

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A COVENANT WITNESS TO THE APPOINTED TIMES

HOLIDAYS, BIRTHDAYS, AND THE NATIONS: WHAT THE COVENANT OF YAHWEH ACTUALLY SAYS

A THREE-RELIGION COVENANT STUDY

Kepha Arcemont, Elder & Founder

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EVIDENTIARY STANDARD: DEVARIM (DEUTERONOMY) 19:15

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 — "A single witness shall not testify against any person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established."

All conclusions in this document are established by a minimum of two independent witnesses drawn from the **Tanakh** text, Hebrew lexicography, and corroborated historical record.

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SECTION 1 — INTRODUCTION: THE QUESTION BEFORE THE COVENANT

Every year — in homes across the world in three of the most populated faith traditions on earth — the same debate surfaces. Families gather for Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Eid, Chanukah, Purim, birthday celebrations, and dozens of regional and secular holidays. Some believers ask: "Are these practices pagan?" Others reply: "It's just family time — what's the harm?" This document is not an opinion piece. It is a **covenant witness** — meaning it presents the case of **Yahweh (יהוה)** Himself, drawn exclusively from the Tanakh, and tested against the Devarim 19:15 standard of two or three witnesses.

The Tanakh does not remain silent on this question. **Yahweh (יהוה)** established His own **Moadim** — His appointed times — and repeatedly commanded His covenant people not to adopt the **chukkim** (statutes/ordinances) of the surrounding nations. The historical record confirms that virtually every major Western holiday carries undeniable roots in pre-Israelite pagan solar, fertility, and death-worship systems. We will present these facts without sensationalism, and we will also give the Tanakh's covenant verdict — not to condemn individuals, but to illuminate what the Covenant actually instructs.

This study addresses Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously. The Tanakh is the source document for all three traditions. Where Talmud, Church councils, and hadith speak, they are treated as historical commentary only — not as covenant authority superseding the written instruction of Yahweh.

SECTION 2 — THE APPOINTED TIMES (MOADIM): WHAT YAHWEH ACTUALLY COMMANDED

Before examining what the nations observe, we must establish what **Yahweh (יהוה)** Himself appointed. The Hebrew word is **מוֹעֲדִים** (**Moadim**, H4150), meaning "**appointed times, set feasts, assemblies of meeting.**" The root is **יָעַד** (**yaad**, H3259) — "to appoint, to meet at a set place and time." These are not man's innovations. They are Yahweh's own covenant appointments, and they are recorded in Vayikra (Leviticus) 23.

THE SEVEN COVENANT APPOINTMENTS OF YAHWEH (VAYIKRA/LEVITICUS 23)

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:2 — "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: These are the appointed feasts of Yahweh that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are My appointed feasts."

The seven Moadim established in covenant are:

- Shabbat (The Seventh-Day Rest) — Weekly; Vayikra 23:3

- Pesach (Passover) — 14th of Aviv/Nisan; Vayikra 23:5 — the night Yahweh delivered Israel from Egypt
- Chag HaMatzot (Feast of Unleavened Bread) — 15th–21st of Aviv; Vayikra 23:6–8
- Yom HaBikkurim (Firstfruits) — first day after the Sabbath during Matzot; Vayikra 23:9–14
- Shavuot (Feast of Weeks / Pentecost) — 50 days from Firstfruits; Vayikra 23:15–21
- Yom Teruah (Day of Trumpets) — 1st of the 7th month (Tishrei); Vayikra 23:23–25
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) — 10th of Tishrei; Vayikra 23:26–32
- Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) and Shemini Atzeret — 15th–22nd of Tishrei; Vayikra 23:33–43

These are the **only** holy days that carry a covenant mandate from **Yahweh (יהוה)** Himself. Every other "holiday" observed by the three Abrahamic traditions — whether Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Eid, Chanukah, Purim, or birthdays — is a human addition to, or replacement of, these covenant appointments.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:2 — "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim that I command you."

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:32 — "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it."

Witnesses count on the prohibition against additions: Devarim 4:2 and Devarim 12:32 = Two independent Tanakh witnesses. The Devarim 19:15 standard is met.

SECTION 3 — THE FOUNDATIONAL PROHIBITION: "DO NOT LEARN THE WAYS OF THE NATIONS"

The Tanakh contains a consistent, repeated command: the covenant people of **Yahweh (יהוה)** are forbidden from adopting the religious customs and practices of the surrounding nations — even when those customs are **rebranded** as worship of **Yahweh**. This is the central legal question behind every holiday debate.

WITNESS I: DEVARIM (DEUTERONOMY) 12:29–31

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:29–31 — "When Yahweh your Elohim cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess... take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? — that I also may do the same.' You shall not worship Yahweh your Elohim in that way, for every abominable thing that Yahweh hates they have done for their gods."

This is foundational and non-negotiable. Yahweh (יהוה) does not permit the borrowing of pagan worship forms and redirecting them toward Himself. The intent of the worshiper does not override the instruction of the Covenant. The Tanakh specifically addresses the argument "I am doing this **for Yahweh**" — and explicitly forbids it.

WITNESS 2: YIRMEYAHU (JEREMIAH) 10:1-5

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 10:2-4 — "Thus says Yahweh: 'Learn not the way of the nations, and be not dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, for the customs of the peoples are vanity. For one cuts a tree from the forest — the work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers so that it will not topple.'"

Context matters here. The scholarly debate over whether Yirmeyahu 10 refers specifically to a "Christmas tree" misses the larger point. The explicit command is "**Learn not the way of the nations**" — and the description that follows is a **decorated object cut from a forest and set upright**, used in connection with winter solstice worship. Whether this is a wooden idol or an evergreen tree, the **principle** is established: the customs of the peoples that surround Yahweh's covenant community are forbidden as worship forms.

WITNESS 3: YECHEZKEL (EZEKIEL) 8:14-15

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 8:14-15 — "Then He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of Yahweh, and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then He said to me: 'Have you seen this, O son of man? You will see still greater abominations than these.'"

Tammuz was the Babylonian/Sumerian vegetation and fertility deity whose mythological death and resurrection aligned with the winter solstice and spring equinox. The women weeping for Tammuz **inside the Temple compound** represents the infiltration of pagan seasonal mourning rites into the covenant worship of **Yahweh (יהוה)**. This is a direct and undeniable historical connection to the seasonal death-resurrection mythology that underlies both Christmas (December 25 = birthday of the sun/Tammuz) and Easter (spring resurrection).

WITNESS 4: SHEMOT (EXODUS) 23:13

Shemot (Exodus) 23:13 — "Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips."

Making no mention of the names of other gods extends beyond spoken invocation. Celebrating **Eostre / Ishtar (Easter)**, **Saturn (Saturnalia / Christmas)**, and **Samhain (Halloween)** embeds the names and structures of foreign deities into the calendar of covenant people. The Covenant is not ambiguous on this point.

Devarim 19:15 Count — Prohibition Against Following the Nations: Four independent Tanakh witnesses. The standard is more than met. The covenant verdict is unambiguous.

