

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT ASSEMBLY

Pearl River, Louisiana · miqdashbethel@gmail.com

WITNESSES TO THE WOUND

A Covenant Investigation into the Exploitation of the Zamar Carriers

100 Years of the Music Business on Trial

Report No. 22 of an Ongoing Series

SAMMY DAVIS JR.

1925 – 1990

Mr. Show Business — The Full Account

Performed at three years old before he could consent — filled Las Vegas showrooms while entering through the kitchen and sleeping in segregated boarding houses — special contract clauses required just to stay in his own hotel — disinvented from Kennedy's inauguration after delaying his wedding at the campaign's request — earned \$50 million across a career; died \$15 million in debt — IRS confiscating all income while he lay dying — his widow ended her days in poverty in Pennsylvania

NOTE: This report applies the Devarim 19:15 full-truth bilateral standard. The racial wound and industry exploitation are documented in full. The self-inflicted dimensions of the financial destruction are also fully entered. The covenant does not simplify complicated men. It holds the full account.

March 2026 · Kepha Arcemont, Elder and Founder

SECTION ONE — THE GIFT: WHO YAHWEH MADE HIM

Biography: Born in Harlem, Raised on Stage, Denied a Childhood

Samuel George Davis Jr. was born December 8, 1925, in Harlem, New York City — to Sammy Davis Sr. and Elvera Sanchez, both vaudeville dancers. His parents separated when he was three years old. His father, not wanting to lose custody, took him on the road. Will Mastin, his godfather, was already performing with his father. The three of them became the Will Mastin Trio. **Sammy Davis Jr. was three years old when his professional career began.** He did not choose it. He was not asked. He was placed on a stage and he performed, and the gift was immediately apparent to everyone who saw him.

At age seven he appeared in his first film, *Rufus Jones for President* (1933). He received no formal education — his father occasionally hired tutors on the road, inconsistently. What he received instead was the most comprehensive apprenticeship in American performance that any child could have received: vaudeville, tap dancing, singing, comedy, impressions, drums, trumpet, piano, vibraphone, acting. He learned tap from the legendary Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson. He absorbed everything the American entertainment tradition had to offer and made it his own. By the time he was a teenager, he was already one of the most complete performers alive.

In 1943, at eighteen, he was drafted into the United States Army. What the stage had protected him from, the Army provided without mercy: his nose was broken multiple times by white soldiers from the South. He was subjected to sustained racist violence. He later said: *"Overnight the world looked different. I could see the protection I'd gotten all my life from my father and Will. I appreciated their loving hope that I'd never need to know about prejudice and hate, but they were wrong."* He was eventually reassigned to Special Services and performed for the troops — including the soldiers who had beaten him. He was discharged in 1945.

He returned to the Will Mastin Trio. In March 1951, the Trio opened for Janis Paige at Ciro's in Los Angeles. The celebrity-filled audience responded so enthusiastically that Paige insisted the billing be flipped — Sammy Davis Jr. headlining over the act he had opened for. **Within a year he was one of the most sought-after performers in America.** Frank Sinatra, who had first encountered the young Davis in 1940, became his lifelong advocate and friend. The Rat Pack years followed: *Ocean's 11*, the Sands Hotel, the Copa Room, Broadway in *Mr. Wonderful* (1956) and *Golden Boy* (1964). He was, by any measure, the most complete entertainer of his generation: singer, dancer, actor, comedian, impressionist, multi-instrumentalist. He earned an estimated \$50 million across his career. He died \$15 million in debt, with IRS agents confiscating his income as he lay dying of throat cancer.

◆ *I am a blues-rock vocalist and guitarist who has carried the zamar since age fourteen. Sammy Davis Jr. carried it since age three. He did not have the childhood to negotiate what the industry would do with his gift. He was on the road with his father and Will Mastin before he could read. The formation that should have given him the tools to protect himself — education, independent*

legal counsel, financial literacy, the simple knowledge of what he was worth and how to hold it — was replaced by the road. The road gave him everything the stage needed. It gave him nothing the business required.

