



## Synopsis of Friday Sermon

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IONA  
REPENTANCE  
REVITALIZATION OF FAITH  
RENEWAL OF COVENANT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

### Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on June 22, 2012 The Qur'anic Concept of Virtue (Part 4)

Today's khutba is a continuation of our discussion of *ayat al-Birr* that gives us the most comprehensive Qur'anic concept of real virtue and piety. *Al-Birr* (real virtue and piety) combines beliefs and all acts of righteousness and obedience, both inward and outward. Whoever has these qualities is indeed the righteous believer who will succeed with Allah (SWT). The *ayah* deals with leading a balanced life and outlines the practical manifestation of belief in Allah, belief in the hereafter, and belief in the institution of prophethood. Such beliefs are demonstrated through acts of kindness and sympathy toward fellow human beings, observing Allah's rights of *salah* and *zakah*, honoring and fulfilling pledges, and being steadfast in times of hardships and conflicts.

Before continuing with the discussion, it is necessary to point out a common mistake that is made by some people while offering their *salah*, and this needs to be addressed. It is important that in the state of *salah*, one's entire *awrah* has to be covered. Sometimes, some people are careless in this regard. *Awrah* is a term that denotes the parts of the body, for both men and women, which must be covered with clothing.

The main topic under discussion today is another aspect of real virtuous and righteous believers, and that is fulfilling of one's covenant. Such believers are those "who keep pledges whenever they make them" (*al-Baqarah*, 2:177). A similar *ayah* appears in Surat al-Ra'd, "Those who fulfill the agreements they make in God's name and do not break their pledges" (*al-Ra'd*, 13:20). Honoring and fulfilling of covenants, pledges, and promises have to be both with the *Ma'bud* (one who is worshipped), and with the *Ibad* (servants of Allah). Before going into some detail about honoring and fulfilling the promises, pledges, oaths, agreements, deeds, pacts, trusts, and all other covenants we make with other people, it is vital to understand the primary covenant (*mithaq*), which the entire humankind has taken with Allah (SWT).

The Qur'an reminds us that in our primordial spiritual forms before our earthly existence, Allah (SWT) took a covenant from all potential human beings that He was their Lord. "When your Lord took out all their descendants from the loins of the children of Adam and made them testify against themselves 'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'We testify that indeed You are!' Lest you say on the Day of Rising. 'We knew nothing of this'" (*al-A'raf*, 7:172). This covenant stipulates that the entire humankind inherently recognizes Allah (SWT), and accepts Him as the Lord and Master. This phenomenon, in the Qur'anic terminology is called *fitrah*, and refers to the natural, inborn nature of man. "So (Prophet) set your face firmly towards the (true) faith. This is the natural disposition Allah instilled in mankind." (*al-Rum*, 30:30).

According to a hadith *qudsi*, "I created all My slaves as *hunafa'* (upright monotheists), but the *shayateen* (devils) came to them and made them deviate from their religion, and they forbade them that which I had permitted to them." According to an authentic hadith, everyone is born a believer in the true and natural faith (*fitrah*) and that it is the person's parents who uproot him from the natural faith and transform him into a Jew, a

Christian or a Zoroastrian. We learn through another hadith that the Prophet said, “Allah will say to that person of the (Hell) Fire who will receive the least punishment, ‘If you had everything on the earth, would you give it as a ransom to free yourself (i.e. save yourself from this Fire)?’ He will say, ‘Yes.’ Then Allah will say, ‘While you were in the backbone of Adam, I asked you much less than this (i.e. not to worship others besides Me), but you insisted on worshipping others besides me.’” These ahadith further confirm to us the first and original covenant we took with Allah (SWT), as a consequence of which recognizing Him and accepting Him as our Lord is embedded in our very beings.

Associating others with Allah (SWT) is *shirk*, which may either be manifest (*al-shirk al-jali*) or hidden (*al-shirk al-khafi*). An example of *shirk* that is evident is attributing Divinity or Godhood to Jesus, as the Christians do. The hidden *shirk* is very elusive, and its inconspicuous and unnoticeable nature has been described by the Prophet (SAW) as “the creeping of a black ant on a black rock in the pitch darkness of the night.” There are individuals including Muslims who succumb to their lustful desires to the point that they are enslaved by them. Thus Allah (SWT) says, “*Have you seen him who takes his whims and desires to be his god?*” (*al-Jathiyah*, 45:23). Hence, it is incumbent upon us that we should shun and guard ourselves from any kind of *shirk*. Further, we should be incessantly imploring Allah (SWT) for His forgiveness.

The Master Supplication for seeking forgiveness (*Sayyid al-Istighfar*) has been taught to us by our beloved Prophet (SAW), the meaning of which is: “O Allah! You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but You. You created me and I am Your slave, **and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise as much as I can.** I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You.” The word covenant mentioned in the hadith refers to the original covenant with Allah (SWT), “‘*Am I not your Lord?*’ They said, ‘*We testify that indeed You are!*’” (*al-A’raf*, 7:172). The promise referred to in the hadith is the promise we make to Allah (SWT) every day while reciting Surat al-Fatiha in our *salah*. “*It is You we worship (and obey); and it is You we ask for help*” (*al-Fatihah*, 1:5).