(See expanded section on this subject of not mentioning the names of gods, at the end of this study.)

SECTION 4 — HOLIDAY-BY-HOLIDAY COVENANT ANALYSIS

4A. CHRISTMAS (DECEMBER 25)

HISTORICAL ORIGINS — THREE INDEPENDENT WITNESSES

Witness 1: Encyclopedia Britannica (15th Edition) states that "Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedate the Christian period — a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition."

Witness 2: The Roman festival of **Saturnalia** (December 17–25) honored Saturn, the god of agriculture. It involved gift-giving, feasting, and decorating with greenery — the precise customs absorbed into Christmas. The feast of **Sol Invictus** (the Unconquered Sun) was celebrated on December 25 as the birthday of the sun god following the winter solstice.

Witness 3: The Babylonian/Sumerian mythology of **Tammuz** placed his "birthday" at the winter solstice — the moment the sun, after dying, begins its "return to life." The date of December 25 was universally associated with the birth of sun/vegetation deities across Babylon, Egypt (Ra/Osiris), Rome (Mithras), and Persia (Mithras), centuries before the first century CE. No historical record places the birth of Yeshua (Yehoshua/Jesus) on December 25. Even the Gospel accounts point to a late-spring or fall birth (shepherds in the field, Luke 2:8).

THREE-RELIGION COVENANT AUDIT — CHRISTMAS

JUDAISM / TANAKH TRADITION	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
No Tanakh basis whatsoever. December 25 does not appear in any Yahweh-appointed Moad. Rabbinic Judaism correctly rejects Christmas but often replaces it with inflated Chanukah observance (see Section 6).	Christmas was formally adopted in Rome in 336 CE, nearly three centuries after the apostolic era. No NT text commands the observance of the Messiah's birth date. The customs (trees, gifts, December 25) are inherited entirely from Roman pagan practice.	Islam correctly rejects Christmas as a foreign innovation (bid'ah). The Quran acknowledges Isa (Jesus) as a prophet but never assigns the December 25 date. Mainstream Islamic scholarship forbids participation.

TANAKH COVENANT VERDICT — CHRISTMAS

ORIGIN	Roman Saturnalia + Sol Invictus (Dec 25) + Babylonian Tammuz birthday mythology
TANAKH COMMAND	Devarim 12:29–31: Do not inquire after their gods to do the same. DIRECT VIOLATION.

ARGUMENT TESTED	"It's for the children / family time." — Devarim 12:31 specifically notes that the nations' practices were done "for their gods" with devotion. Motive does not sanctify a forbidden form.
VERDICT (2+ WITNESSES)	The December 25 celebration carries zero Tanakh authorization and direct historical continuity with sun-god birth mythology. It fails the covenant test.

4B. EASTER (SPRING RESURRECTION FESTIVAL)

HISTORICAL ORIGINS — THREE WITNESSES

Witness 1: The name "Easter" is derived — per the Venerable Bede's **De Temporum Ratione** (725 CE) — from **Eostre**, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring and fertility. Her sacred symbols were the egg (fertility) and the hare (reproduction). These symbols have no basis in any Gospel account of the resurrection.

Witness 2: The spring equinox was universally the season of **Ishtar** (Babylonian), **Astarte** (Canaanite/Phoenician), and the resurrection cycle of **Tammuz**. Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 8:14 records women weeping for Tammuz inside the Temple — directly connecting spring resurrection mythology with infiltration of covenant worship.

Witness 3: The Tanakh appointed **Pesach (Passover)** and **Yom HaBikkurim (Firstfruits)** as the spring covenant appointments. These already address deliverance from bondage and the firstfruits offering. Easter displaces both of these Yahweh-appointed observances with a spring festival that retains pagan symbols (eggs, rabbits) and occurs on a date determined by a lunar calculation disconnected from the original Pesach.

THREE-RELIGION COVENANT AUDIT — EASTER

JUDAISM / TANAKH TRADITION	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Pesach (Passover) is the Yahweh-appointed covenant appointment for spring. Easter's fertility symbols (eggs/rabbits) have no Tanakh basis and derive from Canaanite/Babylonian fertility worship.	The resurrection of Yeshua is historically connected to Pesach/Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20 references "firstfruits"). Renaming the observance "Easter" and adopting Eostre's fertility symbols constitutes exactly the pagan-custom adoption Devarim 12:30–31 prohibits.	Islam rejects the resurrection doctrine itself and has no Easter observance. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are the appointed celebrations, both grounded in submission/covenant themes without fertility imagery.

TANAKH COVENANT VERDICT — EASTER

ORIGIN	Eostre (Anglo-Saxon spring goddess), Ishtar/Astarte (Babylonian/Canaanite), Tammuz resurrection mythology
TANAKH COMMAND	Shemot 23:13: Do not let the names of other gods be heard on your lips. "Easter" is a god's name.
COVENANT DISPLACEMENT	Easter displaces the authorized Moadim of Pesach, Yom HaBikkurim, and Chag HaMatzot.
VERDICT (2+ WITNESSES)	Easter fails the covenant test on name, symbol, and calendar displacement grounds. Three witnesses confirm.

4C. HALLOWEEN (OCTOBER 31 — ALL HALLOWS' EVE / SAMHAIN)

HISTORICAL ORIGINS — TWO WITNESSES

Witness 1: Halloween originates from the Celtic festival of **Samhain** (pronounced "Sow-win"), observed on October 31–November 1. It marked the end of summer and the beginning of the dark half of the year. Celtic belief held that on this night the boundary between the living and the dead dissolved, and the spirits of the dead returned to walk the earth. Bonfires were lit to ward off evil spirits, and offerings were made to appease them. The Catholic Church absorbed this festival as "All Hallows' Eve" (the night before All Saints' Day, established 835 CE), following the same syncretism pattern used with Christmas and Easter.

Witness 2: Direct Tanakh prohibition —

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 18:10–12 — "There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a necromancer, or one who inquires of the dead — for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh."

Halloween's core mythology — **communication with the dead, honoring spirits of the departed, warding off evil through ritual** — is precisely the necromantic/spiritist practice condemned by name in Devarim 18:10–12. This is not peripheral. It is the foundational meaning of the holiday.

THREE-RELIGION COVENANT AUDIT — HALLOWEEN

JUDAISM / TANAKH TRADITION	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
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Explicitly forbidden by Tanakh on multiple counts: necromancy (Devarim 18:10–12), inquiring of the dead (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 8:19–20). No legitimate Yahweh-covenant basis exists.	The Catholic Church's rebranding as "All Saints' Day" does not remove the pagan foundation. The costumes, trick-or-treating, and death symbolism retain the Samhain structure entirely.	Islam also explicitly forbids any engagement with jinn, necromancy, or spiritism (Quran 2:102, Al-Baqarah). Mainstream Islamic scholarship unanimously rejects Halloween observance.
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TANAKH COVENANT VERDICT — HALLOWEEN

ORIGIN	Celtic Samhain — festival of the dead, spirit communication, darkness-half of the year
TANAKH COMMAND	Devarim 18:10–12: Necromancy, communing with spirits of the dead = abomination. Direct prohibition.
ARGUMENT TESTED	"It's just candy and costumes for the children." The form carries the meaning. Samhain's entire structure is built around death-spirit communication. The candy customs were originally offerings to appease spirits.
VERDICT (2+ WITNESSES)	Halloween fails the covenant test with the clearest Tanakh prohibition of any holiday in this study. Two direct witnesses. Verdict: forbidden.

