

# MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

Pearl River, Louisiana | miqdashbethel@gmail.com | 985-250-9060 | miqdashbethel.org

*Authority: The Tanakh — The Word of **Yahweh** Alone | Standard: Devarim 19:15 — Two or Three Witnesses*

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## THE COVENANT AND THE NAME

### WHY YAHWEH CHANGES NAMES — AND WHY WE CHANGE THEM WHEN WE FIND HIM

*A Covenant Study in Hebrew Lexical Etymology, Covenant Theology, and Historical Evidence*

*Including: The Complete Refutation of the 'Isis-Ra-El' Claim*

Three-Religion Standard: Judaism • Christianity • Islam

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## OPENING COVENANT STATEMENT

**Why does a person change their name when they find Yahweh?** This is not a peripheral question. It strikes at the center of what the covenant actually means — and what a name actually is in Hebrew thought. The question has been raised among seekers in every generation, and it demands a thorough answer grounded not in sentiment or tradition, but in the primary text of the Tanakh itself.

A second and related question has gained traction in our generation: Does the name *Yisra'el* (יִשְׂרָאֵל) encode the names of Egyptian deities — specifically Isis, Ra, and El? This claim, popular in certain Afrocentric and conspiratorial circles, alleges that the very name of the covenant people conceals a

pagan Egyptian foundation. This study will address that claim directly and decisively, using the Hebrew lexical record as the primary evidentiary standard.

This study is written under the evidentiary standard of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** — two or three witnesses — and every claim is corroborated from primary Tanakh text and recognized lexical scholarship: BDB (Brown-Driver-Briggs), HALOT (Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament), Gesenius, and extra-biblical archaeological evidence.

## PART I — SHEM: WHAT A NAME IS IN HEBREW THOUGHT

### SECTION I-A: THE HEBREW WORD FOR NAME — SHEM (שֵׁם)

Before any covenant name change can be understood, the Hebrew concept of a name must be established. In modern Western culture, a name is a label — a convenient identifier that distinguishes one person from another. It carries no inherent meaning about the person's nature or destiny. In Hebrew thought, this is categorically not the case.

HEBREW	STRONG'S	TRANSLITERATION	BDB/HALOT CORE MEANING	COVENANT SIGNIFICANCE
שֵׁם	H8034	<i>shem</i>	Name; reputation; memorial; identity; essence of being; character as publicly known	In the Tanakh, shem is not merely a label. It is the essential nature of a being — their character, reputation, authority, and purpose. Yahweh's Name (Shem) is His covenant identity in full. A human's shem is their covenant standing.
שָׁמַיִם	H8064	<i>shamayim</i>	Heavens; skies — possibly related to shem, 'the place where the Name dwells'	Some scholars note the structural relation between shem and shamayim — where Yahweh's Name resides

				is where His covenant reality is fully operative.
שָׁם	H8033	<i>sham</i>	There; in that place — the locative of shem	The Tanakh consistently locates Yahweh's covenant presence at the place where His Name is — 'the place where I cause My Name to dwell' (Devarim 12:11).

**The key lexical reality:** BDB (p. 1027) defines *shem* as "name; reputation; fame; glory" — and notes that in the Tanakh, a name is never merely a phonetic label but carries the full weight of identity, character, and standing before **Yahweh** and before the community. HALOT (Vol. 4, p. 1535) similarly defines *shem* as "name; reputation; person" — explicitly linking name to person. In Hebrew thought, to name something is to declare its nature. When **Yahweh** names Adam (Bereishit 2:19–20) and when Adam names the creatures, they are not affixing arbitrary sounds to arbitrary beings. They are declaring covenant reality.

*"Whatever the living creature called it, that was its name (shem)." — Bereishit (Genesis) 2:19*

This is why, throughout the Tanakh, a name change is never trivial. It is ontological — it declares a new reality about who the person is in the covenant order of **Yahweh**. A changed name is a changed *shem* — which is a changed identity, a changed covenant standing, and a changed purpose.

## SECTION I-B: THE TANAKH'S FOUNDATIONAL DECLARATION ABOUT THE NAME OF YAHWEH

*"Yahweh, the Elobim of your fathers — the Elobim of Avraham, the Elobim of Yitzchak, and the Elobim of Ya'akov — has sent me to you. This is My Name (shem) forever, and this is My memorial to all generations." — Shemot (Exodus) 3:15*

**Yahweh** declares His Name as His covenant memorial — His *shem* — to every generation. This Name is not merely a label. It is **Yahweh's** covenant identity, His relational standing with His people, His

authority over history. When **Yahweh** changes a human being's name, He is doing something analogous to what He declares of His own Name: He is re-establishing that person's covenant identity, their memorial, their standing in the covenant order.