Born	December 8, 1925 — Harlem, New York City
Career began	Age 3, vaudeville with father Sammy Davis Sr. and godfather Will Mastin
Film debut	Age 7 — Rufus Jones for President (1933)
Education	Virtually none — occasional road tutors; the stage was his entire formation
Military	1943–45 — sustained racist violence from Southern soldiers; nose broken multiple times
Peak career	Rat Pack 1959–64; Mr. Wonderful (Broadway 1956); Golden Boy (Broadway 1964); The Candy Man #1 (1972)
Las Vegas	Headliner since 1946; entered through kitchens; slept in segregated West Side boarding houses until special contract clauses negotiated access
Lifetime earnings	Estimated \$50 million across career
Debt at death	\$15 million total; \$7 million to IRS (\$5.2M plus penalties and interest)
Final days	IRS confiscating all performance income while he lay dying; utilities at risk of being cut off
Death	May 16, 1990 — throat cancer — Beverly Hills — age 64
Widow	Altovise Davis: liable for IRS debt; forced to auction possessions; ended days in poverty in Pennsylvania

SECTION TWO — THE WOUND: THE FULL ACCOUNT

The Racial Wound, the Industry Wound, and the Self-Inflicted Wound


This report applies the covenant’s full-truth bilateral standard. The racial wound inflicted on Sammy Davis Jr. by Jim Crow America is documented and indicted. The industry’s exploitation of a child who was placed on stage before he could consent is documented and indicted. The financial management failures — the gambling, the spending, the unreported income, the bad advisors — are also documented honestly.

The Torah does not permit a selective account. All three dimensions are in the record.

The Racial Wound — The Kitchen Entrance and the Contract Clause

When the Will Mastin Trio first performed in Las Vegas in 1946, the Strip had a precise and brutal social architecture: Black entertainers filled the showrooms, generated the revenue, and built the reputations of the hotels that employed them. Then they left through the kitchen, ate where they were permitted, and slept in the segregated West Side boarding houses miles from the neon they had lit. The hotels they filled would not house them. The casinos whose profits they generated would not admit them as guests.

This continued until individual artists, one negotiation at a time, began extracting covenant conditions from the contracts that should never have required extracting. In January 1954, the Will Mastin Trio featuring Sammy Davis Jr. signed a contract with the Last Frontier that included specific clauses guaranteeing Davis and his entourage the best suites in the hotel and full access to all facilities. This is documented as likely **the first such contract in Las Vegas history** — the first time a Black entertainer had negotiated equal access as a contractual right rather than a privilege to be granted or denied.

 **COVENANT DOCUMENTATION:** *Sammy Davis Jr. was required to negotiate equal human dignity into his employment contract as a specific clause. The right to sleep in the hotel where he was the headline act — the right to eat in its restaurants, to walk through its lobby, to use its pool — was not assumed. It was bargained for. This is the racial wound expressed in legal form: that what is owed to every human being by the covenant standard required a lawyer and a contract clause to obtain in Las Vegas in 1954.*

The indignity had specific physical dimensions. Earlier, Davis had gone to a movie theater in Las Vegas and been punched by a security guard for not sitting in the segregated section. He had been turned away from the Copacabana in New York with Frank Sinatra because of his skin color — Sinatra heard about it and insisted Davis return the following night alone to be let in. In Miami Beach after performing, he was required to return to his segregated accommodations immediately after the show — he could not linger where he had just performed. **He filled the rooms. He entered through the kitchen. The covenant names this.**

The Kennedy Inauguration — Loyalty Unreturned

Among the most specifically documented injustices in Davis's career is the Kennedy inaugural betrayal. Davis had been a dedicated supporter of John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign. He was also, at that time, engaged to May Britt, a white Swedish actress — an interracial relationship that was illegal in approximately half the United States and deeply controversial in the political climate of 1960. The Kennedy campaign communicated to Davis that his interracial marriage, scheduled for October 1960, would be politically damaging in the weeks before the November election. Davis delayed the wedding at the campaign's request. He wrote later: *"What*

could I say to May? 'We're postponing our marriage because it's so repulsive to some people that they won't want to vote for Kennedy.'" He delayed it anyway. He continued to campaign for Kennedy.

Kennedy won the election. Frank Sinatra coordinated the inaugural gala. **Sammy Davis Jr. was not invited.** The man who had postponed his wedding at the campaign's explicit request, who had campaigned hard for the candidate, who was one of the most famous entertainers in America, was disinvited from the inaugural celebration — because his marriage to a white woman remained a political liability.

Davis married May Britt five days after the election, as he had promised. His reward for the loyalty he had demonstrated to a political candidate who had asked him to compromise his personal life was exclusion from the moment he had helped create.

The covenant standard for loyalty returned with betrayal is found throughout the Tanakh. The name for it is ingratitude. The record is entered.

