

# MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

*Covenant Studies Series*

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## THE TALMUD AT THE PLUMB LINE

### A COVENANT EXAMINATION OF RABBINIC POST-BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

*What It Is, What It Claims, What It Contains — and What the Torah Judges*

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**Elder Kepha Arcemont**

*Founder & Elder — Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution*

Pearl River, Louisiana | Tuscola, Texas | Clyde, Texas

miqdashbethel.org | miqdashbethel@gmail.com

985-250-9060

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### PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

**This study is not antisemitic.** It is a covenant examination — the same examination that every system of religious authority must pass when measured against the written Torah of **Yahweh** (יהוה) as recorded in the Tanakh. The Talmud is one of the most cited, most feared, and most misrepresented bodies of literature in the history of the world. Defenders will say it is beyond criticism. Opponents will say it is entirely corrupt. Neither extreme serves truth.

The standard of this study is the standard of **Yahweh** Himself: **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** — two or three witnesses. Every claim must be verified against the actual Talmudic text, cross-checked against authoritative scholarship, and then brought before the written Torah as sole covenant authority. Where the Talmud confirms the Torah, it will be affirmed. Where it departs from the Torah, it will be indicted — without malice and without evasion.

This study reaches all three covenant audiences: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each carries a relationship — positive, negative, or contested — with the Talmud and its authority. The Tanakh, as the original written covenant text, is the plumb line for all three.

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# PART I: SOURCE EVALUATION — THE DEVARIM 19:15 TEST

## §I. THE TWO BOOKS BROUGHT TO THE WITNESS STAND

Two books serve as entry points for this study. Both are submitted to the covenant standard before any of their claims are accepted or rejected.

### BOOK ONE: THE TALMUD UNMASKED — REV. I.B. PRANAİTIS (1892)

Justinas Pranaitis (1861–1917) was a Lithuanian Catholic priest and professor of Hebrew at the Imperial Ecclesiastical Academy in St. Petersburg. He published *Christianus in Talmude Iudaeorum* in Latin in 1892, translated into English as *The Talmud Unmasked*. It purports to expose anti-Christian teachings within the Talmud.

**Devarim 19:15 Verdict — Disqualified as Sole Authority.** Scholarship and legal testimony have established that Pranaitis could not read Aramaic, the primary language of the Babylonian Talmud. His incompetence was exposed publicly during the 1913 Beilis ritual-murder trial in Russia, where defense attorneys demonstrated he could not explain basic Talmudic terms and misidentified the name of a Talmudic tractate as a person. Assessment by multiple scholars confirms that while some of his citations are accurate, others are fabricated, and many are extracted from context. He was eventually defrocked. As a sole or primary authority, Pranaitis fails the two-witness test. His citations that can be independently verified on Sefaria.org against the actual Talmudic text will be used in this study; those that cannot be verified will be discarded.

### BOOK TWO: JUDAISM DISCOVERED — MICHAEL A. HOFFMAN II (2008)

Michael Hoffman is a self-published American author. *Judaism Discovered* is his most comprehensive work on the Talmud and Orthodox Judaism. He argues that Orthodox Judaism departs fundamentally from biblical faith and has been shaped more by Babylonian influence than by the written Torah.

**Devarim 19:15 Verdict — Disqualified as Sole Authority.** Hoffman is documented as a Holocaust denier who worked with KKK organizer Tom Metzger and served as assistant director of the Institute for Historical Review, a Holocaust revisionism organization. His framing of Jewish people as a category is antisemitic and cannot be the basis of covenant study. However, his critique of the Talmud's departure from the written Torah — when those specific textual citations can be independently verified — falls within a tradition of legitimate biblical scholarship. The late Karaite tradition, which Hoffman himself references, held similar positions against the Oral Torah purely on textual and covenant grounds. Verified citations only will be used. His antisemitic editorial framing will not be adopted.

