

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT ASSEMBLY

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WITNESSES TO THE WOUND

*A Covenant Investigation into the Exploitation of the Zamar Carriers
100 Years of the Music Business on Trial
Report No. 29 of an Ongoing Series*

LEONARD COHEN

1934 – 2016

The Poet Who Came Down From the Mountain — to Pay for What Was Stolen

*Poet and novelist before he was a musician — career began at 33 out of financial necessity on Hydra — seventeen years of close friendship and trusted management — 1996: manager Kelley Lynch begins selling publishing rights while Cohen is on Mount Baldy in a Zen monastery — retirement fund of more than \$5 million reduced to \$150,000 — \$75,000 charged to his personal account for her credit card — the day after he fired her, she attempted to withdraw \$40,000 from a different branch — \$8.4 million in total improprieties discovered — \$9.5 million civil judgment: she never paid a cent — jailed for harassment and threatening him — Cohen at 73: back on the road for the first time in fifteen years, first concert in Fredericton, New Brunswick, May 11, 2008 — tour grossed \$149.1 million total — Glastonbury at sunset: Hallelujah — ‘Being back on the road re-established me as a worker in the world’ — died November 7, 2016, three weeks after releasing *You Want It Darker**

NOTE: This report is unlike any other in the series. The artist was not young, not desperate, not signing a bad contract. He was 71 years old, a Companion of the Order of Canada, a former resident of a Zen monastery, a man who had spent his life accumulating the means to rest. What was taken from him was the rest itself. And what followed the taking — the road, the concerts, the kneeling fedora, the Glastonbury field, the re-establishment as a worker in the world — is the covenant response. The wound is entered. The response is also entered.

March 2026 · Kepha Arcemont, Elder and Founder

SECTION ONE — THE GIFT: WHO YAHWEH MADE HIM

Biography: Poet, Novelist, Then Reluctant Musician

Leonard Norman Cohen was born September 21, 1934, in Montreal, Quebec — into a middle-class Jewish family, the son of a clothing manufacturer who died when Leonard was nine. He grew up in Westmount, immersed in Jewish theology and the stories of the Tanakh. He studied English literature at McGill University. He gave his earliest poetry readings in a Montreal nightclub to jazz accompaniment. He published his first collection of poetry, *Let Us Compare Mythologies*, in 1956 at age 22, through the McGill Poetry Series. He was already, before he picked up a guitar as his primary instrument, one of the most acclaimed young poets in English Canada.

He moved to the Greek island of Hydra in the early 1960s, using a modest inheritance and a Canada Council grant. He lived there for seven years. He wrote and swam and sailed. He fell in love with a Norwegian woman, Marianne Ihlen, who inspired many of his most enduring songs. He wrote his two novels: *The Favourite Game* (1963) and *Beautiful Losers* (1966), of which the Boston Globe wrote: "James Joyce is not dead. He is living in Montreal under the name of Cohen." He published poetry collections. He was a literary figure, not a musician.

Music came out of financial necessity. With money running low on Hydra in 1966, Cohen began writing songs. His pieces *Suzanne* and *Dress Rehearsal Rag* appeared on Judy Collins' album. He was 33 years old when he released his first album. The songs were his poems set to music — or perhaps more precisely, they were the form his poems had always been reaching toward. ***Songs of Leonard Cohen. Songs from a Room. Songs of Love and Hate. New Skin for the Old Ceremony. Various Positions. I'm Your Man. The Future.*** And then, in 1984, buried on Side Two of *Various Positions*, a song whose opening line has become one of the most recognized phrases in Western popular music: *Hallelujah*.

