

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A COVENANT WITNESS TO THE NATIONS

DOC 70

WAR IS DEVELOPMENT IN REVERSE:

**A COVENANT ECONOMIC WITNESS TO THE POOR, THE STRUGGLING,
AND THE NATIONS BEARING THE WEIGHT OF THE IRAN/ISRAEL/USA WAR**

Issued by: Kepha Arcemont, Elder and Founder | May 5, 2026

Authority: The Tanakh — The Word of **Yahweh** Alone

Evidentiary Standard: Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 — Two or Three Witnesses

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YIRMEYAHU (JEREMIAH) 22:16

"He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know Me? says Yahweh."

— *The standard of covenant knowledge: justice for the poor*

MISHLEI (PROVERBS) 14:31

"Whoever oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors Him."

— *The economic posture of nations is a theological statement*

INTRODUCTION: THE WEIGHT THAT FALLS DOWNWARD

When nations go to war, the accounting is never shared equally. The generals do not stand in the food stamp line. The architects of conflict do not choose between gasoline and groceries. The cost of war

— in every generation, in every nation, on every continent — falls with crushing disproportionate weight on those who were already struggling before the first missile was launched.

This covenant witness stands at the intersection of two urgent realities. The first is the condition of those already on the economic margin in 2026 — in the United States of America, across the Global South, and among the most vulnerable nations on earth. The second is what the Iran/Israel/USA war, launched in early 2026, is now doing to that already-fragile foundation. **Yahweh** has spoken with unmistakable clarity on both realities, and this document brings His standard to bear upon both.

This study draws on four categories of witness in accordance with the Devarim 19:15 evidentiary standard: (1) verified economic data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Energy Agency, and U.S. federal poverty guidelines; (2) on-the-ground reporting from Al Jazeera, the World Economic Forum, the World Bank Commodity Markets Outlook (April 28, 2026), AAA, and The Hill; (3) direct generational testimony — the Generation Lab State of Young People survey (April 26–29, 2026, n=1,002, ages 18–34), which establishes what the next generation is actually experiencing; and (4) the authoritative covenant standard of the Tanakh — the Word of **Yahweh** alone.

This document is transmitted to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously. All three traditions claim fealty to the God who created the poor in His image and who will hold the nations accountable for how they treated them. That accountability has now arrived at the Strait of Hormuz.

PART I: WHERE WE STAND — THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE BEFORE THE WAR

I-A. THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: POVERTY AT A NEAR-RECORD LOW — AND WHAT THAT MEANS

To hear the headline numbers, the United States appears to be doing well by historical measures. The official poverty rate in 2024 stood at 10.6 percent — approximately **35.9 million people** — the second-lowest recorded since measurement began in 1959. GDP per capita reached \$70,140 in the third quarter of 2025, rising 1.8 percent year over year (USA Facts, 2026 State of the Union Report).

But the headline conceals the structural fractures beneath it. The 2026 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) — the government's own baseline — stands at **\$15,960 for a single individual** and **\$33,000 for a family of four** (U.S. HHS, Federal Register, January 15, 2026). These thresholds reflect only an 2.6

percent adjustment for inflation and represent a measure developed in the 1960s — based on a minimum food diet multiplied by three. They do not account for contemporary housing costs, healthcare, transportation, or childcare.

Consider what \$33,000 a year actually means for a family of four in 2026. That is \$2,750 per month — before any tax burden. Median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the United States now exceeds \$1,600 per month in most markets. Gasoline, groceries, utilities, and basic medical expenses consume the remainder and frequently exceed it. The family officially above the poverty line is often one emergency away from the family below it.

