

The Pact of Umar: Primary Source Analysis

Name _____

Date _____

The Pact of Umar is written as a letter from Christians promising to follow these conditions in return for protection. It is attributed to the Caliph Umar (7th century) but was probably written down later; this version was preserved by the scholar al-Turtushi in 1122. Its rules applied to Jews as well. Below are ten provisions, paraphrased. The full text is at [the Jewish Virtual Library](#).

#	Provision (paraphrased)	Category: Worship, Dress, Status, or Safety	What was the purpose of this rule?
1	Do not build new churches, synagogues, or monasteries, or repair ones in ruins.		
2	Host Muslim travelers in your homes and places of worship for three days.		
3	Do not teach the Qur'an to your children, and do not prevent anyone from converting to Islam.		
4	Stand up and give your seat to a Muslim who wants it.		
5	Do not dress, cut your hair, or take names like Muslims; wear a distinguishing belt.		
6	Do not ride on saddles or carry swords or other weapons.		
7	Do not display crosses or holy books in Muslim streets or markets.		
8	Pray, ring bells, and hold funerals quietly so Muslims do not hear.		
9	Do not build houses taller than Muslims' houses.		
10	Do not strike a Muslim. Breaking these terms ends your protection.		

Questions

1. Which provisions were about religion, and which were about showing that Muslims ranked higher? Give two examples.

2. What did the pact *not* restrict? Why might that matter for Jewish life?

3. The pact is written as if the Christians wrote it themselves. Who do you think really set these terms, and why might it be written this way?