The Hebrew word *shem* appears 864 times in the Tanakh (BDB, p. 1027). This frequency alone demonstrates that name — as identity, as covenant marker, as declaration of essence — is not peripheral to the Hebrew worldview. It is central to it.

## PART II — THE PATTERN OF COVENANT NAME CHANGES IN THE TANAKH

The Tanakh records seven major covenant name changes. These are not scattered coincidences. They form a pattern — **Yahweh's** consistent method of marking a new covenant identity, a new mission, and a new ontological reality in the life of the person He has called and transformed. The pattern appears first with Avram, continues through Ya'akov, and extends even to the renaming of places and nations.

OLD NAME	NEW NAME	INITIATED BY	TEXT	MEANING / SIGNIFICANCE	COVENANT MARKER
<b>Avram</b> (exalted father)	<b>Avraham</b> (father of a multitude)	<b>Yahweh</b>	<b>Bereishit 17:5</b>	The name change preceded the birth of Yitzchak — Yahweh declared the transformed identity before any visible evidence. The 'heh' (ה) added to both Avram and Sarai's names is the breath of the divine name (Yahweh begins with heh). New name = new covenant identity breathed into being.	Brit milah covenant; father of covenant nations

<b>Sarai</b> (my princess)	<b>Sarah</b> (princess of all)	<b>Yahweh</b>	<b>Bereishit 17:15</b>	Sarai's covenant name is universalized — no longer 'my' princess but princess to all nations. Her covenant role in the birth of the promised seed is declared in her new name before Yitzchak is conceived.	Mother of covenant nations; bearer of the promise
<b>Ya'akov</b> (supplanter; heel-catcher)	<b>Yisra'el</b> (he who strives with El)	<b>Messenger of Yahweh</b>	<b>Bereishit 32:28</b>	After a night of wrestling at the Jabbok. The wound (dislocated hip) and the transformation are inseparable. The name declared the new covenant identity of a man who would not let go of the covenant Messenger — even through the breaking. The former life of deception (Ya'akov) is superseded.	Patriarchal identity; name of the covenant nation
<b>Hoshea</b> (salvation)	<b>Yehoshua</b> (Yahweh is salvation)	<b>Moshe</b>	<b>Bamidbar 13:16</b>	Moshe adds the Yah-prefix to Hoshea's name before he leads the spies into Canaan. The new name explicitly incorporates the Name of Yahweh — declaring that the salvation to come is Yahweh's salvation, not merely human ability.	The Name of Yahweh embedded in the new name
<b>Gideon/Yerubba'al</b> (let)	<b>Yerubba'al</b>	<b>The people</b>	<b>Shoftim 6:32</b>	After Gideon demolished the Ba'al altar, the people gave him a name that	Covenant witness against false worship

Ba'al contend)				declared the contest between Ba'al and Yahweh. The new name was a covenant witness: Ba'al could not defend himself; Yahweh's servant had prevailed.	
<b>Tzidkiya hu</b> (Yahweh is righteousness)	<b>Tzidkiya hu</b>	<b>Nevuchadne tzar</b>	<b>2 Melachim 24:17</b>	A counter-pattern: when a pagan king changes a covenant person's name, it is an act of conquest and ownership — an attempt to erase covenant identity. Contrast with Yahweh's name changes, which are always acts of elevation and covenant renewal.	Warning: worldly name changes erase covenant identity
<b>Daniyel / Chananyah / Misha'el / Azaryah</b>	<b>Belteshazzar / Shadrach / Meshach / Abed-Ne go</b>	Babylonian court	<b>Daniyel 1:7</b>	The Babylonian renaming of the four covenant men is an explicit attempt to replace their Yahweh-centered identity with Babylonian deity names. Yet the Tanakh continues to call them by their Hebrew names — affirming that the covenant name given by Yahweh supersedes the name imposed by empire.	Covenant identity resists imperial erasure

## SECTION II-A: THE FIVE REASONS YAHWEH CHANGES A NAME IN THE TANAKH

From the evidentiary record above, five consistent reasons emerge for covenant name changes in the Tanakh. These are not abstract theological categories — they are drawn from the primary text and the pattern of the Tanakh's own witness.

### 1. DECLARATION OF NEW COVENANT IDENTITY

When **Yahweh** changes Avram to Avraham and Sarai to Sarah, He is declaring — before the visible evidence exists — the covenant identity that **Yahweh** has established. The name is the covenant declaration. To call Avraham by his new name is to participate in the covenant declaration that **Yahweh** has made. Every use of the new name is an act of covenant witness.