Key U.S. Economic Vulnerability Indicators — May 2026

INDICATOR	DATA POINT / SOURCE
U.S. Poverty Rate (2024)	10.6% — 35.9 million people (USA Facts, 2026)
FPL: Single Individual (2026)	\$15,960/year (\$1,330/month) — U.S. HHS
FPL: Family of Four (2026)	\$33,000/year (\$2,750/month) — U.S. HHS
Homelessness	More people experiencing homelessness than ever recorded in U.S. history (USA Facts, 2026)
Enhanced ACA Premium Tax Credits	Expired January 1, 2026 — premium costs rising sharply for lower-income households (HHS/Federal Register)
U.S. Gas Prices (May 5, 2026)	\$4.45/gallon — AAA; gasoline component of March 2026 CPI up 18.9% month-over-month (BLS/The Hill)
U.S. Inflation — March 2026	3.3% — up 0.9 percentage points from February; gasoline reverses three prior months of year-over-year declines (BLS)
Young Adults (18–24): Economy Rating	84% rate conditions "bad" or "terrible" (55% bad, 29% terrible); only 2% say "excellent" (Generation Lab, April 26–29, 2026)
Young Adults (25–29): Economy Rating	81% rate conditions "bad" or "terrible" (52% bad, ~29% terrible); only 1% say "excellent" (Generation Lab, April 26–29, 2026)
Homelessness	More people experiencing homelessness than ever recorded in U.S. history (USA Facts, 2026)

Enhanced ACA Premium Tax Credits	Expired January 1, 2026 — premium costs rising sharply for lower-income households (HHS/Federal Register)
Mortgage holders at risk	Up to 53% of UK mortgage holders face payment increases; U.S. parallel: Federal Reserve rate cut delays (GB News/UNDP)

The picture that emerges is of a nation where GDP per capita looks strong in aggregate, but where **tens of millions of people carry no meaningful margin** — no savings buffer, no discretionary income, and no insulation from the kind of commodity shock that a war in the Persian Gulf delivers instantly and regressively.

I-A(2). THE VOICE OF THE NEXT GENERATION: WHAT YOUNG AMERICANS ARE EXPERIENCING

Numbers from official poverty measures describe a baseline. But the lived experience of those on the economic margin speaks with a different kind of authority. A Generation Lab survey conducted **April 26–29, 2026** — days before this document was written — surveyed 1,002 Americans ages 18 to 34 on the state of the economy (margin of error ± 3.1 percentage points). The results constitute a fourth witness, and they are stark.

More than 8 in 10 young Americans ages 18–29 rate the U.S. economy as either bad or terrible. Among respondents ages 18–24 (n=546): 55 percent said the economy is bad, 29 percent said terrible — a combined 84 percent negative rating. Among respondents ages 25–29 (n=266): 52 percent said bad, approximately 29 percent said terrible — 81 percent combined. Only 2 percent of the younger cohort and 1 percent of the older cohort described the economy as excellent.

These are not the responses of ideological cynics. These are the responses of a generation entering adulthood into a **\$4.45 per gallon gasoline environment**, a housing market where ownership is inaccessible to a majority of those under 30, a healthcare system where enhanced ACA subsidies just expired at year-end 2025, and now a war-driven energy and food inflation shock arriving on top of all of it.

When asked whom they blame for the state of the economy, young Americans ages 18–24 pointed most to the current presidential administration (more than 4 in 10) and **corporate greed and large companies (one-third)**. Among ages 25–29, the administration and corporate greed each drew one-third of the blame. Congressional leadership of either party received single-digit blame from both cohorts. The Federal Reserve was cited by only 2 percent of the youngest group. The Generation Lab survey was published at generationlab.org/state-of-young-people, April 2026.

The covenant significance of this data is direct: the next generation — whom every tradition charges the elder to protect and prepare — is experiencing the economy as broken. They are the *dal* (H1800) of this generation — the economically reduced, the thinned-out ones — in real time. The war at the Strait of Hormuz has not arrived into a prosperous generation that can absorb the blow. It has arrived into a generation **already standing at the edge**.

I-B. THE WORLD AT LARGE: 32 MILLION ON THE EDGE

Before the Iran war began, the UNDP had already documented that the global development progress achieved in the wake of COVID-19 was fragile. Debt burdens in the Global South were at historic highs. Foreign aid flows from wealthier nations were contracting. The structural resilience required to absorb an energy and food shock simply did not exist across large portions of Africa, South Asia, and the Pacific.

