

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

Reaching Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 149

קֹהֶלֶת (KOHELET / ECCLESIASTES) 12:13

SOF DAVAR — THE END OF THE MATTER: FEAR ELOHIM AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

A Covenant Deep Dive

Covenant Deep Dive — Lexical / Wisdom Literature / Three-Religion

Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution | June 2026

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REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Kohelet 12:13 The final verdict of Israel's Wisdom tradition: <i>yirat Elohim</i> (יִרְאַת אֱלֹהִים) and obedience to the mitzvot — the whole of the human calling.	Ecclesiastes 12:13 The conclusion the NT-framed tradition often bypasses — yet the Written Text stands: reverence and covenant obedience are the totality of human purpose.	Taqwa and 'Ibadah The Quran's central demand — <i>taqwa</i> (God-consciousness, Surah 2:2) and obedience to divine commands — mirrors the covenant formula of Kohelet 12:13 word for word in function.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution holds to the sole written authority of the Tanakh — the Hebrew scriptures as given: Torah (Instruction), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). No external commentary — rabbinic, church council, papal encyclical, or hadith — serves as doctrinal authority. All such sources are treated as historical reference only. The covenant words stand on their own witness: two or three witnesses (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 19:15). Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) belongs

to the Ketuvim (Writings) — the third division of the Tanakh. Its final verse is treated here as covenant law, not merely philosophical observation.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the Devarim 19:15 two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard throughout. Hebrew terms are presented in *bold italic* with Strong's numbers in bold and English meaning in parentheses at first occurrence and at every substantive use. Yahweh (יהוה) and Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold at every occurrence — never as 'God' or 'LORD.' All Tanakh books are cited by their Hebrew name followed by the English in parentheses. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

TORAH	NEV'TIM	KETUVIM	ENGLISH
Devarim	Yeshayahu • Yirmeyahu	Kohelet • Tehillim • Mishlei • Iyov	Deuteronomy • Isaiah • Jeremiah • Ecclesiastes • Psalms • Proverbs • Job

I. THE MASORETIC TEXT — KOHELET (ECCLESIASTES) 12:13

סוף דבר הכל נשמע את-האלהים ירא ואת-מצותיו שמור כִּי-זֶה כֹּל-הָאָדָם:

Sof davar hakkol nishma — et ha-Elohim yera ve-et mitzvotav shemor — ki-zeh kol ha-adam.

Translation (Miqdash Bethel rendering): The end of the matter — the whole of it has been heard: **Elohim** — fear Him. His commandments — keep them. For this is the whole of the human being.

Every major English translation adds the word '**duty**' to the final clause: 'for this is the whole **duty** of man.' The Hebrew has no such word. The text reads: *ki-zeh kol ha-adam (for this is the whole human being)*. The translators' insertion of 'duty' reduces an ontological declaration to a legal obligation. Kohelet is not saying: '**Reverence for Elohim and covenant obedience are your responsibility.**' He is saying: '**Reverence for Elohim and covenant obedience is what you are.**'

II. HEBREW LEXICAL FOUNDATION — SEVEN TERMS

HEBREW	TRANSLITERATION	STRONG'S	LEXICAL MEANING (BDB / HALOT)	COVENANT SIGNIFICANCE

סוף	<i>sof</i>	H5490	An end, termination, conclusion — from <i>cuwph</i> , to come to an end	A formal terminus. The Wisdom teacher signals everything said before leads to this single verdict.
דָּבָר	<i>davar</i>	H1697	Word, matter, thing — from <i>dabar</i> , to speak. Often the word of Yahweh	Carries covenantal weight. The teacher appropriates it for the covenant's final verdict.
נִשְׁמָע	<i>nishma</i>	H8085	Niphal perfect: has been heard — from <i>shama</i> , to hear with discernment	The Niphal passive lends authority: this is received, not merely proposed. Hearing obligates.
יָרָא	<i>yera</i>	H3372	Qal imperative: Fear! Revere! — from <i>yare</i> , to fear, to stand in awe	BDB: reverential awe, not terror. Direct covenant command. Same root: Devarim 10:12.
מִצְוֹתָיו	<i>mitzvotav</i>	H4687	His commandments — from <i>tzavah</i> H6680, to command, charge, appoint	An authoritative charge from a sovereign. The 3ms suffix anchors commands to Elohim personally.
שָׁמַר	<i>shemor</i>	H8104	Qal imperative: Keep! Guard! — from <i>shamar</i> , to hedge about, preserve	The covenant-keeper's verb. Shemot 20:6: 'those who love Me and keep My commandments.'
כָּל־הָאָדָם	<i>kol ha-adam</i>	H3605 / H120	The whole human being / all humanity — <i>kol</i> (all) + <i>ha-adam</i> (the human)	The most striking phrase. 'Duty' does not appear. This is the definition of what a human being is.