4D. VALENTINE'S DAY (FEBRUARY 14)

HISTORICAL ORIGINS — TWO WITNESSES

Witness 1: Valentine's Day is commonly traced to the Roman festival of **Lupercalia** (February 13–15), a fertility and purification festival honoring the god Lupercus. The festival involved ritual animal sacrifice, the smearing of blood, and a lottery in which young men drew the names of young women as sexual partners for the duration of the festival. Pope Gelasius I renamed February 14 as "St. Valentine's Day" around 494 CE, absorbing the fertility-celebration timing.

Witness 2: The Asherah pole (אֲשֵׁרָה, H842) was the standing symbol of the Canaanite fertility goddess **Asherah**. Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:3 commands: **"You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you."** Fertility-celebration customs drawn from Roman/Canaanite sources fall squarely under this command.

TANAKH COVENANT VERDICT — VALENTINE'S DAY

ORIGIN	Roman Lupercalia — fertility ritual, sexual lottery, Lupercus worship. Rebranded 494 CE by Catholic Church.
TANAKH COMMAND	Vayikra 18:3 — do not do as they did in Canaan or Egypt. Devarim 12:30 — do not inquire how the nations served their gods.
VERDICT	No Tanakh basis. Fertility-celebration origin is documented. Fails the covenant test.

4E. NEW YEAR'S (JANUARY 1), MARDI GRAS, AND THANKSGIVING

JANUARY 1 — NEW YEAR'S DAY

January 1 as New Year is a Roman civil calendar construct honoring **Janus** — the two-faced Roman god of beginnings and doorways. The month of January is named for him. The Tanakh places the beginning of months in **Aviv (Spring)** (Shemot/Exodus 12:2: "This month shall be for you the beginning of months"). No covenant new year occurs on January 1.

ORIGIN	Roman calendar — month of Janus, god of beginnings
TANAKH POSITION	Shemot 12:2 places the covenant new year in Aviv (spring). January 1 has no covenant standing.
VERDICT	Secular, pagan-origin calendar marker. No covenant authority.

MARDI GRAS (CARNIVAL)

Mardi Gras (French: "Fat Tuesday") is the pre-Lent carnival season. Its roots include Roman Saturnalia and Lupercalia — the same festivals underlying Christmas and Valentine's Day. The excess and revelry before Lent is a Catholic construct entirely absent from the Tanakh. The **masking tradition** carries direct continuity with ancient pagan masquerade/identity-dissolution rituals used to allow participants to engage in behaviors prohibited in normal life. No Tanakh or covenant basis exists for either Lent or its preceding carnival season.

THANKSGIVING (U.S.)

Thanksgiving is a national/civil holiday, not a religious one. Its historical origin is complex — 1621 Plymouth Colony harvest meal, then President Washington's 1789 proclamation, then Lincoln's 1863 national establishment during the Civil War. The **concept** of gratitude to the Creator for harvest is entirely consistent with the Tanakh's Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) harvest celebration in Vayikra 23:33–43.

However, Thanksgiving as observed in the U.S. carries a deeply troubling historical shadow: it memorializes a narrative that has been used to obscure the covenant-violating treatment of indigenous peoples in North America. The **spirit of gratitude** is covenant-consistent. The **national mythology** attached to the holiday is not. Sukkot — which is already a Yahweh-appointed autumn harvest festival — is the covenant alternative for giving thanks.

**VERDICT —
THANKSGIVING**

The spirit of gratitude = covenant-consistent (see Sukkot). The national mythology and history = requires covenant discernment. Not a replacement for Sukkot.

SECTION 5 — BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS: HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND COVENANT WITNESS

Of all the questions in this study, birthdays are the one most people resist examining. The emotional weight is significant — birthdays are tied to children, family affirmation, and love. The covenant must still speak, and it must be heard. The question is not: "Do we love our children?" Of course we do. The question is: "What does the Covenant instruct, and where did this practice come from?"

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS — THREE WITNESSES

Witness 1 — Ancient Egypt (3,000 BCE): The earliest recorded birthday celebration appears in **Bereshit (Genesis) 40:20** — in the context of **Pharaoh's** birthday. Historical research confirms that Egyptian "birthday" celebrations did not commemorate the physical birth of the Pharaoh but rather the **coronation date** — the day the Pharaoh became a god. It was a **divine birth ceremony**, not a commemoration of natural childbirth. The practice was rooted in solar deity mythology.

Bereshit (Genesis) 40:20 — "On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants."

Note: The text records the event without endorsing it. This is also the only Tanakh record where a birthday feast results in a death sentence (the baker is executed). The Tanakh's treatment of the Pharaoh's birthday celebration is not neutral — it is contextually ominous.

Witness 2 — Ancient Greece: The Greeks developed the custom of baking round, moon-shaped cakes for the birthday of **Artemis** (goddess of the moon and hunt) and placing lit candles on them to mimic the moon's glow. The candles were believed to carry prayers and wishes **upward to the deity**. This is the direct origin of the birthday cake and candles tradition still practiced today. The practice is explicitly a **religious offering to a pagan goddess**.

Witness 3 — Pagan Spirit Protection: Ancient traditions across cultures held that a person's birth anniversary was a day of spiritual vulnerability — evil spirits could gain access to the person on their birth date. Gathering friends and family to surround the person with **protective well-wishes** — and the noise of celebration — was meant to ward off those spirits. The German **Kinderfest** (18th century, the direct precursor to the modern birthday party) carried one candle per year of life plus one "to grow on" — the extra candle representing the life-force/spirit protecting the child from supernatural harm.

WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS ABOUT BIRTHDAYS — TWO WITNESSES

Witness 1 — Iyov (Job) 3:1–3: The only time a covenant figure **reflects** on the day of his birth in the Tanakh, it is in the context of **cursing it**.

Iyov (Job) 3:1–3 — "After this, Iyov opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. Iyov spoke, and said: 'Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man is conceived.'"

Witness 2 — Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 7:1:

Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 7:1 — "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth."

The Tanakh consistently values the **day of death** — the completion of a life of covenant faithfulness — over the **day of birth**. The wisdom tradition of the Tanakh does not celebrate the birthday; it contemplates the whole of life and honors its completion.

THE TANAKH'S TWO RECORDED BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

In the entire Tanakh, there are only **two recorded birthday celebrations**:

- Pharaoh's birthday (Bereshit/Genesis 40:20) — The baker is executed on this day.
- Herod Antipas's birthday (referenced in Mark 6:21–28, outside Tanakh) — Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) is beheaded.