The UNDP has now projected that the Iran/Israel/USA war, as of early May 2026, will push more than 32 million additional people into poverty globally, with the following regional distribution of the most severe impact:

REGION / NATION	PROJECTED IMPACT	PRIMARY SHOCK VECTOR
Iran	4 million newly impoverished (UNDP)	Infrastructure destruction, food inflation at 105%, currency collapse, rial at historic lows
Sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia)	Extreme fertilizer shortages, acute food insecurity, rising debt	Fertilizer supply chain severed; reliance on Gulf urea and ammonia exports (The Guardian)
Asia-Pacific (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan)	8.8 million at risk (UNDP Asia Report)	Over 50% of Bangladesh's fertilizer supply from Gulf; energy price caps and rationing imposed
India	2.5 million newly impoverished (UNDP)	Heavy reliance on Middle Eastern crude; inflation feeding through to wheat and food staples
Iraq, Jordan, Egypt	Severe economic crises	Loss of regional investment; rising energy import costs; limited policy buffers

Small Island Developing States	Particularly exposed	Total reliance on imported food and fuel; no domestic alternatives
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These numbers are not abstractions. They represent human beings — predominantly women, children, and subsistence farmers — whose margin between eating and not eating was already razor thin before the first strike. The war has now **seized that margin**

PART II: THE STRAIT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

II-A. THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ — A COVENANT CHOKEPOINT

The Strait of Hormuz — a narrow passage between Iran and Oman at the mouth of the Persian Gulf — has become the single most consequential geographic point on earth in 2026. Through this waterway, in ordinary times, pass **more than 20 million barrels of oil per day** — approximately one-fifth of global petroleum consumption and one-quarter of all oil traded by sea (Al Jazeera, March 10, 2026; EIA). Since the opening strikes on Iran, marine traffic through the Strait has nearly ground to a halt. Attacks on vessels and interference with navigation equipment have pushed most operators to anchor their ships rather than risk the crossing.

Gavekal Research estimated that Gulf exporters could reroute at most an additional 3.5 million barrels per day through alternative pipelines — leaving the world facing a sudden supply shortfall of approximately **15 million barrels per day**. The International Energy Agency has characterized this as the *"greatest global energy security challenge in history"* (Wikipedia, Economic Impact of 2026 Iran War).

On March 31, 2026, U.S. gas prices hit \$4 per gallon — a 30 percent surge since the war began. By May 5, 2026, prices had climbed further to **\$4.45 per gallon** per AAA — with Iran's renewed Strait restrictions prompting fresh spikes after President Trump announced a U.S. military escort operation that drew immediate Iranian military retaliation (The Hill, May 5, 2026). Brent crude oil, which averaged \$69 per barrel in 2025, is now forecast to average **\$86 per barrel in 2026**, with scenarios projecting up to \$115 per barrel if shipping disruptions extend through year-end (World Bank, Commodity Markets Outlook, April 28, 2026). These are not speculative projections — they are the documented trajectory.

II-B. THE CASCADE: ENERGY → FERTILIZER → FOOD

The Strait of Hormuz is not merely an oil passage. It is also the primary route for the world's fertilizer supply. Through it moves a third of global seaborne fertilizer — urea, ammonia, sulfur, and phosphates — the raw inputs on which global agriculture depends. The war has not only raised the cost of driving to work; it has raised the cost of growing food.

The World Bank's April 2026 analysis finds that fertilizer prices are projected to rise **31 percent in 2026**, driven by a **60 percent jump in urea prices**. Fertilizer affordability has fallen to its worst level since 2022. The consequences follow a predictable biological and economic timeline: rising fertilizer costs reduce application, reduced application reduces crop yields, reduced yields raise food prices, and rising food prices — arriving weeks or months after the initial supply shock — hit the poor first and hardest.

The World Food Programme has warned that if the conflict proves prolonged, these pressures could push **up to 45 million more people into acute food insecurity** in 2026 alone (World Bank, April 28, 2026). Iran itself has seen food inflation surge to **105 percent**: bread and cereals up 140 percent; red meat and poultry up 135 percent; oils and fats up 219 percent.

II-C. THE WAVE STRUCTURE OF THE ECONOMIC SHOCK

World Bank Chief Economist Indermit Gill has described the war's economic mechanism with precision: *"The war is hitting the global economy in cumulative waves: first through higher energy prices, then higher food prices, and finally, higher inflation, which will push up interest rates and make debt even more expensive."* He concluded: *"The poorest people, who spend the highest share of their income on food and fuels, will be hit the hardest... war is development in reverse."* (World Bank, April 28, 2026)

That phrase — *war is development in reverse* — is not merely an economist's observation. It is a covenant statement. It describes exactly what the Tanakh calls the outcome of a nation that abandons *tzedakah* (righteousness/justice) and *mishpat* (judgment/equitable governance). When leadership pursues power at the expense of the vulnerable, the structure of society begins to reverse — and the reversal is felt first, longest, and deepest by those at the bottom.