There are few things that we need to fulfill in terms of pledges and contracts. First and foremost is our oath of allegiance to Allah (SWT). “*Say: ‘My salah and my rites, my life and death, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds’*” (*al-An’am*, 6:162). A conscious, true, and righteous believer understands the depth and magnitude of this pledge that he makes with Allah (SWT). This pledge is also reflected and reasserted in the two testimonies of faith (*shahadatayn*): “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger.” Fulfilling pledges and contracts is absolutely imperative. “*O you who believe, fulfill your contracts*” (*al-Ma’idah*, 5:1). Allah (SWT) loves those who do so. “*No indeed! God loves those who keep their pledges and are mindful of Him,*” (*Aal ‘Imran*, 3:76). As opposed to this, He detests those who do not. “*But those who sell out God’s covenant and their own oaths for a small price will have no share in the life to come. God will neither speak to them nor look at them on the Day of Resurrection- He will not cleanse them [of their sins] - agonizing torment awaits them*” (*Aal ‘Imran*, 3:77).

Oaths made to Allah (SWT) are of two types: conditional and unconditional. The conditional oath refers to a vow (*nazar*) that is made to do something on the condition that a supplication is answered or a certain wish is fulfilled. The unconditional oath is out of the goodness of one’s heart to do something good, and does not have any conditions attached to it.

As Muslims living in America, it behooves us that we honor all oaths, covenants, and pledges made with the US government. The Assembly of Muslim Jurists (AMJA) comprising of highly reputable Muslim jurists have allowed American Muslims to abide by the oath undertaken by them as citizens of USA by respecting the US constitution and US laws. Doing so does not in any way undermine our submission to Allah (SWT), who alone we worship, who alone we obey, and whose absolute authority (*wilayah*) alone, we acknowledge. Breaching the pledge made with one’s country is indirectly breaching one’s pledge made with Allah (SWT), because it is He who has commanded us to fulfill all pledges. “*Fulfill any pledge you make in God’s name and do not break oaths after you have sworn them, for you have made God your surety: God knows everything you do*” (*al-Nahl*, 16:91).

It goes without saying that the contracts and transactions that have to be honored are only those which are lawful and permissible. It is indeed sinful to deal with anything that Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) have declared forbidden or undesirable. One is not allowed, for example, to sign contracts or purchase agreements that have to do with any forbidden products like pork, and intoxicants, or any forbidden activities involving pornography, flesh trade, and other sinful engagements.

Breach of lawful contracts may be either intentional or unintentional. Entering into a contract with an intention to violate it is obviously intentional. A person who does so is a liar. Lying is a sin, and said to be among the traits of a hypocrite (*munafiq*). A hadith tell us: “Among the signs of a hypocrite are three: (a) whenever he speaks, he tells a lie. (b) Whenever he promises, he always breaks it (his promise). (c) If you trust him, he betrays the trust.” And according to one version, the Prophet (SAW) added: “even if he prays and claims to be a Muslim.” The Prophet (SAW) is also reported to have said: “Whoever has four characteristics will be a pure hypocrite: “If he speaks, he tells a lie; if he gives a promise, he breaks it; if he makes a covenant he proves treacherous; and if he quarrels, he behaves in a very imprudent, evil, insulting manner. And whoever has one of these characteristics has one characteristic of a hypocrite unless he gives it up.” The Qur’an clearly asserts: “*The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell and you will find no one to help them*” (*al-Nisa’*, 4:145).

Such admonitions make a demand on us to keep introspecting and evaluating ourselves and to keep exercising ample care and caution while entering into contracts and dealing with people. Unintentional breach of contract is that in which one is completely sincere and truthful in one’s attitude and action, but unintentionally does something that goes toward revoking the contract or pledge. Here also, one is advised to be as careful and cautious as possible. “*Be mindful of God as much as you can*” (*al-Taghabun*, 64:16). Any one showing negligence or insincerity toward honoring and fulfilling pledges and promises will be questioned on the Day of Reckoning. “*Honor your pledges, you will be questioned about your pledges*” (*al-Isra’*, 17:34).

We also have a useful lesson from a hadith that teaches us to fulfill the pledges, contracts, and debts of the deceased if he or she was unable to do the same during his or her life. It is reported that the Prophet (SAW) said: “If the money of Bahrain comes, I will give you a certain amount of it.” The Prophet had breathed his last before the money of Bahrain arrived. When the money of Bahrain reached, Abu Bakr announced, “Whoever was promised by the Prophet should come to us.” I went to Abu Bakr and said, “The Prophet promised me so and so.” Abu Bakr gave me a handful of coins and when I counted them, they were five-hundred in number. Abu Bakr then said, “Take twice the amount you have taken (in addition).”

The *ayah* from Surat al-Saff, “*O you, who believe, why do you say things and then do not do them? It is most hateful to God that you say things and then do not do them*” (*al-Saff*, 61:2-3) reminds us to be sincere and truthful in our intentions, actions, and dealings. The spirit of this divine message is further corroborated by the hadith, which says, “Whenever the Messenger of Allah (saw) preached his companions, he used to say: The person who does not keep trust has no *iman* (faith) and the person who does not respect his covenant (and promise) has no faith (deen).” While describing the true believers, Allah (SAW) says that they are: “*those who honor their trusts and their contracts*” (*al-Mu’minun*, 23:8).

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