248517 - The covenant taken from the sons of Adam is the fitrah

the question

In Surah Al Baqarah in Quran. It is mentioned that this worldly life is our second life. Our (All Human Beings) first life was in a form of spirit in a Barzakh like place (Another world for spirits/souls before this world). Allah took an oath from all of us that when we come to this world than we will only worship him and not anyone else. But when he sent us to this world he removed that part from our memory.
A sincere and genuine question that would arise in anyones mind would be that: "What was the point in taking an oath from us in first place if later it was going to be removed from our memory anyways"???

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The covenant that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, took from the progeny of Adam in the previous life has not been erased from our memory and not one of the sons of Adam has forgotten it. If you want to ask about it, then we say to you: It is the fitrah (natural inclination/sound human nature) which is instilled in our souls and hearts, that drives us to believe in Allah and long to know Him, may He be glorified. In fact, it reaches the level of urgency that pushes and compels us to acknowledge that the Creator, may He be glorified and exalted, is the only, perfect Lord Who bestows His blessings upon us and upon all other created beings.

This spiritual and rational urge (to believe in Allah) is the strongest factor that prompts man to believe in Allah and affirm His Oneness, because it is usually stronger than any other impulses that may lead man to fall into ignorance and doubt. Often this urge (to believe) may overwhelm a person and make him realise the belief in divine Oneness (Tawheed) deep in his heart at times of

crisis and calamity, even if the one who still has that sound natural inclination (fitrah) is pretending today to be an atheist. The call of Tawheed is still urging him from deep inside to believe, because of this natural inclination (fitrah) which is the first covenant taken from the sons of Adam.

If the questioner thought of the opposite of what he is saying, he would find the answer to his question. If he could think of this covenant that was taken from the sons of Adam, “Am I not your Lord?” [al-A‘raaf 7:172], and if he could imagine it not moving to settle deep in our innate nature (fitrah) and not becoming an urge deep inside – rather it remained vivid in the memory of each of us, as if he could see it right now – then what would be left after that of the concept of belief in the unseen? How could there be the test of faith, if everyone could have seen the covenant of Allah being taken with his own eyes? Allah created the entire world to test us and see whether we would do righteous deeds, and strive to bring about reform and fight mischief. In any of these tests – in order for it to be a test – there must be available a means of success and a means of failure, so that man can choose his way in the light of this guidance.

Abu Dawood narrated in as-Sunan (no. 4716) – and it was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani – he said: al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali told us: al-Hajjaaj ibn al-Minhaal said: I heard Hammaad ibn Salamah explaining the hadeeth: “Every child is born in a state of fitrah.” He said: In our view this refers to when Allah took the covenant from them when they were in their fathers’ loins, when He said: “ ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes’” [al-A’raaf 7:172].

Here we will quote the views of scholars which confirm that the covenant is the fitrah (natural inclination/sound human nature), and the fitrah is present in the individual and is never absent. It is the message of Allah, may He be exalted, to humanity, to remind them of the first covenant; it is a message that is clear because it is instilled in all souls, but at the same time it is not something that is witnessed by sight, otherwise there would be no meaning to the idea of belief in the unseen; rather there would be no point in the creation of man.

Ibn Qutaybah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What is meant by the words (of the hadith), “Every newborn is born in a state of fitrah” refers to

the covenant that Allah took from them when they were in the loins of their father Adam, “and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes’” [al-A‘raaf 7:172].

You cannot find anyone who does not believe that he has a Creator Who created him and is controlling him, even if he calls Him by a name other than His real name, or he worships something else besides Him so that it may bring him closer to Him, as he thinks, or He ascribes to Him attributes that do not belong to Him, or he refers to Him in a manner that does not befit Him.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And if you ask them who created them, they will surely say: ‘Allah’”

[az-Zukhruf 43:87].

Every newborn in this world is born with this covenant and affirmation, which is the monotheism (haneefiyyah), the covenant of which took place at the beginning of creation and was instilled in man’s fitrah (natural inclination).

