

# TRUSTWORTHINESS

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 5

## Objectives >>>

### Students should:

- Understand that trustworthiness has several meanings
- 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). Know that this is the character we have to portray to the community in the West
- Understand the responsibilities of the trustee
- Understand that our body, time and everything we think we own is a trust from Allah (SWT) and we have to look after it and use it only in His way

## Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is one of the first and most important traits that Islam has commanded the believers to practice. In this lesson we will briefly review this trait and examine in detail our responsibilities regarding what we are entrusted with.

## 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 we have of 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 by other people. For example, trust may be wealth, such as when a person's friend leaves money with them, or a bank lends money to a person. In every situation, one is obligated to fulfil their trusts.



## **NO EXCEPTIONS**

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”.<sup>i</sup>

As the narration above shows, trustworthiness is an obligation without any exceptions, and there is no difference in the obligation whether the people involved are believers or non-believers. 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, whether they are living in a Muslim or a Non-Muslim country.

## **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, and should not be judged solely by their worship.

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”.<sup>ii</sup>

We should keep this criteria in mind when it comes to making decisions in our lives and the lives of our family members, such as when considering potential spouses.

We should also bear in mind that, especially when living in Western countries, we are the flag bearers of our religion and our actions can illustrate the



beauty of Islam. For example, if a Muslim works in a financial institution and is the most trustworthy person there, everyone will see how beautiful and perfect the religion of Islam is, and the workmates may be more encouraged towards our faith.

When living in a Non-Muslim country, we must follow the inspirational example of Prophet Yūsuf (as) who became the minister and treasurer of Egypt, the land of the Pharaohs, due to his supreme moral character (which includes trustworthiness) and firm faith in Allah (SWT).

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRUSTEE**

If a person is to take a formal position as a trustee, they should fulfil the following conditions:<sup>iii</sup>

- Be bāligh (mature) & sane (the depositor must also have this condition)
- Reject taking up the trust if they do not have the ability to take care of it
- Guard and 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 their own benefit without the permission of the owner
- Not delay in returning the trust
- Compensate for any loss or damage if they were negligent towards the trust. However, if they have not been negligent and the property unexpectedly perishes, they are not responsible for it.
- Keep the trust in the specified place if they have accepted to do so, and not move it without the owner's permission.
- 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, and return the property when the owner is mature and able to take care of it.

## ARE THEY REALLY OURS?

We sometimes think that our body belongs to us and we can do whatever we like with it. But if it was truly ours, we would be able to keep it forever and it would not become dead when we pass away. If our body parts, belongings, time, and even family members were truly ours, then Allah (SWT) would not be able to take them away from us at any second.



وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

“And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth...” (4:131)

Everything we ‘own’ is in fact the blessing of Allah (SWT) which belongs to Him, and we are merely His trustees. We should therefore take care of these precious blessings that we are entrusted with and use them only in His way. For example, with regards to ‘our’ money, we should only spend it in Halal transactions, we should not waste it, and we should pay our Khums and Zakāt. We should always keep in mind the responsibilities of the trustee which we have learnt as we are the trustees of Allah (SWT), and He will one day ask us about everything that we have been entrusted with.

## ACTIVITY

Discuss as a class how we can take care of and use in Allah (SWT)’s way each of the trusts named below:

- |               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| • Eyes        | • Hands    |
| • Tongue      | • Time     |
| • Food        | • Brain    |
| • Environment | • Internet |

## Review Questions

**Q1. Everything that we ‘own’ in reality is:**

- Truly ours
- Truly Allah (SWT)’s
- Truly our children’s

**Q2. Being trustworthy is:**

- Only in regards to what other people entrust us with.
- An important social recommendation
- One of the most important social obligations mentioned in many narrations

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

- How often a person prays
- How much a person fasts
- How trustworthy a person is

<sup>i</sup> [al-Kaafi vol2 p.104]

<sup>ii</sup> [al-Kaafi vol.2 p. 162]

### References

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-islam.org/greater\\_sins\\_complete/](http://www.al-islam.org/greater_sins_complete/)

<sup>iii</sup>Islamic Laws: Rules regarding deposit or custody or trust (Amanat), Ayatullah Sistani, <http://www.sistani.org/english/book/48/2341/>