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Commitment to the Covenant and its Function in Making Life Meaningful (From Religious Perspective)

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Abstract

SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES: Commitment to the covenant is one of the most important values in religious moral system. Faithfulness to the covenant and its profound role in human meaningful life and human societies can be considered and examined from different aspects; but the main question in this research is that: What are the importance and effects of fulfilling the covenant and its meaning in life From Religious Perspective?

METHOD AND FINDING: The method of this research is a descriptive method, by using library studies, review of documents and review of verses and hadiths and narrative-revelatory arguments related to the subject of discussion in the field of religious studies.

CONCLUSION: We have concluded that based on the verses of the Quran and hadiths, commitment to the covenant has a high status in Islam like other Abrahamic religions; but in particular, the value of fulfilling the

covenant in Islam has come to be synonymous with faith; this means that if a person does not fulfill his covenant, he has no faith. This meaning has been considered so important in the lives of human beings and human societies that if a covenant is made with the enemy and even the polytheists and unbelievers it must be committed. Therefore, one of the behaviors that play an important role in moral societies and it is important in making life meaningful and also in tolerance of human society, is the commitment to the covenant.

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Introduction

Humans are social beings who live together and together. Life is a subject that can be considered and discussed from different aspects. Understanding “how to live” helps to realize hope in life and make it meaningful. A meaningful life is a life based on value and an immoral life cannot be meaningful, because the discussion of the meaningful life is rooted in religion on the one hand and in morality on the other.

In the meantime, Faithfulness to the covenant as a moral and Islamic concept that is mentioned in religious texts, has a significant role in the realization of the life and permanence of Islamic society. Since keeping the covenant creates trust and peace among the people, living with it will be meaningful and man will live hopefully.

Faithfulness to the covenant is praised in the Holy Quran in many verses. Loyalty is the ornament of reason and the adornment of social relations. Breaking the covenant is considered a moral vice and it has irreparable consequences on one's personality and humanity. Mutual trust is the capital of social life, one of the sins that destroys the string of trust and weakens the foundation of social relations is forsaking the covenant.

The covenant refers to the same bilateral agreements, also known as treaties. Sometimes it is established between two individuals, two groups, two societies, society and individual, society and group, or group and individual and sometimes it is realized between man and God. (*Mesbah Yazdi, 2012: 167*)

Among these, the covenant with God is one of the most

important branches of fulfilling the covenant, such as the vow, the violation of which is forbidden and is considered a major sin. Commitment to a covenant means the termination and adherence to a covenant in which a person undertakes to protect something or to take responsibility for something.

One of the behaviors that plays an important role in the meaning of life and morality and the morality of human life is keeping the promise. In this article, the commitment to the covenant and its function in giving meaning to life from the perspective of the Abrahamic religions with emphasis on the religion of Islam is mentioned.

Fulfilling the Covenant from the Perspective of Abrahamic Religions

According to what is obtained from religious texts, fulfilling

the covenant in the past religions and even in the age of ignorance, was common among the tribes as an effective and important matter and it has been accepted in tribes and human societies.

In Islam, special attention has been paid to the commitment to the covenant and it is considered as one of the important moral principles and important human virtues. In the following, we will examine this issue in verses and hadiths.

Fulfilling the Covenant from the Perspective of Verses and Hadiths

There are many verses in the Quran about commitment to the covenant, we will only refer to some verses:

“So Moses returned to his people in a state of indignation and sorrow.

He said: O my people! did not your Lord make a handsome promise to you? Did then the promise seem to you long (in coming)? Or did ye desire that Wrath should descend from your Lord on you and so ye broke your promise to me?" (Quran, 20: 86)
"Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: He was (strictly) true to what he promised and he was a messenger (and) a prophet". (Quran, 19: 54)

In this noble verse, God mentions the promise of Ishmael. These verses and the above verses are all evidence of the acceptance of the commitment to the covenant before the advent of Islam.

A brief look at the Islamic texts reveals that commitment

to the covenant has been a rational matter with human societies and all divine and even non-divine races and religions. This indicates the special place and importance of fulfilling the covenant in the meaning of life, according to the Quran.

