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# Keeping Promises and Trusts\*

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## Abstract



Faithfulness and trustworthiness can be regarded both as two moral principles and as two virtues. They are commonly approved by common sense morality. In addition, one may think of them as religious obligations or as moral rational duties. After providing a short introduction and a good working definition of them, this paper seeks to discuss that the importance of keeping promises and trusts (faithfulness and trustworthiness) is strongly emphasized by the Glorious Quran and hadiths. Then we see that they have three kinds: faithfulness and trustworthiness with respect to God, humans, and oneself, and that they are developed and strengthened by certain grounds such as belief in the unity of divine acts, determination, dignity, and awareness of its unpleasant consequences. After that, we consider the fact that these two principles or virtues can bring great individual benefits such as perfection of faith, divine pleasure, and closeness to God as well as significant social benefits such as high social status, public trust, security, and comfort.

## Keywords

Keeping promises, trusts, faithfulness, trustworthiness, truthfulness.

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## Introduction

The most important capital of a society is the trust people have toward each other; thus, anything which strengthens this trust is desirable, and anything which harms it is undesirable. People's loyalty to the agreements they establish and also returning entrusted items to their owners are among the means of reinforcing this sense of trust in society. Understanding the necessity of keeping promises and trusts can be considered an evident and natural understanding God has gifted the human being with. Even when a father makes a promise to his small child, the child expects him to keep his promise; or when a child entrusts his father with some of his personal belongings, he expects his father to return them exactly as they were. Thus, from a social aspect, keeping the promises and agreements people establish with each other and also returning entrusted items or money to their original owners are part of good morals. Safeguarding entrusted items or wealth may also be considered among the examples of commitment to contracts and agreements.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, keeping promises and looking after entrusted property has a significant role in building one's moral and spiritual personality. A human's commitment to a promise which he has made to God keeps him away from sins and disobedience. Also, looking after entrusted property necessarily results in him benefitting from God's blessings entrusted to him, leading him further towards perfection and happiness, which is what God desires.

## Literal Meaning and Usage

Literally, *'ahd* means "keeping to something and constantly

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1. As it is mentioned in a speech of Imam Ali (a), "The best of trust-keeping is keeping promises." See *Tasnif Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 251.

observing it”; thus, a contract which is necessary to be adhered to is also called an *‘ahd*. (Raghib Isfahani, vol. 1, p. 591) Therefore, keeping a promise, i.e., a commitment to a covenant a person establishes with others, will have three forms: his covenant with God, his covenant with God’s servants, and his covenant with himself.

The opposite of *‘ahd* is *ghadar* which means “interference in something” and has also been meant as “breaking a covenant”. (Raghib Isfahani, 1375 SH, vol. 1, p. 602; Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 5, p. 8)

*Amāna*, *amn*, and *amān* are all infinitive forms meaning “inner tranquility and lack of distress”. (Raghib Isfahani, 1375 SH, vol. 1, p. 90) Therefore, *amāna* (“trust”) can be considered to mean something (including a material object or a secret, etc.) trusted with someone. Thus, trust keeping means “maintaining this trust and confidence by the trust-keeper and the one who has been trusted with something.

“Betrayal” is against *amāna*. According to Raghib, “betrayal” and “hypocrisy” are similar except that “betrayal” is used more for breaking trusts and covenants, but hypocrisy is breaking [i.e. betraying] religion [as a covenant]; then the two meanings became intermingled. So, betrayal is the same as disobedience of the truth and breaking a covenant in secret. Collocation of the concepts of keeping a promise and trust-keeping shows their common root, because breaking a promise is a kind of betrayal of covenant, and observing the trust is loyalty to a covenant.

## Keeping Promises and Trusts in the Qur’an and Hadiths

Aside from their place in religion and religious law, these two qualities are also desirable to humans and pursued by them. However, faithful people are more expected to be loyal to them, and they are considered to be among the qualities of the faithful.