## §2. THE WITNESS STANDARD APPLIED IN THIS STUDY

All Talmudic passages referenced in this study are verified through the following independent sources:

SOURCE	FUNCTION	STATUS
Sefaria.org	Complete Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud with English translations	Primary
AlHaTorah.org	Linguistic and thematic cross-analysis of Talmudic texts	Primary
Chabad.org Talmud translations	Standard English Talmud with commentary	Corroborating
Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Library — Rabbi Dov Linzer	Peer-reviewed halakhic analysis of Gentile-related passages	Scholarly
Encyclopedia Judaica (archive.org)	Historical and textual authority on Talmudic literature	Reference
Sefaria — Written Torah (Tanakh)	Sole covenant authority	Final Authority

## PART II: THE TALMUD — ORIGIN, STRUCTURE, AND THE AUTHORITY CLAIM

### §3. WHAT THE TALMUD IS

The Talmud (from the Hebrew root *lamad* — to teach, learn) is a compilation of rabbinic discussion, legal ruling, narrative, and commentary. It exists in two major forms:

VERSION	PERIOD	LOCATION	STATUS IN JUDAISM
Jerusalem (Yerushalmi) Talmud	~200–400 CE	Land of Israel	Less authoritative; less studied
Babylonian (Bavli) Talmud	~200–600 CE	Babylonian academies (Sura, Pumbedita)	Primary authority in Orthodox Judaism

The Babylonian Talmud contains the *Mishnah* (the earlier oral legal code, written down c. 200 CE by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi) and the *Gemara* (rabbinic commentary and discussion on the Mishnah, completed c. 500–600 CE). Together, they form the Talmud's 63 tractates across six orders (*sedarim*). These tractates address everything from Sabbath observance to civil damages to marriage law to agricultural tithes.

### §4. THE AUTHORITY CLAIM — THE ORAL TORAH DOCTRINE

The central authority claim of the Talmud is the doctrine of the *Torah SheBe'al Peh* — the Oral Torah. The rabbinic tradition holds that when **Yahweh** gave the written Torah to Moshe (Moses) at Sinai, He simultaneously gave an oral explanation — a parallel body of law transmitted secretly by word of mouth through Joshua, the elders, the prophets, and the sages, until it could no longer be retained orally and was written down.

This is not a minor claim. It is the foundation of all rabbinic authority. If the Oral Torah is legitimate, then the Talmud has standing to interpret, expand, and in some cases override the plain text of the written Torah. If the Oral Torah claim does not survive the covenant test, the entire structure of rabbinic authority rests on a foundation the written Torah itself does not authorize.

### THE COVENANT TEST — DEVARIM 4:2 AND DEVARIM 12:32

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:2 — You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor diminish from it, in order to keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim which I command you.***

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:32 — Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.***

These two covenant commands, both from Devarim (Deuteronomy), establish a closed boundary around the written Torah. The very claim that Yahweh gave a second, parallel oral body of law — one that expands, modifies, or supersedes the written Torah — is itself an addition to the written word. The absence of any reference to a "hidden oral Torah" anywhere in the Tanakh is a textual witness against the claim. The prophets (Nevi'im) consistently call Israel back to the written Torah (Torah haKetuvah) — not to an oral tradition.

**Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 8:8** records Yahweh's indictment: ***"How do you say, 'We are wise, and the law of Yahweh is with us'? But the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie."*** This passage is a prophetic covenant warning against exactly the kind of scribal addition the Oral Torah doctrine represents.

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## PART III: THE PASSAGES — WHAT THE TALMUD ACTUALLY SAYS ABOUT NON-JEWS

**Foundational Note:** The following passages are drawn from verified Talmudic sources. Each reference has been cross-checked against Sefaria.org and secondary scholarship. They are organized not to demonize a people but to hold a legal-religious document to the covenant standard — the same standard that this ministry applies to the New Testament, the Church councils, and the Islamic hadith literature. Truth requires this consistency.

### §5. THE DIFFERENTIAL LEGAL STATUS OF GENTILES

#### SANHEDRIN 57A — CAPITAL LAW AND NON-JEWS

The Babylonian Talmud tractate **Sanhedrin 57a** contains a discussion of the capital laws that apply to non-Jews under the Noahide framework. Within this discussion, **the Talmud states that when a Jew kills a gentile, no death penalty applies to the Jew** — while the reverse carries full capital liability. The specific formulation varies by manuscript, but the differential is textually confirmed in multiple editions and acknowledged by Orthodox scholars themselves as a real and unresolved ethical tension.

**Covenant Indictment:** The Torah of **Yahweh** commands in

*Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:15–16 — One statute shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before Yahweh. One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you.*

One law. Not two laws — one for Israel and one for everyone else. The Talmudic differential in capital liability contradicts the plain text of Bemidbar 15:15–16 with no textual authorization from the written Torah.

#### BAVA KAMMA 37B — THE OX-GORING DIFFERENTIAL

Babylonian Talmud, **Bava Kamma 37b**, contains the ruling: if the ox of an Israelite gores the ox of a Canaanite (gentile), there is no liability. If the ox of a Canaanite gores the ox of an Israelite, the gentile owner is fully liable. This is cited verbatim in multiple authoritative editions and acknowledged as doctrinally operative in traditional halakha.

