

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT ASSEMBLY

Pearl River, Louisiana · miqdashbethel@gmail.com

WITNESSES TO THE WOUND

A Covenant Investigation into the Exploitation of the Zamar Carriers

100 Years of the Music Business on Trial

Report No. 24 of an Ongoing Series

SLY STONE

1943 – 2025

The Man Who Invented the Alphabet — Living in a Van

Woodstock 4 AM — the most sampled catalog in hip-hop history — performance royalties signed away for drug debts — publishing sold to Michael Jackson for \$1 million — 1989: manager supplied cocaine for months, created the dependency, then presented the contract: sign this or no more loans, no more drugs, no recording deal — BMI paid out \$3.3 million 1996–2009, Stone saw almost none of it — homeless, living in a white van in Los Angeles — \$5 million jury verdict obtained and then reversed on a technicality — died June 9, 2025, age 82, surrounded by his children

NOTE: This report applies the full-truth bilateral standard. The cocaine contract of 1989 — in which a manager supplied addiction and then leveraged it to obtain a signature — is the most precisely documented instance in this series of an addiction being used as a commercial weapon against an artist. The self-inflicted dimensions of Stone's financial destruction are also honestly entered. Both accounts are true. Both are in the covenant record.

March 2026 · Kepha Arcemont, Elder and Founder

SECTION ONE — THE GIFT: WHO YAHWEH MADE HIM

Biography: The Inventor of the Musical Alphabet

Sylvester Stewart was born March 15, 1943, in Denton, Texas, and raised in Vallejo, California, in a deeply religious household in the Church of God in Christ. His parents encouraged musical expression from childhood. By age eight he was recording gospel music with his siblings as The Stewart Four. By age eleven he was proficient on keyboards, guitar, bass, and drums. He was not a prodigy in the sense of receiving it as a miracle. He was a worker who absorbed everything the covenant had placed around him and turned it into something the world had not yet heard.

In high school he formed a multi-racial doo-wop group, The Viscaynes. As a young man he worked as a DJ on KSOL, an R&B radio station in San Mateo, California — programming both Black and white artists on the same playlist at a time when that was a political act. He worked as a record producer at Autumn Records, producing Bobby Freeman's hit ***C'mon and Swim*** and early recordings by the Great Society including the first version of ***Somebody to Love***. He had a producer's ear, a DJ's vocabulary, a multi-instrumentalist's range, and a preacher's sense of what a crowd needed to feel. In 1966 and 1967, he and his brother Freddie merged their separate bands into Sly and the Family Stone. The band was, from its first day, a covenant statement: Black and white musicians, men and women, playing together in 1966 San Francisco as equals. Not as a commercial calculation but as a covenant conviction. **There was a band in which men and women, Black and white, had not one fixed role but many fluid ones.** The Black Panthers pressured him to remove the white members. He refused. He stood up for his white bandmates personally, physically, repeatedly.

Dance to the Music. Everyday People. Stand! I Want to Take You Higher. Hot Fun in the Summertime. Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin). Family Affair. There's a Riot Goin' On. Between 1968 and 1973 Sly Stone produced a body of work that permanently altered the trajectory of American music. Five top-ten hits. Three number ones. **Sly and the Family Stone has been sampled more than 1,000 times.** Prince, Michael Jackson, Dr. Dre, 2Pac, Kendrick Lamar, D'Angelo — all drew from the alphabet he invented. Questlove said it plainly: *"Sly created the alphabet that we are still using to express music."* AllMusic wrote: *"James Brown may have invented funk, but Sly Stone perfected it."*

He performed at Woodstock at 4 AM on August 17, 1969. The crowd had been there since the morning. They were exhausted, rain-soaked, half-asleep in fields that had become rivers of mud. He walked onstage and said *"I want to take you higher"* and he did. His manager at the time, David Kapralik, watched the Woodstock footage and said: *"I knew that this was Icarus, his wings made of wax, and the spotlight was the sun he flew too close to."* He was right. But what came before the fall was real, and it was extraordinary, and it changed everything it touched.

