

416822 - Do Promises to Allah Take the Same Rulings as Oaths

the question

I've made promises to Allah for many things like I promised that I wouldn't talk to someone while I'm doing my Adhkaars. but then a lot of the times my family ask me questions and I respond to them or like at my workplace while I'm doing my adhkar, I end up talking because I have to do something or I ask a question. Is this considered a broken oath. Usually when I'm making dua I say "Ya Allah, I promise to never to do such and such again " and sometimes I forget that I broke the oath. I don't remember if I would say "By Allah" or "Wallahi" or the likes. What's the difference between an oath and promising Allah that you would do or not do a certain thing? Because a lot of the time, I promise to Allah that I won't or wouldn't do a certain thing. Is this breaking an oath and can one donate to charities that are specifically for offering kafara? Also, how can one estimate how many times they broke an oath if this so something they did many times and can't remember?

Detailed answer

A promise or covenant with Allah to perform an act of obedience takes the ruling of a vow (nadhr) and an oath (yamin), and it is obligatory to fulfill it. If one does not, then they are required to offer expiation for breaking an oath (kaffarat yameen).

Allah the Almighty Says (interpretation of the meaning): And fulfill the covenant; indeed, the covenant will be questioned about. (Al-Isra'/34), and He says (interpretation of the meaning): And among them are those who made a covenant with Allah, [saying], 'If He should give us from His bounty, we will surely spend in charity, and we will surely be among the righteous.' But when He gave them from His bounty, they were stingy with it and turned away while they refused. So He penalized them with hypocrisy in their hearts until the day they will meet Him - because they failed Allah in what they promised Him and because they were lying. (At-Tawbah/75-77).

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "When one says: 'I make a covenant with Allah that I will perform Hajj this year,' it is a vow, a covenant, and an oath." This is from "Al-Ikhtiyarat Al-'Ilmiyyah" p. 286.

And in "Al-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah" (2/325): "Some jurists consider the promise and the covenant to be the same, while others differentiate between them, restricting the covenant to what Allah the Almighty has obligated or forbidden, and considering the promise to pertain to other matters." End quote.

It is obligatory for you to be cautious of breaking your covenant or promise with Allah.

If you have not fulfilled your promise with Allah several times, then strive to estimate the number of times, and offer expiation for each promise as expiation for an oath (Kaffarat Yamin).

The expiation for an oath (Kaffarat Al-Yamin) is to feed ten poor people or clothe them, and whoever cannot find [the means], then they should fast for three days.

It is better for those who want to do good to do it without an oath or covenant with Allah, and for those who want to abstain from evil to do so without an oath or covenant with Allah, because by the oath and covenant, one puts oneself in difficulty if they fail to fulfill it, as has happened with you.

And Allah knows best.