Bob Dylan said: "When people talk about Leonard, they fail to mention his melodies, which to me, along with his lyrics, are his greatest genius. Even the counterpoint lines — they give a celestial character and melodic lift to every one of his songs. As far as I know, no one else comes close to this in modern music." That is Bob Dylan speaking of Leonard Cohen. The covenant acknowledges what was given through this vessel: a body of poetry and song that addressed faith and mortality, betrayal and redemption, desire and loss, with a precision and beauty that no other voice in popular music has matched. **He was the Tanakh's closest ally in the Western popular music canon.**

◆ *I am Kepha Arcemont, a covenant minister and blues-rock guitarist from Pearl River, Louisiana. I have studied the Tanakh my entire adult life. Leonard Cohen is the artist in this series whose work is most directly covenant-saturated — not in doctrine, not in polemic, but in the literary tradition. The Psalms of Tehillim are in his DNA. 'Hallelujah' is a psalm in the form of a popular song. 'You Want It Darker' is a direct address to Yahweh. 'Bird on the Wire' is a vow of covenant behavior. Cohen never left the literary tradition he came from. He brought it into the tavern, onto the stage, into the*

darkening sunset at Glastonbury. And a woman who had been his friend for seventeen years emptied his retirement fund while he was on the mountain.

Born	September 21, 1934 — Montreal, Quebec — Jewish family, deeply Tanakh-grounded
Formation	Poet and novelist first; McGill University English literature 1955; first poetry collection age 22
Hydra	Lived on Greek island 1960s with Marianne Ihlen; wrote novels and poetry; music began out of financial need
Music career	First album 1967, age 33; 11 studio albums 1967–2016; Hallelujah (1984) became his most famous work
Dylan on Cohen	'As far as I know, no one else comes close to this in modern music' — referring to Cohen's melodies
Zen retreat	Spent years on Mount Baldy Zen Center, California, in monastic practice; ordained as a Buddhist monk
Lynch hired	Kelley Lynch: personal manager from early 1988 through October 2004 — close family friend, 17 years
Theft begins	1996: Lynch begins selling Cohen's publishing rights without authorization, while Cohen is on Mount Baldy
Discovery	Late 2004: daughter Lorca tipped off by insider; Cohen checks accounts; finds \$75,000 Amex charge he paid for Lynch
Scale	\$5 million retirement fund reduced to \$150,000; total improprieties: approximately \$8.4 million
Court action	Fired Lynch October 2004; \$9.5 million civil judgment awarded 2006; Lynch never paid; jailed 2012 for harassment
Tour response	Age 73, back on road May 2008 — 15 years since last tour — \$149.1 million total across 2008–2013 tours
Death	November 7, 2016, age 82, Los Angeles; three weeks after releasing You Want It Darker

SECTION TWO — THE WOUND: SEVENTEEN YEARS OF TRUSTED FRIENDSHIP

\$150,000 Left From \$5 Million

Kelley Lynch: The Close Friend Who Was More Than a Manager

Kelley Lynch had been Cohen's personal manager since early 1988. She was not simply an industry professional who handled his business affairs. She was, as Cohen's biographer Sylvie Simmons described, *"not simply his manager but a close friend, almost part of the family."* She had access to Cohen's home. She worked from his duplex in Los Angeles. He prepared lunch for her. She had signing authority over his accounts, his publishing, his investment structures. He trusted her with the totality of his financial life for seventeen years. He was not a man who paid no attention — he had explicitly described his precautions: *"I can assure you, within reason, I took every precaution except to question the fidelity of my closest associates."*

The theft began in 1996. While Cohen was at the Mount Baldy Zen Center in California in monastic practice, Lynch began selling his music publishing rights. There was no financial incentive for Cohen to sell his publishing rights. He had not authorized the sales. She sold them anyway, apparently under his signature or through his entities, while Cohen was on the mountain. She also linked her American Express card directly to his personal checking account. He later discovered he had paid a \$75,000 Amex bill on her behalf without knowing what the charges were for.

Discovery came in late 2004 through an unexpected conversation. A young man, the boyfriend of a casual employee of Lynch's, spoke to Cohen's daughter Lorca at the duplex. *"Your father really ought to look into his accounts, because he might be surprised at what he finds,"* he said. Lorca replied that her father trusted everyone involved and was about to retire. The young man said: *"He won't be able to retire."* Lorca called her father. Cohen flew to Los Angeles, went to the bank, removed Lynch's signing powers, and fired her.

