

# The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## IS VERSE 3:81 A REFERENCE TO ANY PARTICULAR MESSENGER?

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### IS VERSE 3:81 A REFERENCE TO ANY PARTICULAR MESSENGER?

Let us note the verse in question first.

#### 003.081

"And when God took a covenant (through - see below\*) the prophets: Certainly what I have given you of the Book and wisdom, then a messenger (Arabic: rasulun) comes to you confirming that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must help (Arabic: walatansurunnahu) him. He said: Do you affirm and accept My Covenant in this (matter)? They said: We do affirm. He said: Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you"

Many Muslims understand the above verse as referring to a particular messenger, in this case Prophet Muhammad. <sup>(pbuh)</sup> However, there are also some Muslims that understand this as a reference to their own particular messenger.

The first point to note is that there is no mention of any particular messenger or prophet in this verse by name. The nominative indefinite noun 'rasulun' (a messenger) is not restricted to any particular messenger but can be used as a reference to a 'generic messenger', to 'any particular messenger' or group of messengers. This can clearly be seen in the following verse:

#### 002.101

"And when there came to them a messenger (Arabic: rasulun) from God, confirming what was with them, a party of the people of the Book threw away the Book of God behind their backs, as if they did not know!"

Clearly the 'rasulun' in 2:101 is not a reference to any particular messenger but rather, it refers to a 'generic' messenger. This is clearly attested if one consults the previous verses and its context. The

context refers to a people that kept breaking their covenant after ratifying them by virtue of the fact that when a messenger came to confirm the message (as in 3:81), they rejected him.

Therefore, the 'rasulun' in 3:81 is also not a reference to any particular messenger in much the same way as the 'rasulun' in 2:101.

We also note the plurality of messengers in verse in Surah Yasin (Chapter 36) when two messengers were sent and were then strengthened with a third (36:14)

#### 036.014

"When We (first) sent to them two (messengers), but they denied both of them. So We strengthened them with a third and they said, "Truly, we have been sent to you as messengers."

### MISUNDERSTANDING THE COVENANT \*

Furthermore, the covenant in 3:81 is usually misunderstood as being taken 'with the prophets'. This seems unwarranted from the context of the verse.

Let us assume that in this verse, the covenant is taken 'with' the prophets and in light of the very next verse (3:82) which reads:

#### 003:082

"Then whoever turns away after this, they are perverted transgressors / wrongdoers / disobedient (Arabic: fasiqun)"

Given the verse above, is one really expected to accept the suggestion that the prophets would have had any inclination to turn away from their covenants after ratifying them only to be potentially classed as 'fasiqs'?

Clearly, this is an unwarranted suggestion given the context of the verse.

The covenant in 3:81 was taken **'through'** the prophets and with their respective people and communities who ratified the covenant. Therefore, each prophet took a covenant with his community, that if a messenger (or messengers) (the singular can be used to denote a generic 'messenger(s)') came to them **confirming what was with them**, then they would be expected to render him / them help.

This also ties in with verse 7.157 where the People of the Book are expected to **'help'** (Arabic: **wa'nasaru**) the Prophet Muhammad <sup>(pbuh)</sup> due to a prior covenant (3:81). This covenant was ratified by their ancestors and to which they have also borne allegiance (with complete freedom) by virtue of them accepting their forefather's faith as truth.

### 007:157 (Part)

"... So those who believe in him, honour him, help him (**Arabic: wanasarahu**), and follow the light which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper / be successful."

It appears from verse 3:81, that all Prophets made a covenant with their respective communities. Prophet Muhammad <sup>(pbuh)</sup> would not have been an exception nor is he cited as an exception.

### 007:035

"**O ye Children of Adam!** whenever there come to you **messengers from among you**, rehearsing My verses (**Arabic: ayati**) to you, those who are righteous and mend (their lives), on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve"

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

To understand verse 3:81 as a reference to any particular messenger or to use it as support for any particular messenger is not warranted by context.

### 007:035

"**O ye Children of Adam!** whenever there come to you **Messengers from among you**, rehearsing My signs to you, those who are righteous and mend (their lives), on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve"

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