

AHAD-NAMA  
**AHTINAME**  
CHARTER OF PRIVILAGES

Ahtiname (latinised version of AHAD-NAMA) comes from the Arabic words ahd, which means "obligation," and name, which means "document, testament." The document has been instrumental in the protection of St Catherine's Monastery at the base of Mount Sinai, and as a means of ensuring peaceful and cooperative relations between Christians and Muslims. The continuous existence of the monastery during fourteen centuries of Islamic rule is a sign of the respect given to this Letter of Protection, and the principles of peace and cooperation that it enshrines.

*"This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries.*

*No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate.*

*No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray.*

*Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (of Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world)."*

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 330 AD, Helena the mother of Constantine I had a chapel constructed on the site where Prophet Musa (pbuh) saw the burning bush. The bush and the chapel still exist today. Later Emperor Justinian around 540 AD constructed a monastery which came to be known as Monastery of St. Catherine, enclosing the Chapel of the Burning Bush. The fathers of the Monastery visited Rasulullah (pbuh) in Madina in 625 AD and requested for protection. The request was accepted and the charter, was sent to them by Rasulullah (pbuh).