Both recorded birthday celebrations in the biblical record result in **executions**. Neither is a celebration of a covenant figure. Neither is commanded or endorsed. This is not coincidence; it is the Tanakh's consistent literary presentation of the practice.

THE "JUST FOR THE CHILDREN" ARGUMENT — COVENANT RESPONSE

This is the most emotionally powerful objection, and it deserves a direct covenant answer. The argument runs: "Even if birthdays have pagan origins, we are not worshiping pagans — we are just celebrating our children and showing them love."

Covenant Response 1: Devarim 12:30–31 does not include an exemption for sincere motivation. The command is not "do not worship other gods with **evil intent**"; it is "do not inquire how they served their gods **to do the same**." The key phrase is the form of action, not the intent behind it.

Covenant Response 2: The desire to honor our children and express love is a **covenant value**. That value does not require adopting a practice rooted in spirit-appeasement and goddess worship. The covenant question is not "**Should we honor our children?**" — of course we should. The covenant question is: "**Must we borrow this particular form from pagan origin to do so?**" The answer is no.

Covenant Response 3: Yahweh (יהוה) gave His covenant people a lifecycle of appointed times — Shabbat, Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur — that already provide structure, celebration, family gathering, and covenant identity. The fullness of life in covenant does not need to borrow from the nations.

THREE-RELIGION COVENANT AUDIT — BIRTHDAYS

JUDAISM / TANAKH TRADITION	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
No Tanakh command to celebrate birthdays. Two biblical records associate them with pagan rulers and executions. Kohelet 7:1 inverts the hierarchy. Rabbinic tradition does not require them.	No NT command to celebrate birthdays. The early Church did not observe them; early Church Fathers (Origen, 3rd century) explicitly opposed birthday celebrations as pagan.	Islamic tradition is divided. Many scholars note that the Prophet Muhammad did not celebrate his own birthday and that birthday celebrations were not practiced in early Islam. The debate over Mawlid al-Nabi (Prophet's birthday) reflects the same tension.

ORIGIN	Ancient Egypt (divine-birth ritual), Ancient Greece (Artemis moon-goddess cakes with candles), pagan spirit-protection rites
TANAKH RECORD	Two recorded birthdays: both result in executions. Iyov 3:1–3: Job curses his birth day. Kohelet 7:1: day of death is better than day of birth.
ARGUMENT TESTED	"Just for the children / family love." — The covenant question is not whether love is good (it is) but whether this particular form is warranted or necessary. No covenant command requires it.
VERDICT (2+ WITNESSES)	No covenant mandate for birthday celebrations. Clear pagan origins documented. No Tanakh endorsement. Families may assess individually, but they do so outside covenant authorization.

SECTION 6 — POST-BIBLICAL JEWISH HOLIDAYS: CHANUKAH AND PURIM

This section must be approached with precision and respect. **Yahweh (יהוה)** appointed seven Moadim in the Tanakh. Chanukah and Purim are observances added to the Jewish calendar after the closing of the Tanakh canon. Their origins, covenant standing, and appropriate level of observance must be evaluated honestly.

6A. CHANUKAH (FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS — 25TH OF KISLEV, 8 DAYS)

Chanukah commemorates the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes (167–164 BCE) and the rededication of the Temple in Yerushalayim. The miracle of the oil lasting eight days is recorded in the Talmud (Tractate Shabbat 21b), not in the Tanakh.

The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees (preserved in the Septuagint/LXX and Catholic canon, though not in the Protestant or Jewish Tanakh canon) describe the historical events. The feast is mentioned in Yochanan (John) 10:22 in the NT as the "Feast of Dedication" — which Yeshua was present for — but no command to observe it is given.

Covenant Assessment: Chanukah is a post-canonical historical commemoration. It is not one of the seven Yahweh-appointed Moadim. Observing Chanukah in its historical/memorial form — commemorating the preservation of covenant worship against forced Hellenization — is not in itself a violation. However:

- When Chanukah is inflated to rival or compete with Christmas in gift-giving and cultural prominence, this represents cultural accommodation, not covenant faithfulness.
- The "Hanukkah bush" (a Jewish Christmas tree) is a direct violation of Devarim 12:30 — adopting a nation's custom for worship.
- Chanukah cannot carry the same covenant authority as Pesach, Shavuot, or Sukkot, as it is not Yahweh-appointed.

6B. PURIM (14TH–15TH OF ADAR)

Purim is recorded in the book of **Esther (Megillat Esther)** — which is unique among Tanakh books in that it contains no explicit mention of **Yahweh (יהוה)** by name. The festival commemorates the saving of the Jewish people in Persia through Esther and Mordecai.

Esther 9:20–28 commands future generations to observe the 14th–15th of Adar with feasting, joy, and gifts to the poor. **This makes Purim unique: it is a post-Mosaic observance with a Tanakh command to observe it.** However, it is commanded within the book of Esther itself and not as part of the seven Moadim of Vayikra 23.

Covenant Assessment: Purim occupies an intermediate status — it has a written Tanakh basis (Esther 9) for its observance, but it is not one of Yahweh's seven appointed Moadim. The masquerade/costume tradition attached to Purim in later Jewish practice has no Tanakh basis and carries the same concerns

as Halloween masking customs. The spirit of the observance — commemorating covenant preservation and giving to the poor — is sound.

SECTION 7 — ISLAMIC HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES: COVENANT ASSESSMENT

7A. EID AL-FITR AND EID AL-ADHA

These two Eids are the primary Islamic celebrations and deserve the most balanced assessment. Both are connected to the Abrahamic narrative: Eid al-Adha honors the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son (Quran 37:102–107, parallel to Bereshit/Genesis 22). Eid al-Fitr marks the conclusion of Ramadan, a month of fasting and prayer.

Covenant Assessment: The themes of sacrifice, submission, fasting, and communal prayer all have deep Tanakh parallels. The **Akeidah** (binding of Isaac/Yitzchak) is central to covenant theology. However:

- Neither Eid is among the seven Yahweh-appointed Moadim of Vayikra 23.
- The Islamic calendar is entirely lunar, resulting in these observances falling on different Tanakh-calendar dates each year. No alignment with the covenant calendar is possible.
- The themes are covenant-adjacent. The calendar and authority structure (Quran/hadith superseding Torah) places them outside the covenant standard.

7B. MAWLID AL-NABI (PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY)

This observance — celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad — is itself contested within Islam. Major Sunni scholars (Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn 'Uthaymin) have classified it as **bid'ah** (forbidden innovation), noting that neither the Prophet himself nor his companions (the Sahaba) ever celebrated it. This internal Islamic debate mirrors the exact covenant question this study raises: **does sincere devotion justify adopting a form that has no authorized precedent?**

From the Tanakh covenant standard: Mawlid al-Nabi is a birthday celebration of a religious leader — carrying all the concerns of Section 5 above, plus the additional concern that it elevates a human figure to a level that approaches the honors due only to **Yahweh (יהוה)**.