### 2. MARKING A COVENANT TRANSFORMATION THAT IS IRREVERSIBLE

Ya'akov's name change is given in the context of the most visceral transformation account in the Tanakh — a night of wrestling that leaves him permanently wounded. The wound and the name are inseparable. **Yahweh** does not change the name as a reward for spiritual achievement. He changes it as a covenant marker of an irreversible ontological shift. Ya'akov walked away as Yisra'el — permanently — and walked differently forever because of the wound. The new name declared what the transformation had made him.

### 3. EMBEDDING THE NAME OF YAHWEH INTO THE NAME OF THE CALLED PERSON

The addition of *Yah-* to Hoshea's name to produce Yehoshua is the clearest example of **Yahweh** embedding His own *shem* into the called person's name. The pattern appears across the Tanakh: names that incorporate the divine Name (Eliyahu, Yeshayahu, Yirmeyahu, Yechezkel, Nechemiah) are themselves covenant declarations — every time the name is spoken, it proclaims the reality of **Yahweh** in the life and mission of the bearer.

### 4. SEVERING THE OLD IDENTITY FROM THE NEW COVENANT LIFE

**Yahweh's** declaration to Avram — "*No longer shall your name be called Avram*" (Bereishit 17:5) — is a formal, covenant-legal severance. The former name is retired. It is not merely added to; it is superseded. This is the Hebrew equivalent of a covenant legal document. The old name represented the old life; the new name declares the covenant life now operative.

## 5. ESTABLISHING THE CALLED PERSON'S ROLE IN THE COVENANT HISTORY OF YAHWEH

Avraham is named 'father of a multitude' before the multitude exists — because **Yahweh** declares covenant reality before it is visible. The name functions as prophetic covenant declaration: this is who you are in **Yahweh's** purpose, before the evidence catches up with the declaration. This is *bara* — the exclusively divine act of creating from nothing — applied to personal identity.

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## PART III — WHY PEOPLE CHANGE THEIR NAMES WHEN THEY ENTER THE COVENANT OF YAHWEH

Given the Hebrew understanding of *shem* established above, the pattern of name changes in the Tanakh, and the five covenant reasons for those changes, the question becomes: why do people today — when they genuinely encounter **Yahweh** and enter His covenant — often feel moved to change or adopt a Hebrew name?

The answer has several dimensions, all grounded in the Tanakh's own pattern.

### DIMENSION I: THE COVENANT ENCOUNTER PRODUCES A NEW IDENTITY

When **Yahweh** encounters a person in covenant reality — whether through wrestling (Ya'akov), through fire (Yeshayahu), through the still small voice (Eliyahu), or through the Word of the Torah penetrating the heart (Yirmeyahu 31:33) — the person who emerges from that encounter is not the same person who entered it. **Yahweh** does not improve people. He transforms them — applying *baphak* (פָּקַד, H2015) — the radical overturn of the root nature — and installing a *lev chadash* (לֵב חָדָשׁ, new heart — Yechezkel 36:26).

When a new heart is installed, the old name — which represented the old identity, the old life before **Yahweh**, the old nature — no longer fits the person who has been transformed. This is not theological vanity or spiritual performance. It is the natural outworking of what has actually happened: the *shem* that carries the person's identity needs to reflect the person who now exists. When the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, it does not retain the name 'caterpillar.' The name follows the nature.

## DIMENSION 2: ADOPTING A HEBREW NAME IS AN ACT OF COVENANT ALIGNMENT

The Tanakh was given in Hebrew — the covenant language of **Yahweh's** revelation to His people. The names of the covenant people throughout the Tanakh are Hebrew names that carry covenant meaning. When a person enters the covenant of **Yahweh** and takes a Hebrew name, they are aligning themselves with the covenant reality that the Tanakh declares. They are not merely adopting a cultural affectation. They are declaring: *my identity is now defined by the covenant of Yahweh and by the language in which that covenant was first revealed.*

Rut (Ruth) the Moabite is the Tanakh's clearest example of this principle — though she did not change her name, she changed her covenant community, her covenant language, her covenant deity: *"Your people shall be my people and Yahweh shall be my Elohim."* The name change that accompanies covenant entry follows this same logic: it is the formal declaration, in the covenant language, of the new covenant reality.

