

Surah 17. Al-Israa

Asad: And do not touch the substance of an orphan, save to improve it, before he comes of age.⁴² And be true to every promise - for, verily, [on Judgment Day] you will be called to account for every promise which you have made!⁴³

Malik: You shall not go near the property of an orphan, except with the good intention of improving it, until he attains his maturity. You shall fulfill your pledges; surely you shall be held accountable for your pledges.

Pickthall: Come not near the wealth of the orphan save with that which is better till he come to strength; and keep the covenant. Lo! of the covenant it will be asked.

Yusuf Ali: Come not nigh to the orphan's property except to improve it until he attains the age of full strength; and fulfil (every) engagement for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning). ^{2217 2218 2219 2220}

Transliteration: Walā taqraboo mala alyateemi illa bilallatee hiya ahsanu hatta yablugha ashuddahu waawfoo bilAAahdi inna alAAahda kana masoolan

Khatab:

Do not come near the wealth of the orphan—unless intending to enhance it—until they attain maturity. Honour your pledges, for you will surely be accountable for them.

Author Comments

42 - See surah {6}, note [149].

43 - Lit., "every promise shall be asked about" or "investigated".

2217 - Cf. vi. 152, and other passages relating to orphans, e.g., ii. 220. If an orphan's property is touched at all, it should be to improve it, or to give him something better than he had before, -never to take a personal advantage for the benefit of the guardian. A bargain that may be quite fair as between two independent persons would be, under this verse, unfair as between a guardian and his orphan ward until the latter attains the full age of understanding.

2218 - Ashuddahu means the age when the orphan reaches his full maturity of strength and understanding, say between the ages of 18 and 30. The age of legal maturity may be 18 (as for certain purposes in India) or 21 (as in England). For certain purposes in Muslim law it may be less than 18. In the orphan's interest a much stricter standard is required in his case.

2219 - The definite article al has here a generic meaning, and is best translated by "every".

2220 - From the context the engagements referred to would relate to beneficial contracts connected with the orphan's property or promises or undertakings given by the guardian or implied in the terms of his appointment. But the words are general and may be interpreted in the general sense. Note that this sentence does not occur in the similar passage in vi. 152, where there was a discussion of social laws: it is appropriate here, where the discussion is about the guardian's personal and individual responsibility.

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