232749 - Trust in Islam

the question

What does trust (Amanah) mean? What is the punishment for one who betrays the trust? How can he repent? What is the evidence for all of that from the Quran and Sunnah?

Summary of answer

Trust in Islam includes everything that Allah has entrusted to you and instructed you to take care of. That includes guarding your physical faculties from engaging in anything that is not pleasing to Allah, and guarding anything that has been entrusted to you that has to do with the rights and dues of others.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Meaning of trust in Islam

Trust (Amanah) – in Islamic terms – has two meanings, a general meaning and a specific meaning.

- The general meaning has to do with all commands and prohibitions of Islam.

Among the evidence for that is the verse in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Truly, We did offer Al-Amanah (the trust or moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties which Allah has ordained) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it (i.e. afraid of Allah’s Torment). But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust (to himself) and ignorant (of its results).” [Al-Ahzab 33:72]

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) quoted a number of opinions of the earlier scholars concerning the interpretation of the word Amanah, then he said:

“There is no contradiction between any of these views; rather they are all in harmony and boil down to the idea that what it refers to is responsibility and acceptance of all the commands and prohibitions with the conditions attached. This means that if the individual fulfils that commitment, he will be rewarded, but if he fails to do so, he will be punished. Man accepted this commitment despite his weakness, ignorance and wrongdoing, except for those whom Allah guides and helps. And Allah is the source of strength.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, 6/489)

This meaning is the one that was favoured by Ibn Jarir At-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him), when he said:

“The view that is most likely to be correct is the view of those who said that what is meant by the Amanah here is all types of trust, whether they have to do with matters of religion or with people’s rights. That is because when Allah said “We did offer Al-Amanah (the trust or moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties which Allah has ordained)”, He did not single out some of the meanings of Amanah to the exclusion of others.” (Tafsir At-Tabari, 19/204-205)

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The word Amanah includes all religious duties, according to the correct scholarly view, which is the view of the majority.” (Tafsir Al-Qurtubi, 17/244)

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

“Those who are faithfully true to their Amanah (all the duties which Allah has ordained, honesty, moral responsibility and trusts etc.) and to their covenants.” [Al-Mu’minoon 23:8]

Shaykh Muhammad Al-Amin Ash-Shinqiti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The Amanah includes everything that Allah has entrusted to you and instructed you to take care of. That includes guarding your physical faculties from engaging in anything that is not pleasing to

Allah, and guarding anything that has been entrusted to you that has to do with the rights and dues of others.” (Adwa’ Al-Bayan, 5/846)

- With regard to the specific meaning of Amanah or trust:

There are numerous Mutwawatir Islamic texts which enjoin paying attention to trusts and fulfilling them, and not neglecting or betraying them. That is widely discussed in the books of the scholars and jurists, and is widely spoken of among people in general. Perhaps this is what the questioner meant when he asked about Amanah or trusts.

Based on that, what is meant by Amanah or trust in this sense is everything that the individual is obliged to take care of, uphold and fulfil of the rights of others.

Types of trust in Islam

There are three well-known scenarios with regard to Amanah or trust:

1. **Financial rights that are established by contracts and covenants , such as items left with a person for safekeeping, loans, hiring and rentals, and so on; and those concerning which there is no contract, such as found items and what people pick up of the lost property of others.**

It says in Al-Mawsu‘ah Al-Fiqhiyyah Al-Kuwaitiyyah (6/236):

“From researching the issue, it becomes clear that the jurists use the word Amanah in the following senses:

- In the sense of an item that is left in the possession of the person to whom it was entrusted. This may be with regard to one of the following scenarios

i. a contract in which the Amanah is the primary focus, which is when an item is left with a person for safe keeping. This is more specific than Amanah, because every item that is left with a person for safekeeping is an Amanah, but the converse is not necessarily true

ii. (b) a contract in which the Amanah is implied, but it is not the primary focus; rather it is connected to it as a consequence, such as renting, borrowing, profit sharing, appointing someone to act as an agent, partnerships and collateral for loans.

iii. (c) cases in which no contract is involved, such as picking up lost property, or that which the wind blows into a neighbour's house. Such cases are called Shar`i trusts."

1. **Keeping people's secrets**

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "One of the most evil people before Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who is intimate with his wife and she is intimate with him, then he broadcasts her secrets."