III. KOHELET — THE BOOK, THE MAN, THE CRISIS

A. WHO IS KOHELET?

Kobelet (קֹהֵלֵת) derives from the root *qabal* (H6951), meaning assembly or congregation — the one who assembles, who speaks before an assembly. Identified in 1:1 as 'the son of David, king in Jerusalem,' the Solomonic attribution is accepted by the Talmud, Targum, and Peshitta. Critical scholarship dates the linguistic content to approximately the 4th–3rd century BCE. The **Devarim 19:15** standard requires us to hold both the attribution and the linguistic evidence without resolving beyond what the text itself establishes.

B. THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEM KOHELET ADDRESSES

Kohelet is a crisis document. Its recurring refrain — *bevel bavalim* (H1892, vapor of vapors, all is vapor) — dismantles naive Deuteronomic reward theology from the inside. The wicked prosper (8:14). The righteous die like fools (9:2). Wisdom earns no permanent advantage (2:15–16). Under the sun — the purely human horizon — nothing holds. This is not nihilism. It is radical covenant honesty. The Teacher has surveyed the full scope of human experience — pleasure, wisdom, labor, wealth, legacy — and found that none of them constitutes a foundation.

C. THE EPILOGUE AS COVENANT VERDICT

Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 12:9–14 is structured as an epilogue added by a second voice — a student or editor — who summarizes the Teacher’s entire project. Verse 13 is not a casual opinion; it is the institutional verdict of the covenant tradition itself, ratifying everything the Teacher taught: **all roads lead here.** The verse carries the weight of twelve chapters of testimony. Pleasure: vapor. Wisdom: vapor. Labor: vapor. Legacy: vapor. Only that which is oriented toward **Elohim** and His commandments survives the *bevel* (vapor) test.

IV. YIRAT ELOHIM — THE TANAKH WITNESS CHAIN

Yirat Elohim (H3374 + H430, reverence / fear of Elohim) is not introduced in **Kohelet 12:13**. It is the spine of Wisdom literature throughout the Tanakh. Kohelet’s verdict simply names what was always true. The seven-witness chain below establishes the multi-source foundation under **Devarim 19:15**.

TEXT	HEBREW ROOT(S)	COVENANT CONTENT
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:12	<i>yare</i> H3372, <i>balakh</i> H1980, <i>abav</i> H157, <i>shamar</i> H8104	Yahweh asks four things of Israel: fear, walk in His ways, love, keep His commandments. Kohelet 12:13 is the distilled essence of this fourfold demand.
Mishlei (Proverbs) 1:7	<i>yirat Yahweh</i> H3374, <i>reshit</i> H7225, <i>chokmah</i> H2451	The fear of Yahweh is the beginning (reshit) of wisdom. Kohelet’s conclusion begins and ends in the same place: yirah is not a beginner’s posture to be left behind.
Mishlei (Proverbs) 9:10	<i>yirat Yahweh</i> , <i>da’at</i> H1847, <i>kedoshim</i> H6918	Wisdom and knowledge of the Holy are rooted in the same yirah. The Wisdom tradition speaks with internal consistency.
Iyov (Job) 28:28	<i>yirat Adonai hi chokmah</i> H2451, <i>sur me-ra bina</i> H998	Wisdom is defined as: yirat Adonai. Understanding is: turning from evil. Torah, Nevi’im, Ketuvim speak with one voice.

Tehillim (Psalms) 111:10	<i>reshit chokmah yirat Yahweh</i>	The identical formula to Mishlei 1:7 — the two-witness minimum of Devarim 19:15 met within the Ketuvim alone.
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 33:6	<i>yirat Yahweh hi otzaro H214</i>	Yahweh declares that the fear of Yahweh is His treasure — the supreme currency of covenant relationship.
Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 32:40	<i>yirah otam, lo yasuru mimeni</i>	The everlasting covenant: 'I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.' Fear is both commanded and given.