*Shemot (Exodus) 22:21 — You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

**Covenant Indictment:** Unequal liability in property law between Israelites and resident aliens directly contradicts the Torah's repeated command not to oppress the stranger. The financial harm caused by unequal tort law is a form of oppression — precisely what the written Torah prohibits.

### **BAVA KAMMA 113A — PERMITTED DECEPTION OF A GENTILE**

Babylonian Talmud, **Bava Kamma 113a**, contains a discussion in which *Rav Ashi* rules that it is permitted to deceive a gentile customs collector. Scholarly analysis by Rabbi Dov Linzer of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (2016) confirms the passage and acknowledges that the broader discussion reveals a double standard — at a minimum in the area of financial dealings with non-Jews. Rabbi Akiva in the same passage objects to the deception, but on the grounds that it may cause a *hillul HaShem* (desecration of the Name) — not on the grounds of inherent wrongness to the gentile. The ethical critique of the gentile's welfare is largely absent from the Talmudic discussion.

*Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:11 — You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another.*

**Covenant Indictment:** The prohibition on deception in Vayikra 19:11 is written without a qualification of nationality or covenant status. The Torah does not say "do not lie to your fellow Israelite." The Hebrew *re'echa* (neighbor/fellow) was consistently interpreted in Torah context to include the *ger toshav* (resident stranger) — as Vayikra 19:33–34 in the same chapter makes explicit. The Talmudic permission to deceive gentiles in commercial dealings contradicts the plain text of the surrounding Torah passages.

### **SANHEDRIN 59A — A GENTILE WHO STUDIES TORAH DESERVES DEATH**

Babylonian Talmud, **Sanhedrin 59a**, contains the statement attributed to Rabbi Yochanan: "A gentile who studies Torah is liable to death." This passage is confirmed in the Soncino and ArtScroll editions and is referenced in multiple scholarly analyses. Some rabbinical authorities soften this ruling by applying it only to specific Torah sections not related to the Noahide laws, but the text as written does not contain that limitation.

*Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 56:6–7 — And the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh, to minister to him, to love the name of Yahweh, and to be his servants... their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*

**Covenant Indictment:** The Torah of **Yahweh** through the prophet **Yeshayahu (Isaiah)** explicitly invites foreigners to love the Name of **Yahweh** and to join themselves to His covenant. The Talmudic ruling that a gentile who studies the written Torah deserves death is a direct contradiction of the covenant's stated purpose in Yahweh's own prophetic word.

## YEVAMOT 61A — 'YOU ARE CALLED MEN'

Babylonian Talmud, **Yevamot 61a**, contains the exegetical argument: "Ye are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture; ye are men" (from Yechezkel/Ezekiel 34:31) — from which the Talmud derives that Israelites are called "men" (*adam*) but gentiles are not. On this basis, the Talmud rules that a priest who touches the corpse of a gentile does not incur ritual impurity, because the verse's definition of "men" applies only to Israel. This ruling is operative in traditional halakha.

**Covenant Context:** The Talmud's exegesis here is selective and decontextualized. The passage in **Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 34** is a covenant rebuke of Israel's leadership — the passage is not defining who qualifies as human. Using this verse to create a two-tier humanity contradicts the foundational covenant statement of Bereishit (Genesis) 1:27: "***So Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim he created him; male and female he created them.***" The image of Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) is not the exclusive property of Israel.

## THE ZOHAR — 'SOULS OF THE NATIONS'

The *Zohar* (13th-century kabbalistic text attributed to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai) contains multiple passages — cited by Pranaitis, Hoffman, and confirmed in standard Zohar editions — stating that the souls of non-Jews derive from the "unclean side" (*kelipah*) and that non-Jews are spiritually inferior by nature of their origin.

**Important Textual Note:** The Zohar is not part of the Talmud proper. It is a kabbalistic medieval text and is not universally accepted even within Orthodox Judaism. Nevertheless, it is included here because both source books cite it and because its theology has had documented influence on certain streams of Hasidic and ultra-Orthodox Judaism. The same covenant standard applies: this teaching contradicts the covenant statement of Bereishit (Genesis) 1:27 and the covenant universalism of the Tanakh.

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## PART IV: THE COVENANT STANDARD — THE TORAH SPEAKS

Before rendering any verdict, the covenant authority of **Yahweh (יהוה)** must be heard in its fullness. The Tanakh does not merely hint at a covenant for all nations — it declares one, repeatedly, from Bereishit to the final pages of the Trei Asar (Twelve Minor Prophets). What follows is the direct covenant testimony of the written Torah concerning non-Israelites.