The Financial Destruction — The Bilateral Account

Sammy Davis Jr. earned an estimated \$50 million across his career. He died \$15 million in debt, of which \$7 million was owed to the IRS. The author Matt Birkbeck, in *Deconstructing Sammy* (2008), documented that this was at one point *"the largest single open case of an individual taxpayer debt in the nation."* His estate was declared insolvent. His home was sold. His possessions were auctioned. His widow was forced to sell his memorabilia, his awards, his Andy Warhol painting, his jewelry. She ended her days in poverty.

The covenant bilateral standard requires entering both the industry's role and Davis's own role in this destruction honestly.

What the industry and the system did: Davis entered the industry at age three, with no financial education, no legal counsel of his own, no protection from the business structures that surrounded him. He was taught to perform. He was not taught to manage what the performance produced. He had multiple financial advisors and managers over the decades, several of whom mishandled his affairs, gave bad counsel, or exploited his trust. The racial system that had required him to negotiate his own human dignity into contracts also meant he navigated a business world in which the standard protections available to white artists were not automatically available to him. The IRS was confiscating all of his performance income — every dollar he earned from shows, tours, and Las Vegas appearances went directly to the debt — while he was actively working to repay it in his final years.

What Davis himself contributed to the destruction: The research across multiple independent sources documents chronic gambling losses, extravagant personal spending that continued even as the debt mounted, and income that was not reported to tax authorities. Davis said it himself: *"I make a lot of money and I spend a lot of money."* He was a degenerate gambler by multiple documented accounts. He continued spending when the money was gone. He gave generously to everyone who asked — a generosity that was real and documented, rooted in his own impoverished childhood, but one that the finances could not sustain. **The covenant does not exempt the generous man from the consequences of financial faithlessness. Mishlei's wisdom on wealth applies regardless of how charitably the money was spent.**

The bilateral account holds both. The industry that provided no financial education to a child performer. The racial system that added friction to every business negotiation he made. The advisors who mishandled his affairs. **And:** the gambling, the spending, the unreported income, the choices that compounded every external wound into a \$15 million debt. The Torah holds the full account because the full account is the only honest account.

The Final Days — Dying While the IRS Collected

In August 1989, Davis lost his ability to taste food and felt a tickle in his throat. It was throat cancer — the disease that would take the voice of one of the greatest vocal performers in American history. He chose chemotherapy and radiation over a laryngectomy because he wanted to keep his voice. The cancer returned. His larynx was eventually removed. He died on May 16, 1990, at his Beverly Hills home. While he lay dying, the IRS was confiscating his performance income. Every dollar from every show went directly to the debt. His widow Altovise, who had co-signed their tax returns, was liable for the full balance. An inside source reported that she prayed every day that the utilities would remain on until he died. **The most celebrated all-around entertainer in America, dying of throat cancer in Beverly Hills, with his wife praying the electricity wouldn't be cut off.** The lights on the Las Vegas Strip were dimmed for ten minutes in his honor two days after he died. His widow ended her days in poverty in Pennsylvania. The estate took until 1997 to settle its IRS debt.

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

Corroboration of the Record

WITNESS One: *Wikipedia (Sammy Davis Jr. article): confirms career began at age 3; confirms military service and racial violence; confirms the segregation Davis faced in Las Vegas and the special contract conditions required for equal access; confirms Kennedy inauguration exclusion; confirms death from throat cancer May 16, 1990; confirms estate valued at \$4 million with \$5.2 million IRS debt (\$7 million with penalties); confirms Altovise made liable through joint tax returns; confirms Beverly Hills home and possessions auctioned.*

WITNESS Two: *NPR Talk of the Nation interview with Matt Birkbeck, author of Deconstructing Sammy (2008): confirms Davis 'made \$50 million singing, dancing and cavorting with the Rat Pack but died impoverished and in debt to the IRS'; confirms debt of \$15 million at death, \$7 million to IRS; confirms Altovise ended up living in poverty in Pennsylvania; confirms IRS debt was 'the largest single open case of an individual taxpayer debt in the nation'; confirms all royalties from film, TV, records paid directly to IRS; confirms estate declared insolvent; confirms Altovise settled IRS debt in 1997.*

WITNESS Three: *UNLV Oral History Research Center (Integrating Las Vegas) / Soul of America (Las Vegas integration history): confirms Black entertainers entered and exited through kitchens and could not stay in the hotels where they performed; confirms Davis and Will Mastin Trio were among the first Black performing artists to headline the Strip in 1944; confirms January 1954 Last Frontier contract as the first documented contract*

giving a Black entertainer complimentary room, access to casino, and full hotel facilities on the Strip. Corroborated by SammyDavisJr.Info biographical record of the specific 1954 contract conditions. Also: John Isaac Jones eyewitness account of Davis's final days (confirmed IRS confiscating all income; utilities potentially at risk of being cut off; wife praying every day).