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, says: ‘I created all of My slaves as hunafa’ (sing. haneef, i.e., believing in monotheism), but the devils diverted them from their belief.’” End quote from Ta’weel Mukhtalaf al-Hadith (p. 200).

Abu Ishaaq az-Zajjaaj said:

What this means is that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, created people with the inclination to believe in Him according to what is mentioned in the hadith. Allah, may He be exalted, took from the loins of Adam his progeny like tiny particles, and made them testify concerning themselves that He was their Creator. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their

seed (or from Adam’s loins his offspring) and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes’”

[al-A‘raaf 7:172].

So every newborn is from that offspring or progeny, who testified that Allah is their Creator. What is meant by “Allah’s Fitra (the natural disposition that Allah instilled in mankind)” [ar-Room 30:30] is the religion of Allah to which He has created a natural inclination (fitrah) in people.

End quote from Ma‘aani al-Qur’an wa I‘raabuhu (4/185).

Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This indicates that they were created with the inclination to affirm that Allah is their Lord, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed (or from Adam’s loins his offspring) and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes’”

[al-A‘raaf 7:172].

This verse clearly refers to their affirmation and testimony concerning themselves with regard to the knowledge that is instilled in them that Allah is their Lord. And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Every child is born in a state of fitrah.”

Some of the scholars interpreted this affirmation of Allah’s Oneness as meaning referring to when they were brought forth from the loins of Adam, and say that what is meant is that Allah caused them to speak and made them bear witness. But this was not proven in any sound report from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and the verse does not indicate that.

End quote from Jaami‘ ar-Rasaa’il by Ibn Taymiyah – Rashaad Saalim, 1/11

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:

As for the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “Every child is born in a state of fitrah, then his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian or a Zoroastrian”, the correct view is that what is meant is “Allah’s Fitrah (the natural disposition that Allah instilled in mankind)” which is the natural inclination towards Islam, the natural inclination which Allah instilled in them on the day when He said: “‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes’” [al-A‘raaf 7:172]. This means that everyone is born free of any false beliefs and will have an inclination towards sound beliefs.

The reality of Islam is surrender to Allah alone, and no other. This is the meaning of Laa ilaaha ill-Allah (there is no god but Allah). The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gave a likeness of that when he said: “There is no child who is not born in a state of fitrah, then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Zoroastrian, just as animals bring forth animals with their limbs intact; do you see any deformed one among them?” This hadith explains that the soundness of the heart and the fact that it is free of any shortcomings (in terms of belief) is just like the soundness of the body and that defects are something that occurs later on. In Saheeh Muslim it is narrated that ‘Iyaad ibn Himaar said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said in a hadith qudsi that Allah said: “I have created all My slaves with the inclination to worship Me alone, but the devils come to them and turn them away from their religion. They forbid to them that which I have permitted to them, and they tell them to associate others with Me for which I have not sent down any authority.” End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa, 4/245.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The best way to interpret the meaning of this verse is by the hadith in which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Every child is born in a state of fitrah (the natural state of man), then his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian.” The covenant that Allah, may He be glorified, took from them and the testimony that He took from them concerning themselves, and the affirmation that they affirmed refers to the fitrah or natural inclination that is instilled in them, because Allah, may He be glorified, used that as evidence against them, and He does not use evidence against them that none of them recognises or remembers; rather it is

something that is common knowledge among them and that they all affirm.

End quote from Ahkaam Ahl adh-Dhimmah (2/949)

Al-‘Allaamah as-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed (or from Adam’s loin his offspring)” and made them reproduce, generation after generation. When He brought them forth from the wombs of their mothers and the loins of their fathers, He “made them testify concerning themselves (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord?’” that is, He asked them to affirm that He was their Lord, on the basis of what He instilled in their innate nature, that He is their Lord, Creator and Sovereign.