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "If a man says something then turns away, it becomes a trust [which should not be disclosed by the one who heard it] ." (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 4868. Also narrated by At-Tirmidhi, 1959, who said: This is a sound Hadith. It was classed as authentic by Al-Albani in As-Silsilah As-Sahihah, 4868)

1. **Positions of responsibility, whether social, public or private**

One should carry out such positions of trust and responsibility on a basis of truth and justice. A position of rulership is a trust, a judicial position is a trust, a management position in any organisation is a trust, responsibility for a family is a trust, and the same applies to all positions of responsibility.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "When Amanah is neglected, then await the Hour." He said: How would they be neglected, O Messenger of Allah? He (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "When positions of authority are given to people who are not qualified for them, then await the Hour." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 6496)

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, will you not appoint me (to a position of authority)? He struck me on the shoulder with his hand and said: “O Abu Dharr, you are weak and it is a trust, and on the Day of Resurrection it will be a source of humiliation and regret, except for the one who takes it and fulfils all obligations and does all duties required.” (Narrated by Muslim, 1825)

Importance of taking care of trusts in slam

What is required in the case of both public and private trusts is to take care of the trust and fulfil it in the proper manner as required by Shari`ah, and it is prohibited to neglect it or betray it.

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

“O you who believe! Betray not Allah and His Messenger, nor betray knowingly your Amanat (things entrusted to you, and all the duties which Allah has ordained for you).” [Al-Anfal 8:27]

“Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due.” [An-Nisa’ 4:58]

Betrayal of trusts is one of the signs of hypocrisy. `Abdullah ibn `Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There are four characteristics, whoever has them all is a pure hypocrite, and whoever has one of them has one of the characteristics of hypocrisy, until he gives it up: when he makes a covenant he betrays it, when he speaks he lies, when he makes a promise he breaks it, and when he disputes he resorts to obscene speech.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 34 and Muslim, 58)

Is betrayal of trust in Islam a major sin?

Betrayal of trust is a sin, and in fact it is a major sin. Although it is a grave sin, the gate of repentance is open .

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

“Say: "O My slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [Az-Zumar 39:53]

“And He it is Who accepts repentance from His slaves, and forgives sins, and He knows what you do.” [Ash-Shura 42:25]

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever repents before the sun rises from its place of setting, Allah will accept his repentance .” (Narrated by Muslim, 2703)

Sincere repentance means hastening to give up the sin, regretting it , and resolving not to go back to it. Then the sinner who neglected the trust should see whether the trust that he neglected has to do with the rights of Allah, in which case – in addition to repenting and seeking forgiveness – he should find out if there are any Shar`i requirements that he must fulfil in order to make up for this negligence, such as making up (missed obligatory deeds) or offering expiation.

For example, if someone neglects the trust of fasting, by breaking the fast deliberately during Ramadan, then – in addition to repenting – he must make up for the days that he did not fast. If his breaking of the fast was done by having intercourse, then he must offer the required expiation. This is also applicable to all other shar‘i matters that he neglected.

But if the trust that he betrayed has to do with the rights of people, then – in addition to what is explained above about repentance – he must also fulfil that right and give that person his dues, or ask him to let him off and forgive him.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever has wronged someone with regard to his honour or anything else, let him ask for his forgiveness today, before (a Day when) there will be no Dinar and no Dirham, and if he has any righteous deeds to his credit, they will be taken from him, commensurate with the wrong that he did, and if he does not have any good deeds to his credit, some of the bad deeds of his opposite number will be taken and added to his burden.” (Narrated

by Al-Bukhari, 2449)

Conditions of repentance in Islam

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The scholars said: Repentance is obligatory from all sins. If the sin has to do with a matter that is between the individual and Allah, may He be Exalted, and does not have to do with the rights of other people, then three conditions must be met :

1. he must give up the sin
2. he must regret what he has done
3. he must resolve never to go back to it.

If one of these three is missing, then his repentance is not valid.

But if the sin has to do with other people, then four conditions must be met: the three mentioned above, and he must also absolve himself of any wrongdoing and pay his dues to the one whom he wronged. If it is a matter of money and the like, then he must return it to him. If it has to do with punishment for slandering him and the like, he should submit to the punishment to be carried out on him, or seek that person’s forgiveness. If it is the matter of backbiting , he must ask him to forgive him for it.” (Riyadh As-Saliheen, p. 14)

And Allah knows best.