V. SOF DAVAR — FIVE COVENANT DECLARATIONS

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	EXPLANATION
1	The Verdict Is Universal	Kohelet does not say 'duty of the Israelite' or 'the religious man.' Ha-adam — the human being — encompasses every person in every era in every nation. The covenant standard is creaturely, not tribal.
2	Reverence Comes First	Yirat Elohim precedes mitzvot in the verse's structure. The commandments flow from a prior orientation of the heart. The Tanakh consistently presents yirah as the interior condition from which covenant obedience springs.
3	Commandment-Keeping Is Non-Optional	Shemor — the Qal imperative of shamar — is a direct command. The mitzvot are not suggestions. Where tradition has detached 'spiritual experience' from covenant obedience, Kohelet 12:13 refuses the separation.
4	Everything Else Has Already Been Weighed	Kohelet 12:13 carries the weight of twelve chapters of testimony against pleasure, wisdom, labor, wealth, and legacy — all found to be vapor. Only that which is oriented toward Elohim and His commandments survives the hevel test.
5	The Judgment Follows	Verse 14 is inseparable from verse 13: 'For Elohim will bring every work into judgment — every hidden thing, whether good or evil.' Covenant accountability is the necessary completion of covenant obedience.

VI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — KOHELET 12:13 AT THE PLUMB LINE

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Reverence / Fear of the Creator	Yirat Shamayim (fear of Heaven) — the foundational rabbinic ethical concept. The Encyclopedia Judaica identifies yirat Elohim as 'that which God primarily desires of man' (Devarim 10:12).	The NT preserves yirah language in Greek phobos (G5401). However, systematic theology has increasingly replaced covenant yirah with abstract 'grace,' separating interior orientation from covenant obedience. Kohelet 12:13 refuses this separation.	Taqwa (تقوى) — Islamic God-consciousness — appears over 100 times in the Quran. Ibn Abbas defined the muttaqin as 'believers who avoid shirk with Allah and who work in His obedience.' Taqwa is functionally identical to yirat Elohim.
Keeping the Commandments	Shemirat hamitzvot is the central obligation of covenant life. Kohelet 12:13 is cited in rabbinic sources to demonstrate that all 613 are implied in a single verse.	The NT trajectory has largely displaced 'keeping commandments' with 'faith.' However, Kohelet's text predates Paul by centuries and makes no such distinction. The Written Tanakh governs: shemor mitzvotav stands.	'Ibadah (عبادة) — worship and obedience — is the Islamic term for commanded service to Allah. Surah 51:56: 'I created jinn and humanity only to worship Me.' An exact parallel to kol ha-adam.
Universal Human Application	Ha-adam in Kohelet appears 49 times — consistently universal. The Wisdom tradition is the most universalist current in the Tanakh. The 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia identifies Kohelet's universalism as a distinctive theological signature.	Christian tradition reads Ecclesiastes universally but tends to complete the verse 'through Christ.' The Tanakh text carries no such qualification. The Written Text governs: the application is universal as written.	The Islamic concept of fitra — the natural disposition toward Allah built into every human being — corresponds structurally to kol ha-adam. Kohelet 12:13 names the honored form: yirah and obedience.
The Judgment That Follows	Kohelet 12:14 corresponds to the Tanakh's consistent	Christian eschatology affirms the judgment of verse 14. The challenge	The Quran's Yawm al-Qiyamah and hisab (accounting of deeds)

	theme of divine accountability (Devarim 32:35; Tehillim 94:2; Amos 3:2). Rabbinic tradition connects this to Yom HaDin.	is applying verse 13 (commandment-keeping) with the same force as verse 14 (judgment).	maps precisely onto Kohelet 12:14. Al-Baqarah 2:281: 'Fear a Day when you shall be brought back to Allah.' The structural parallel is exact.
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VII. FOUR-SPHERE COVENANT APPLICATION

SPHERE	COVENANT APPLICATION
PERSONAL	Every individual human being — regardless of nation, ethnicity, or tradition — is measured by one standard: is the fear of Elohim the orientation of the heart? Are His commandments being kept? These are not denominational questions. They are the constitutive questions of what it means to be human.
COMMUNAL	Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is built on this single premise: that covenant community exists to embody and transmit the fear of Elohim and the keeping of His commandments — not as a Jewish sect, not as a Christian denomination, not as an Islamic school, but as the covenant institution that Kohelet 12:13 describes.
NATIONAL	Nations are composed of human beings under the same ha-adam obligation. The covenant standard of Kohelet 12:13 — not realpolitik, not majority preference, not ideological framework — is the measure by which national governance is assessed.
PROPHETIC	In the eschatological framework of the Tanakh (Yeshayahu 2:2–4; Mikha 4:1–5; Yirmeyahu 31:31–33), the nations stream to the mountain of Yahweh not to receive a new religion but to learn His covenant ways — which is Kohelet 12:13 on a national scale.