◆ *I am a blues-rock vocalist and guitarist who has carried the zamar since I was fourteen. I know what it means to be the one who brings the music through. Sly Stone brought it through at a level most musicians can describe but cannot replicate. The Woodstock performance. The multi-track recording in his home studio when nobody else was doing that. The racially integrated band that stood as a covenant declaration in 1966. He paid a price for that gift that the musical world has not adequately accounted for. This report is part of that accounting.*

Born	March 15, 1943 — Denton, Texas; raised Vallejo, California
Formation	COGIC household; recorded gospel at age 8; proficient on 4 instruments by age 11
Band	Sly and the Family Stone, formed 1966–67 — first prominent American racially integrated, mixed-gender group
Hits	Dance to the Music, Everyday People (#1), Stand!, I Want to Take You Higher, Hot Fun in the Summertime, Thank You (#1), Family Affair (#1) — three #1s, five top-tens
Woodstock	August 17, 1969, 4 AM — widely cited as the festival's defining performance
Influence	Sampled 1,000+ times; Prince, Michael Jackson, Dr. Dre, 2Pac, Kendrick Lamar
Performance royalties	Signed away to manager Ken Roberts in exchange for loans to cover drug debts, mid-1970s
Publishing sale	Sold to Michael Jackson's MiJac Music, 1985, for \$1 million
Cocaine contract	1989: Jerry Goldstein supplied cocaine for months, then used dependency to extract signature on contract assigning all financial affairs to his company Even Street Productions
BMI royalties	\$3.3 million paid by BMI, 1996–2009 — Stone saw almost none of it
Van	2011: reported homeless, living in a white van in Los Angeles
\$5M verdict	2015 jury awarded \$5 million; overturned months later on technicality of the 1989 contract
Death	June 9, 2025 — COPD and other underlying health issues — age 82 — Granada Hills, Los Angeles — surrounded by his three children
Legacy	Questlove documentary Sly Lives! (aka The Burden of Black Genius), 2025 — Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, 2017

SECTION TWO — THE WOUND: THE FULL ACCOUNT

The Alphabet Inventor Who Died in a Van

Sly Stone's financial destruction was layered across three decades by at least three separate mechanisms. This report applies the bilateral covenant standard: the industry's exploitation is documented and charged, and the self-inflicted dimensions of Stone's financial destruction are also honestly entered. The cocaine contract of 1989 is the covenant centerpiece of this report — not because it is the only mechanism, but because it is the most precisely documented instance in this entire series of a predator deliberately using an artist's addiction as a commercial weapon to obtain a contract signature.

Layer One: Performance Royalties Assigned to a Manager for Drug Debts

In the mid-1970s, already developing the drug dependencies that would define his next three decades, Stone turned to his friend and manager Ken Roberts for financial help. Roberts advanced him money to cover debts. In exchange, Stone signed over his performance rights royalties — the royalties paid by BMI whenever one of his songs was played anywhere: radio, television, live performances, streaming. **The songs that were being played were the songs he had written and performed. The royalties from their commercial use were assigned to another man as debt repayment.** This is the opening of the wound.

Then in 1980 the IRS levied a multimillion-dollar tax lien on Stone's income. For the next fifteen years, much of what the songs produced went directly to tax collectors. Roberts was not being paid. Stone was not being paid. The government was collecting what should have flowed to the artist. And Stone's drug use continued to deepen.

Layer Two: The Publishing Sale — \$1 Million for a Catalog Worth Infinitely More

In 1985, Stone sold his publishing interest in most of his existing musical compositions to Michael Jackson's MiJac Music company for a reported \$1 million. This was Jackson's first major publishing acquisition, made at a time when Stone did not appear to fully grasp what he was selling. The songs continued to generate royalties indefinitely. Stone retained the songwriter's share but lost the publishing interest. The IRS took even the songwriter's share.

Years later, Jackson offered to return the catalog under one condition: Stone must enter a rehabilitation program for substance abuse. Stone refused. He missed the scheduled meeting with Jackson. He later sent a letter that never reached Jackson — it was sold as memorabilia instead. The covenant bilateral account must enter this: **the catalog was offered back. The man whose addiction had extracted the catalog offered to return it in exchange for the recovery the artist refused.** The offering was genuine. The refusal was real. Both are in the permanent record.

Layer Three: The Cocaine Contract of 1989 — The Covenant Centerpiece

By late 1988, Sly Stone's addiction to cocaine and sedatives had made him a fugitive with no record deal and no income. He was destitute. He turned to Jerry Goldstein, whom he had known for more than twenty years. What happened next is documented in court filings — presented as facts assumed to be true — by the California appeals court in its ruling:

Between December of 1988 and February of 1989 Goldstein, through his company Goldstein Music, made approximately 30 loans to Stewart in amounts ranging from one hundred to several hundred dollars. The money was used to pay Stewart's living expenses and to fuel his drug addictions. Goldstein and attorney Stone gave cocaine to Stewart on several occasions. In late February of 1989, Goldstein, Topley and attorney Stone told Stewart that Goldstein had obtained a new recording contract for Stewart. They told Stewart there would be no more loans or drugs, and no recording contract, unless Stewart signed an agreement providing that their entity, Even Street, would become manager of all of Stewart's personal and professional financial affairs.