ECONOMIC WAVE	DOCUMENTED IMPACT (MAY 2026)
Wave 1: Energy Prices	Brent crude up 50%+ from year start; U.S. gas at \$4/gallon (30% surge); Strait of Hormuz functionally closed to normal traffic
Wave 2: Fertilizer / Food	Fertilizer up 31% projected (urea +60%); food inflation 105% in Iran; FAO warns 20% average fertilizer price increase in H1 2026

Wave 3: Inflation / Interest Rates	Global inflation in developing economies projected at 5.1% (up 1 full point since January); central bank rate cut expectations shelved across Chile, Poland, UK, U.S.
Wave 4: Poverty / Hunger	32+ million projected into poverty (UNDP); up to 45 million into acute food insecurity (WFP); K-shaped inequality deepening
Wave 5: Recession / Debt	Global growth revised down 0.4 pts; 70% of commodity importers face weaker growth; UK recession risk rising; stagflation fears global

PART III: WHAT YAHWEH SAYS ABOUT THE POOR

III-A. THE HEBREW FOUNDATION: FOUR WORDS FOR THE VULNERABLE

Yahweh does not speak about poverty in abstractions. The Tanakh uses at least four distinct Hebrew terms to describe those at the economic margin — each carrying a specific shade of meaning, each embedded in a body of covenant law that addresses their condition directly. These terms are not footnotes to the covenant. They are central to it.

HEBREW TERM	MEANING AND COVENANT SIGNIFICANCE
'ani (עָנִי) — H6041	The poor, the afflicted, the humbled one. Appears 80+ times in the Tanakh. Devarim 15:11: 'For the poor (ha-'ani) will never cease from the land.' The 'ani is the one crushed by circumstance, often by the structures of society itself.
'ebyown (אֶבְיוֹן) — H34	The destitute one, the one who desires or lacks. Often paired with 'ani. Devarim 15:7,9,11; Amos 2:6 — 'they sell the needy (ebyown) for a pair of sandals.' The 'ebyown is beyond struggling — he is at the end.
dal (דָּל) — H1800	The lean, thin, reduced one. The one diminished by economic stripping. Amos 4:1: 'Hear this word, you cows of Bashan... who crush the needy (dal).' The dal is the person whose life has been thinned by the choices of others.
rash (רָשָׁע) — H7326	The impoverished one, the one made poor. Mishlei 22:16: 'Whoever oppresses the poor (rash) to increase one's riches... will only come to

	poverty.' The rash is the one whose poverty is the direct result of exploitation by the powerful.
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These four terms together form a comprehensive portrait of economic vulnerability in the Tanakh — and together they describe the person who is now being crushed by the cascading wave of war-driven inflation, food insecurity, and energy poverty. **Yahweh** named them four different ways because He did not want His covenant people to look past them.

III-B. THE COVENANT LAW: SPECIFIC OBLIGATIONS TO THE POOR

The Torah does not leave the treatment of the poor to charitable impulse. It legislates it.

TEXT	COVENANT COMMAND
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 15:7–11	'If there is among you a poor man (ebyown) of your brethren... you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need.' The open hand is not optional — it is commanded.
Shemot (Exodus) 22:21–22	'You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry.' Yahweh Himself guarantees the case of those the system ignores.
Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:9–10	The pe'ah (corner-of-field gleaning law): harvest must leave margins for the poor and the stranger. The economic system itself must be structured to feed those who cannot feed themselves.
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:14–15	'You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy... you shall give him his wages on his day... lest he cry against you to Yahweh, and it be sin to you.' Economic delay is covenant sin.
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:19–21	Gleaning laws for fields, olive trees, and vineyards: 'It shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.' Economic design must include margin for the vulnerable.
Zechariah (Zechariah) 7:9–10	'Execute true justice; show mercy and compassion... do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, or the poor.' — This is Yahweh's direct summary of covenant economics.