SECTION FOUR — THE COVENANT ANALYSIS

The Torah Charges — Applied to Sammy Davis Jr.: Both Accounts

Charge One: The Child on the Stage — Vayikra 19:14

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

— Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:14

Sammy Davis Jr. was three years old when he was placed on a stage. He could not consent. He could not evaluate the terms of his participation in the industry. He could not understand what it meant to be a professional performer with no legal protection, no financial education, no independent counsel, no childhood outside of the industry's demands. **The stumbling block placed before the blind applies with its fullest force to the child performer who enters the industry before they have the capacity to see the ground they are standing on.** This is not a charge against his father or Will Mastin, who loved him and protected him from racism as best they could. It is a charge against an industry that received a child's gift and gave him no tools to protect what that gift would produce. ***I am Yahweh.*** Yahweh watched the three-year-old on the stage. The witnessing is permanent.

Charge Two: The Racial Contract Clause — Shemot 23:9

"You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."

— Shemot (Exodus) 23:9

In 1954, Sammy Davis Jr. required a specific contract clause to stay in the hotel where he was the headline act. The right to sleep in his own bed, eat in his own hotel's restaurant, walk through his own lobby — these required negotiation and documentation. **This is the racial system's covenant violation stated in its most precise legal form.** The Torah's prohibition on oppressing the sojourner — the one who is present but not fully at home, who must navigate a social structure that treats their presence as conditional — applies to every Black entertainer who entered through the kitchen of the hotel that bore their name on the marquee. Davis knew the heart of the sojourner. He had lived it since birth. The industry that required him to negotiate his own

human dignity into a contract made him a sojourner in the house where he was the master of the stage. The covenant names it.

Charge Three: Loyalty Unreturned — Mishlei 17:17

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

— Mishlei (Proverbs) 17:17

The Kennedy inauguration betrayal is the covenant's indictment of political loyalty that extracts service and returns exclusion. Davis delayed his wedding. He campaigned. He gave his reputation and his platform. The campaign took what he offered and then, when it was no longer convenient, disinvited him from the moment of victory. **Mishlei's standard for covenant friendship — love at all times, especially in adversity — is the standard by which the Kennedy campaign's treatment of Davis is measured.** The campaign loved him when it needed him. It did not love him when the love became politically costly. The record is entered.

Charge Four: The Wealth That Did Not Remain — Kohelet 5:10-11

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?"

— Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 5:10-11

Kohelet's meditation on wealth that cannot be held is not a condemnation of Sammy Davis Jr. It is a covenant description of the pattern documented in his financial life. The goods increased — \$50 million across a career. Those who ate them increased — the gamblers, the spenders, the advisors, the IRS, the creditors, the generous impulses that could not be sustained. **The covenant bilateral standard requires naming this as directly as it names the racial wound and the industry exploitation.** The Torah's wisdom literature exists precisely to warn against the pattern Kohelet names. Davis did not receive that formation as a child. The industry gave him the stage. No one gave him Kohelet. The wound has multiple authors. All of them are in the record.

Charge Five: False Weights in the Racial System — Vayikra 19:35-36

"You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am Yahweh your Elohim."

— Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:35-36

A system that pays a Black entertainer the same as or less than a white entertainer for the same commercial service, while requiring additional contract negotiations for the same human accommodations, operates on false weights. **The Las Vegas segregation system that Davis navigated was not merely morally wrong. It was a covenant violation against just measures.** The man who fills the room deserves the room. The

man whose voice generates the revenue deserves equal access to the building that houses it. The Torah's standard for just weights applies to every discriminatory commercial transaction in which Black artists were required to accept less because the system weighted their humanity differently from their commercial value. ***I am Yahweh.*** The witnessing is permanent.

SECTION FIVE — THE LIVING WITNESS: KEPHA ARCEMONT, 2026

A Blues Guitarist Reads the Record

The Candy Man. Number one on the pop charts in 1972. One of the most recognizable songs in American pop music. Sammy Davis Jr.'s biggest commercial single. He reportedly hated it — found it trivial, commercial, beneath what he was capable of. He sang it anyway, because the industry required it, and because the man who enters through the kitchen and sleeps in the boarding house and negotiates his own human dignity into contracts does not always have the luxury of singing only what the covenant calls him to sing. He sang it. It paid. It did not pay enough to prevent what followed.