In its description of the faithful, the noble Qur'an says:

And those who keep their trusts and covenants. (23:8)

Also, God has mentioned keeping promises at the same level as God-wariness:

Yes, whoever fulfills his commitments and is wary of Allah—Allah indeed loves the God-wary. (3:76)

In another verse, God tells people to be loyal to their covenants, because they will be questioned about them:

Fulfill the covenants; indeed, all covenants are accountable. (17:34)

Another verse explains respecting the covenants Muslims had with polytheists. In this verse, God orders that as long as the polytheists are loyal to their covenants and do not support anyone against the Muslims, the Muslims should not break their covenants:

...barring the polytheists with whom you have made a treaty, and who did not violate any [of its terms] with you, nor backed anyone against you. So, fulfill the treaty with them until [the end of] its term. Indeed, Allah loves the God-wary. (9:4)

Also, there are several verses in the glorious Qur'an about looking after entrusted property, including one that presents it as one of the characteristics of the faithful<sup>1</sup> and also gives a command about it:

Indeed Allah commands you to deliver the trusts to their [rightful] owners... (4:58)

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1. See: 23:8; 70:32.

However, religious responsibility and commitment is the most important thing the human being is entrusted with, and he is obliged to protect it. God mentions this trust in the following verse:

Indeed, We presented the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to undertake it and were apprehensive of it; but man undertook it. Indeed, he is most unjust and ignorant. (33:72)

Commitment and responsibility toward God, creation and oneself is a heavy burden; no being but humans had the capacity to accept it. Thus, God granted them intellect which is the criteria for divine reward and punishment, freedom, and the means of choosing; it took him to the position of the vicegerency of God. But the unjust and ignorant human being did not know the value of this great position and betrayed this trust and committed injustice to himself.

In hadiths too, the issue of keeping promises and looking after entrusted properties is considered to be very important. For example, the noble Prophet (s) says, “One who does not safeguard entrusted properties does not have faith, just as the one who does not respect promises and covenants does not have religion.” (Majlisi, n.d., vol. 69, p. 198) This shows that even if we do not summarize all of the religion in faithfulness toward the Creator and the creation, at least safeguarding entrusted properties is one of the important principles of the religion; thus, in another statement from Imam Ali (a), it is mentioned that “the essence of religion is returning entrusted items and fulfilling promises.” (Tamimi Amudi, 1366 SH, p. 86)

The noble Prophet (s) of Islam himself was entitled “Muhammad al-Amin” due to his great observance of looking after entrusted items. Before his mission of prophethood began, he (s) was famous for truthfulness, looking after entrusted items, intelligence and smartness. In His conversation with Moses (a),

God described the Prophet Muhammad (s) with the title of “Amin” [“trustworthy”] and said, “His name is Ahmad, Muhammad (s) the trustworthy; from the remainders of the first group in the past who believes in all [divine] books and approves of all the messengers and bears testimony to the sincerity of all the prophets (s).” (Kulayni, 1362 SH, vol. 8, p. 43)

With regards to the important role of these two qualities in faith and religion, Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “There are three things which God, the Glorified and Exalted, never allowed anyone to disobey: returning anyone’s entrusted property, whether the owner be righteous or an evil-doer; fulfilling a promise to anyone, whether he be righteous or an evil-doer; and doing good to one’s father and mother, whether they be righteous or evil-doers.” (Saduq, 1362 SH, vol. 1, p. 128)

This high emphasis on these two moral virtues is for two reasons: observing them elevates the human soul and assists him to reach perfection; furthermore, it strengthens social bonds. Therefore, in addition to exhorting truthfulness and good manners, the Qur’an and hadith also exhort the two above-mentioned qualities, i.e. keeping promises and looking after trusts. The noble Prophet(s) said, “The closest of you to me tomorrow at the Last Station [for the Judgement] are the ones who are the most truthful among you in speech, most trustworthy among you regarding entrusted property, most loyal among you regarding promises, and the best of you in manners.” (Daylami, 1412 AH, vol. 1, p. 133)