The day after Cohen fired her, the bank notified him that Lynch had gone to a different branch and attempted to withdraw \$40,000 from one of his accounts. He called a lawyer and brought in forensic accountants, Moss-Adams. The investigation discovered approximately \$8.4 million in total improprieties across all his holdings. His retirement fund — which he had believed to be more than \$5 million — held \$150,000. Cohen's response: *"I was devastated. You know, God gave me a strong inner core, so I wasn't shattered. But I was deeply concerned."*

The Scale of the Taking

Five precise dimensions of what Kelley Lynch took from Leonard Cohen:

u2696 1 — THE RETIREMENT FUND: *\$5 million retirement savings reduced to \$150,000. Cohen had been about to retire. The money that would have funded the rest of his life was gone.*

u2696 2 — THE PUBLISHING RIGHTS: *Lynch began selling Cohen's music publishing rights in 1996 without authorization and without financial incentive. Sold while Cohen was in monastic retreat on Mount Baldy.*

u2696 3 — THE CHARITABLE TRUST FUNDS: *Money from Cohen's charitable trust funds was also depleted. Money held in trust for purposes beyond Cohen's personal use was taken.*

u2696 4 — THE CREDIT CARD: *Lynch's American Express bill linked directly to Cohen's personal checking account. A \$75,000 payment made by Cohen on her behalf. He never knew what the charges were for.*

u2696 5 — THE FINAL ATTEMPT: *The day after she was fired, Lynch attempted to withdraw \$40,000 from a different branch of Cohen's bank. The bank notified Cohen in time. He had already removed her signing powers.*

The Judgment and the Non-Payment

In March 2006, a Los Angeles County Superior Court awarded Cohen a civil judgment of \$9.5 million. Lynch did not respond to the suit. She did not respond to the subpoena of her financial records. Cohen's attorney told the Globe and Mail: *"We're still trying to figure out where all the money went."* Lynch did not pay the judgment. She never paid a cent.

What followed was worse than the original theft, in one dimension: Lynch launched a harassment campaign against Cohen that continued for years. Hundreds of emails. Voice messages accusing him of tax fraud and drug abuse. Threats. She was arrested in March 2012 for violating a protective order. In April 2012 a jury found her guilty on all charges. She was sentenced to eighteen months in prison and five years probation. The theft was effectively unpunished financially. The harassment was punished with prison. The \$9.5 million was never recovered.

Cohen's statement at her sentencing hearing is the most extraordinary document produced by any artist in this series in response to their exploiter:

"It gives me no pleasure to see my onetime friend shackled to a chair in a court of law, her considerable gifts bent to the services of darkness, deceit, and revenge. It is my prayer that Ms. Lynch will take refuge in the wisdom of her religion, that a spirit of understanding will convert her heart from hatred to remorse, from anger to kindness, from the deadly intoxication of revenge to the lowly practices of self-reform." — **Leonard Cohen, statement at Kelley Lynch sentencing hearing, April 2012**

This is teshuvah language. From hatred to remorse, from anger to kindness, from the deadly intoxication of revenge to the lowly practices of self-reform. This is not the language of a victimized man seeking justice. It is the language of a prophet offering the possibility of turning to someone who is still, in his assessment, capable of turning. **No other artist in this series addressed their exploiter from this altitude.** The covenant record notes it. The wound is real. The height from which Cohen addressed it is also real.

SECTION THREE — THE RESPONSE: BACK ON THE ROAD AT 73

Performing Is an Opportunity for a Thousand Humiliations

Leonard Cohen had not toured in fifteen years. He had described touring as *"an opportunity for a thousand humiliations."* He had been in Zen monastic practice. He had been, by his own account and Lorca's, about to retire. After the forensic accounting revealed what had happened to his finances, he had no choice. **He went back on the road not because he chose to but because someone had taken away his ability to choose not to.**

He was reluctant. His new manager Robert Kory said: *"Leonard was very reluctant at first. From his view, touring had always been a disaster — he would say, 'Performing is an opportunity for a thousand humiliations.'" What changed his mind was the simple arithmetic of what remained and what he needed to survive.*