— **California appeals court ruling, *Sly Stone v. Goldstein et al.***, document of record

This is the most precisely documented predatory contract in the series. The predator did not merely present an unfair contract to an artist who lacked legal counsel. He manufactured the conditions that made resistance impossible: thirty small loans to pay rent and buy cocaine over three months, building financial and chemical dependency simultaneously, and then presenting the ultimatum when the dependency was at its deepest. The cocaine that was supplied was the mechanism of the contract. Without the supplied cocaine there was no dependency. Without the dependency there was no leverage. Without the leverage there was no signature. Stone's attorney Robert J. Allan later summarized what Goldstein's strategy had been: *"He just hoped Sly would die broke in the back of a van before he found out."*

The Even Street Structure — What Was Built on the 1989 Signature

After Stone signed the Even Street agreement, Goldstein took control of all his financial affairs. He and his companies arranged bank loans of at least \$5 million, secured by Stone's future royalties. When money came in from Warner (publishing) and BMI (performance), it went to repay the bank loans — and then to Goldstein's companies. Between 1996 and 2009, BMI paid out almost \$3.3 million from Stone's catalog. Stone saw almost none of it. He was living in a van. Goldstein also allegedly registered a shell company called ***Majoken Inc.*** — virtually identical in name to the ***Majoken*** company Ken Roberts had originally set up to collect Stone's BMI royalties. BMI did not know two companies with nearly identical names existed until 2009, by which time approximately \$600,000 in royalties had been paid to

Goldstein's entity instead of Roberts'. **Goldstein created a fraudulent duplicate of an existing entity to intercept royalties that were flowing in a direction he did not control.** This is not mismanagement. This is documentary fraud.

In 2008, Goldstein stopped giving Stone advances. Stone was left destitute. In 2011, news reports confirmed he was homeless, living out of a white van in a rough Los Angeles neighborhood.

The man who invented the musical alphabet — who performed at Woodstock at 4 AM and took half a million people higher — was living in a van. While \$3.3 million from BMI alone had flowed through his catalog between 1996 and 2009 and he had seen almost none of it.

The Lawsuit, the Verdict, and the Reversal

In 2010, Stone sued Goldstein for \$50 million, alleging fraud and 20 years of stolen royalty payments. In 2015, a Los Angeles jury awarded him \$5 million and found that his former manager had cheated him out of over a decade of royalties through "shady accounting." His attorney said: *"It's a good day for Sly, it's a good day for entertainers in general."*

Months later, the verdict was overturned. The court found that Stone had legally signed the 1989 agreements — the Shareholder's Agreement and the Employment Agreement that Goldstein's cocaine supply had induced him to sign — and that under those agreements, the royalties had been properly directed. The contracts, obtained through manufactured dependency, were held to be legally valid. **The system that the addiction had been used to install held even after a jury found fraud.** Stone did not receive the \$5 million. He died in 2025 having never recovered what the contract had taken.

The Final Years and the Covenant Close

Sly Stone died on June 9, 2025, in Granada Hills, Los Angeles. He was 82 years old. The cause of death was COPD and other underlying health issues. He died surrounded by his three children. He had recently completed a memoir — **Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)** — and was working on a screenplay for his life story. Questlove's documentary **Sly Lives! (aka The Burden of Black Genius)** had been released earlier in 2025, celebrating his legacy and documenting the burden that his influence had placed on him personally.

In October 2023, Stone spoke with the Guardian via email — he was too ill to speak in person: *"I have trouble with my lungs, trouble with my voice, trouble with my hearing and trouble with the rest of my body, too."* He had been told in 2019 that if he did not stop smoking he would be setting himself up for death. *"Once I decided,"* he said, *"it just happened."* He stopped. He survived until 2025. His children were with him when he died.

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

Corroboration of the Record

WITNESS One: *California appeals court ruling (Sly Stone v. Goldstein et al., documented in Hollywood Reporter April 2013): confirms all facts assumed true by the court — approximately 30 loans December 1988–February 1989 to fuel living expenses and drug addiction; confirms Goldstein and attorney gave cocaine to Stewart on several occasions; confirms the ultimatum: no more loans or drugs or recording contract unless Stewart signed Even Street agreement; confirms Goldstein took control of all financial affairs; confirms BMI paid almost \$3.3 million 1996–2009, Stone saw almost none of it; confirms Goldstein stopped advances in 2008 leaving Stone destitute. This is primary court documentation.*