In some hadiths, only truthfulness and trust-keeping are mentioned as the criteria for a person’s faith and religion, not the number of his prayers and fasts. The noble Prophet (s) said, “Do not look at people’s many prayers, fasts, performances of the hajj, good deeds or nightly prayers; but rather, look at the truthfulness of their speech and their returning entrusted properties.” (Tabrisi, 1385 AH, p. 53) Also, Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “Do not be fooled by people’s prayer and fasting, for one may become so fascinated

with his prayers and fasts that he would be worried if he abandons them. Rather, try them with truthfulness and returning entrusted items.” (Kulayni, 1362 SH, vol. 2, p. 104) That is why lack of commitment to promises and betraying entrusted items are considered among the attributes of hypocrites and faithless people: “A hypocrite has three signs: whenever he talks, he lies; whenever he promises, he breaks it; and whenever he is entrusted with something, he betrays that trust.” (Saduq, 1404 AH, vol. 4, p. 361)

Due to the lack of commitment of some people to their covenants, God has afflicted them with hypocrisy and has weakened their faith. It may be the worst punishment because the most valuable asset of the human being is his faith. It is his faith which can elevate him to the divine throne. If faith is taken from him, he will be lower than any low being. The Qur'an clearly mentions this issue and says:

Among them are those who made a pledge with Allah: “If He gives us out of His grace, we will surely give the zakat and we will surely be among the righteous.” \* But when He gave them out of His grace, they begrudged it and turned away, being disregardful. \* So, He caused hypocrisy to ensue in their hearts until the day they will encounter Him, because of their going back on what they had promised Allah and because of the lies they used to tell. (9:75-77)

This hypocrisy is not temporary, but rather, it will remain in their hearts until Judgement Day because they have broken their covenant with God. But, if a person is loyal to his covenant with God and observes it, he will be rewarded; i.e. in addition to that, he will receive great daily sustenance, and when he observes his covenant and gives to charity, he will receive the reward for charity as well. Such people receive light instead of hypocrisy and achieve the capability of the perfection of their faith and being forgiven.

From the viewpoint of Islam, commitment to covenants is not limited to one's coreligionists and friends, but rather commitment to covenants made with enemies is also incumbent and necessary, the same way that returning a trust to the most fierce enemies is obligatory. Imam Ali (a) advised Malik Ashtar about commitment to covenants he made with his enemies: "If you conclude an agreement between yourself and your enemy or enter into a pledge with him, then fulfil your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully. Place yourself as a shield against whatever you have pledged, because among the obligations of Allah, there is nothing on which people are more strongly united despite the difference of their ideas and variation of their views than respect for fulfilling pledges. Besides Muslims, even unbelievers have abided by agreements because they realized the dangers which would come in the wake of violation thereof. Therefore, do not deceive your enemy, because no one can offend Allah save the ignorant and the wicked. Allah made His agreement and pledged the sign of security which He has spread over His creatures through His mercy and an asylum in which they stay in His protection and seek the benefit of nearness to Him. Therefore, there should be no deceit, cunning or duplicity in it. Do not enter into an agreement which may admit to different interpretations and do not change the interpretation of vague words after the conclusion and confirmation (of the agreement). If an agreement of Allah involves you in hardship, do not seek its repudiation without justification, because the bearing of hardships through which you expect relief and a handsome result is better than a violation whose consequence you fear, and that you fear that you will be called upon by Allah to account for it and you will not be able to seek forgiveness for it in this world or the next." (*Nahj al-balagha*, letter no. 53)

About the importance of trust-keeping, Imam al-Sajjad (a) also said, "You are advised to honor trusts; I swear by the One Who sent Muhammad (s) as the Prophet (s) that if the murderer of my father Husayn (a) entrusted me with the sword with which he



killed my father, I would return it to him.” (Saduq, 1400AH, p. 246)

After learning about the importance of commitment to covenants and trust-keeping from the views of the Qur'an and hadiths, we are going to examine each of the two qualities separately.