◆ *I am Kepha Arcemont. I am the Elder and founder of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Assembly and a recording artist who has played music since age fourteen. I have been in rooms — venues, booking offices, recording studios — where the implicit weight given to my presence was not equal to the commercial value I brought. Not the same as Jim Crow Las Vegas. Not the kitchen entrance. But the same directional logic: the one who carries the gift is valued for the gift and less valued for the one carrying it. Sammy Davis Jr. carried more gift than any single human being has a right to expect from one body. Dancer, singer, actor, comedian, impressionist, multi-instrumentalist. He gave it all to the stage from the time he could walk. The stage took all of it. The industry that housed the stage gave him no education in how to hold what the stage produced. The racial system that surrounded the industry gave him a contract clause instead of a room. He did the rest himself, in both directions.*

His widow ended her days in poverty in Pennsylvania. The man who lit up the Las Vegas Strip for forty years, whose name is on a street and a showroom in the city he helped build, left his wife with nothing but a tax debt and a room in the Poconos.

Altovise Davis received the IRS bills while Sammy received the posthumous Grammy. The Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award came in 2001, eleven years after his death. His widow died in 2009, her estate's main asset being the right to his creative works. The covenant sees the full account. The Grammy does not close it.

SECTION SIX — THE COVENANT VERDICT

Yahweh's Record on Sammy Davis Jr. — Both Sides of the Ledger

The covenant verdict in this report holds three charges against external forces and one honest account of the internal wound. All four are non-canceling. All four are in the permanent record.

COVENANT CHARGE ONE: Sammy Davis Jr. was placed on a stage at age three, entering an industry before he had the capacity to consent, with no financial education, no independent legal counsel, and no formation outside the performance tradition. Vayikra 19:14 — stumbling block before the blind. The charge is entered against every industry structure that receives a child's gift and provides no tools to protect what that gift will produce.

COVENANT CHARGE TWO: For years, Sammy Davis Jr. was required to enter through the kitchen of the hotel where he headlined, sleep in segregated boarding houses, and negotiate equal human dignity into his employment contracts as specific clauses. In 1960, he delayed his interracial wedding at a presidential campaign's request and was then disinvited from the inaugural gala. Shemot 23:9 — oppression of the sojourner. Vayikra 19:35-36 — false weights in the racial contract. The judgment is entered.

COVENANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT — BILATERAL: Sammy Davis Jr. earned an estimated \$50 million and died \$15 million in debt. The financial destruction had multiple causes: industry mismanagement, racial system friction, bad advisors, AND chronic gambling, extravagant spending, and unreported income. Kohelet 5:10-11 — the wealth that cannot be held. The covenant enters the full account honestly. The racial wound does not cancel the self-inflicted wound. The self-inflicted wound does not cancel the racial wound. Both are in the record.

COVENANT CHARGE THREE — THE WIDOW: Altovise Davis, who co-signed tax returns she may not have fully understood, inherited \$15 million in debt and ended her days in poverty in Pennsylvania. The estate that should have honored a lifetime of covenant service instead became a liability that consumed her final years. Bemidbar 27:8-9 — the covenant obligation to pass inheritance to rightful heirs without delay and without

seizure. The IRS settlement was reached in 1997, seven years after his death. His widow died in 2009. The accounting is entered.

"Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is Elohim in his holy habitation. Elohim settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land."

— Tehillim (Psalms) 68:5-6

Father of the fatherless. Sammy Davis Jr. lost his mother at three. He was raised on the road by his father and godfather. He was formed by the stage and by two men who loved him and could not give him what they could not give him. ***Protector of widows.*** Altovise Davis, poverty in Pennsylvania, the utilities possibly at risk, praying for her husband to survive one more day. ***Yahweh witnessed the Harlem birth and the Beverly Hills death and the Pennsylvania poverty. The covenant does not require commercial success for its accounting to be complete. It requires honest witness.*** The witness is entered. The record is complete. ***Selah.***

SERIES NOTES

Extended series continuing. Report No. 22 applies the bilateral covenant standard to a case in which racial exploitation, industry exploitation, and self-inflicted financial destruction operate simultaneously. The full account is the only honest account.

Selah.

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