III-C. THE PROPHETIC INDICTMENT: WHEN NATIONS FAIL THE POOR

The Nevi'im — the Prophets — are not soft in their assessment of nations that generate wealth for the few while crushing the many. **Yahweh** raised up His servants precisely to deliver this verdict:

PROPHET / TEXT	THE COVENANT VERDICT ON ECONOMIC INJUSTICE
Amos (Amos) 5:11–12	'You trample on the poor (dal) and take grain taxes from him... for I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins — afflicting the just, taking bribes; diverting the poor (ebyown) in the gate.' Yahweh calls economic oppression of the poor a sin — not a policy disagreement.
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 3:14–15	'Yahweh enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the faces of the poor?"' The faces of the poor — not abstractions, not statistics.
Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 16:49	'Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.' Sodom's judgment was economic — not only sexual. The parallel to every comfortable, war-funding Western nation is direct.
Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 22:16	Of righteous King Yoshiyahu: 'He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know Me?' says Yahweh.' Covenant knowledge of Yahweh is demonstrated in economic justice — not creed, not ritual.
Tehillim (Psalms) 12:5	"'Because of the oppression of the poor ('ani), because of the sighing of the needy (ebyown), I will now arise," says Yahweh; "I will set him in the safety for which he yearns.'" Yahweh arises specifically in response to the cry of the economically crushed.

The covenant standard is not ambiguous: **Yahweh** holds nations — not just individuals — accountable for whether their economic structures protect or destroy the vulnerable. The Iran/Israel/USA war is now a covenant indictment point. Its economic consequences do not fall randomly. They fall regressively,

systematically, and overwhelmingly on the *'ani*, the *'ebyown*, the *dal*, and the *rash* — and **Yahweh** hears their cry.

PART IV: THE FIVE COVENANT FAILURES IN THE CURRENT CRISIS

Measured against the Torah standard for the treatment of the poor and the vulnerable, the geopolitical and economic architecture of the 2026 Iran/Israel/USA war reveals five specific covenant failures by the nations involved:

COVENANT FAILURE	EVIDENCE FROM CURRENT EVENTS
FAILURE 1: War as collective punishment of the poor	The Strait of Hormuz closure does not primarily harm the wealthy, who can absorb energy costs. It is a structural mechanism that functions as a tax on poverty. Every percent of oil price increase transfers wealth upward and crushes downward. The architects of this war bear covenant responsibility for its economic consequences on the defenseless.
FAILURE 2: Withdrawal of foreign aid at the moment of maximum need	Wealthier nations are cutting foreign aid to manage their own inflation pressures (UNDP research summary), leaving the nations of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia — already fragile — without the resources to absorb the shock. This is the opposite of the <i>pe'ah</i> principle. When the harvest is thin, the corner is taken; the margin is eliminated.
FAILURE 3: Fertilizer as a weapon of food insecurity	The targeting of Strait of Hormuz shipping — which carries 33% of global seaborne fertilizer — is functionally equivalent to attacking the world's food supply system. Bangladesh, dependent on Gulf urea for over 50% of its fertilizer, will plant less and harvest less. The harvest failure will arrive months after the war's headlines have moved on.
FAILURE 4: The K-shaped economy and the widening gap	Energy sector gains accrue to the wealthy (investors in oil stocks, commodity traders). Energy price increases are borne entirely by those who cannot insulate themselves. The UNDP research describes this as the 'K-shaped' economy: the war's economic effects drive the

	top of the K further up and the bottom further down. This is precisely what Amos condemned.
FAILURE 5: No proportionality calculus measuring civilian economic harm	The doctrine of just war — rooted in the covenant principle of lo tirtzach (you shall not murder, Shemot 20:13) — requires proportionality. The projected impoverishment of 32 to 45 million people globally, disproportionately women and children who had no part in any military calculation, constitutes a covenant harm of historic magnitude that no military objective can justify before Yahweh.

PART V: THREE-RELIGION COVENANT AUDIT

This study reaches Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously. Each tradition claims the mandate to care for the poor as a central religious obligation. Each tradition is implicated by the current crisis in different ways. The covenant standard is one: **Yahweh** holds all nations accountable.