As we mentioned, the covenants a person makes are of three types:<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Covenants with God

Covenants between God and humans are of two types: sometimes, God takes a covenant with people, and sometimes they make a covenant with God. God took a covenant from humans on the day of *Alast*, based on which humans admitted to the Lordship of God, so they have to obey and serve God. Commitment to such a covenant requires one to be always obedient to divine orders and keep away from what God has prohibited; also, God provides for all his affairs and does not leave him alone in anything.

But the covenant humans establish with God are covenants in which humans set a condition. For example, they may say to God, “If You fulfil such a request of mine, I will do such a good deed or act of worship”; i.e., in fact, the vow will be conditioned. In this case, whenever a person achieves his wish after a covenant he has made with God, he has to remain loyal to his covenant and perform his vow.

## 2. Covenant with people

Human covenants with each other are of two types: sometimes, a

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1. In the glorious Qur'an, a type of covenant is mentioned as the covenant of God with servants which means God's advice to servants. In such cases, the word '*ahd*' ("covenant") is collocated with *ila* ("toward") which connotes God's order to servants. c.f. Misbah Yazdi, 1388 SH, vol. 3, p. 175.

person makes a covenant with another to help him or solve one of his problems. In this case, lack of commitment to this covenant is morally inappropriate and bad. Covenants among people include the personal treaties bound between people every day; even many transactions they make are categorized under the rubric of “covenants”, while regarding transactions, the word “contract” is usually used.

Covenants between two groups or two communities occur in cases like when the Islamic community makes a covenant with other governments and nations. Covenants between two communities may have different forms which are mentioned in *fiqh*, such as treaties to cease hostilities (ceasefires), peace treaties, and treaties of political, military, economic, or other cooperation which are made with other communities at the discretion of the leader of the Islamic community.

Also, sometimes, a covenant is made between an individual and a community so that the members of that community will make a covenant with this person as the leader of the community to support him and obey his orders. The covenant between one person and the community in the glorious Qur'an and hadiths is called *bay'a* “allegiance” or *mubaya'at*. It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

Indeed, those who swear allegiance to you, swear allegiance only to Allah: the hand of Allah is above their hands... (48:10)

### **3. One's covenant with himself**

Among the followers of mysticism and ethics, this kind of covenant is called *musharata* “preconditioning”. In this kind of covenant, the person preconditions himself and promises to himself that he should be as such, act as such and prohibit doing such thereafter. Preconditioning is a requirement of *muraqaba*

“spiritual surveillance” which is itself one of the stages of moral education. If a person neither preconditions himself first, nor does he specify the cases or make a plan for himself, he would not know how to survey himself. People with vigilant consciences and souls undoubtedly show sensitivity toward these preconditions and covenants with themselves and do not easily violate them.

It seems that this type of covenant has great importance in morality and education, because, basically, only the one who is bound to the covenant he has with himself is expected to be loyal to his covenant with others; and how can a person, who discredits himself by breaking his covenant with himself, honor his covenant with others?

Just as with keeping promises, looking after entrusted things has a vast meaning. Divine blessings such as the divine religion, divine books, the instructions of religious leaders and properties, children and social position of people, etc. are all forms of divine trusts which believers should make utmost efforts to guard.

Fakhr Razi mentioned three types of entrusted things: God’s trusts, trusts of people and one’s own trusts. Then, he has an extensive explanation about each of them. He includes doing obligations and abandoning prohibitions among divine trusts and categorizes them into different categories including the tongue’s trust, the eye’s trust and the ear’s trust. (That is, the tongue should not sin, the eye should not cast a sinful look, and the ear should not hear sinful talk.)

He presents people’s trusts as similar to the trusts they keep with each other, abandoning reduction in exchange, abandoning backbiting, observing justice by governments and not provoking laypeople in false beliefs and the like.