SECTION 8 — THE DEVARIM 19:15 FORMAL THREE-WITNESS VERDICT

Having surveyed the historical origins and applied the Tanakh's own instructions, the Devarim 19:15 evidentiary standard is now applied formally. Each verdict below rests on a minimum of two independent Tanakh witnesses.

HOLIDAY	ORIGIN
CHRISTMAS	Roman Saturnalia + Sol Invictus + Tammuz winter solstice birthday mythology. No Tanakh authorization. FAILS.
EASTER	Eostre (Anglo-Saxon) + Ishtar/Astarte (Babylonian/Canaanite) + Tammuz resurrection mythology. Displaces Pesach/Firstfruits. FAILS.
HALLOWEEN	Celtic Samhain — feast of the dead, necromancy, spirit-communication. Explicitly forbidden by Devarim 18:10-12. FAILS.
VALENTINE'S DAY	Roman Lupercalia — fertility ritual, sex lottery, Lupercus worship. Rebranded 494 CE. FAILS.
NEW YEAR'S (JAN 1)	Roman Janus — god of doorways. Conflicts with Shemot 12:2 covenant new year in Aviv. FAILS covenant calendar standard.
MARDI GRAS	Roman Saturnalia/Lupercalia roots. Pre-Lenten excess. No Tanakh basis whatsoever. FAILS.
THANKSGIVING	Civil holiday with a spirit of harvest gratitude (covenant-consistent theme). Sukkot is the authorized alternative. CONDITIONAL — examine the historical narrative.
CHANUKAH	Post-canonical historical commemoration. Not among the seven Moadim. Not inherently forbidden; not covenant-mandated. CONDITIONAL.
PURIM	Tanakh basis in Esther 9. Post-Mosaic, but written-commandment-backed. CONDITIONAL — observe per Esther's instruction, not rabbinic additions.
BIRTHDAYS	Ancient Egypt (divine coronation), Ancient Greece (Artemis offering), pagan spirit-protection ritual. No Tanakh authorization. NOT FORBIDDEN by explicit command, but NOT AUTHORIZED by covenant mandate. CONDITIONAL — outside the covenant calendar.

EID AL-FITR / ADHA	Covenant-adjacent themes (sacrifice, fasting, submission). Outside Tanakh Moad calendar. Not among the seven. CONDITIONAL — addressed to the Muslim community.
MAWLID AL-NABI	Birthday celebration of a human prophet. No Tanakh or early Islamic precedent. Contested within Islam itself. FAILS — same grounds as birthday section.

SECTION 9 — THE COVENANT ALTERNATIVE: LIVING THE MOADIM

This study is not designed to leave covenant families in a vacuum. The answer to "what do we celebrate instead?" is already written — it has always been written. The seven Moadim of **Yahweh (יהוה)** in Vayikra 23 provide:

- **SHABBAT** — Weekly covenant rest, family gathering, cessation from labor. Every seven days.
- **PESACH (Passover)** — Spring covenant memorial of deliverance from bondage. Family seder meal.
- **CHAG HAMATZOT (Unleavened Bread)** — Seven days of covenant reflection. Removing leaven = removing corruption.
- **YOM HABIKKURIM (Firstfruits)** — Gratitude for the first of the harvest. Covenant acknowledgment that all provision comes from Yahweh.
- **SHAVUOT (Feast of Weeks)** — The giving of the Covenant instruction (Torah) at Sinai. Anniversary of covenant.
- **YOM TERUAH (Day of Trumpets)** — 1st of the 7th month. Shouting, trumpets, solemn anticipation.
- **YOM KIPPUR (Day of Atonement)** — The holiest day. Fasting, reflection, seeking right-standing.
- **SUKKOT (Feast of Tabernacles)** — The great harvest festival. Seven days of feasting, family, dwelling in booths, joy.
- **SHEMINI ATZERET** — The eighth day of assembly. Covenant conclusion.

Each of these appointments provides what people seek in holidays: **community, meaning, memory, gratitude, solemnity, and joy**. They do not require the names of foreign deities. They do not carry death-spirit mythology. They are not commercial constructs. They are the **Covenant's own sacred rhythm**, and they have been waiting for every generation to return to them.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:2 — "These are the appointed feasts of Yahweh, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them."

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:19–20 — "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving Yahweh your Elohim, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days."

SECTION 10 — COVENANT CONCLUSION

This covenant witness has not been composed to condemn individuals or declare anyone "unsaved" for celebrating a birthday or putting up a Christmas tree. **We are not the court; Yahweh (יהוה) is the Judge. We are witnesses** — called to present the evidence of the Covenant faithfully and without addition or subtraction.

The evidence is clear:

- Every major Western holiday carries documented, multi-witness historical continuity with pre-Israelite pagan solar, fertility, death-spirit, and deity-worship systems.
- The Tanakh contains explicit, repeated commands not to adopt the worship customs of surrounding nations — even when rebranded as worship of Yahweh.
- Birthday celebrations originated in Egyptian divine-coronation ritual, Greek goddess offerings (Artemis cake/candle), and pagan spirit-appeasement. The Tanakh records two birthdays, both resulting in executions, and its wisdom tradition explicitly values the day of death over the day of birth.
- Yahweh (יהוה) has already provided seven appointed Moadim — covenant times of family, community, memory, joy, gratitude, and solemn reflection — that fulfill every human need that drives the holiday impulse.
- For Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike, the return to the Tanakh covenant calendar is not a step backward — it is a step home.

The question is not whether the nations' holidays have **some good** in them. The question **Yahweh (יהוה)** asks is simpler and more direct: "**Have I commanded this?**"

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:8 — "You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes."

What is right in our own eyes is not the standard. What **Yahweh (יהוה)** commands is the standard. The Moadim are His commands. The holidays of the nations are man's additions. The Covenant — tested by Devarim 19:15 — speaks clearly.

PO Box 762 | Pearl River, Louisiana 70452

miqdashbethel.org | 985-250-9060

miqdashbethel@gmail.com

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EXPANDED WITNESS 4 — "MAKE NO MENTION OF THEIR NAMES"

THE NAMES OF THE GODS ARE ALL AROUND US: A COVENANT RESPONSE TO COMMERCE, CULTURE, AND DAILY LIFE

The common response to Shemot (Exodus) 23:13 is to narrow its scope to formal religious speech — prayer, ritual invocation, liturgy. If I am not standing at an altar calling on Zeus, the argument goes, then I am not "mentioning" any god's name. This interpretation is understandable. It is also, under examination of the Hebrew text and the broader covenant context, **insufficient**.

The world in which we live in 2026 is saturated with the names of the gods of the nations. They appear on the tires of our vehicles, the shoes on our feet, the candy in our children's hands, the coolers in our kitchens, the planets named in our astronomy, and the days of the week on our calendars. The covenant people of **Yahweh (יהוה)** must grapple with this honestly, without either dismissing it or descending into an impractical separatism that makes daily life impossible. The Tanakh provides the framework.