“They said: ‘Yes”, we affirm that, because Allah (st) created His slaves with a natural inclination towards the right way of monotheism. Therefore everyone has this natural inclination, but that inclination may change and be altered because of corrupt beliefs by which it may be influenced. Hence “They said: ‘Yes! We testify,’ lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Verily, we have been unaware of this’”. That is, We tested you by asking you this question, in order to make you affirm that which was instilled in your innate nature, that Allah, may He be exalted, is your Lord, lest you deny that on the Day of Resurrection and therefore you do not affirm any of it, and you claim that the proof of Allah was not established against you and you have no knowledge of it; rather you were heedless and distracted from it. But today you have no excuses left, and the ultimate proof of Allah is established against you.

End quote from Tayseer al-Kareem ar-Rahmaan (p. 308)

Secondly:

With regard to what the questioner mentioned about us living now in our second life, that is based on the view that the first (or previous) life was when the offspring were brought forth from Adam’s loins and the covenant was taken from them, according to what was mentioned in Soorat al-A‘raaf.

These two lives and these two deaths are mentioned in the verse in which Allah, may He be

exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“How can you disbelieve in Allah? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life and then unto Him you will return”

[al-Baqarah 2:28].

This view concerning what is meant by the two deaths and the two lives is a weak view and is to be rejected.

Abu Hayyaan (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There are different views concerning the order or sequences of these two deaths and two lives which Allah mentioned and reminded them of that blessing:

i.That the first death is the previous nonexistence before creation; the first bringing to life is creation; the second death is the regular death that occurs in this world; and the second life is the resurrection on the Day of Judgement. This was the view of Ibn Mas‘ood, Ibn ‘Abbaas and Mujaahid.

ii.That the first death is the regular death that occurs in this world; the first bringing to life is in the grave, for the questioning; the second death is in the grave after the questioning and the second bringing to life is the resurrection.

iii.That the first death is in the womb, because the individual is dead (in the sense of not being alive) until the soul is breathed into him; and the second death is the usual death (in this world); and the second bringing to life is the resurrection.

iv.That the first death is when the Arabs were unknown; the first bringing to life was when they became known and honoured by virtue of this religion and this Prophet who came to them; the second death is the usual death in this world; and the second bringing to life is the resurrection. This was the view of Ibn ‘Abbaas.

v.That the first death is when Adam was made of clay; the first bringing to life was when the soul

was breathed into him, thus you were brought into existence by his coming to life. The second death is the usual death in this world; and the second bringing to life is the resurrection.

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said [discussing the meaning of al-Baqarah 2:28]:

Allah, may He be exalted, says, quoting proof of His existence and power, and that He is the Creator Who has control over His slaves: “How can you disbelieve in Allah” that is, how can you deny His existence or worship anything else alongside Him? “Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life” that is, you were non-existent, then He brought you into existence, as He, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “Were they created by nothing, or were they themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, but they have no firm Belief” [at-Toor 52:35, 36]. And He says: “Has there not been over man a period of time, when he was nothing to be mentioned?” [al-Insaan 76:1]. And there are many verses that speak of this matter.

Sufyaan ath-Thawri said, narrating from Ibn Ishaq, from Abu’l-Ahwas, from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him): “They will say: ‘Our Lord! You have made us to die twice, and You have given us life twice’” [Ghaafir 40:11]. He said: This is like the verse in al-Baqarah: “you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life” [al-Baqarah 2:28].

Ibn Jurayj said, narrating from ‘Ata’, from Ibn ‘Abbaas: “you were dead and He gave you life” means: You were dead in the loins of your fathers; you were nothing until He created you, then He will cause you to die a true death, then He will bring you back to life when He resurrects you. This is like the verse in which He says: “‘Our Lord! You have made us to die twice, and You have given us life twice’” [Ghaafir 40:11].