TRADITION	INTERNAL STANDARD ON THE POOR	CURRENT COVENANT POSITION
JUDAISM	Tzedakah (righteous giving) is halakhic obligation, not optional. Maimonides' eight levels of charity; the gleaning laws of Torah; the Talmudic principle that saving one life saves a world (Sanhedrin 4:5). The poor are made b'tzelem Elohim — in the image of Elohim.	The State of Israel's military alliance with the United States has produced the Strait of Hormuz closure that will push 32+ million people into poverty. The covenant standard asks: does this align with tzedakah? Can a nation that claims Torah fealty export economic catastrophe to the world's most vulnerable populations?
CHRISTIANITY	The Torah's commands on the poor are affirmed throughout the Tanakh, which the Christian tradition claims as its Old Testament foundation. The prophetic indictments of Amos, Isaiah, and Micah against economic oppression are explicitly part of the Christian canon. No serious reading of Yeshayahu 58 or	Christian-majority nations (the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe) are the primary actors and primary beneficiaries of the current war economy. The economic shock is being exported to the Global South — disproportionately nations of the African and Asian poor. The 'least of these' (Mattityahu 25) framing places

	Amos 5 can avoid the economic justice mandate.	the covenant responsibility squarely on the West.
ISLAM	Zakat (obligatory charity) is the third pillar of Islam. The Quran repeatedly commands care for the miskeen (the poor), the orphan, and the traveler. Islamic jurisprudence has elaborate frameworks for economic justice. The poor are amanah — a trust — in the hands of those with resources.	Islamic-majority nations in the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, UAE) are navigating between alliance with Western military action and their own populations who bear the economic weight. Gulf workers sending remittances to Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Egypt — key economic lifelines for the poor — are disrupted by the conflict. Iran's own Muslim poor have seen food inflation at 105%.

The covenant audit produces a single verdict: all three traditions possess the theological resources to name this crisis as a covenant failure. None of them — in their institutional expression — has done so with sufficient force. That silence is itself a covenant position.

PART VI: WHAT THE STRUGGLING HOUSEHOLD NEEDS TO KNOW

This covenant witness does not end with indictment. **Yahweh** is not a God who leaves His people without counsel. The following is addressed directly to the household that is already struggling — in America, in Louisiana, in Britain, in Bangladesh, in Ethiopia — and is now facing the additional weight of war-driven price increases.

Practical Covenant Counsel for the Struggling Household — 2026

AREA	COVENANT-GROUNDED PRACTICAL GUIDANCE
Energy Costs	The pe'ah principle applies in reverse: do not be ashamed to utilize every legitimate assistance program available (LIHEAP, SNAP, CHIP, state energy assistance). These are structured tools for the community's margin — use them. Seek collective arrangements for carpooling, shared transportation, and combined purchases where covenant community makes this possible.

Food	Prioritize staple proteins and grains over processed foods as prices rise. Community food sharing — rooted in Vayikra 19:9 gleaning principles — is not charity; it is covenant design. Connect with food pantries, community gardens, and neighborhood covenant networks without shame. Yahweh designed the margin precisely so it could be accessed.
Debt	The Torah prohibited lending at interest among the covenant community (Shemot 22:25; Vayikra 25:36–37). In the current environment of rising interest rates, credit card debt is a covenant trap. Prioritize reduction. Avoid new debt for non-essential consumption. The coming months will reward the household that has reduced its interest burden.
Community	The covenant is not individualistic. Devarim 15:11 commands: 'open your hand wide to your brother.' This obligation flows in both directions. The struggling household should seek and accept the open hand of covenant community — and extend it to whoever is more fragile. Isolation in economic crisis is itself a form of poverty.
Spiritual Grounding	Tehillim 12:5: 'Because of the oppression of the poor... I will now arise, says Yahweh.' The covenant promise is that Yahweh sees this. He has not abandoned the poor to the calculus of geopolitics. His judgment on nations that crush the poor is documented across every book of the Nevi'im. Ground your household in that promise.

PART VII: COVENANT VERDICT AND CALL

The covenant verdict is this: the Iran/Israel/USA war of 2026, whatever its stated military justifications, is — by the documented and measurable standard of Tanakh covenant law — an act of economic warfare against the world's most vulnerable populations.

Thirty-two million people projected into poverty. Forty-five million facing acute food insecurity. Food inflation at 105 percent in Iran. Fertilizer prices destroying the agricultural foundation of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Energy costs rising regressively on every household that drives, heats, or eats — which is every household on earth.

Yahweh said through **Amos**: *"I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins — afflicting the just, taking bribes; diverting the poor in the gate."* (Amos 5:12) The *'gate'* — the

seat of judgment and commerce in the ancient world — is today the Strait of Hormuz. The mechanisms are modern. The covenant offense is ancient.