STEP 1 — WHAT DOES THE HEBREW ACTUALLY SAY?

The critical phrase in Shemot 23:13 is:

Shemot (Exodus) 23:13 — "Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips."

The Hebrew word translated "mention" is תִּזְכִּירוּ (**tazkiru**, from the root זָכַר, H2142). The Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB) lexicon defines H2142 as: **"to remember, to recall, to mention, to invoke, to call to mind in order to honor."** The HALOT lexicon adds the sense of **"to bring someone to remembrance before another — especially in the context of ritual or formal acknowledgment."**

The companion phrase **"nor let it be heard on your lips"** employs the Hebrew יִשְׁמַע (**yishama**, from שָׁמַע, H8085) — **"to be heard, to be proclaimed, to be made audible."** The command is not merely about silent thought — it is about what is **regularly spoken, habitually referenced, and consistently honored** in daily life.

The reinforcing witness comes from **Yehoshua (Joshua) 23:7**:

Yehoshua (Joshua) 23:7 — "...that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them."

Yehoshua's list — **mention** → **swear** → **serve** → **bow down** — describes a progression of engagement. **Mentioning is the first step on the ladder** toward the deeper levels of idolatrous

involvement. The covenant's concern is not only with formal worship — it is with the **normalization and casual familiarity** of foreign deity names in covenant life. Two Tanakh witnesses establish this.

STEP 2 — THE GODS ARE IN THE DICTIONARY: DAYS, MONTHS, AND PLANETS

Before we even get to commercial brands, we must acknowledge that the gods of the nations are embedded in the basic vocabulary of Western civilization — the very calendar and the very sky.

The Days of the Week:

- **Sunday** — "Sun's Day." The sun was worshiped as a deity across Egypt (Ra/Aten), Babylon (Shamash), and Rome (Sol Invictus).
- **Monday** — "Moon's Day." The moon goddess (Selene/Diana/Sin) was widely worshiped in the ancient Near East.
- **Tuesday** — "Tiw's Day." Tiw (Tyr) is the Norse god of war and single combat.
- **Wednesday** — "Woden's Day." Woden (Odin) is the Norse chief deity.
- **Thursday** — "Thor's Day." Thor is the Norse god of thunder.
- **Friday** — "Frigg's Day." Frigg (Freya) is the Norse goddess of love and marriage.
- **Saturday** — "Saturn's Day." Saturn is the Roman god of agriculture and time — the same deity whose festival (Saturnalia) underlies Christmas.

The Months of the Year (Gregorian/Roman Calendar):

- **January** — Janus, Roman god of beginnings and doorways.
- **March** — Mars, Roman god of war.
- **April** — Possibly Aphrodite (Venus); alternatively from Latin aperire (to open). Disputed, but deeply Greco-Roman.
- **May** — Maia, Roman goddess of growth and fertility.
- **June** — Juno, the Roman queen of the gods (equivalent to Hera).

The Planets (and their embedded deity names):

- **Mercury** — Roman messenger god.
- **Venus** — Roman goddess of love (Ishtar/Astarte parallel).
- **Mars** — Roman god of war.
- **Jupiter** — Roman king of the gods (Zeus).
- **Saturn** — Roman agricultural deity/time god.
- **Uranus** — Greek god of the sky (primordial deity).
- **Neptune** — Roman god of the sea (Poseidon).
- **Pluto** — Roman god of the underworld (Hades).

The covenant person who refuses to say "Thursday" or "January" has opted out of Western language itself. This is where the argument becomes important to calibrate carefully — because **Yahweh's** (יהוה) command must be applied with the full weight of the text, not less — but also not more than what it carries.

STEP 3 — COMMERCIAL BRANDS CARRYING DEITY NAMES: A DOCUMENTED SURVEY

The following table documents major commercial brands and products in active everyday use whose names are taken directly from the deities of the nations. This is not an exhaustive list. It is a representative witness to how thoroughly the names of the gods have been embedded into commercial life.

BRAND / PRODUCT NAME	DEITY ORIGIN	COVENANT CONSIDERATION
Nike (footwear/apparel)	Nike — Greek goddess of victory (Νίκη). Symbol of divine athletic triumph in Greek religion.	One of the most globally recognized brands. The "swoosh" is her wing. The name is spoken billions of times daily worldwide.
Mars (candy bar / confectionery)	Mars — Roman god of war. The brand name was chosen by founder Franklin Mars, deliberately invoking the Roman deity.	Sold in every supermarket, convenience store, and vending machine globally. Name casually consumed with the product.
Venus (Gillette razor brand)	Venus — Roman goddess of love and beauty (parallel to Ishtar/Astarte of the Tanakh). The "queen of heaven."	Venus/Astarte is one of the most directly condemned deities in the Tanakh (Yirmeyahu 44:17–19, Shoftim/Judges 2:13).
Mercury (automobiles / element)	Mercury — Roman messenger deity, guide of souls to the underworld (psychopomp). Equivalent to Greek Hermes.	Ford Mercury vehicles were named directly for the deity. The element mercury carries the same origin.

Apollo (tires / space program)	Apollo — Greek god of the sun, music, prophecy, and healing. One of the most central Olympian deities.	Apollo Tires is a global brand. NASA's Apollo moon program was explicitly named for the sun-deity by its planners.
Hermes (luxury fashion)	Hermes — Greek messenger god, patron of commerce and thieves, guide of souls. Roman equivalent: Mercury.	The Hermes brand (Paris) is among the most prestigious luxury fashion houses on earth. Named directly for the deity.
Pandora (jewelry / music streaming)	Pandora — Greek mythological figure whose "box" (pithos jar) released all evil into the world. A creation of the gods.	The name itself carries the mythology of unleashed evil by divine design. Worn as jewelry; listened to daily as music.
Amazon (retail / technology)	Amazons — Mythological race of warrior women from Greek/Scythian tradition, associated with the war goddess.	The largest retailer on earth. Its logo, brand identity, and Alexa AI assistant are household presences worldwide.
Oracle (technology / database)	Oracle — The prophetic voice of Apollo at Delphi. The Delphic Oracle was the most authoritative pagan divination site in the ancient world.	Oracle Corporation, one of the world's largest tech companies, is literally named for the pagan divination channel of Apollo.
Atlas (various brands)	Atlas — Greek Titan condemned to hold up the heavens. His image (holding the globe) appears on countless brands.	Atlas Air, Atlas Copco, Atlas Van Lines. The Titan carrying the world is a ubiquitous commercial symbol.
Midas (auto service)	Midas — Greek mythological king granted the "golden touch" by Dionysus (god of wine/revelry).	"Trust the Midas touch" — the brand explicitly invokes the mythological legend tied to a deity's gift. Auto service chain, widely used.