### §6. THE TORAH'S COMMAND REGARDING THE STRANGER

REFERENCE	THE COVENANT COMMAND
Shemot (Exodus) 22:20	"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."
Shemot (Exodus) 23:9	"You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt."
Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:33–34	"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your Elohim."
Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:15–16	"One statute shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you... one law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger."
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:17–19	"For Yahweh your Elohim is the Elohim of gods and the Lord of lords... He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Love the stranger, therefore, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:17	"You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless."
Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 47:22–23	"You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the strangers who sojourn among you... They shall be to you as native-born children of Israel... they shall receive inheritance among the tribes of Israel."

### §7. THE COVENANT'S UNIVERSAL INTENT FROM THE BEGINNING

**The covenant of Yahweh was never intended as the exclusive property of a biological ethnic group.** The following covenant texts establish the universal scope:

*Bereishit (Genesis) 12:3 — "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*Bereishit (Genesis) 22:18 — "And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."*

*Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 49:6 — "It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

*Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 56:6–7 — "And the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh, to minister to him, to love the name of Yahweh, and to be his servants... these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer... for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."*

*Zechariah (Zekbariah) 8:22–23 — "Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Yahweh of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of Yahweh. In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that Elohim is with you.'"*

These are not marginal texts. They represent the overarching prophetic covenant trajectory of the entire Tanakh — a trajectory that runs directly counter to any reading of post-biblical rabbinic law that creates a permanent, legally codified two-tier humanity between Israel and the nations.

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## PART V: THE TALMUD'S CRITICAL DEPARTURE — THE REDEFINITION OF GER

One of the most consequential and least-discussed shifts in the transition from written Torah to Talmudic halakha is the **redefinition of the Hebrew word ger (גר)**.

### §8. WHAT GER MEANS IN THE WRITTEN TORAH

In the written Torah, the word *ger* (Strong's **H1616**) means: a sojourner, a resident alien, a foreign-born person living among Israelites. It is a sociological and legal category, not a religious one. The Torah commands Israel to love, protect, feed, and apply equal justice to the *ger* — the foreigner who has come to live among them. The reason given is always the same: "For you were strangers in the land of Egypt." It is the experience of vulnerability, not the act of conversion, that grounds the command.

### §9. WHAT GER BECOMES IN THE TALMUD

The Talmudic rabbis, writing after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) in a diaspora context, redefined *ger* to mean exclusively *ger tzedek* — a righteous proselyte, a full convert to Judaism. Under this redefinition:

TORAH (WRITTEN) MEANING	TALMUDIC (RABBINIC) REDEFINITION
Ger = resident foreigner (any non-Israelite living among Israel)	Ger = convert to Judaism only
Protection applies to any sojourner	Protection applies only after formal conversion process
One law for native and stranger — always	Non-converts fall under separate legal categories (Nokhri, Akum)
Love the stranger as yourself — based on shared human experience	Talmudic discussions restrict the love command to those within the covenant community

This redefinition is not trivial. It is the mechanism by which dozens of Torah commands about equal treatment of foreigners become inapplicable to actual foreigners. Yeshivat Har Etzion (a prominent Modern Orthodox academic institution) has published scholarly analysis acknowledging directly: "According to Halakha, the commandment to 'love the ger' is limited in its application to the ger as referred to in rabbinical literature, a *ger tzedek*." They then note that this represents "a contradiction

between the plain meaning of the verses and Halakha." This is an Orthodox institution acknowledging the departure.

## §10. THE NOAHIDE LAWS — THE TALMUD’S UNIVERSAL FRAMEWORK

The Talmud does contain a universalistic framework — the **Seven Noahide Laws** (*Sheva Mitzvot Benei Noach*), derived in **Sanhedrin 56a–60a**. These seven categories are:

LAW	CATEGORY	BIBLICAL ROOT
Establish courts of justice	Civil governance	Bereishit (Genesis) 9
No blasphemy against Yahweh	Covenant reverence	Shemot (Exodus) 22:27
No idolatry	Covenant exclusivity	Shemot (Exodus) 20:3
No sexual immorality	Covenant purity	Vayikra (Leviticus) 18
No murder	Covenant life	Bereishit (Genesis) 9:6
No theft or robbery	Covenant honesty	Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:11
No eating flesh torn from a living animal	Covenant compassion	Bereishit (Genesis) 9:4

**Covenant Assessment:** The Noahide framework acknowledges that non-Jews are moral agents under **Yahweh’s** authority and are capable of righteous standing. This is consistent with the Tanakh. However, it is a post-biblical rabbinic construction that has no explicit Torah textual basis as a unified "seven commandments" system — it is derived through exegesis. More significantly, the Noahide framework does not resolve the tension created by Talmudic passages that permit deception, unequal tort liability, and differential capital law regarding gentiles. A framework of seven universal laws cannot coexist consistently with legal rulings that create financial and legal disadvantage for the very people those laws are meant to protect.