He considers people’s trusts toward himself to include choosing what is his good in religion and the world and not surrendering to lust and wrath, or sins they lead to. (Fakhr Razi, 1420 AH, vol. 10, p. 109)

## **The Story of a Promise Kept**

In *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, Yaqut Hamawi mentions a wonderful story about the conquest of the town of Suhriyanj.<sup>1</sup> At the time of one of the caliphs, an army was sent there. One of the chiefs of the army said, "We had decided to seize the town in one day (since we had sufficient soldiers and provisions). First, a battle began between the people of the town and the army of Islam; then, the army returned to the camp to regain their strength. Only one of the slave warriors remained near the town. They asked him for safe passage, so he tied a safe passage permit to an arrow and shot it toward them. When the army of Islam went back to the town to continue the battle, they were faced with a strange scene. They saw that the people of the town had opened the gates of the town and held a piece of paper which was the safe passage granted to them by one of the soldiers of the Islamic army, so the soldiers were left confused. They wrote a letter to the caliph and asked for his advice. In reply, the caliph wrote back, "One Muslim's covenant is the same as the covenant of all Muslims, so you should respect it and give the people of the town safe passage!" They did so (and it had a good effect on attracting the people of the town toward Islam). (Makarem Shirazi, 1388 SH, vol. 3, pp. 264-265)

## **A Story of a Trust Kept**

In Mecca, a poor young man lived with his good wife. One day, upon returning from Masjid al-Haram, he found a purse. When he opened it, he found 1000 gold dinars. He happily went to his

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1. In the central region of Bawana of Fars province, there is a village called Suriyan which seems to be the same Suhriyanj; in *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, under this story, its Persian name is mentioned as Suriyanj (the shorter form of which is Suriyan).

wife and called his friends. His wife told him, “This is forbidden. You should take it back to that place and make an announcement; maybe its owner will be found.”

The man went out of home and when he arrived where he found the bag of gold; he saw a man shouting, “Who has found a bag containing a thousand dinars?” The young man went forth and said, “I have found it. Here is your bag, take your gold.” The man took the bag and counted the coins and saw that they were all there; then, returned the bag to the young man and said, “Keep it for yourself. Come with me to my house; I have some business with you.” Then, he took the young man to his house and gave him nine other bags, each containing a thousand red gold dinars and told him that they were his.

The young man was surprised and said, “Is this in jest?” The man answered, “By God, I swear that I am not teasing you. When I was going to Mecca, an Iraqi man gave me this and said, ‘Take this gold with you to Mecca and drop one bag on the way. Later, go there and shout, ‘Who has found the bag?’ If someone comes and said he has found it, give him the other nine bags, because, such a person is trustworthy. A trustworthy person would remove it from his own possessions and also give it to others, and our charity will thus be accepted before God because of him!’” The young man took the money home due to his trust-keeping and honesty, and became one of the rich people of his time.

### **A Poem about Promises and Trusts Kept**

In His Book, God the Most Loving  
 Ordered you to keep your covenants  
 Do not have an evil character, come!  
 Be firm upon your covenant and loyalty!

If you do not observe the rule of trust-keeping  
And you do not keep your agreements,  
Your religion and faith would not be true,  
The pillar of your faith would be weak.

### **How to Develop and Strengthen the Virtue of Keeping Promises and Trusts in the Self**

**Believing in the unity of divine acts:** strengthening belief in God and believing in the unity of divine acts is one of the causes of developing the spirit of keeping promises and trusts, since those who break covenants and betray seek immediate gain out of this despicable deed and forget God's power, providership, and promises; thus, in short, illuminated words, Imam Ali (a) said, "One of the signs of faith is keeping promises." (Tamimi Amudi, 1366 SH, p. 252) In another hadith, he (a) said, "He has not truly believed in God who does not observe his covenants and liabilities." (Ibid., p. 253) He (a) also said, "The best of faith is keeping trusts." (Ibid., p. 251)

**Having great perseverance:** To keep a promise one gives others and also to guard what he is entrusted with, a person needs great perseverance with which he can withstand possible problems he may face in the course of the observance of his commitments and trusts.