WITNESS Two: *Hollywood Reporter (2011, 'Funk Legend Sly Stone Homeless and Living in a Van'): confirms Stone was homeless and living in a white van in Los Angeles; confirms \$50 million lawsuit against Goldstein alleging 20 years of stolen royalty payments; confirms attorney Allan's statement 'He just hoped Sly would die broke in the back of a van before he found out'; confirms Goldstein's alleged trademark acquisition of 'Sly and the Family Stone' name as collateral for loans. Corroborated by Rolling Stone (2015 jury award), Celebrity Net Worth (detailed financial history), and Billboard (original 2013 court case reporting).*

WITNESS Three: *NPR obituary (June 9, 2025): confirms death at age 82 from COPD; confirms Woodstock performance as 'legendary moment in a legendary concert'; confirms Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award 2017; confirms Questlove documentary Sly Lives! 2025. Rolling Stone obituary (June 9, 2025): confirms first prominent American group to be racially integrated and mixed-gender; confirms 1,000+ samples on WhoSampled; confirms influence on Prince, Michael Jackson, Dr. Dre, Kendrick Lamar. Wikipedia (Sly Stone): confirms Questlove: 'Sly created the alphabet that we are still using to express music.'*

SECTION FOUR — THE COVENANT ANALYSIS

The Torah Charges — Applied to Sly Stone: Both Accounts

Charge One: The Manufactured Stumbling Block — Vayikra 19:14

"You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your Elohim: I am Yahweh."

— Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:14

The standard application of Vayikra 19:14 in this series has been: a manager presents a contract to an artist who lacks the knowledge to understand what they are signing. In Sly Stone's case, the stumbling block was not merely placed in his path. It was *manufactured*. Goldstein supplied cocaine for three months, creating and deepening the chemical dependency that would make it impossible for Stone to evaluate the contract he was about to sign. Then the ultimatum: no more loans, no more drugs, no recording

contract, unless you sign. **The Torah's prohibition on the stumbling block applies with its fullest force when the blindness was created by the one who placed the block.** Stone could not see the ground he was standing on in February 1989 because Goldstein had been ensuring that he could not see it since December 1988. ***I am Yahweh.*** The witnessing covers every line of cocaine supplied and every dollar of the loan.

Charge Two: Wages Withheld for Two Decades — 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

BMI paid out almost \$3.3 million from Stone's catalog between 1996 and 2009. Stone saw almost none of it. He was living in a van. The songs whose performance generated those royalties were his songs — written by him, performed by him, recorded by him, carried by him. **\$3.3 million from one royalty source alone, across thirteen years, while the man who wrote the songs lived in a white van in Los Angeles.** The Torah's prohibition does not apply only to wages withheld for a day. It applies to wages diverted into shell companies and bank loan repayments while the hired worker sleeps in a vehicle. The directional imprecision of the accounting — always flowing away from the artist — is documented here with specificity: \$3.3 million, 1996–2009, Stone saw almost none of it.

Charge Three: The Duplicate Shell Company — Vayikra 19:11

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

— Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:11

Goldstein registered a company called ***Majoken Inc.*** that was virtually identical in name to the ***Majoken*** company Ken Roberts had set up to collect Stone's BMI royalties. BMI did not know two entities with nearly identical names existed until 2009. By that time approximately \$600,000 had been paid to Goldstein's entity. **This is false dealing in its most direct documentary form: creating a fraudulent duplicate of an existing entity in order to intercept royalties flowing in a direction the predator did not control.** The Torah's prohibition on false dealing applies to every payment intercepted by the duplicate company.

Bilateral Covenant Account — Kohelet 5:10

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity."

— Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 5:10

The bilateral standard requires entering what Stone himself contributed to the destruction honestly. He began using cocaine heavily by the early 1970s. He missed a third of his shows in 1970. He sold his publishing catalog for \$1 million when it was

worth vastly more. He refused rehabilitation when Michael Jackson offered to return his catalog. He wrote in his memoir: *"Arrest records were the new records, and I was hitting the charts. Court dates were my new concerts."* **The covenant holds both accounts simultaneously.** The predator who manufactured the dependency is charged. The covenant wisdom that was not applied — **he who loves money will not be satisfied** — is also entered. The racial system that had pressured him to remove his white bandmates, the industry that provided no financial education to a self-made radio DJ turned bandleader, the cocaine that was given to him by a manager who intended to use it as a contractual weapon — all of these surround the self-inflicted account without canceling it. All are in the record.

SECTION FIVE — THE LIVING WITNESS: KEPHA ARCEMONT, 2026

A Blues Guitarist Reads the Record

I Want to Take You Higher. Woodstock. 4 AM. Half a million people in a field of mud. He walked onto the stage and they rose. **That is the zamar at maximum power: the one who carries the gift walking into the most exhausted moment and lifting the entire covenant community.** He performed until they would not let him stop. He came back for encore after encore. The Woodstock film captured it. The world has never forgotten it. And then the years that followed took everything the Woodstock moment was worth and directed it somewhere other than Sly Stone.