Olympus (cameras / medical)	Olympus — Mount Olympus, the divine dwelling of all twelve Greek gods.	Olympus cameras are standard in professional photography and medical imaging. The brand carries the divine mountain's name.
Ajax (cleaning products)	Ajax (Aias) — Greek hero of the Trojan War, known for his strength. Name also used in tech (Ajax programming).	"Stronger than dirt" — the strength-of-the-hero mythology is embedded in the brand's core marketing identity.
Vulcan (materials / tech)	Vulcan — Roman god of fire, the forge, and volcanoes. Patron of blacksmiths and craftsmen.	Vulcan Materials Company (largest U.S. construction aggregates producer), Vulcan chemicals, and others carry the forge-god's name.
Aurora (various brands)	Aurora — Roman goddess of the dawn (Greek: Eos). The personification of sunrise in Roman religion.	Aurora cannabis, Aurora healthcare, Aurora lighting — multiple major brands carry the dawn-goddess name.
Cerberus (finance)	Cerberus — The three-headed dog guarding the gates of the Greek underworld (Hades/Sheol).	Cerberus Capital Management is a major private equity firm. It is literally named for the guardian of the realm of the dead.
Janus (pharmaceutical / finance)	Janus — Roman god of doorways, beginnings, and transitions. January is named for him.	Janus Henderson Investors, Janus Films, multiple pharma brands. The two-faced god of transitions lends his name to financial and health sectors.
Bacchus (wine brands)	Bacchus — Roman god of wine and revelry (Greek: Dionysus). The "dying and rising" vegetation deity.	Bacchus wine brand, Bacchus bars/restaurants globally. A deity whose mythology directly parallels Tammuz, condemned in Yechezkel 8.
Goodyear (tires)	Named after Charles Goodyear, inventor of vulcanized rubber — however, "vulcanization" itself is named after Vulcan, the Roman god of fire and the forge.	The product Goodyear sells is created through a process bearing the name of a Roman deity. Indirect but documented chain.

Gott (coolers)	"Gott" is the German and Old Norse/Germanic word for "God" — carrying direct theological weight in the language of the Germanic peoples whose pantheon included Odin, Thor, and Tiw.	Gott coolers (now produced under Igloo) carry a name that is the Germanic linguistic root of deity-reference used across the Norse/Germanic religious tradition.
Saturn (automobiles)	Saturn — Roman god of agriculture, time, and the harvest. The Saturnalia festival underlies Christmas (Section 4A).	General Motors named its Saturn division after the deity. The same deity whose festival forms the foundation of the Christmas holiday.
Styx (waterproofing)	Styx — The river of the dead in Greek mythology. The boundary between the living world and the underworld (Hades). Swearing by the Styx was the most binding oath among the gods.	Styx waterproofing and thread-sealant brand names are taken from the mythological river separating the living from the dead.

STEP 4 — THE COVENANT STANDARD: A THREE-LEVEL FRAMEWORK

The Tanakh does not require a covenant person to move to a monastery and reject all contact with a world saturated in the names of foreign deities. But it **does** require something more than a casual shrug. The following three-level covenant framework distinguishes between the types of engagement the text actually addresses:

LEVEL 1 — PASSIVE CULTURAL EMBEDDEDNESS (DAYS, MONTHS, PLANETS)

Hebrew Tanakh Assessment: The days of the week, months of the year, and names of the planets as used in common Western language function as **positional markers** in everyday discourse, not as invocations of deity. When a covenant person says "Thursday" or "January," the overwhelming weight of intent is "**the fifth day of this week**" or "**the first month of the Gregorian calendar**" — not "praise to Thor" or "honor to Janus."

However: the **covenant alternative** exists and should be known. **Yahweh's (יהוה)** own calendar names the days by number: Yom Rishon (First Day), Yom Sheni (Second Day), Yom Shlishi (Third Day), through Yom Shishi (Sixth Day) — and the seventh is **Shabbat**. The months are numbered:

Chodesh Rishon (First Month, Aviv), etc. A covenant community that intentionally uses **Yahweh's calendar language** internally — "we gather on Yom Shishi" rather than "Friday" — practices a form of covenant awareness without requiring separation from the broader world's calendar terminology.

LEVEL 1 VERDICT

Using days, months, and planets by their common Western names in ordinary speech: NOT the same as invoking the deity. Covenant awareness is the goal. Using Yahweh's numbered calendar internally is the higher standard.

LEVEL 2 — COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS BEARING DEITY NAMES (NIKE, MARS, VENUS, APOLLO, ETC.)

This is where the debate gets heated — and where the covenant must be applied honestly without adding to or taking from it.

The text of Shemot 23:13 says "**make no mention of the names**" and "**let it not be heard on your lips.**" The critical question is: **does purchasing or using a product whose brand name carries a deity's name constitute "mentioning" that deity?**

The honest answer is: **it depends on the degree of conscious engagement.**

Consider the **Nike** example. There are two separate acts happening when someone wears Nike shoes:

- **Act 1:** Purchasing footwear that performs a practical function. The shoe's covenant-neutral purpose is foot protection and athletic performance.
- **Act 2:** Regularly, publicly, habitually proclaiming — through logo display, verbal brand reference ("I love my Nikes"), and consumer identity — the name of the Greek goddess of victory.

Act 1 alone is a commerce transaction. Act 2 — the **habitual, affectionate, public proclamation** of the deity's name as a brand identity — begins to approach what **tazkiru** (H2142) describes: "**to bring to remembrance, to honor through regular mention.**"

The covenant concern escalates when the brand engagement becomes **devotional** — and in modern consumer culture, brand devotion is not a metaphor. People **collect** Nike. They build **identity** around Nike. They **display** the Nike swoosh (which is the wing of the goddess Nike) as a symbol of who they are. At that level, the covenant language of Yehoshua 23:7 becomes applicable: the progression from mention → swear by → serve → bow down.

The same analysis applies to **Venus razors** — whose deity is one of the most directly condemned figures in the Tanakh (see **Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 44:17–19**, the women baking cakes for the "Queen of Heaven"); to **Mars** (candy and the Roman war-god); to **Bacchus** (wine brand and the dying/rising vegetation god parallel to Tammuz); and to **Oracle** (literally named for the pagan divination channel of Apollo at Delphi — a direct violation of Devarim 18:10–12, which prohibits inquiring of oracles and divination).

LEVEL 2 VERDICT

Purchasing a product for its practical function: covenant-permissible at the transaction level. Habitually, affectionately, and publicly proclaiming the deity's name as a brand identity: approaches and may meet the threshold of tazkiru (H2142). Covenant discernment is required. Where alternatives exist, the higher standard is to choose them.

LEVEL 3 — ACTIVE CELEBRATION, DISPLAY, AND PROMOTION OF DEITY-NAMED BRANDS AND SYSTEMS

Level 3 is not in dispute. When a covenant person:

- Tattoos the Nike swoosh (goddess wing) on their body as a permanent identity mark — this is an active display of a deity's symbol (compare Devarim 14:1 against self-marking).
- Names a business, ministry, or child after a pagan deity — this is direct invocation.
- Uses Oracle's "Oracle" branding in ministry/covenant contexts — invoking the Delphic divination system by name in covenant work.
- Wears a Venus razor as a spiritual self-care ritual while simultaneously celebrating the Easter (Eostre/Astarte/Venus) holiday — the cumulative weight of these practices constitutes systematic normalization of foreign deity names in covenant life.
- Declines an alternative specifically to maintain engagement with the deity-named brand — at this level, the mention has become a choice and the intent becomes discernible.

