

KEEPING PROMISES

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 5

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that Allah (SWT) Has given us a unique ability to speak and write
- Be reminded that we should be thankful to Him for this gift by using it wisely
- List the number of sins and good things one can do through speech
- Understand that we have to be careful as to what we say

Keeping Promises

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

“Those (faithful believers) who are faithfully true to their trusts and to their covenants” (23:8)

As we have learnt in the past, keeping promises is one of the most important social obligations in Islam, and named as one of the major traits of the faithful believers in the Holy Qur’an. We have also learnt that breaking promises is a major sin and a sign of hypocrisy. In this lesson, we will examine some further details regarding this concept.



THE GREATEST PROMISE

Amongst all our promises, the greatest promise (or covenant) is the promise that we have made with Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) tells us in the Holy Qur’an that before we were born into this world, we have all made a promise to Him that we will obey Him.

Proofs for this promise are that we each have a divine Godly instinct that points us towards Allah (SWT) and a conscience which teaches us right and wrong. Each and every time we sin, we are breaking this great promise, and we will be held account for our unfaithfulness to our covenant with Allah (SWT) on the Day of Reckoning. In fact, Allah (SWT) groups those who have broken this major promise as the *Fasiqīn* (*the rebellious and disobedient to Allah whose hearts are turned away from the truth and suffer the disease of hypocrisy*)

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ

“Those (Fasiqīn) who break Allah’s Covenant (of worshipping none but Allah and abiding by His Law) after ratifying it...” (2:27)

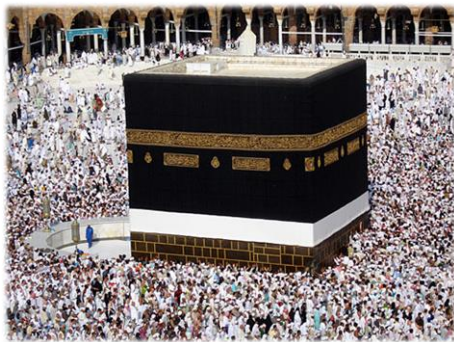
THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING PROMISES

As with fulfilling trusts, keeping promises is an obligation without exceptions, as we can see from the following narration.

Imam al-Bāqir (as) said: “There are three situations where Allah (SWT) did not make any exceptions: respect to parents, keeping promises and fulfilling trusts.”ⁱⁱⁱ

As Muslims we **must** keep our promises to **any person** we make them to. It does not matter whether the other person is young or old, Muslim or non-Muslim, good or bad. We must follow the example from Imam Zainul ‘Abidīn (as) who said that even if a person entrusted him with the sword that was used to kill his holy father, and he had promised to return it to the owner, he would do so.

MUḤAMMAD (SAW, THE TRUSTWORTHY)



Our Holy Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad (saw) is the perfect role model that each and every one of us should follow. At a young age, before beginning his mission, he was known as ‘Al-Amīn’, the trustworthy, due to the fact that he never broke a promise or trust.

Even all the disbelievers had complete trust in him, highlighted by the story regarding the Black Stone (al-Hajar al-Aswad) of the Ka’ba. He was so trustworthy that during his first public invitation to Islam he first asked the people of Mecca whether they would believe him or not if he gave news of enemies approaching from behind the mountains. The unanimous reply was ‘yes’. Indeed, it was Prophet Muḥammad’s (SAWA) trustworthiness that made him fit for this great mission and allowed the people to believe the message that he delivered. If we follow his example in our lives, especially in Western societies, we will present the supreme moral standards of our religion and invite others to Islam through our actions.

NADHR, ‘AHD & QASAM

In Islam, we have three types of specific promises that have special jurisprudential rulings.

Nadhr (vow): when one uses a verbal expression to promise using the name of Allah (SWT) to make

something obligatory on themselves if a certain thing happens

Qasam (oath): when one uses a verbal expression using the name of God to promise to do a certain act

‘Ahd (covenant): this is when a person makes a vow with Allah (SWT) to do something. It is very similar to a Qasam, and differs mainly in the verbal expression used

If one makes any of the above promises with their required conditions, and then breaks them, a kaffārah (expiation) is obligatory. This expiation is different according to the type of promise.

	Nadhr Vow	Ahd Covenant	Qasam Oath
Kaffarāh	Feed 10 poor, clothe 10 poor or free a slave. OR Fast for 3 consecutive days.	Feed 60 poor, fast consecutively for 2 month or free a slave.	Feed 10 poor, clothe 10 poor & free a slave. OR Fast for 3 consecutive days.

Homework

Q1. The Greatest Promise is:

- The covenant we made with our parents.
- The covenant we made with Allah (SWT).
- The covenant we will make with Allah (SWT).

Q2. If a person takes an oath to do something for the sake of God:

- They must do that thing or pay a penalty
- They do not have to do it
- They should not do it

Q3. The signs of a hypocrite are:

- He or she does not pray
- He or she does not fast
- He or she does not keep their promises

References

Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei – Lesson 8 on Social Rules in Islam – Keeping Promises

Youth & Morals, by SayyidMujtabaMusaviLari - <http://www.al-islam.org/youth-and-morals-sayyid-mujtaba-musavi-lari/>

ⁱⁱ Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei – Tafseer of Verse 27 of Surah Baqarah.

ⁱⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi vol.2 p. 162]