The importance of fulfilling the covenant in addition to the Holy Quran, it has been frequently stated in the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt, which refers to three examples of such narrations:

Amir al-Mu'minin Ali expressed various advices in a letter which is written for Malik al-Ashtar an-Nakha'i as the Governor of Egypt regarding the way of governing.

In a part of letter 53 of Nahj al-Balaghah, which is related to fulfilling the covenant, it is stated:

"Do not enter into an agreement which may admit of 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.

You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting of Divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequence

and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short of life than the shedding of blood without justification.

On the Day of Judgement Allah the Glorified, would commence giving His judgement among the people with the cases of bloodshed committed by them.

Therefore, do not strengthen your authority by shedding prohibited blood because this will weaken and lower the authority, moreover destroy it and shift it. You cannot offer any excuse before Allah or before me for wilful killing because there must be the question or revenge in it. If you are involved in it by error and you exceed in the use of your whip or

sword or hand in inflicting punishment, as sometimes even a blow by the fist or a smaller stroke causes death, then the haughtiness of your authority should not prevent you from paying the blood price to the successors of the killed person". (Sharif al-Radhi, 1993, Part. 2, Letters and Sayings: 418)

In this advice, we can understand the function of fulfilling the covenant in the meaning of life, because the Imam has explicitly considered fulfilling the covenant as a cause of security and peace.

A life in which there is security and peace will be meaningful; but a life in which there is fear and insecurity, man does not want to continue such a life, but feels hopeless and empty in his life.

Imam Ali quotes the Holy Prophet as saying:

"He who is not trustworthy does not believe and he who does not abide by the covenant has no religion and he who does not complete the bowing and prostration of his prayer has no prayer". (Majlesi, 1983, Vol. 47: 252)

Imam Ali said:

"Religious people have signs that are known by them, truthfulness and trustworthiness, commitment to covenant". (Saduq, 2013: 243)

According to these two narrations, violation of the covenant is a sign of a non-believer. Because religion itself is a factor that gives meaning to life. Faithfulness to the covenant, which is a sign of human piety, gives meaning to

a person's life and gives him hope to continue it.

The Worldly Effects of Keeping the Covenant in Giving Meaning to Life

The effects of keeping the covenant can be raised from worldly and otherworldly aspects. The worldly effects of keeping the covenant in human life also appear in both individual and social dimensions.

Faithfulness to the covenant has many effects on personal life, some of which are:

1. Trusteeship

“Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless thou constantly stookest demanding, because, they say, there

*is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (Pagans); but they tell a lie against Allah and (well) they know it” *
“Yea, whoever fulfills his promise and guards (against evil) then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil)”.
(Quran, 3: 75-76)*

In this noble verse, one of the examples of fulfilling the covenant is mentioned. A person who keeps his covenant is trustworthy and trusted by the people and God loves him.

2. Honesty and Truthfulness

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West; but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the book and the

prophets and give away wealth out of love for him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and the performers of their promise when they make a promise and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts- these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil)". (Quran, 2: 177)

People who keep their promises are introduced in this noble verse as truthful and pious.

3. Making Interest in Religion and Spirituality

One of the effective factors in giving meaning to life is religiosity. What caused many to convert to Islam in the early days of Islam was the loyalty of the Prophet to his covenants.

For example, in the peace of Hdaybiyyah, where a pact was made between the Prophet and the polytheists of Mecca. According to this pact, if any of the followers of the Messenger of God came to the Quraysh, the Quraysh would accept him and whoever came to the Prophet from the Quraysh would not accept him. The Holy Prophet was faithful to his covenant until the polytheists broke the covenant.

On the other hand, socially, commitment to the covenant is considered one of the most important social contracts that form the core of civil society; because human society is based on

covenants that indicate interactions and relationships between members of that community.

As a result, many things can be inferred from fulfilling the covenant in human society. Some of the most important effects of fulfilling the covenant in the Islamic society are:

✓ **System Stability**

Faithfulness to the covenant strengthens political, social and cultural relations in society and it will be a link between individuals and social systems. If the commitment to the covenants and contracts is observed, the security and stability of the society will be guaranteed and life with order will be meaningful.

