



TRUSTWORTHINESS

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that trustworthiness has several meanings in the belief context and social context
- Know that being trustworthy is an obligation in Islam and there are no exceptions to it whatsoever
- Understand that trustworthiness is a true sign of belief in Allah (SWT)
- Understand the responsibility of the trustee
- Understand that our body and everything we think we own is a trust from Allah (SWT) and we have to look after it

TRUSTWORTHINESS

One common theme among the narrations we have about social rules is that one of the most important of these social rules is trustworthiness. This trait is always one of the first and most important traits that a believer is encouraged to practice.

THE DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS IN ISLAM

Trustworthiness has several meanings in different contexts. Trustworthiness can mean faith in the beliefs of Islam, because this is fulfilling the trust of Allah, the Exalted. For example believing in the day of Judgement means knowing that all our blessings are from Allah (SWT) as trusts for us to use properly in this world, after which we will be accountable for them.

Trustworthiness also has a meaning in the social context, where it means to fulfil the trust that a person has been given. This trust may be wealth, such as when a person's friend leaves money with them, or a bank lends money to a person. The trust may be a person's health, such as when a doctor is looking after a patient. There are many other examples of trust in everyday life, and in each case, the person who is expected to fulfil the trust is obligated to fulfil it in all circumstances.



TRUSTWORTHINESS: AN OBLIGATION WITH NO EXCEPTIONS

Trustworthiness is an obligation without exceptions or limitations. As the following narration shows, it is an obligation that all prophets have commanded. Breaking a trust is not allowed in any religion. *Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said:*

*“Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, did not depute any prophet except with (teachings of) truthful speech and fulfilling the trusts, whether it is the trust of a good person or an evil person”.*ⁱ

The following narration shows that fulfilling the trust is among a number of selected obligations in which there are no exceptions, and where there is no difference in the obligation whether the people involved are believers or non-believers. *Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:*

*“there are three situations where Allah (SWT) did not make any exceptions: respect to parents, keeping promises and fulfilling trusts”.*ⁱⁱ

In fact, in one narration narrated by Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī, Imam al-Sajjād says that even if the killer of his father, Imam Husain (as), were to leave the sword with which he killed Imam Husain in Imam Sajjād’s trust, the Imam would give it back to him and fulfil the trust. A similar narration is narrated from Imam Hassan regarding the killer of Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the Faithfulⁱⁱⁱ.

Taking these narrations into consideration, it becomes very clear that there is no excuse for the scams and tricks that some people use in order to obtain money by illegal means or by obtaining benefits from social welfare systems without deserving them. Also, people who take loans and leave the country or who use similar tricks to cheat banks or the government out of money have absolutely no excuse. These actions cannot be justified by saying that this is reclaiming the property for the Muslims or any other weak justification. There is absolutely no excuse for such actions and they are considered to be stealing in Islam.

TRUSTWORTHINESS: THE REAL CRITERIA FOR BELIEF

The Ahlul Bayt (as) have taught us that if a person wants to be known as a real follower of theirs, they must be known within their community to be the most trustworthy person.

In another narration, Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) clearly states that believers should not be judged solely on their prayers, fasting and other ritualistic deeds. Rather, they should be judged according to their truthfulness and trustworthiness. *Ishāq ibn ‘Ammār and others narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as):*

“Do not be deceived by their prayers and their fasting. A man may become so habituated to praying and fasting that he would feel strange if he did not perform them. Rather, examine them when it comes to truthfulness in speech and the fulfilling of trusts”.^{iv}

We should keep their criteria in mind when it comes to making decisions in our lives and the lives of our family members. If someone proposes to a daughter of ours, we need to check his trustworthiness and truthfulness. Our child will be a trust in that person’s hands and we need to make sure that this person is trustworthy. Our criteria should not be family relations or country of origin, but real trustworthiness.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRUSTEE

The trustee (a person who holds the trust) has several responsibilities. Many of which are common or obvious. As seen from the discussion above and the traditions, we know that it is *Wājib* to return the entrusted thing to its owner without having damaged it, or used it for our own benefit (if we did not have the permission to use it), and to guard and protect that thing while the trustee is in possession of it.