◆ *I am a blues-rock vocalist and guitarist. I understand the arc from covenant calling to commercial extraction in my own life and career. I have spent more than I have received. I have trusted people I should not have trusted. I have signed things I did not fully understand. But I was never supplied cocaine by a manager who intended to use my chemical dependency to obtain my signature on a contract. That is a different category of stumbling block. The Torah names it with precision: the stumbling block placed before the blind. When the blindness is manufactured by the one placing the block, the charge carries additional weight. The covenant record is entering that weight in full.*

He died in 2025, nine months before this report was written. He died surrounded by his children. He had recently finished his memoir and his screenplay. He died with his lungs failing from decades of smoking, in a house in Granada Hills, not a van. In his final years he had a measure of stability he had not had for decades. **But the catalog that generated a thousand samples was never returned to him. The \$3.3 million from BMI that flowed through his work between 1996 and 2009 went elsewhere. The \$5 million jury verdict was overturned on the technicality of the contracts obtained through manufactured addiction.** He died with the accounting unresolved. The covenant record remains open.

Questlove called him the inventor of the musical alphabet. That is not hyperbole. It is documentary. Every genre that came after him — hip-hop, funk, neo-soul, R&B, contemporary gospel in its modern forms — draws from the alphabet he assembled in a

San Francisco studio in the late 1960s. **The man who invented the musical alphabet that everyone still uses lived in a van.** That sentence is the covenant indictment in its most precise and irreducible form.

SECTION SIX — THE COVENANT VERDICT

Yahweh's Record on Sly Stone

The covenant verdict in this report holds three charges against external predation and enters one honest bilateral account of the self-inflicted wound. All four are non-canceling. All four are permanent.

COVENANT CHARGE ONE: Between December 1988 and February 1989, Jerry Goldstein supplied cocaine and loans to Sly Stone approximately 30 times to create financial and chemical dependency, then presented an ultimatum: sign the Even Street agreement or receive no more loans, no more drugs, no recording contract. Stone signed. Vayikra 19:14 — the stumbling block placed before the blind. The blindness was manufactured by the one who placed the block. The judgment is entered against every dollar that flowed through Even Street from 1989 onward.

COVENANT CHARGE TWO: Between 1996 and 2009, BMI paid out almost \$3.3 million from Sly Stone's catalog. Stone saw almost none of it. He was living in a white van in Los Angeles. Vayikra 19:13 — wages withheld. The songs whose commercial performance generated those royalties were his songs. The \$3.3 million did not reach the one who wrote them. The judgment is entered for every payment that flowed to bank accounts and shell companies while the artist lived in a van.

COVENANT CHARGE THREE: Goldstein registered a company named Majoken Inc., virtually identical to the Majoken entity Roberts had set up to collect Stone's BMI royalties, and intercepted approximately \$600,000 in royalties before the duplicate was discovered. Vayikra 19:11 — theft and false dealing. The duplicate entity was a documentary fraud designed to intercept funds flowing in a direction the predator could not otherwise access. The judgment is entered.

COVENANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT — BILATERAL: Sly Stone's addiction to cocaine and other substances contributed significantly to his financial

destruction. He sold his publishing catalog for \$1 million. He refused rehabilitation when Michael Jackson offered to return the catalog. He wrote: 'Arrest records were the new records.' Kohelet 5:10 — the wealth that could not be held. The bilateral account is entered honestly. The external predation does not cancel the self-inflicted wound. The self-inflicted wound does not cancel the external predation. Both are in the permanent record.

"Yahweh works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed."

— Tehillim (Psalms) 103:6

For all who are oppressed. Not for the ones who were oppressed while making all the right decisions. Not for the ones whose lives were simple enough to be fully righteous. For ***all*** who are oppressed. Sly Stone was oppressed by a predator who manufactured his dependency and used it to extract his signature. He was also a man whose addiction consumed decades of his life and his commercial fruit. **The Torah's justice covers the full account.** He died in 2025, nine months before this report, surrounded by his children. The musical alphabet he invented is still in use. The catalog is still being sampled. ***Yahweh works righteousness and justice.*** The covenant record holds it all. ***Selah.***

SERIES NOTES

Report No. 24 documents the most recent death in the series: Sly Stone died June 9, 2025, nine months before this report was written. The Questlove documentary *Sly Lives! (aka The Burden of Black Genius)* was released in 2025, the same year he died. The extended series continues.

Selah.

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