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See also: ʿĀD; ĀDAM, UPON HIM PEACE; ADULTERY AND FORNICATION; BELIEF; BLOOD; BOUNDARIES OF ALLAH; BROTHER AND BROTHERHOOD; CARRION; CHILDREN OF ISRĀʾĪL; COMMANDING GOOD AND FORBIDDING WRONG; COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET; COVENANT; DISBELIEF; DISBELIEVERS; FIRʿAWN; FOOD AND DRINK; HĀRŪN, UPON HIM PEACE; ḤAWWĀʾ; HELL; HEREAFTER; HŪD, UPON HIM PEACE; HYPOCRISY AND HYPOCRITES; INTOXICANTS; JĀLŪṬ; MADYAN; MAGIC; MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; NŪḤ, UPON HIM PEACE; ŠĀLIḤ, UPON HIM PEACE; SHUʿAYB, UPON HIM PEACE; THAMŪD; TORAH; YĀʾJŪJ AND MAʾJŪJ; YŪSUF, UPON HIM PEACE; ZAKARIYYĀ, UPON HIM PEACE.

CSABA OKVATH AND MUZAFFAR IQBAL

COVENANT

MĪTHĀQ, ʿAHD

This article comprises the following sections: i. Definitions and Usage; ii. Types of Covenants; iii. Divine Covenant with all human beings; iv. Divine Covenant with Prophets; v. with the Children of Isrāʾīl; vii. with the Christians; vii. Intra-human Covenants; viii. Fulfilling and Breaking the Covenant; ix. Bibliography.

Definition and Usage

Covenant is a foundational concept in the Qurʾān and is defined as “a contractual commitment, formally affirmed by an oath (‘*aqdun muʾakkadun bi-yamīnin wa ʿahd*)” (Rāghib; Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz*, sub Q 4:22). The Qurʾān employs two key terms are employed in the for it:

- i. *mīthāq*, a noun of instrument (*ism al-ālah*) from the root *w-th-q*, it carries the basic meanings of “‘*aqd*—contract” (Ibn Manẓūr). Since an ‘*aqd* ties two entities through mutual trust, the basic stem carries the meanings of “placing one’s confidence [in someone]”, “*sakantu ilayhi wa iʿtamada ʿalayhi wa awthaqtuhu*, lit. “to completely rely upon someone and be satisfied in that trust” (Rāghib). Its four plurals (*mawāthiq*, *mayāthiq*, *mayāthiq* and *mawthiq*) are quasi-synonyms (Jawharī; Ibn Manẓūr). The stem has another vowel, *wathaqa-wathāqatan*, meaning “to make

something firm (*‘aqd*, *ihkām*)” (Ibn Fāris), thus, *wathuqa* means, “it was, or became, firm, stable and strong.” (Fayyūmī). One says, “*wathīqa bihi*”, “he trusted, or confided, in him (Jawharī; Fayyūmī; Fayrūzābādī). Form III—Form IV—“*awthaqa–yūthīqu*— means “to tie, fasten and bind”. Thus, *mīthāq* is an agreement, affirmed by an oath (*yu’akkad bi-yamīn*), “in the sense of “*istiḥlāf*—a solemn oath” (Fayrūzābādī)—and “a pact (*‘ahd*) that is confirmed (*al-muwaththaqu*) with an oath, *al-‘ahd* and *al-yamīn*” (Qarāfī, *Furūq*, 3:37); and

- ii. **‘ahd**, which carries “the basic meaning of protecting something and to take care of it perpetually in all its states, thus a pact and an agreement which requires fulfillment is called an *‘ahd*. He [Allah Most High] said, *‘and fulfill the covenant. Surely, the covenant shall be asked about [on the Day of Reckoning].*” (Rāghib). An *‘ahd* can be between Allah Most High and individuals and collectivities or between individual human beings (cf. Q 2:100, 177; 8:56; 9:1), but when conjugated with the Divine Name, or a pronoun referring to him, *‘ahd* is a Covenant: Q 2:27, *those who break the Covenant of Allah [‘ahda-Llāhi] after it has been made binding, and cut off the relations Allah has commanded to be joined, and spread disorder on the earth...; Q 16:91: And fulfill the Covenant of Allah when you have made it.*