✓ **Unity of Society**

Faithfulness to the covenant leads to the unity of society; in other words, by fulfilling the covenant by each member of

the society, the sense of trust and cooperation among the individuals increases and it creates unity in the society.

In this regard, Imam Ali says:

“The cause of empathy and solidarity is loyalty”.
(Tamimi Amadi, 1987: 120)

✓ **Social Trust**

Social trust is another effect of faithfulness to the covenant; Loyalty is one of the most important factors in social trust and social trust is the greatest asset of any society; Because in the absence of social trust, any interactions and relationships are subject to crisis and lead to social divergence and society faces security, economic and moral crises.

As a result, social trust leads to convergence among society. By fulfilling the covenant, the society will get rid of many crises in the fields of security, economy and morality and will move forward.

Otherworldly Effects of Keeping the Covenant in Giving Meaning to Life

In the Holy Quran, some of the otherworldly effects of fulfilling the covenant and not fulfilling the covenant are mentioned. Some of these effects are:

1. Praised by the Angels

“Those who fulfill the covenant of Allah and do not break the contract and those who join that which Allah has ordered to be joined and fear their Lord and are afraid of the evil of [their] account... Gardens of perpetual residence; they will enter them with whoever were righteous among their forefathers, their spouses and their descendants. And the angels will enter upon them from every gate,

[saying] and “Peace [i.e., security] be upon you for what you patiently endured and excellent is the final home; but those who break the covenant of Allah after contracting it and sever that which Allah has ordered to be joined and spread corruption on earth-for them is the curse and they will have the worst home”. (Quran, 13: 20-24)

2. Divine Reward

“And do not exchange the covenant of Allah for a small price. Indeed, what is with Allah is best for you, if only you could know”. (Quran, 16: 95)

3. Closeness to the Prophet

One of the effects of adhering to obligations and covenants is closeness to the Prophet.

The Prophet said:

“The closest of you to me on the Day of Resurrection is the most honest, the most trustworthy and the most faithful to the covenant, the most moral and the closest of you to the people”.
(Majlesi, 1993: 94)

Faithfulness to the covenant by having these otherworldly effects, brings human life out of the state of absurdism and gives it meaning. Such a life will be meaningful and purposeful.

There are some other effects for faithfulness to the covenant except these worldly and otherworldly effects like:

- ✓ Greatness and Personality
- ✓ Good Reward
- ✓ The Way of Salvation
- ✓ Ensuring no Betrayal in Society. (Ref: Babanejad, 2021)

Conclusion

According to what we mentioned in this article, we can conclude that the meaning of life is one of the most important issues that include the motivation to live, the value of life, hope and endeavor in life and what we want from life.

In this article, by expressing the importance and position of fulfilling the covenant according to the verses, hadiths and manners of the Infallibles, we knew that fulfilling the covenant gives meaning to a person's life and gives him confidence, peace and hope in the continuation of his life; because faithfulness to the covenant has important effects; Such as trustworthiness, honesty, stability of the social system and its cohesion, as well as social trust and other effects, each of which is itself the

source of the effects of other good and moral things in life.

Accordingly, fulfilling the covenant has many effects on individual and social life; because in addition to its effects, some of the most important of which were mentioned, there are many other effects; but the main point is that the effects of keeping the covenant all play an important role in giving meaning to life.

From all the verses and hadiths in the search for the meaning of fulfilling the covenant, it is understood that it has a high place in Islam and other religions; so that it has been commanded in a few verses.

The value of fulfilling the covenant in the narrations is equal to faith and if a person does not fulfill his covenant, he has no religion and faith and will not enter Paradise; even if

the covenant is fulfilled with your enemy or the polytheists.

So one of the things that gives a person character, shapes his true identity and meaning, frees him from emptiness in this short life of the world, is the commitment to a covenant. By acting on the covenant, the faithful person gives confidence, reassurance, and comfort to those around him, and by having this feeling, he considers himself useful and does not feel absurd.

In this article, considering the commitment to the covenant and its effects, we found that commitment to the covenant has a great function and role in making life meaningful, so that without commitment to the covenant, life will not have a fixed system and it is always accompanied by worry and despair.

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