The Tour — What Followed Reluctance

The tour began May 11, 2008, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. It was Cohen's first concert in fifteen years. He was 73 years old. He wore his signature grey suit and fedora, and he did something nobody expected from the man who had described the stage as an opportunity for humiliation: **he skipped on and off stage. He knelt to his musicians. He doffed his fedora in tribute to every player. He wept at climactic moments.** He gave the audience everything he had carried through five years of monastic silence, poured out through three-hour concerts across three continents. June 29, 2008: the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury. As the sun went down over the field, Cohen began *Hallelujah*. A hundred thousand people sang back every word. The audience gave him a reception described by critics as the highlight of the festival. He stood in the sunset at 73, singing the song that had been buried on Side Two of an album whose label had not wanted to release it, singing it to a field full of people who knew every word. **The wound that forced him onto that stage produced the most celebrated performance of the most celebrated song of his career.**

The numbers, from Billboard Boxscore: \$85.7 million from 147 dates, 2008–2010. \$63.4 million from 87 dates on the Old Ideas Tour, 2012–2013. Total across the touring years forced by the theft: \$149.1 million.

Cohen discovered something he had not expected. *"Being back on the road,"* he said, *"re-established me as a worker in the world."* The man who had spent five years on a mountain in silent practice found, at 73, that the discipline of nightly performance had its own form of covenant. He gave three-hour concerts. He donated \$200,000 to victims of the Australian bushfires from the proceeds of a single Australian show. He played Israel and announced that concert proceeds would go to Israeli and Palestinian peace groups.

His final concert was December 21, 2013, in Auckland, New Zealand. He closed with a cover of the Drifters' *Save the Last Dance for Me*. His manager said that even in his final years, Cohen would talk about wanting to get back onstage. *"He kept saying, 'Maybe we can do just a couple more concerts.' There was never a sense of 'I finally triumphed,' just a sense of gratitude. Leonard genuinely felt privileged to have the opportunity to share his music every night."*

The Final Years and the Last Album

In his final years, Cohen released three albums of new material. *Old Ideas* (2012) returned to the spare folk arrangements of his earliest work. *Popular Problems* (2014). And then, three weeks before his death, *You Want It Darker* (2016) — a direct address to the divine, recorded when Cohen was frail and knew his death was close. The title track begins with a Hebrew cantor's call and Cohen's lowest voice answering: *Hineni, hineni* — "I'm ready, my Lord." **The man who was forced back onto the road at 73 by a stolen retirement fund recorded his final album as a covenant prayer directly addressing Yahweh, using the Tanakh's most intimate word for readiness. *Hineni*. Here I am.**

He died November 7, 2016, age 82, in Los Angeles. He had asked for a small memorial service. His estate was worth approximately \$10 million — rebuilt from the road, from the work, from the discipline that the wound had forced him back into.

SECTION FOUR — THE THREE WITNESSES (DEVARIM 19:15)

Corroboration of the Record

WITNESS One: *Leonard Cohen direct testimony (The Canadian Encyclopedia / Maclean's 2005): 'I was devastated. You know, God gave me a strong inner core, so I wasn't shattered. But I was deeply concerned'; 'I can assure you, within reason, I took every precaution except to question the fidelity of my closest associates'; Cohen calls the case 'a tragedy... greed, concealment, and reckless disregard.'* *Leonard Cohen Wikipedia: confirms theft began 1996 with publishing rights; confirms \$5 million retirement fund reduced to \$150,000; confirms Lynch attempted to withdraw \$40,000 from separate branch the day after being fired; confirms \$9.5 million judgment; confirms Lynch never paid; confirms 18-month prison sentence for harassment.*

WITNESS Two: *Billboard ('How an Embezzling Manager Caused Leonard Cohen's Late-Career Comeback,' 2016): confirms Lynch ordered to pay \$9.5 million, never did; confirms Robert Kory: 'Leonard was very reluctant at first. From his view, touring had always been a disaster'; confirms tour grossed \$85.7 million 2008–2010; confirms Old Ideas Tour grossed \$63.4 million 2012–2013; total \$149.1 million; confirms Cohen: 'Being back on the road re-established me as a worker in the world'; confirms final concert December 21, 2013, Auckland, New Zealand. Grunge.com: confirms total tour earnings \$149.1 million; confirms \$9.5 million judgment never collected.*

