, but suggested that they wait to amputate until he started his prayer (because of the concentration he was able to achieve in his salah). The doctors did as they were told. Once Zubair started his prayer, they then amputated his leg, and Zubair passed out. During that time, one of his sons was killed. When Zubair awoke, people had come to console him about his son and his leg. Zubair answered by saying, “Alhamdulillah, Allah gave me four limbs, He took one away but I still have three left. Allah has been so generous to me. Allah gave me four sons, took one and I still have three. Allah is so generous towards me.”

This is the good **ظن** that one should have in Allah.

There was a man passing in a desert when he came across a man who was very old. This old man could hardly move anything in his body, except his tongue. The old man continuously repeated, “O Allah, give me strength to thank you.”

A woman was crying over the grave of her son, when the Rasul approached her and tried to comfort her. She snapped back at him saying he had no idea what she was experiencing (not knowing who she was talking to). The Rasul walked away and said, “Patience is when it (the problem) first hits you.”

2) In sins-

When one commits a sin and repents, he must have good **ظن** that Allah will forgive him. The bad **ظن** is one who commits sins continuously and says that Allah is the most forgiving and will forgive him.

When the Prophet was on his deathbed, ابن حنيف (Ibn Haneef) and عروة بن الزبير (Urwa bin Zubair) went to visit him. Aisha told Urwa the Prophet had told his wife that he had six dinars that he wanted her to be give away. Later he asked if Aisha had taken care of the money, and she said no since she was busy taking care of the Rasul. He commented by saying, “How is the Messenger of Allah going to meet Allah with six dinars in his house.”

I imagine this was the Rasul who had six dinars in halal and didn't want to keep them, whereas we have many sins and do not fear meeting Allah in this state.

فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

37:87 "Then what is your idea about the Lord of the worlds?"

3) Good **ظن** in deeds-

One should do a good deed and hope that Allah will accept his deeds and shower his mercy on him in order to enter Paradise. No one will enter Paradise based solely on his deeds; but rather needs Allah's mercy. The deeds are a way to achieve Allah's mercy.

4) Dua-

When someone makes dua, he should be confident that Allah will answer his prayer. Even if He doesn't right away, he still should have good **ظن** in Allah. Allah answers dua in three different ways:

- a. By granting the asker what he wanted in this life.
- b. Preventing harm from happening to the person equivalent to that dua (Allah deters a harm from affecting the person).
- c. The reward or higher rank in Paradise.

Bad **ظن** is either saying, "Allah doesn't accept my prayers", or when Allah accepts it then one attributes the fulfillment of dua as mere coincidence or attribute it to someone other than Allah.

5) Good/Bad **ظن** in death-

Good **ظن** is when someone is on his deathbed and hopes he will enter heaven. A Muslim should always balance his thoughts. It is described like a bird, having two wings; one of hope and the other of fear of Allah.

When one is on his deathbed, he should always think good of Allah. There is a hadith where the Prophet said,
"Let none of you die until he thinks good of Allah."

Bilal radiya Allahu anhu, while on his deathbed, stated, "Tomorrow, I meet my beloved ones- Muhammad (salla Allahu alayhe wasalam) and his companions."

Hasan Al-Basri said, "If the Mu'min thinks good of Allah, he will continually do good (actions)."

The Prophet said, "They are liars. If they think good of Allah, they WOULD do good."

The Prophet said:

الكيس من دان نفسه وعمل لما بعد الموت، والعاجز من اتبع نفسه هواها، وتمنى على الله الأمانى.

"A wise person is one who keeps a watch over his bodily desires and passions, and checks himself from that which is harmful and strives for that which will benefit him after death. And a foolish person is one who subordinates himself to his cravings and desires and expects from Allah the fulfillment of his futile desires." (Tirmidhi)