## PART VI: FOUR SPHERES OF APPLICATION

### SPHERE 1: PERSONAL COVENANT CONDUCT

The Talmud's differential legal treatment of non-Jews creates a legal permission structure in which acts toward gentiles that would be prohibited toward Israelites are permitted or at minimum ambiguous. The written Torah does not create this permission structure. **Yahweh** commands love of neighbor as self and equal justice regardless of national origin. Any covenant follower who uses Talmudic rulings to justify unequal treatment of non-covenant people is placing rabbinic authority above written Torah authority — a violation of Devarim 4:2.

### SPHERE 2: COMMUNITY/CONGREGATION STANDARDS

Congregations and institutions that derive their behavioral standards from Talmudic halakha must acknowledge — honestly — the places where that halakha creates a legal two-tier system. The Talmud contains extraordinary wisdom, legal nuance, ethical debate, and prophetic commentary. It also contains passages that, taken as binding authority, contradict the written Torah's covenant standard for the stranger. **No congregation can claim to honor Yahweh while applying rulings that His own written word prohibits.**

### SPHERE 3: NATIONAL/CIVIC STANDARDS

Wherever Talmudic halakha has been given civic or semi-governmental standing — in Israeli religious law courts (*batei din*), in diaspora community governance, or in any national context — the Torah's equal justice standard must be the governing plumb line. The covenant vision of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:18–20** — "Justice, justice shall you pursue" — is not a two-tiered justice. It is not justice for Israel and a lesser justice for others.

### SPHERE 4: INTERNATIONAL COVENANT STANDARDS

The prophetic vision of the Tanakh is consistently universal: the nations will stream to the mountain of **Yahweh** (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 2:2–4). The mission of Israel in the Tanakh is not to maintain an exclusive covenant club — it is to be a *goy kadosh*, a holy nation, that serves as a covenant light to all peoples. Any post-biblical legal development that moves Israel further from the nations — by creating permanent legal disadvantage for non-Jews — moves in the opposite direction from the covenant's stated eschatological purpose.

## PART VII: THREE-RELIGION COVENANT AUDIT

The Talmud is not only a Jewish concern. Its influence — and the questions it raises — touches all three Abrahamic covenant communities.

COVENANT COMMUNITY	RELATIONSHIP TO THE TALMUD	WHERE IT ALIGNS WITH TORAH	WHERE IT DEPARTS FROM TORAH
Judaism (Traditional/Orthodox)	Talmud is authoritative; Oral Torah doctrine is foundational to all halakhic practice	Preserves the written Torah; maintains covenant identity; Noahide laws affirm universal moral accountability	Differential legal treatment of non-Jews; redefinition of 'ger' to exclude resident strangers; rulings that contradict Devarim 4:2 by adding to the written Torah
Christianity	Largely rejected the Talmud historically, but adopted Talmudic-era hermeneutics and often mirrors its in-group/out-group legal reasoning toward 'unbelievers'	Universal call to repentance; covenant love ethic drawn from Torah; preservation of many Tanakh texts	Replaced Torah authority with Church councils (identical structural error to Oral Torah); created its own two-tier ethics toward non-Christians; persecuted Jews using Talmudic misrepresentations
Islam	Explicitly rejects the Talmud; regards both Torah and the Quran as superseded by the Quran in their current form	Universal submission to one Creator; affirmation of prophets; justice emphasis; prohibition on usury	Hadith literature creates the same two-tier legal reasoning regarding non-Muslims; Sharia in some applications mirrors the differential justice the Talmud creates for non-Jews

**Covenant Observation:** All three communities have developed post-biblical legal structures that create differential treatment of outsiders — and all three rest those structures on the claim that they represent the divine will. The Tanakh, as the original written covenant, contains none of these three-tiered permission systems. The covenant of **Yahweh** is one law — for native and stranger alike.