## DIMENSION 3: THE NEW NAME IS A WITNESS TO THOSE AROUND THE COVENANT PERSON

Every time someone calls Avraham by his new name, they are declaring the covenant promise of **Yahweh** — father of a multitude. Every time someone called Yehoshua (formerly Hoshea) by his new name, they were declaring: *Yahweh is salvation.* The new name is not merely a personal marker. It is a covenant witness embedded in daily life. Every greeting, every introduction, every conversation is a testimony to what **Yahweh** has done.

When Elder Kepha Arcemont introduces himself as Kepha — the Aramaic-Hebrew form of Peter, the name Yeshua gave to Shim'on in the Tanakh record — he is bearing witness in every encounter to a covenant transformation: from Peter (Greek identity) to Kepha (covenant identity); from a Baptist-trained, SDA-influenced man to a 55-year covenant walker under the authority of the Tanakh alone.

## DIMENSION 4: THE NAME CHANGE MARKS A COVENANT LEGAL SEVERANCE FROM THE OLD LIFE

**Yahweh's** declaration to Avram — "*No longer shall your name be called Avram*" — is not merely a social announcement. It is a covenant legal document: the old identity is formally retired. For people entering the covenant of **Yahweh** today, the name change carries this same character. It marks the formal boundary between the life before the covenant and the life inside it. It declares to themselves and to those around them: I am not going back. The old name represents the old life. The new name represents the covenant reality that I have chosen and that **Yahweh** has confirmed in me.

## **DIMENSION 5: IT IS NOT REQUIRED — BUT IT IS UNDERSTOOD**

The Tanakh does not command all covenant people to change their names when they enter the covenant. Rut kept her Moabite name. **Moshe** kept his Egyptian name (meaning 'drawn out' — itself given by Pharaoh's daughter). Dawid kept the name given at birth. The name change is not a commandment. But it is a recognized, legitimate, and deeply meaningful response to a genuine covenant encounter — the response of a person who has experienced the *baphak* of **Yahweh** so profoundly that the old name simply no longer fits. The Tanakh pattern honors and records it. The covenant community recognizes it.

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## **PART IV — THE ISIS-RA-EL CLAIM: A COMPLETE LEXICAL AND HISTORICAL REFUTATION**

### **SECTION IV-A: STATING THE CLAIM**

A claim has circulated — particularly in Afrocentric and conspiratorial circles — that the Hebrew name *Yisra'el* (יִשְׂרָאֵל) is not a pure Hebrew name at all, but a compound of three Egyptian and Canaanite deity names: Isis (the Egyptian goddess), Ra (the Egyptian sun deity), and El (the Canaanite deity). The argument proceeds phonetically: the letters 'I-s' in Israel = Isis; the letters 'r-a' = Ra; and 'el' = El. Therefore, this argument claims, the covenant people of **Yahweh** are actually named after pagan gods.

This claim is built on a fundamental methodological error: it treats the *English transliteration* of a Hebrew word as if it were the word's etymological origin. It is not. Etymology must be determined

from the *source language* — in this case, Biblical Hebrew — not from the coincidental appearance of letters in a Roman-alphabet transliteration. The following analysis applies the Devarim 19:15 standard: multiple independent witnesses from lexical scholarship, the Tanakh's own text, and archaeological evidence.

## SECTION IV-B: THE FIVE FATAL PROBLEMS WITH THE ISIS-RA-EL CLAIM

### PROBLEM 1: THE CLAIM OPERATES ON ENGLISH TRANSLITERATION, NOT HEBREW TEXT

The Hebrew name is **יִשְׂרָאֵל** — Yisra'el. In Hebrew, it contains no letters that correspond to the name of Isis in Egyptian, nor to Ra, nor to El as a Canaanite deity separate from the Hebrew word for **El** (which simply means 'Mighty One' or 'Power' and appears throughout the Tanakh as an attribute and title of **Yahweh**). The appearance of the letters I-S-R-A-E-L in *English* is a consequence of the way English transliterates Hebrew — not a window into Hebrew etymology. The letters of the Hebrew word tell a completely different story, as the lexical analysis below demonstrates.

### PROBLEM 2: THE EGYPTIAN NAME 'ISIS' WAS NOT 'ISIS'

The Egyptian name rendered as 'Isis' in English was most likely pronounced '*Iset*' or '*Uset*' in ancient Egyptian — reconstructed from the hieroglyphic consonant cluster *ist* or *zst*. It bore no phonological resemblance to the beginning of the Hebrew word Yisra'el (which begins with the Hebrew letter *yod* — י — followed by *sin/shin* — ש — not an 'I' vowel that corresponds to any Egyptian divine name). The 'Isis' form is itself a Greek rendering of the Egyptian name, adopted in the Hellenistic period — centuries after the name Israel was already in use.

