

Is Kaffarah Required for Breaking a Promise Made to Allah?

Darulifta Ahlesunnat (Dawateislami)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: What is the ruling if someone makes a promise to Allah regarding something, but later breaks the promise? Is there any expiation or not?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

If the promise was merely a promise, and not a Qasam (Sharī'ah oath) or Nazr (vow), then breaking it will not necessitate any expiation. However, making a promise to Allah Almighty and then failing to fulfill it without a valid excuse is a very evil act. In fact, if the promise was about refraining from a sin, or performing a fard or wajib act, then breaking such a promise makes the person a grave sinner because committing a sin or neglecting a fard or wājib is itself sinful, and along with that, a promise is being broken to Allah Almighty. Breaking a promise made to Allah Almighty is a severe act, and stern warnings have been mentioned about this; it is the way of the Munafiq (hypocrites). Nevertheless, one who does this must repent sincerely in the Court of Allah Almighty for his sin, and in the future, he should ensure that he fulfills whatever promise he makes. Allah Almighty states about fulfilling a promise:

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ ۖ)

Translation (Kanz-ul-'Irfan): O you who believe! Fulfill all oaths. (Part 6, Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 1)

Allah Almighty also states:

(وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا)

Translation (Kanz-ul-'Irfan): And fulfill your oaths; the oath will be questioned. (Part 15, Surah Bani 'Israel, Verse 34)

It is stated in Tafsir Ruh Al-Bayan under the above-mentioned verse:

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ سواء جرى بينكم وبين ربكم أو بينكم وبين غيركم من الناس

Translation: Fulfill your oaths, whether they are between you and your lord or between you and other people. (Tafsir Ruh Al-Bayan, Vol. 5, p. 155, Publ. Dar Al-Fikr Beirut)

Breaking promises made to Allah is the way of the hypocrites. Thus, Allah Almighty states:

(فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ)

Translation (Kanz-ul-Irfan): So Allah placed hypocrisy in their hearts until the Day they will meet Him as they broke the promise they made to Him, and they were lying. (Part 10, Surah Al-Taubah, Verse 77)

It is stated in Tafsir Sirat-Ul-Jinan under this verse:

امام فخرالدین رازی رحمۃ اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ فرماتے ہیں کہ اس آیت سے ثابت ہوتا ہے کہ عہد شکنی اور وعدہ خلافی سے نفاق پیدا ہوتا ہے تو مسلمان پر لازم ہے کہ ان باتوں سے احتراز کرے اور عہد پورا کرنے اور وعدہ وفا کرنے میں پوری کوشش کرے۔

Translation: Imam Fakhr-Uddin Razi رحمۃ اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ states that this verse proves that breaking promises nurtures hypocrisy. Therefore, it is necessary for a Muslim to avoid these things and to try and fulfill his oaths and keep promises. (Tafsir Sirat-Ul-Jinan, Vol. 4, p. 188, Publ. Maktaba-Tul-Madinah, Karachi)

A'la Hazrat, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan رحمۃ اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ states in Fatawa Razawiyyah while answering a question:

اس لفظ سے کہ "(کہ یہ گائے) اللہ کی نذر کریں گے" نذر نہ ہوئی محض وعدہ ہوا، اور وہ کہنا کہ "پال کر ننھی کو دیں گے" اس سے بھی ہبہ نہ ہوا یہ بھی ایک ارادہ کا اظہار تھا، مگر اللہ عزوجل سے جو وعدہ کیا اس سے پھرنا بھی ہرگز نہ چاہئے، قرآن عظیم میں اس پر سخت وعید فرمائی ہے۔

Translation: By the words 'this cow will be given for Allah,' a Nazr doesn't take place; instead, it is merely a promise. Saying 'we will raise it, then give it to her,' doesn't count as 'Hibah' either; it is only an expression of an intention. But the promise which was made to Allah Almighty shouldn't be turned back from, as there are stern warnings against this in the Holy Qur'an. (Fatawa Razawiyah, Vol. 13, p. 581, Publ. Raza Foundation, Lahore)

Answering a question in another place, he stated:

اگر اپنی قربانی کی کھال مدرسہ میں دینے کو کہی تھی پھر نہ دی تو بیجا ہے، مگر چنداں الزام نہیں، جبکہ کسی عذر شرعی سے ایسا کیا ہو، ورنہ اللہ عزوجل سے وعدہ خلافی ہے، چنانچہ نتیجہ بہت شدید ہے۔

Translation: If one said that he would give the hide of his animal to a Madrasah but didn't do so, it is wrong; however, there is no blame on them given that this was done due to any Sharī'ah valid reason.

Otherwise, this is considered breaking a promise made to Allah, the consequence of which is very severe. (Fatawa Razawiyyah, Vol. 6, p. 551, Publ. Raza Foundation, Lahore)

A'la Hazrat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan رحمۃ اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ states in another place:

اللہ واحد قہار سے وعدہ کر کے پھرنا بہت سخت ہے اور اس پر شدید وعید (وارد ہے)۔

Translation: Turning away after having made a promise to Allah is a severe act, and stern warnings have been mentioned about this. (Fatawa Razawiyyah, Vol. 16, p. 481, Publ. Raza Foundation, Lahore)

وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَرَسُوْلُهُ اَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم knows best.)

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