Yahweh said through **Yeshayahu**: *"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?..."* (Yeshayahu 58:6–7) The fast that **Yahweh** honors is not ritual — it is the dismantling of economic structures that crush the vulnerable. The call to every nation, every institution, and every individual who holds power in this moment is that fast.

The World Bank's own economist used the phrase: *"war is development in reverse."* That phrase is a Tanakh verdict in economic language. It says: you have taken what **Yahweh** built into the structure of human community — the gleaning law, the open hand, the proportionate share — and you have run it backward. The poor will pay for this war for years after the bombs have stopped.

To every nation engaged in or benefiting from this conflict: the Tanakh charges you with economic harm to the *'ani*, the *'ebyown*, the *dal*, and the *rash*. The cry of 32 million people has ascended. **Yahweh** says in Tehillim 12:5: *"I will now arise."* Nations should take that declaration seriously.

To the household already struggling: you are seen by **Yahweh**. Your circumstance is not your sin. The structures that have crushed you carry a covenant indictment before the Judge of all the earth. Do not despair — seek community, use every legitimate resource, reduce every avoidable vulnerability, and anchor yourself in the promise that **Yahweh** does not forget the cry of His poor.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **For Personal Reflection:** In what specific ways does my household budget reflect the economic consequences of the Iran/Israel/USA war? What covenant community resources have I not yet accessed?
- **For Community Leaders:** What structures does your community currently have that function as *pe'ah* — margin for the most vulnerable? What structures are missing?
- **For Civic Engagement:** At what point does the projected impoverishment of 32–45 million people globally become a covenant basis for demanding cease-fire and diplomatic resolution? By what standard does your tradition answer that question?
- **For All Three Traditions:** Yechezkel 16:49 lists Sodom's sin as 'pride, fullness of food, abundance of idleness... she did not strengthen the hand of the poor.' How does this mirror the posture of the nations currently funding or sustaining this conflict?

- **For the Theologian and the Scholar:** The World Bank Chief Economist called this war 'development in reverse.' What is the covenant vocabulary for that same reality? How does the Tanakh's economic justice framework translate into a modern policy demand?

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	TOPIC
Bereishit (Genesis) 1:26–27	Tzelem Elohim — the image of Elohim as the covenant basis of human dignity and economic rights
Shemot (Exodus) 20:13	Lo tirtzach — you shall not murder; covenant basis for proportionality in war
Shemot (Exodus) 22:21–22	Do not afflict the widow or the fatherless — Yahweh hears their cry
Shemot (Exodus) 22:25	No interest on loans to the poor among your people
Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:9–10	Pe'ah — the gleaning law; structured margin for the poor built into the economic system
Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:36–37	Do not take interest or increase from the poor; let him live with you
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 15:7–11	Open your hand wide to the poor brother — the ebyown — the command of the open hand
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15	Two or three witnesses — the evidentiary standard of this document
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:14–15	Do not oppress the hired servant who is poor — pay wages same day
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:19–21	Gleaning laws for fields, olive trees, vineyards — for the stranger, the fatherless, the widow
Tehillim (Psalms) 12:5	Because of the oppression of the poor — I will now arise, says Yahweh
Mishlei (Proverbs) 14:31	Oppressing the poor reproaches his Maker; generosity to the needy honors Him

Mishlei (Proverbs) 22:16	Oppressing the poor to increase riches leads only to poverty
Amos (Amos) 2:6	They sell the needy for a pair of sandals — covenant indictment of economic trafficking
Amos (Amos) 4:1	You cows of Bashan who crush the needy — Yahweh's address to the comfortable oppressor
Amos (Amos) 5:11–12	You trample the poor and take grain taxes — economic oppression named as covenant sin
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 3:14–15	The plunder of the poor is in your houses — Yahweh enters into judgment
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 58:6–7	The fast Yahweh chooses — loose bonds, undo burdens, share bread with the hungry
Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 22:16	Judging the cause of the poor — this is to know Me, says Yahweh
Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 16:49	Sodom's sin: fullness of food and idleness; did not strengthen the hand of the poor
Zechariah (Zechariah) 7:9–10	Execute true justice; do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, or the poor

YESHAYAHU (ISAIAH) 58:6–7

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out?"

— *The covenant answer to every economic crisis*

AMOS (AMOS) 5:24

"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

— *The covenant demand of the ages*

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION | PEARL RIVER, LOUISIANA

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