### PROBLEM 3: 'RA' WAS PROPERLY PRONOUNCED 'RE' — AND IS NOT PRESENT IN YISRA'EL

Egyptologists confirm that the Egyptian sun deity was more properly vocalized as *Re* (or *Rê*) rather than 'Ra.' More critically: the letters in **יִשְׂרָאֵל** that are transliterated as '-ra-' are the Hebrew consonants **resh** (ר) and **aleph** (א) — the aleph being the Hebrew glottal stop, not a vowel in the Egyptian sense. In the Tanakh's own etymology of the name (Bereishit 32:28), **Yahweh** provides the explicit

derivation: it comes from *sarita* — 'you have striven/struggled' — the verb **סָרַטָה** (H8280) — not from any Egyptian divine name.

#### PROBLEM 4: 'EL' IN YISRA'EL IS THE HEBREW WORD FOR 'MIGHTY ONE' — NOT AN INDEPENDENT CANAANITE DEITY

The Hebrew word **El** (**אֱל**, H410) is a common Semitic word meaning 'mighty one,' 'power,' 'god.' It is used throughout the Tanakh as a title and attribute of **Yahweh** Himself — **El Elyon** (Most High Mighty One), **El Shaddai** (Almighty Mighty One), **El Ro'i** (Mighty One Who Sees). The Tanakh's own text confirms this: in Bereishit 32:28, the name Yisra'el is explained as 'you have striven with **Elohim** (**אֱלֹהִים**) and with men.' The **El** in Yisra'el is the Hebrew word for **Yahweh** — not a reference to the separate Canaanite deity of that name. BDB (p. 42) and HALOT (Vol. 1, p. 49) confirm **El** as the common Semitic appellative for 'God/deity,' widely used as a component in Israelite theophoric names to refer to **Yahweh**: **Isra-el**, **Dani-el**, **Micha-el**, **Eliy-abu**, **Ezeki-el**.

#### PROBLEM 5: MIXING THREE DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS WITHOUT EVIDENCE

The 'Isis-Ra-El' claim requires combining elements from *three different* religious and linguistic systems — Egyptian mythology (Isis, Ra) and Canaanite religion (El as a separate deity) — into a single Hebrew name, without any textual, inscriptional, or archaeological evidence that any such combination was ever made or intended. Egyptologists confirm that Ra/Re and Isis belonged to different branches of Egyptian religious tradition. Neither was connected to the Semitic divine appellative **El**. To create 'Isis-Ra-El' requires ad hoc phonetic leaps across three separate religious systems with no historical bridging evidence.

### SECTION IV-C: THE AUTHORITATIVE HEBREW LEXICAL ETYMOLOGY OF YISRA'EL

HEBREW COMPONENT	STRONG'S	ROOT	BDB / HALOT DEFINITION	ROLE IN 'YISRA'EL'
י (yi-)	Prefix	<b>Verbal prefix</b>	Imperfect prefix (3rd person masculine singular) indicating ongoing/future	Marks the name as a verbal sentence: 'he who strives / he will strive / El strives (for him)'

			action: 'he who [verb]s' or 'he will [verb]'	
שָׂרָה / שָׂרָה (-śr-)	H8280 / H8323	<b>Shin-Resh</b> (ר-ש)	BDB p. 975: 'to persist, exert oneself, contend, persevere.' HALOT Vol. 4 p. 1354: 'to fight, to prevail, to persist with effort.' The verb appears in Bereishit 32:28 (sarita — you have striven) and Hoshea 12:4-5.	The verbal core of the name. Not from Isis, not from any Egyptian deity name. From the Hebrew root meaning to strive, contend, persist. The Tanakh gives its own explicit etymology in Bereishit 32:28.
אל (-El)	H410	<b>Aleph-Lamed</b> ד (ל-א)	BDB p. 42: 'God, mighty one, power.' HALOT Vol. 1 p. 49: 'God; divine being; mighty one.' The most basic Semitic appellative for the divine. Used throughout the Tanakh as a title of Yahweh.	The divine element of the name — referring to Yahweh, not to any Canaanite deity separate from Yahweh. Yisra'el = '[he who] strives with El/Yahweh.' The Tanakh confirms: 'for you have striven with Elohim and with men and have prevailed' (Bereishit 32:28).
<b>FULL NAME:</b> Yisra'el (ישָׂרָאֵל)	<b>Bereishit</b> <b>32:28</b>	<b>Complete Name</b>	<i>'He who strives with El' / 'El strives' / 'He who persists with Yahweh'</i>	<b>100% Hebrew etymology. 0% Egyptian deity content. The Tanakh provides its own explicit etymology in the text that records the name's bestowal. No external deity claim has any philological foundation.</b>