VIII. COVENANT WITNESS TO CURRENT EVENTS

THE NOISE OF MANY BOOKS — KOHELET (ECCLESIASTES) 12:12

The verse immediately before the covenant verdict reads: **'Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.'** Kohelet wrote this before the internet, before AI, before 24-hour media saturation. In 2026, billions of words are generated daily — by algorithms, by institutions, by political actors, by religious systems. Yet the Teacher's verdict cuts through all of it in seventeen Hebrew words: *et*

ha-Elohim yera ve-et mitzvotav shemor (fear Elohim and keep His commandments). This institution exists inside that noise — and its entire purpose is to name the signal: the written covenant of Yahweh as given, applied to every nation, every human being, now.

THE CRISIS OF FOUNDATION

Kohelet's *bevel* (vapor) diagnosis — **all is vapor** — is more legible in 2026 than at any prior moment in recorded history. Religious hierarchies have abused their congregants, governments have betrayed their citizens, economic systems have enriched the few. The Teacher anticipated every one of these failures. His answer has not changed: **the only non-vapor thing is the fear of Elohim and the keeping of His commandments.**

THE COVENANT'S ADDRESS TO ALL THREE TRADITIONS

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each claim Kohelet 12:13 in some measure — yet each has supplemented it with structures the Written Text does not authorize. Rabbinic tradition supplements *yirat Elohim* (fear of Elohim) with the authority of the Oral Torah. Christianity supplements *shemirat hamitzvot* (keeping of the commandments) with Christological substitution. Islam supplements both with prophetic hadith. **Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution removes all supplements and returns to the text as written: fear Elohim. Keep His commandments. This is the whole human being.**

IX. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR COVENANT STUDY

#	DISCUSSION QUESTION
1	The Hebrew text does not say 'duty of man' — it says ' <u>the whole human being.</u> ' What is the difference between a legal obligation and an ontological definition? How does this change the way you understand Kohelet 12:13?
2	Kohelet 12:12 warns against the endless production of books. This library is at Document 149. How does an institution engaged in extensive document production honor Kohelet's warning? What is the difference between Kohelet's 'many books' and the covenant witness library?
3	Yirat Elohim appears across Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim as a single consistent covenant orientation. Yet all three major religious traditions have found ways to supplement, relocate, or reinterpret it. Identify the specific supplement each tradition uses and test it against the Written Text.
4	Kohelet 12:13 is addressed to ha-adam — all humanity. Yet the Book of Kohelet never uses the Tetragrammaton (יהוה) — only Elohim. Why is this significant for the three-religion outreach framework? What does the absence of the personal Name in Kohelet reveal about its intended audience?
5	Kohelet 12:14 — the judgment of every hidden thing — is the covenant seal on verse 13. Is there a difference between keeping commandments because one fears punishment and keeping them because one reverences Elohim? What does the Tanakh say about this distinction?

X. SCRIPTURE INDEX

TEXT	USE IN THIS DOCUMENT
Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 12:13	Primary text — full lexical study
Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 12:12	Context: the warning against endless books
Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 12:14	Covenant seal — divine judgment as completion of verse 13
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:12	Four-fold covenant demand — foundational parallel
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15	Two-or-three witness evidentiary standard — governing rule
Mishlei (Proverbs) 1:7	Reshit chokmah yirat Yahweh — Witness 1 for yirat Elohim chain
Mishlei (Proverbs) 9:10	Witness 2 for yirat Elohim chain
Iyov (Job) 28:28	Yirat Adonai hi chokmah — Witness 3
Tehillim (Psalms) 111:10	Reshit chokmah yirat Yahweh — Ketuvim corroboration
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 33:6	Yirat Yahweh as His treasure — prophetic corroboration
Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 32:40	Everlasting covenant — fear planted in the heart
Shemot (Exodus) 20:6	Shomrei mitzvotav — those who keep His commandments — Sinai
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 2:2–4	Nations streaming to the Torah — eschatological application

סוף דבר הכל נשמע את-האלהים ירא ואת-מצותיו שמור פי-זה פלי-האדם:

*Sof davar hakkol nishma — et ha-Elohim yera ve-et mitzvotav shemor — ki-zeb kol ha-adam.
(The end of the matter, all has been heard — fear Elohim and keep His commandments — for this is the whole human being.)*

The end of the matter — the whole of it has been heard: Fear Elohim. Keep His commandments. For this is the whole human being.

— *Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 12:13*

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