**Strengthening the personality:** If a person respects his personality and protects his dignity, he will never break his covenants with others and will not betray what they have trusted him with, because he would consider breaking the covenant and betrayal a sign of weakness, lowliness and lack of good personality.

**Knowing about the evil consequences of breaking covenants and betrayal:** ignorance and lack of information are

among the evil consequences of breaking covenants and betrayal of individuals and people. Another factor is accepting these two moral vices, exactly like a person who zestfully eats sweet food poisoned with a deadly poison unknowingly. Those who have a better share of intellect and wisdom, and understand the good effects of keeping promises and trusts and the harms of violating them, will never abandon the two mentioned moral virtues and will not accept their opposite attributes, as Imam Ali (a) says: “Loyalty is the ornament of wisdom and the symbol of nobility.” (Ibid.)

Also, studying the evil consequences of the two shows that although in short term, they may bring about some gains, in the long term, they will bring about dishonor and lack of credibility among friends and in all society, and one’s greatest capital which is people’s trust will be wholly lost. The person will be both discredited among people and before God, and we see their examples in our everyday lives and throughout history. Thus, in many societies, there is no religion and faith in God and there are organizations and companies which try to make and observe contracts and ensure people’s trusts and deposits by insurance.

In brief, keeping promises and looking after trusts is the result of perception, discernment, reason, faith, sincerity and good character. Sometimes, the cause of breaking a promise is carnal desires and the cause of betraying trusts is poverty and oppression; therefore, strengthening the religious spirit and also establishing justice can help eliminate the two vices from the heart.

## **Signs of Keeping Promises and Trusts**

### **1. Keeping secrets and respecting others’ honor and property**

These three are mentioned as the signs of trustworthy people. Imam al-Kazim (a) describes the signs of a trustworthy person as

follows: “A trustworthy person can only be considered trustworthy when he is entrusted with three things and he guards them: properties, secrets, and pudenda; so if he keeps two but fails one, he is not trustworthy.” (Harrani, 1404 AH, p. 316)

Also, Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “Anyone, who washes the dead body of a believer and keeps trust regarding him will be forgiven.” He was asked, “What does it mean to keep trust regarding him?” He (a) said, “He does not speak about what he saw.” (Saduq, 1400 AH, p. 540)

## 2. Guilelessness

In a speech from Imam Ali (a), the sincerity of a person’s manner in privacy and public is considered the sign of his trust-keeping. He (a) said, “Anyone whose [manner in] secret is in agreement with his [manner in] public, and whose action is in agreement with his speech, has maintained the trust, and his justness is proven.” (Tamimi Amudi, 1366 SH, p. 211)

In another speech, he (a) mentioned this sign as one of the signs of keeping trusts and promises: “Keeping trusts and promises are truthfulness in actions, and lying and fabrication are betrayal in speech.” (Ibid., p. 251)

## 3. Truthfulness

If a person is truthful, his truthfulness can be considered a sign of his trust-keeping; Imam Ali (a) said, “When trust-keeping is strengthened, truthfulness increases.” (Ibid.) In the same way, lying can be considered a sign of betrayal. Also in hadiths, keeping promises is considered at the level of truthfulness, and this shows that a person’s truthfulness can be considered proof of keeping his promise. Imam Ali (a) said, “Loyalty is together with truthfulness.” (Ibid.)



## Personal and Social Fruits of Keeping Promises and Trusts

### 1. Personal Fruits

#### 1.1. Perfection of faith

Everyone's faith advances toward perfection after passing different levels and taking efforts and hardships in doing good and righteous deeds, but some good deeds have a significant effect on the perfection of a human's faith. Imam al-Sadiq (a) quotes from his father, "There are four attributes that if anyone has them, his faith will be perfect; and if one is covered with sins from top to toe, they will not harm it [his faith] [and he will be forgiven through these great attributes]: truthfulness, returning entrusted things, modesty and good manners." (Kulayni, 1362 SH, vol. 2, p. 100)