## SECTION IV-D: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WITNESS — THE MERNEPTAH STELE

The final witness against the 'Isis-Ra-El' claim comes from archaeology. The earliest non-biblical reference to Israel outside the Tanakh is the **Merneptah Stele** — a black granite monument commissioned by the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah, dated to approximately 1208–1205 BCE and discovered by British archaeologist Flinders Petrie in 1896 at Thebes. It is now housed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

On the Merneptah Stele, the name is written in Egyptian hieroglyphs as *y-s-r-i-□-r* — which Egyptologists and Semiticists agree is the Egyptian rendering of the Semitic/Hebrew name *Yisra'el*. The hieroglyphic determinative used for this name is a seated man, woman, and seated child — the sign for a *people* (not a city-state or territory). This confirms that Israel was already understood as a covenant people group — not a political construct — in Canaanite/Levantine context in the late 13th century BCE.

**Critically:** The Merneptah Stele's rendering of the name — as analyzed by Egyptologists at Tyndale House (Cambridge) and the Biblical Archaeology Society — follows the expected phonological pattern of a Northwest Semitic tribal name. It is consistent with the Hebrew *ysr'l*, not with any compound of Egyptian deity names. An Egyptian inscription naming a people after Egyptian gods would not use Northwest Semitic phonological structure. The Merneptah Stele is thus a three-thousand-year-old witness against the 'Isis-Ra-El' claim — carved by an Egyptian pharaoh who had every reason to know Egyptian divine names and who records Israel as a Semitic people name, not an Egyptian theological construct.

*"...Israel is laid waste, bare of seed..." — Merneptah Stele, Line 27 (c. 1208 BCE). The Egyptian hieroglyphs render the name as a Northwest Semitic form — consistent with Hebrew Yisra'el — not as an Egyptian theophoric compound.*

## SECTION IV-E: THE VERDICT UNDER DEVARIM 19:15

**WITNESS 1 — The Tanakh's Own Explicit Etymology:** Bereishit 32:28 provides **Yahweh's** own explanation of the name: 'you have striven (*sarita* — from the root **סָרַץ**) with **Elohim** and with men and have prevailed.' The name is a sentence in Hebrew: He who strives with El. This is the definitive, authoritative, text-internal etymology. No external claim can supersede it.

**WITNESS 2 — Hebrew Lexical Scholarship (BDB, HALOT, Gesenius):** All three primary lexicons confirm the Hebrew root *śr* (רָשָׁ) as the verbal core of Yisra'el, meaning to strive, persist, or prevail. HALOT Vol. 4 p. 1354; BDB p. 975; Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar §85. No lexical authority identifies any Egyptian deity element in the Hebrew name.

**WITNESS 3 — Archaeological Evidence (Merneptah Stele, c. 1208 BCE):** The oldest non-biblical reference to Israel renders the name in hieroglyphs consistent with a Northwest Semitic tribal name — not an Egyptian deity compound. The phonological pattern matches Hebrew *Yisra'el*, not any combination of Isis, Ra, and El.

**VERDICT: The 'Isis-Ra-El' claim fails on all three witnesses. It is built on English transliteration, not Hebrew etymology. It is refuted by the Tanakh's own text, by lexical scholarship, and by archaeological evidence. The matter is established under the standard of Devarim 19:15: the name Yisra'el is pure Hebrew — 'He who strives with Yahweh (El)' — given by the Messenger of Yahweh to a man who wrestled through the darkness and would not let go.**

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## **PART V — PERSONAL COVENANT TESTIMONY: FROM PETER TO KEPHA**

The Tanakh requires two or three witnesses for any matter to be established (Devarim 19:15). The following personal testimony is offered not as scripture, but as covenant evidence — a living witness that the pattern the Tanakh records in Avraham, Ya'akov, and Yehoshua is still operative in this generation.

I was born Peter Paul Arcemont — a name rooted in the Greek *Petros*, meaning rock. My mother taught me the Name of **Yahweh** in 1976. My father, SFC Terry Gilman Arcemont, was killed in action on the Imjin River in South Korea in 1967. I grew up a Gold Star son — carrying from childhood the weight of that loss. I was baptized as a Baptist at eleven years old. I moved into Seventh Day Adventism at fourteen — getting closer to the Sabbath, to the appointed times, to the Hebrew roots of the faith. At twenty-seven years old I made the covenant decision that I have not reversed in 55 years: to live according to the covenant of **Yahweh** and not go back.