WITNESS Three: *Sylvie Simmons, Leonard Cohen biography (2012), as cited in Live in London Wikipedia and Billboard: 'Lynch took care of Leonard's business affairs... not simply his manager but a close friend, almost part of the family'; confirms theft began 1996; confirms \$75,000 Amex charge; confirms forensic accountant discovery of \$8.4 million in total improprieties. Cohen statement at Lynch sentencing hearing (April 2012), quoted in AV Club and multiple sources: 'It gives me no pleasure to see my onetime friend shackled to a chair in a court of law, her considerable gifts bent to the services of darkness, deceit, and revenge. It is my prayer that Ms. Lynch will take refuge in the wisdom of her religion...' Biographer Anthony Reynolds: 'In public, at least, Cohen did seem remarkably sanguine about the loss. He was never angry or accusatory.'*

SECTION FIVE — THE COVENANT ANALYSIS

The Torah Charges

Charge One: The Betrayal of the Trusted Friend — Mishlei 17:17

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

— Mishlei (Proverbs) 17:17

Kelley Lynch was not simply a manager who extracted value through a contract Cohen did not fully understand. She was a friend of seventeen years, a woman he described as almost part of the family, a person for whom he prepared lunch, to whom he gave signing authority over everything he had built, with whom he had briefly been intimate. **The covenant defines the friend precisely: one who loves at all times.** What Lynch was required to be by the standard of covenant friendship, and what she was instead, is entered here. The friend who loves at all times does not sell publishing rights while the friend is on the mountain. The friend who loves at all times does not link her credit card to his checking account. The friend who loves at all times does not attempt to withdraw \$40,000 the day after being fired. ***A friend loves at all times.*** What Lynch demonstrated was not the opposite of love but the use of love's appearance as the mechanism of the theft. The trust of seventeen years of apparent friendship was the precise instrument of the extraction.

Charge Two: The Empty Retirement Fund — Vayikra 19:13

"You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning."

— Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:13

Cohen's retirement fund was not wages withheld in the conventional sense of this series. It was the accumulated provision of a lifetime of covenant work — the savings that should have funded the rest of his life. The Torah's standard of not robbing your neighbor applies to the taking of what another person has earned and set aside, not only to current wages. **\$5 million reduced to \$150,000 over nine years while Cohen was in contemplative retreat.** The money flowed out through structures Cohen did not know were being depleted, through statements that were sent to him and not accurately reflected the state of his accounts, through the use of his name and his signature to sell assets he had not chosen to sell. The robbery was patient, sustained, and comprehensive. The covenant names it: ***lo tignov*** — you shall not steal. ***lo tignol*** — you shall not rob. Both applied here with full force.

Charge Three: The Unauthorized Publication Sales — Vayikra 19:11

"You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another."

— Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:11

Beginning in 1996, Lynch sold Cohen's publishing rights. There was no financial incentive for Cohen to sell his publishing rights. He had not authorized the sales. His signature was used, or the entities under his name were used, to transfer what belonged to him without his knowledge. **This is Vayikra 19:11's prohibition on false dealing applied to a sustained, documented pattern: the use of a principal's name and authority to transfer assets without his knowledge or consent.** The publishing rights are a form of the artist's covenant inheritance — the fruit of the zamar, the ongoing commercial expression of what was given through the vessel. Selling them without authorization is not a single transaction. It is the removal of the ongoing covenant provision those rights represent.

The Covenant Response — Yirmeyahu 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares Yahweh, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

— Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 29:11

The covenant does not offer a simple arc from wound to triumph. Cohen did not receive the \$9.5 million he was awarded. He received something different: five years of concerts that became the most commercially and critically successful period of his late career, and the unexpected discovery that the discipline of nightly work **re-established him as a worker in the world.** The future that opened after the wound was not the retirement he had planned. It was the Glastonbury field at sunset. It was the Auckland stage at 79. It was **You Want It Darker** at 81, singing **Hineni** to Yahweh. **The theft did not give him what was stolen back. It gave him something he had not known he needed.** The covenant is not a guarantee of restoration on the artist's terms. It is a declaration of plans for welfare and not for evil, a future and a hope. Cohen found his future on the road he had not intended to take.