#### 1.2. God's Contentment and Forgiveness of Sins

"There are four attributes [that if] anyone has them, his Islam will be perfect, his faith will be assisted, his sins will be removed and he will meet God while He is content with him – and if from his top to his toe, he is covered with sins, God will remove them from him. They are: keeping a covenant he undertakes for the sake of God ..." (Mufid, 1413 AH, p. 166)

#### 1.3. Safety on Judgement Day

Abu Dhar said, "I heard the Prophet (s) say, 'On Judgement Day, mercy and trust [will be embodied and] stand at the sides of the Sirat bridge. When a person who protected his blood relatives and kept trusts passes it, they will directly go to Paradise, but when a betrayer of trusts and non-protector of blood relatives passes it, no good deeds will benefit him with these two ugly acts, and his

face will be turned toward the hellfire.” (Majlisi, n.d., vol. 71, p. 105)

#### **1.4. Perfection and Closeness to God**

From an individual perspective, the observance of these two important moral qualities leads to the progress and perfection of the human being. A person who keeps trusts and promises gains a great position before God. The noble Prophet (s) said, “The closest to me tomorrow at the Last Station [for the Judgment] are the most truthful among you in speech, the most trustworthy among you regarding trusts, the most loyal among you regarding covenants, and the best of you in manners.” (Daylami, 1412 AH, vol. 1, p. 133) Evidently, since the Prophet (s) has the greatest position before God, those who keep their promises and trusts are closer to that position.

The same way, keeping covenants results in forgiveness of sins and the contentment of God, whereas breaking covenants results in the hastening of a person’s punishment. The noble Prophet (s) told Imam Ali (a), “There are four things which receive quick punishment... and a man who undertakes to do something, so you keep your promise toward him but he betrays you....” (Nuri, 1987, vol. 11, p. 47)

## **2. Social Consequences**

### **2. 1. Maintaining Social Status**

Keeping promises preserves a person’s honor and dignity in the eyes of others. Imam Ali says, “Loyalty is the fortress of honor.” (Tamimi Amudi, 1366 SH, p. 251)

### **2. 2. Attracting Public Trust**

Through his good deeds, a trustworthy person attracts public trust to himself, and people trust him in important issues of life

and with their properties. Imam al-Sadiq (a) told ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Siyaba, “Shall I give you a piece of advice?” He said, “Yes, may I be your ransom!” The Imam (a) said, “Be truthful; returning trusts makes you a partner in people’s properties like this” – the Imam (a) put his two fingers together. (Majlisi, n.d., vol. 47, p. 385)

### 2. 3. Increase of Daily Sustenance

A trustworthy person attracts others’ trusts toward himself which will bring about increase in daily sustenance and comfort for himself. In contrast, betrayal and disloyalty bring about poverty and humility for him. The Prophet (s) said, “Keeping trusts attracts [an increase of] daily sustenance, and betrayal brings about poverty.” (Ibid., vol. 74, p. 151)

### 2. 4. Security and Comfort in Society

About this social fruit of trust-keeping in society, the honorable Prophet (s) said, “My community will not decline in goodness as long as they do not betray each other and return trusts....” (Ibid., vol. 72, p. 172)

Imam al-Kazim (a) expected this fruit to relate to all people on earth and identified their happiness with trust-keeping and acting upon the truth. In a wise speech, he (a) said, “The people of the earth will receive [God’s] mercy as long as they love each other, observe trust-keeping, and act upon the truth.” (Ibid., p. 117)

## Conclusion

Human dignity requires that people observe their covenants and look after what they are trusted with. Therefore, only those who forget their human dignity break promises with different excuses

or betray trusts. The lives of the prophets (a) and friends of God are full of scenes of loyalty to covenants and keeping trusts, while the lives of lowly people are full of betrayal and breaking promises. Essentially, these two attributes are considered as two principles of human life. Humans' individual and social lives and human happiness depend on developing these two valuable attributes in the soul.

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