I spent 23 years as ordained Deacon, Elder, and Judge within the House of Yahweh in Abilene, Texas, from 1987. When that institution collapsed around me, I fled with suitcases and a one-week-old baby and nothing else. I traveled to Yisra'el — to Tel Arad, in the Negev desert — where I stood at the site of the ancient excavated **House of Yahweh**, a real physical stone sanctuary with His Name inscribed on pottery shards found on site. I understood in that moment that **Yahweh** does not need a compound or a corporation. He needs covenant people — living tabernacles — who know His Name and carry His standard.

I went from Peter to Kepha (כִּפְתָּא) — the Aramaic-Hebrew form of the same name, the name Yeshua gave to Shim'on in Yochanan 1:42. The name Kepha in Aramaic and Hebrew means *rock* — the same meaning as Peter in Greek, but now in the covenant language. The change was not arbitrary. It was the formal declaration of a new covenant identity: from a Greek-named man inside a religious institution to a Hebrew-named covenant witness standing outside the gates of that compound, free.

That is *haphak* — the radical overturn. The wound (the loss of my family, my sons, my wife, 23 years of labor unrewarded) and the transformation (a new institution: Miqdash Bethel, a new covenant partnership with Asayah Y. Hawkins, a new commission to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously) are inseparable. I did not choose the name Kepha to be religious. I chose it because Peter no longer fit the man who emerged from the chrysalis.

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## PART VI — THREE-RELIGION AUDIT

This study reaches Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously under the Tanakh-only authority standard of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution.

### JUDAISM

**Where Judaism aligns with the covenant standard:** Judaism preserves the Tanakh's testimony on name and identity more faithfully than any other tradition. The Jewish understanding of *shem* as carrying the essential nature of a being is reflected throughout rabbinic literature (Midrash Rabbah on Bereishit 17:5; Rashi's commentary on the name Yisra'el in Bereishit 32:29). The practice of taking a Hebrew name at conversion (*kabbalat shem ivri*) reflects the Tanakh's own pattern. Jewish practice

also preserves the reality that **Yahweh's** Name (the Tetragrammaton, יהוה) is the most sacred covenant reality in the entire Tanakh — used 6,828 times, declared by **Yahweh** Himself as His eternal memorial (Shemot 3:15). The refusal to treat the Divine Name as merely a label parallels this study's central argument about *shem*.

**Where Talmudic tradition departs from the Tanakh:** The rabbinic elaboration of the prohibition against pronouncing the Divine Name — replacing **Yahweh** with *HaShem* ('The Name') in practice — paradoxically suppresses the very Name that **Yahweh** declares as His eternal memorial. Devarim 12:5 commands Israel to seek the place where **Yahweh** causes His Name to dwell — and to call on His Name. Suppressing the pronunciation of His Name is not commanded by the Tanakh. It is a rabbinic tradition not authorized by the Written Torah.

## CHRISTIANITY

**Where Christianity preserves the covenant pattern:** Christianity records the most explicit covenant name change in the post-Tanakh period: Shim'on becomes Kepha/Peter — given by Yeshua in Yochanan 1:42 and confirmed in Mattityahu 16:18. This follows the exact Tanakh pattern: new covenant identity, new mission, new *shem*. The Christian tradition also records the name change context of Sha'ul to Paul — though this is more complex, as Sha'ul/Paul was a bilingual Jew who used both names in different contexts (Acts 13:9), not a formal covenant renaming.

**Where Christianity departs from the covenant standard:** The widespread replacement of **Yahweh** with 'LORD' (all capitals) and 'God' in Christian translations of the Tanakh directly suppresses the covenant Name that this study has established as central to Hebrew identity and covenant reality. The Nicene tradition further removed the Hebrew linguistic framework from the covenant people's identity, replacing the Hebrew covenant name framework with Greek theological categories. The 'Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16) is referenced by Paul, but Christianity has largely severed the Hebrew identity claim — the *shem* — from its Hebrew root.

## ISLAM

**Where Islam preserves the covenant pattern:** The Quranic tradition confirms the name change of Ya'akov to Yisra'el (Quran 3:93 references 'what Israel made unlawful for himself'), affirming the Tanakh account. Islamic practice of adopting an Arabic name upon entering Islam reflects a similar

impulse to the Hebrew covenant name adoption — the acknowledgment that covenant entry produces a new identity that should be marked in the covenant community's language.