LEVEL 3 VERDICT

Active display, permanent marking, naming of covenant persons or institutions after pagan deities, or deliberate choice to maintain deity-brand identity over available alternatives: this is the direct application of Shemot 23:13. The command applies fully.

STEP 5 — ANSWERING THE COMMON ARGUMENTS DIRECTLY

ARGUMENT 1: "IT'S JUST A BRAND NAME. NO ONE THINKS ABOUT THE DEITY WHEN THEY BUY NIKE SHOES."

Covenant Response: "No one thinks about it" is precisely the concern. The normalization of deity names into cultural vocabulary is not morally neutral — it is how **Yahweh's** (יהוה) people throughout the Tanakh drifted from covenant. They stopped **thinking** about Baal. They just adopted the practice because "everyone does it" and "it's just a local custom." The covenant command is not suspended because **zakar** has become unconscious. It calls covenant people back to **consciousness**. The command to remember (**zakar**) includes the obligation to be aware of what we are regularly placing on our lips and bodies.

ARGUMENT 2: "YOU CAN'T AVOID IT. THE WHOLE WORLD USES THESE NAMES. ARE YOU GOING TO STOP SPEAKING ENGLISH?"

Covenant Response: This is the strongest practical objection, and it deserves a honest engagement rather than dismissal. Complete avoidance of every word with pagan origin in the English language is not achievable — and the Tanakh itself does not demand it. **Yahweh (יהוה)** required His covenant people to **live in the world** while not being **of** the world's worship systems. The distinction the covenant draws is between **unavoidable linguistic inheritance** and **chosen covenant devotion**.

A covenant person who says "Thursday" in giving directions to a neighbor is not violating Shemot 23:13. A covenant person who builds a ministry on an "Oracle" platform, names their child "Venus," tattoos a Swoosh (goddess wing) on their arm, and celebrates the Easter (Eostre/Astarte) holiday — **while simultaneously arguing they are innocent because "everyone uses these names" — is suppressing the covenant's call to consciousness.**

The question **Yahweh (יהוה)** asks of His covenant people is: **"When you have a choice, what do you choose?"**

ARGUMENT 3: "THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THESE BRANDS DON'T EVEN KNOW THE DEITY CONNECTION ANYMORE. THE MEANING IS LOST."

Covenant Response: The meaning being lost to the marketer or the consumer does not mean it is lost to the history — or to the covenant standard. **Yahweh (יהוה)** told Israel not to inquire about the gods of the nations **"after they have been destroyed before you"** (Devarim 12:30). The destruction of the culture around the practice does not retroactively purify the practice or the name.

Moreover — the etymology has not disappeared. The goddess Nike's wing is **literally** the design of the Swoosh. The Delphic Oracle's prophetic function is **literally** the reason Oracle Corporation chose that name (its database "speaks knowledge" the way the oracle "spoke the will of Apollo"). The original meaning was intentionally invoked by the brand creators — it is not the ignorance of the modern consumer that erases it.

ARGUMENT 4: "THIS IS TOO STRICT. YAHWEH UNDERSTANDS OUR HEARTS."

Covenant Response: Yes, **Yahweh (יהוה)** does know the heart. The Tanakh says so repeatedly. But "knowing the heart" is consistently paired with **the demand for covenant obedience** — not used as an exemption from it. The argument that "Yahweh sees my good intent" is the same argument used by the Israelites who brought Canaanite worship forms into the Tabernacle "for Yahweh." The response of **Yahweh (יהוה)** to that argument is recorded in the deaths of Nadav and Avihu (Vayikra 10:1–2, "strange fire"), the Peor incident (Bamidbar 25), and the entirety of the prophetic literature.

Shemuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 15:22 — "Does Yahweh delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken better than the fat of rams."

STEP 6 — THE COVENANT STANDARD: PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR 2026

The goal of Shemot 23:13 is **covenant consciousness** — an ongoing, active awareness of how the names of the nations' gods flow through daily life, coupled with deliberate, increasing separation at every point where choice is available. The standard is not zero-contact perfection. The standard is **directional movement**: moving toward covenant, not toward accommodation.

Practical Covenant Standards for Daily Life:

- **Know the origin of the names.** A covenant person should not be ignorant of what Nike means, what Venus means, what Oracle means. Knowledge is not legalism — it is the prerequisite of covenant consciousness.
- **Where alternatives exist, prefer them.** If a competitor offers comparable quality without deity branding, choose it. This is the covenant principle of "flee from idolatry" (compare Shemot 23:24, Devarim 7:5) applied in a commerce context.
- **Never name covenant institutions, children, or ministries after pagan deities.** This is the clearest direct application of "let it not be heard on your lips" — it belongs on the lips of the covenant community's most intimate naming practices.
- **Avoid permanent body marks with deity symbols.** Devarim 14:1 prohibits self-marking in mourning contexts; the broader covenant principle of the body as a covenant vessel (see Vayikra 19:28) applies to marking with the symbols of foreign deities.
- **Use Yahweh's calendar language internally.** Within the covenant household and community, use numbered days and Yahweh's appointed month names rather than Thursday and January as the primary calendar reference.
- **Teach the children.** The covenant command in Devarim 6:7 — "teach them diligently to your children" — includes teaching what these names mean. A child who knows that Thursday = Thor's Day is better equipped for covenant consciousness than one who absorbs the name unexamined.
- **Do not build covenant ministry on Oracle, Venus, Mars, or Apollo platforms.** The Oracle database example is particularly relevant: a covenant institution that manages its membership in an "Oracle" database — a system named for the pagan divination channel of Apollo — has allowed the name of a foreign god's prophetic system into the infrastructure of covenant work. Prefer covenant-neutral naming wherever possible in ministry tools.

CLOSING COVENANT STATEMENT ON WITNESS 4

Shemot (Exodus) 23:13 is not a call to impossible cultural separation. It is a call to **wakefulness**. The covenant people of **Yahweh (יהוה)** are called to be awake to what the nations have named and why — and to walk with increasing intentionality away from those names and toward the language, calendar, and identity that **Yahweh (יהוה)** Himself provided.

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 16:19–21 — "O Yahweh, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, to You shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: 'Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit. Can man make for himself gods? Such are not gods!' Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know My power and My might, and they shall know that My name is Yahweh."

The nations themselves — according to the prophet **Yirmeyahu** — will one day confess that they inherited nothing but lies in the names and systems they have built. That confession is coming. The covenant community's task is not to wait for it — it is to **live it now**: naming what is, seeing clearly, and walking toward **Yahweh (יהוה)** in every domain where choice is available.

— INSERT INTO SECTION 3, FOLLOWING WITNESS 4 —

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