The trilateral root *w-th-q* appears thirty-four times in the Qur’ān in six derived forms (‘Abd al-Bāqī):

- i. once as Form III verb “*wāthaqa*”—“*and remember the favor of Allah upon you and his Covenant with which He bound you (wāthqakum), when you said: We hear and obey*” (Q 5:7);
- ii. once as Form IV verb *yūthīqu*—“*as He will bind*, describing the severe punishment for the disbelievers (Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 89:25-26);
- iii. three times as the noun “*maṯṯīq*” (Q 12:66 x2, 80);
- iv. twenty-five times as “*mīthāq*”; in some verses, *mīthāq* refers to socio-political pacts, agreements between believers (see: BELIEVER(S) and between people nations (cf. Q 4:90; 8:72);
- v. twice as the noun “*wathāq*—bond, binding” (Q 47:4; 89:26); and
- vi. twice as *wuthqā*, in the expression “*al-‘urwatu-l-wuthqā*—the most trustworthy handhold” (Q 2:256; 31:22), that is “the confirmed Covenant”

(*al-‘ahd al-wathīq*) (Makkī, *sub* Q 2:256), which is the means for the Contentment of Allah (Abū Ḥayyān) (see: CONTENTMENT).

The root *‘h-d* is used 46 times in three derived forms (‘Abd al-Bāqī):

- i. six times as the Form I verb *‘ahida* (Q (2:125; 3:183; 7:134; 20:115; 36:60; 43:49);
- ii. 11 times as the Form III verb *‘ahada*; and
- iii. 29 times as the noun *‘ahd*.

Related terms

In addition, three other terms related to the concept of covenant, even as they have other connotations, are:

- **‘aqd**, “contract, agreement and oath” (cf. Q 5:89); and as a term for marriage “*‘uqdat al-nikāḥ*” (Q 2:235, 237); (see: ALLIANCE AND TREATY);
- **bay‘a**, “pledge”, it can also denote a covenant, as in “*indeed, those who pledged allegiance to you—they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah*” (Q 48:10); “it is establishing a covenant (*‘aqd al-mīthāq*) for the sake of support and help for victory (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nuzhat*, *sub* bāb al-bay‘). In Q 5:7, *mīthāq* is used in the sense of “*bay‘a*”: *and remember the Favor of Allah upon you and His covenant (wa mīthāqahu) with which He bound you (wāthaqakum bihi) when you said: We hear and we obey.* A majority of exegetes hold that this *mīthāq* is between the Prophet, upon him be blessings and peace, and those who pledged it on the night of al-‘Aqaba under a tree, saying, “*we hear and obey*” (cf. Q 48:18) (Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 5:7). ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr (700-774/1300-1373) says that Allah Most High has taken pledges (*al-‘uhūd*) and covenants (*al-mawāthiq*) and this refers to a contract to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet (*mutāba‘at al-rasūl*), and to help and support him (*wa munāṣaratihī wa mu‘āzaratihī*) and to believe in all Prophets (*sub* Q 5:15); (see: PLEDGE)
- **ḥablu-Llāhi**, “the Rope of Allah”, used twice (Q 3:103, 112)—in Q 3:103, in the phrase *bi-ḥablin mina-Llāh*, *And hold fast to the rope of Allah*—, where “*the rope*” is variously glossed as “*bi-‘ahdi-Llāh*—hold fast to the Covenant of Allah” (Zajjāj; Ṭustarī; Ṭabarī; Sam‘ānī; Māwardī, *sub* Q 3:103); “His Commands” (Ṣan‘ānī); “the Qur’ān” (Zayd b. ‘Alī, *Gharīb*; Ṭabarī; Māturīdī; Jaṣṣās); “the Religion of Allah” (Muqātil; Samarqandī); “the Congregation” (Zayd b. ‘Alī, *Gharīb*; Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Mundhir).