**Where Islam departs from the Tanakh:** The Quran does not preserve the full Hebrew lexical framework of *shem* and covenant name identity. The divine name framework of the Tanakh — **Yahweh** (יהוה), declared as His eternal memorial — is replaced in the Islamic tradition with *Allah*, which is the Arabic word for 'God' (cognate with Hebrew *El*) rather than the personal covenant Name of **Yahweh**. The distinction is significant: the Tanakh specifically establishes the Tetragrammaton as the Name that distinguishes **Yahweh** from all other divine appellatives (Shemot 3:15; Yechezkel 39:7).

## PART VII — FOUR-SPHERE COVENANT APPLICATION

SPHERE	COVENANT APPLICATION
<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>	The covenant individual who has genuinely encountered Yahweh and experienced the <i>lev chadash</i> (new heart) of Yechezkel 36:26 naturally seeks a <i>shem</i> that reflects their new covenant reality. A name change is not required but is a recognized and meaningful response to genuine transformation. It declares to the self and to the world: I am not the same person. The old life is behind me. My new <i>shem</i> bears witness to what Yahweh has done.
<b>FAMILY</b>	Covenant families transmit the Hebrew name identity to their children, embedding the covenant language into the next generation's <i>shem</i> . The naming of children in covenant families follows the Tanakh pattern: names that bear witness to the covenant reality of Yahweh — theophoric names (names incorporating <i>El</i> or <i>Yahweh</i> elements) or Hebrew names that carry covenant meaning. This is not cultural imperialism. It is covenant continuity.
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	The covenant community recognizes and honors the name changes of its members as covenant testimonies. When Elder Kepha Arcemont is addressed as Kepha rather than Peter, the entire community participates in declaring the covenant transformation that Yahweh has worked. Every use of the covenant name is a communal act of witness — declaring Yahweh's transformative reality in the life of His called servant.
<b>NATIONS</b>	The great covenant promise of the Tanakh is that all nations will come to know the Name of Yahweh: 'For then I will give to the peoples pure language (pure lips), so that they may all call upon the Name of Yahweh, to serve Him with one accord'

(Tzefanyah 3:9). The question of names and naming — who has the right to name covenant reality — is ultimately a question of which Name stands over all of history: the Name of Yahweh, declared as His eternal memorial (Shemot 3:15), or the names of Isis, Ra, El as pagan constructs. The Tanakh answers without ambiguity.
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## CLOSING COVENANT STATEMENT

This study has established three covenant realities from the Tanakh, from Hebrew lexical scholarship, and from archaeological evidence.

**First:** A name in the Hebrew covenant framework is not a label. It is a *shem* — the declared essential identity, covenant standing, and purpose of the bearer. When **Yahweh** changes a name, He is declaring a new covenant reality. When a covenant person today changes or adopts a Hebrew name upon entering the covenant of **Yahweh**, they are participating in the Tanakh's own pattern: declaring the new identity that **Yahweh** has established in them through the *baphak* of transformation.

**Second:** The name *Yisra'el* (יִשְׂרָאֵל) is a pure Hebrew name, meaning 'He who strives with El (**Yahweh**).' It was given by the Messenger of **Yahweh** to Ya'akov at the Jabbok ford after a night of covenant wrestling (Bereishit 32:28). The Tanakh provides its own explicit etymology. Hebrew lexical scholarship (BDB, HALOT, Gesenius) confirms a purely Semitic root. The Merneptah Stele (c. 1208 BCE) confirms the name in a Northwest Semitic linguistic form consistent with Hebrew — not with any Egyptian deity compound. The 'Isis-Ra-El' claim fails on every evidentiary standard.

**Third:** The pattern of covenant name changes in the Tanakh — from Avram to Avraham, from Sarai to Sarah, from Ya'akov to Yisra'el, from Hoshea to Yehoshua — is not religious theater. It is **Yahweh's** covenant method of marking the irreversibility of the transformation He has accomplished. The new name is the public, permanent declaration of the *lev chadash* (new heart). It is the *shem* of the butterfly — the creature that cannot go back to being a caterpillar.

*"Your name shall no longer be called Ya'akov, but Yisra'el, for you have striven with Elohim and with men, and have prevailed." — Bereishit (Genesis)*

*32:28*

*"This is My Name (shem) forever, and this is My memorial to all generations."  
— Shemot (Exodus) 3:15*

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*Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is NOT associated with the House of Yahweh out of Clyde/Abilene,  
Texas.*

Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution | Pearl River, Louisiana | miqdashbethel@gmail.com |  
985-250-9060

Authority: The Tanakh — The Word of **Yahweh** Alone | Devarim 19:15 — Two or Three Witnesses

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