Ad-Dahhaak said, narrating from Ibn ‘Abbaas concerning the verse “‘Our Lord! You have made us to die twice, and You have given us life twice’” [Ghaafir 40:11]: You were dust before He created you, so this is one death. Then He brought you to life and created you, so this is one life. Then He will cause you to die and you will go to your graves, and this is a second death. Then He will

resurrect you on the Day of Resurrection, and this is another life. So this is two deaths and two lives. This is like the verse in which He says: “How can you disbelieve in Allah? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection)” [al-Baqarah 2:28].

Something similar was narrated from as-Suddi, with his isnaad, from Abu Maalik; and from Abu Saalih, from Ibn ‘Abbaas; and from Murrah, from Ibn Mas‘ood; and from some people from the Sahaabah; and from Abu’l-‘Aaliyah, al-Hasan al-Basri, Mujaahid, Qataadah, Abu Saalih, ad-Dahhaak, and ‘Ata’ al-Khuraasani.

Ath-Thawri said, narrating from as-Suddi, from Abu Saalih: “How can you disbelieve in Allah? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection)” [al-Baqarah 2:28]: He will bring you to life in the grave, then He will cause you to die.

Ibn Jareer said, narrating from Yoonus, from Ibn Wahb, from ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Zayd ibn Aslam: (What is meant is) He created them in the loins of Adam, then He took the covenant from them, then He caused them to die, then He created them in the wombs, then He causes them to die, then He will bring them back to life on the Day of Resurrection. This is like the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “They will say: ‘Our Lord! You have made us to die twice, and You have given us life twice’” [Ghaafir 40:11]. This and the view mentioned before it are strange. The correct view is that which is mentioned above from Ibn Mas‘ood and Ibn ‘Abbaas, and from that group of the Taabi‘een. This is like the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say (to them): ‘Allah gives you life, then causes you to die, then He will assemble you on the Day of Resurrection about which there is no doubt. But most of mankind know not’”

[al-Jaathiyah 43:26].

Man’s condition before existence is described as death because both conditions have in common the lack of awareness and feeling, as Allah also says concerning idols: “(They are) dead, lifeless”

[an-Nahl 16:21] and He says: “And a sign for them is the dead land. We gave it life, and We brought forth from it grains, so that they eat thereof” [Yaa-Seen 36:33].

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (1/213).

Abu Hayyaan (may Allah have mercy on him) said, after mentioning the difference of opinion concerning the meaning of the verse:

Ibn ‘Atiyah favoured the first view and said: It is most likely to be correct, because the disbelievers could not deny that with regard to its order and the sequence of events. Moreover, the fact that Allah says “you were dead” [al-Baqarah 2:28], then with regard to the second death He attributes the cause of death to Himself supports this view (that what is referred to is the time before they existed). If the disbelievers accept the fact that they were dead in the sense of being non-existent, then they were brought to life in this world, then they will be caused to die in this world, then the argument that Allah will definitely bring them to life again becomes stronger, and their denial of that (namely life after death) will confirm that their claim (that there is no life after death) is a claim that has no proof. End quote (from Ibn ‘Atiyah); this is a good comment.

End quote from al-Bahr al-Muheet (1/211).

Ash-Shinqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The correct view is that the first death is when they are in the wombs of their mothers as clinging clots (‘alaq) and chewed lumps of flesh (mudghah), in which there is no life before the soul is breathed into them; the first life is when they are given life in their mothers’ wombs, from which they emerge into this world. The second death is death in the grave, and the second life is when they are brought back to life from the graves and are resurrected for the reckoning and requital. Allah has explained that this is what is meant in Soorat al-Baqarah, where He says (interpretation of the meaning): “How can you disbelieve in Allah? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection)” [al-Baqarah 2:28].

Al-‘Adhb al-Nameer (236).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The correct view is that this verse – i.e., “‘Our Lord! You have made us to die twice, and You have given us life twice’” [Ghaafir 40:11] – is like the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “How can you disbelieve in Allah? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection)” [al-Baqarah 2:28]. The first death occurred before this life, and the second death occurs after this life. And the words “then again [He] will bring you to life” refer to what will happen after death.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (4/275).

And Allah knows best.