

Surah 2, Al Baqarah, Medina 87

The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's translation:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ... ^{up}

2: 83. And remember We took a Covenant from the children of Israel (to this effect): worship none but God;

... وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ...

treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need;

... وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ...

speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practice regular charity.

... ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

Then did ye turn back, except a few among you, and ye backslide (even now).

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ... ^{up}

2: 84. And remember We took your Covenant (to this effect): shed no blood amongst you, nor turn out your own people from your homes;

... ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

and this ye solemnly ratified, and to this ye can bear witness.

Muhammad Asad's Translation:

2:83

AND LO! We accepted this solemn pledge from [you,] - the children of Israel:" "You shall worship none but God; and you shall do good unto your parents and kinsfolk, and the orphans, and the poor; and you shall speak unto all people in a kindly way; and you shall be constant in prayer; and you shall spend in charily." And yet, save for a few of you, you turned away: for you are obstinate folk! 68

2:84

And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge that you would not shed one another's blood, and would not drive one another from your homelands - whereupon you acknowledged it; and thereto you bear witness [even now].

[Asad's comments: 68 The Old Testament contains many allusions to the waywardness and stubborn rebelliousness of the children of Israel - e.g., Exodus xxxii, 9, xxxii, 3, xxxiv, 9; Deuteronomy by, 6-8, 23-24, 27.]

Ali's comments:

87. So far from the Covenant being of the kind you suggest in 2:80 the real Covenant is about the moral law, which is set out in 2:83.

This moral law is universal and if you break it no privileges will lighten your punishment or help you in any way (2:86).

"Speak fair to the people" not only means outward courtesy from the leaders to the meanest among the people, but the protection of the people from being exploited, deceived, defrauded, or doped with things to lull their intelligence.

88. Verse 83 referred to the universal moral law.

This verse 84 refers to its application under a special Covenant entered into with the Jews of Madinah by the new-born Muslim Commonwealth under its Guide and teacher Muhammad.

This Covenant is given in Ibn Hisham's *Sirat-ur-Rasul*, and comments on it will be found in Ameer Ali's *Spirit of Islam* (London 1922), pp. 57-61. It was entered into in the second year of the Hijrah, and

was treacherously broken by the Jews almost immediately afterwards.