## PART VIII: COVENANT VERDICT

### §II. WHAT THE TALMUD IS — ACCURATELY STATED

VERDICT	FINDING
What the Talmud Is	The Talmud is the largest, most sophisticated body of post-biblical Jewish legal reasoning and narrative commentary in history. It represents centuries of serious, earnest, and often brilliant engagement with Torah questions. It preserves enormous amounts of historical, ethical, and textual material that would otherwise be lost.
What the Talmud Is Not	The Talmud is not the written Torah. It is not the word of Yahweh. The Oral Torah doctrine — the claim that the Talmud represents a divine revelation given in parallel with the written Torah at Sinai — has no textual support in the Tanakh and directly contradicts the written Torah's prohibition on adding to the covenant word (Devarim 4:2).
On the Gentile Passages	The Talmud contains textually verified passages that create differential legal status between Jews and non-Jews — in capital law, civil damages, commercial dealings, and the definition of human status. These passages exist. They are not fabrications of antisemites. They are acknowledged by Orthodox scholars as genuine halakhic tensions. They contradict the written Torah's one-law standard.
On the Sources Used	Pranaitis and Hoffman are unreliable as sole or primary authorities. Pranaitis could not read Aramaic; Hoffman is a Holocaust denier. Both mixed real textual citations with fabrications and ideological framing. This study used only passages independently verifiable on Sefaria.org and in scholarly literature.
On the Talmud's Value	The Talmud contains genuine wisdom, ethical debate, and legal nuance. Its discussions of justice, charity, human dignity, and covenant life often reflect deep Torah values. Its problem is not that it is worthless — <u>its problem is that it has been placed above the authority that can alone correct it: the written Torah of Yahweh.</u>
On the Oral Torah Doctrine	The Oral Torah doctrine is a claim of authority. That claim cannot pass the covenant test of Devarim 4:2 and 12:32. Post-biblical rabbinic commentary is to be read as historical reference — not as binding authority alongside or above the written Torah.

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## COVENANT WITNESS

This study is submitted as a covenant witness before **Yahweh (יהוה)** and before the three covenant communities — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — that carry pieces of His written covenant word.

The Talmud is not the enemy of the Torah. It is the product of men who loved the Torah deeply and gave their lives to preserve it through exile, persecution, and diaspora. That love is real. That sacrifice is real. This witness does not dishonor it.

But love for the Torah is not the same as authority to replace it, redefine it, or add to it. The prophets of Israel — Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), Yeshayahu (Isaiah), Yechezkel (Ezekiel), Amos (Amos), Mikhah (Micah) — all called Israel back to the written word, not forward into an ever-expanding oral tradition. The prophets knew nothing of the Talmud. They knew everything about the cost of placing human authority above the word of Yahweh.

*Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:1–2 — "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live... You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim that I command you."*

*Mikhah (Micah) 6:8 — "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your Elohim?"*

What **Yahweh** requires of every human being — Israelite, gentile, male, female, born or sojourner — is the same: justice, covenant love, and humble obedience to His written word. Not a double standard. Not two legal systems. Not a hierarchy of human worth based on ethnic inheritance.

**This is the testimony of the written Torah. This is the covenant of Yahweh. It has not changed. It will not change. And it stands in judgment over every legal system — Talmudic, ecclesiastical, and hadith-based alike — that departs from it.**

## SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	TOPIC
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Bereishit (Genesis) 12:3	All families of the earth blessed through Avraham
Shemot (Exodus) 22:20	Do not wrong or oppress the stranger
Shemot (Exodus) 23:9	Do not oppress the stranger
Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:11	Prohibition on deception and lying
Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:33–34	Love the stranger as yourself
Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:15–16	One law for native and stranger alike
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:2	Do not add to the written word
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:17–19	Yahweh loves the stranger; love the stranger
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:32	Do not add or diminish from the covenant word
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:18–20	Justice, justice shall you pursue
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:17	Do not pervert justice for the sojourner
Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 8:8	The lying pen of scribes has made the Torah a lie
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 49:6	Light to the nations
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 56:6–7	Foreigners who love Yahweh's name will be accepted
Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 47:22–23	Strangers receive inheritance among Israel
Mikhah (Micah) 6:8	Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with Elohim

# SUPPLEMENTAL SECTION: WHO IS A HEBREW?

*The Root of the Name and Its Covenant Significance for This Study*

Before a study of the Talmud and its claim to represent the covenant of **Yahweh (יהוה)** can be properly assessed, a foundational question must be settled: **Who, exactly, is a Hebrew?** Not in the political sense. Not in the ethnic sense. In the covenant sense — which is the only sense that matters when the Tanakh is the standard. The answer to this question reshapes the entire framework within which the Talmud's authority claim must be evaluated.