Therefore in summary, the trustee should:

- Guard & protect the trust from any damage, misuse or loss
- Return the trust the way it was given, to its lawful owner when asked to return it
- Not use it for his/her own benefit without the permission of the owner

- Not delay in returning the trust
- In the case of orphans or people who cannot take care of their own property, the trustee has to guard and manage the property by maintaining it and if possible also to invest in it to make the value of the property grow. So for example, a trustee of an orphan should educate the orphan, train them and if they have any money or property, it should be given back to the orphan when they reach maturity (both mental and physical).



TYPES OF TRUSTS

1. **Trust of Allah (SWT):** What is meant by Divine trust? The scholars have a variety of opinions in this regard. Some say that it means the grace of intellect given by Allah (SWT). The safeguarding of this trust (intellect) means that man should use it to recognise and obey his Creator. According to other scholars this trust consists of the laws of Islam that Allah (SWT) has sent through His Prophet (saw). These laws are a Divine trust. To guard these laws means to obey them faithfully.



2. **Blessing of Intellect:** Intellect or the faculty of reasoning is one of the greatest trusts that Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon man and this trust demands that man continually honours it. We must not say or do anything that is against reason. If we allow our desire to conquer reason we would have committed a breach of trust with Allah (SWT).



In regards to the safekeeping of trust with reference to the rules of Sharʿaʿ, Imam Muhammad Bāqir (as) says:

“Misappropriating the trust of Allah and His Prophet (saw) is their disobedience. As far as the breach of trust is concerned, every person is the trustee of the laws revealed by Allah.”^v



3. **Blessings of Allah(SWT):** These could include everything from our health, property, money, family, friends etc. It is important that we use our health for good deeds and take care of our health by following the laws of Allah (SWT). The best way to be a good trustee of the blessing of Allah (SWT) on us is that we should use them according to how He has shown us to use them i.e. by not doing anything forbidden with them e.g. speaking lies or rude words with the tongue that He has blessed us with. We should also avoid *Isrāf* (being extravagant or wasteful) especially with our food and money. We should not throw away good food or buy too many things and then not use them or we should not buy useless things which we don't need.

We should know that in Islam, whatever you own is not yours but Allah's (SWT) and He will ask you about how you used it. Therefore, it is important that we, for example, pay our *Khums* and *Zakāt* because this money is the trust of Allah (SWT). If we refuse to pay these obligatory charities, it is like we have stolen from Allah (SWT).

Therefore, whatever we have, we should look after very carefully and avoid misusing or damaging it, because one day it will have to be returned to its real Owner. If we have not kept the trust properly, we will definitely be punished for it!^{vi}

Review Questions

Q1. The trust that Allah (SWT) has left with us to look after includes:

- a. Our intellect
- b. The rules of religion
- c. The many blessings He has given us
- d. All of the above

ⁱ [al-Kaafi vol2 p.104]

ⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi vol.2 p. 162]

ⁱⁱⁱ [Beharul-anwaar vol.75 p.114]

^{iv} [al-Kaafi vol.2 p.104]

^v (Tafsīr Safi)

^{vi} **References**

Q2. Being trustworthy is:

- a. An important social obligation mentioned in a few narrations
- b. An important social recommendation
- c. One of the most important social obligations emphasised in multiple narrations

Q3. The Ahlul Bayt have taught us that the real criteria for belief is:

- a. How often a person prays
- b. How much a person fasts
- c. How trustworthy a person is

Social Rules in Islam – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei:

Trustworthiness

Greater Sins: The Complete Book, by Ayatullah Abdul Husayn Dastaghaib

Shirazi, Chapter 24 “Khayanat” - [http://www.al-](http://www.al-islam.org/greater_sins_complete/)

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