SECTION SIX — THE LIVING WITNESS: KEPHA ARCEMONT, 2026

A Covenant Minister Reads the Record

Hallelujah. The word is Hebrew. It means: **Hallelu** — praise, in the plural imperative — and **Yah** — the shortened form of the divine name. All of you: praise Yahweh. Cohen wrapped the entire theological complexity of the Hebrew covenant relationship with the divine into a song whose structure mirrors the Psalms of Tehillim: human failure, covenant beauty, brokenness, and the reaching toward the divine despite and through the brokenness. **He is the only artist in the Western popular music canon who took the Hebrew covenant tradition this seriously and carried it this far.**

◆ *I am Kepha Arcemont, Elder and Founder of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Assembly, a covenant minister rooted in the Tanakh. I have been in conversation with Cohen's work my entire adult life without knowing his name for it, because his work is the work of the covenant — the work of taking the Hebrew tradition of honest address to Yahweh and placing it where people*

who would never enter a synagogue could find it. 'You Want It Darker' is a direct address to Yahweh in the language of prophetic challenge. It is in the tradition of Iyov (Job). Kelley Lynch took his retirement fund. She could not take the tradition he carried. She could not empty that account. And the tour she forced him onto — the road she sent him back to — returned him to the people who needed the tradition he carried. The wound did not destroy the zamar. It distributed it.

He stood in the field at Glastonbury at sunset and 100,000 people sang **Hallelujah** back to him. That is not a commercial metric. That is a covenant metric. The word that means praise Yahweh, carried by a man who had been robbed of his retirement fund, received back in massed human voices in a field in Somerset. **The covenant record does not end with the theft. It ends with the singing. It ends with *Hineni* — here I am. *Selah*.**

SECTION SEVEN — THE COVENANT VERDICT

Yahweh's Record on Leonard Cohen

One wound. One response. One covenant close.

COVENANT CHARGE: Kelley Lynch served as Cohen's personal manager and close family friend for seventeen years. Beginning in 1996, while Cohen was in monastic practice on Mount Baldy, she began selling his publishing rights without authorization. She depleted his retirement fund of more than \$5 million, leaving \$150,000. She linked her credit card to his personal account. Total improprieties: \$8.4 million. She attempted to withdraw \$40,000 from a separate branch the day after being fired. A civil court awarded Cohen \$9.5 million. She never paid a cent. She harassed him for years, was convicted, and served 18 months. Mishlei 17:17 — a friend loves at all times: the trust of seventeen years was the instrument of the taking. Vayikra 19:13 — the accumulated provision of a lifetime of covenant work robbed while the worker was on the mountain. Vayikra 19:11 — false dealing: publishing rights sold without consent under his name. The judgment is entered in full.

COVENANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT: Cohen returned to the road at 73, not from desire but from necessity. What followed was the most celebrated late-career concert tour in popular music history. Total earnings: \$149.1 million. The Glastonbury sunset. The kneeling fedora. The three-hour concerts. 'Being back on the road re-established me as a worker in the world.' He died in 2016 at age 82, three weeks after releasing *You Want It Darker*, a direct address to Yahweh in the Tanakh tradition. *Hineni*. Here I

am. The wound did not destroy the zamar. It distributed it. The covenant record closes not with the theft but with the singing.

Cohen's word to Kelley Lynch at sentencing: *"It is my prayer that Ms. Lynch will take refuge in the wisdom of her religion, that a spirit of understanding will convert her heart from hatred to remorse, from anger to kindness, from the deadly intoxication of revenge to the lowly practices of self-reform."* **From hatred to remorse. From anger to kindness. From the deadly intoxication of revenge to the lowly practices of self-reform.** This is teshuvah — the turn — offered from the one who was wronged to the one who did the wrong. No other statement in this series of twenty-nine reports carries this weight. It is the covenant's deepest word, spoken not by a judge but by the wounded artist himself. The record is complete. **Selah.**

SERIES NOTES

Report No. 29 is categorically distinct from all previous reports in the series. It documents an artist who was exploited in old age after decades of commercial and literary achievement, by a trusted friend rather than an industry predator. It is the first report in the series in which the artist's response to exploitation produced a body of work widely judged to be among the greatest of his career. And it is the first report to close with the exploited artist's own covenant prayer for his exploiter.

Hallelujah. Hineni. Selah.

*Miqdash Bethel Covenant Assembly · Pearl River, Louisiana · March 2026
miqdashbethel@gmail.com · Doctrinal Authority: The Tanakh Alone*