## §A. THE HEBREW WORD IVRI — THE LINGUISTIC FOUNDATION

The English word **Hebrew** is derived from the Hebrew term **Ivri (עִבְרִי)** — Strong's **H5680**. This term comes from the three-letter Semitic root *ayin-bet-resh* (עִבְר) — Strong's **H5674** — which appears 559 times in the Tanakh. The lexical meaning of this root, confirmed across all major Hebrew lexicons, is:

LEXICON	DEFINITION OF AYIN-BET-RESH (עִבְר)
Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB)	To pass over, pass through, cross, pass on; of persons crossing a boundary, river, or border region
HALOT (Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament)	To cross over, to pass through; movement from one side to another; used of river crossings, territorial boundaries, and transitional action
Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon (Gesenius)	To pass over or through; transitum facere — 'to make a crossing'; figuratively used of the passing of decrees, time, and covenants
TWOT (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)	Primary meaning: physical crossing of a boundary, often a body of water; extended meaning: to go beyond a limit, to transgress or surpass

The noun form **Ivri (עִבְרִי)** therefore means literally: **"one who has crossed over," "one from the other side," or "one who passes through."** It is a relational, directional, and covenantal term before

it is an ethnic one. It describes not what a person is biologically — **but what a person has *done* and *where they have come from* in response to a divine call.**

## §B. THE FIRST HEBREW — AVRAM'S CROSSING

The first person in the entire Tanakh to be called a **Hebrew (Ivri)** is not Adam, not Noah, not Shem — it is **Avram (Abram)**, later renamed **Avraham (Abraham)** by **Yahweh** Himself.

*Bereishit (Genesis) 14:13 — "And a fugitive came and told Avram the Hebrew (ha-Ivri), who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite..."*

Why is he called **ha-Ivri** — the Hebrew, literally the Crosser-Over? Because in **Bereishit (Genesis) 12:1–4**, **Yahweh** commanded Avram: *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."* Avram crossed over the Euphrates River from Ur of the Chaldees, left Mesopotamia behind, and entered Canaan. He was not born a Hebrew. He became a Hebrew in the act of crossing over in response to the word of **Yahweh**.

This is the original covenant definition of the term. **A Hebrew is not primarily a member of an ethnic bloodline — a Hebrew is a person who has crossed over out of one world and into a covenant relationship with Yahweh.** The ethnic connection to Avraham's descendants came *afterward* — it is a covenant inheritance, not a biological prerequisite to the identity.

## §C. THE ANCESTOR EBER — THE GENERATIONAL LINE OF THE CROSSING

The term **Ivri** carries a second layer of meaning. It is also connected genealogically to the biblical figure **Eber (עֵבֶר)** — Strong's **H5677** — whose very name is built on the identical root **ayin-bet-resch (עֵבֶר)**. Eber appears in the genealogical record of

*Bereishit (Genesis) 10:21–25 — "To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born... Shem... Arpachshad... Shelah... Eber. And to Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided..."*

GENERATION	PERSON	COVENANT SIGNIFICANCE
Post-Flood Patriarch	Shem (שֵׁם)	Son of Noah; recipient of the covenant blessing of Yahweh (Bereishit 9:26)

GENERATION	PERSON	COVENANT SIGNIFICANCE
Third from Shem	Eber (עֵבֶר) / Heber	Name means 'the one from across / the crosser-over'; all Hebrews bear his name in their title
Fifth from Shem	Peleg (פֶּלֶג)	Name means 'division'; born in the generation when the nations were divided (Table of Nations, Bereishit 10)
Ninth from Shem / Fourth from Eber	Avram / Avraham (אַבְרָהָם)	First individual called ha-Ivri (the Hebrew) in the text; covenant initiated at his crossing

The name **Eber** preserves in the genealogical record the identity of people defined by crossing over. The ancient Semitic world understood that peoples were named by their defining characteristic or geographical origin. The descendants of Eber were, by ancestral memory, the people of the crossing — those whose patriarch's name itself carried the concept of *abar* (עָבַר), to pass through.

#### §D. WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THIS TALMUD STUDY

This is not a word study for its own sake. The meaning of **Ivri** (עִבְרִי) strikes at the heart of the Talmud's authority claim and the question of who the covenant belongs to.

#### 1. THE COVENANT IS DEFINED BY CROSSING — NOT BY BLOODLINE

If a Hebrew is fundamentally **one who has crossed over** in response to the call of **Yahweh**, then the category is definitionally open to any person who makes that crossing. This is precisely what the written Torah confirms in passage after passage concerning the **ger (stranger)** who dwells among Israel. The stranger who crosses over into covenant relationship with **Yahweh** and His people is — by the root definition of the word Hebrew itself — a crosser-over, an **Ivri**.

The Talmud's redefinition of **ger (גֵּר)** to mean only a formal convert to rabbinic Judaism — as examined in Part V of this study — now takes on additional weight. That redefinition does not merely narrow a legal category. It reverses the foundational covenant concept embedded in the very word **Ivri**. If being a Hebrew means being a crosser-over, then closing the crossing to all but those who pass through a rabbinic conversion process is a departure from the word's covenant meaning at its root.

## 2. THE TALMUD IS WRITTEN IN — BUT DOES NOT ALWAYS ALIGN WITH — HEBREW COVENANT IDENTITY

The Babylonian Talmud was composed largely in **Jewish Babylonian Aramaic** — **not in Hebrew**. This is not a minor point. It is composed in the language of the empire that destroyed the First Temple, carried Israel into exile, and represented in the prophetic covenant record the very world that Avraham had crossed *away from* when he became ha-Ivri. The Talmud was compiled in Babylon — the city and culture that the prophets of **Yahweh** consistently used as a symbol of human authority opposed to covenant authority.

*Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 51:6 — "Flee from the midst of Babylon; let every one save his life!"*

The Babylonian Talmud does not forfeit its value because of where it was compiled. But its geographic and linguistic origin is a covenant-historical signal worth noting: the most authoritative post-biblical legal document in rabbinic Judaism was completed in the very city the prophets called Israel to flee.

## 3. THE ROOT EXPOSES THE UNIVERSALISM HIDDEN IN THE WORD ITSELF

**Avraham** was not born a Hebrew. He was born a Chaldean from Ur. He became **ha-Ivri** the moment he crossed over. **Ruth the Moabite** crossed over into covenant relationship with **Yahweh** and with Israel:

*Rut (Ruth) 1:16 — "Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your Elohim my Elohim."*

**Rahab the Canaanite** of Yericho (Jericho) crossed over. **Yitro (Jethro) the Midianite** — father-in-law of Moshe and a priest of another people — acknowledged **Yahweh** and counseled Israel. None of these were born to the line of Avraham. All of them made the crossing. The covenant word **Ivri** contains within its root letters the covenant invitation that the Talmud's differential legal framework for non-Jews was designed — however unintentionally — to close.

## §E. COVENANT SUMMARY — THE NAME TESTIFIES AGAINST THE DEPARTURE

### COVENANT FINDING

The word Hebrew (Ivri) is built on the root ayin-bet-resh (עִבְרָה) — to cross over, to pass through. Avraham became ha-Ivri not by birth but by crossing over in obedience to Yahweh's call. The covenant identity of a Hebrew is therefore rooted in a covenantal act of passage — not in ethnic inheritance alone. Any legal system that permanently closes that crossing to non-Israelites

by creating irreversible two-tier status contradicts the covenant meaning encoded in the very name of the people it claims to represent.

KEY TERM	HEBREW	STRONG'S	ROOT MEANING	COVENANT SIGNIFICANCE
Hebrew / Ivri	עִבְרִי	H5680	One who has crossed over	Identity defined by covenant passage, not biological descent alone
Eber / Ever	עֵבֶר	H5677	The crosser-over	Ancestral bearer of the crossing identity; forefather of Avraham
Abar	עָבַר	H5674	To cross over, pass through, traverse	Root verb; 559 occurrences in Tanakh; foundation of the Hebrew identity term
Ger	גֵּר	H1616	Sojourner, resident alien, one who dwells among	Written Torah category that the Talmud redefined — but whose meaning is structurally parallel to Ivri: both involve a crossing into a new place of dwelling

***Bereishit (Genesis) 12:1 — "Now Yahweh said to Avram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'" — The first command that made a Hebrew. It was a command to cross over.***

The name of the covenant people is an open invitation. It always has been. The Talmud's authority structure has, in places, treated it as a closed gate. The written Torah — and the root letters of the word **Ivri** itself — testify otherwise.

## MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

Pearl River, Louisiana | Tuscola, Texas | Clyde, Texas

miqdashbethel@gmail.com | 985-250-9060

miqdashbethel.org

*"...one law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you."*

— **Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:16**