

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Plain-Language Study for Every Reader — Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 184A

THE BITE OF NESHEKH, PLAINLY TOLD: REVERSE MORTGAGES AND YAHWEH'S LAW AGAINST USURY

A Plain-Language Companion to Document 184 — Written So Any Man or Woman, Especially the Everyday Christian Reader, Can Understand What Yahweh (God) Says About Charging Interest, and Why It Matters for the Reverse Mortgage Industry Today

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REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	⬤ ISLAM
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DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the Tanakh — the written covenant of Yahweh. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by Yahweh; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and Yahweh's own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Tehillim [Psalms] 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because Yahweh's covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written Tanakh. Yahweh (יהוה) and Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Hebrew book names are given with English in parentheses. Hebrew transliterations appear in bold italic with English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, and the Qur'an are cited as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions. This companion edition (184A) restates Document 184 in plain, everyday language for the average reader — and for the Christian reader in particular, the covenant name Yahweh is given throughout as "Yahweh (God)" so the text reads naturally in a Christian voice while preserving the sacred name itself.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

HEBREW NAME	ENGLISH NAME	KEY PASSAGES CITED
בְּרֵאשִׁית (Bereshit)	Genesis	49:17 (the snake that bites the horse's heel)
שְׁמוֹת (Shemot)	Exodus	22:24-26 (no interest from the poor; widow/orphan; pledge)
וַיִּקְרָא (Vayikra)	Leviticus	19:13; 25:35-37 (fear God, not neshekh or tarbit)
דְּבָרִים (Devarim)	Deuteronomy	19:15; 23:20-21; 24:6,10-17; 27:19
נְחֵמְיָה (Nechemiah)	Nehemiah	5:1-13 (people losing homes; the interest stopped)
תְּהִלִּים (Tehillim)	Psalms	15:1-5 (who may dwell safely with God)
מִשְׁלֵי (Mishlei)	Proverbs	22:22-23; 23:32; 28:8 (wine that bites; wealth by neshekh)
עָמוֹס (Amos)	Amos	5:19 (bitten by a snake inside your own house)
יְחֶזְקֵאל (Yechezkel)	Ezekiel	18:5-13,17; 22:6-12 (the good man and the violent man)

I. WHAT A REVERSE MORTGAGE ACTUALLY IS, IN PLAIN WORDS

If you're 62 or older and own your home, a company will let you borrow against the value of that home and give you cash, a line of credit, or monthly payments. You don't have to make a monthly payment back to them. It sounds like a gift. It isn't. It's a loan, and like every loan, it has to be paid back — usually when you move, sell the house, or pass away.

Here's the part most people don't realize: even though you're not paying anything each month, the debt is still growing every single month. Interest gets added on top of what you already owe, and then next month interest gets charged on that new, bigger number too. This is called **compounding**, and it means the debt grows faster and faster the longer it sits — which, sadly, is exactly the situation for an elderly homeowner who may live in that house for another ten, twenty, even thirty years.

I-A. Where the Money Really Goes

On top of the interest, there are fees stacked on fees: an insurance charge the government requires (2% of the home's value, right up front), an ongoing insurance charge every year after that, an origination fee to the lender (up to \$6,000), plus appraisal fees, title fees, and closing costs. Almost none of it is paid out of pocket — it all just gets added to the loan.

Which means the interest starts compounding on the fees themselves from day one, before the homeowner has spent a single dollar.

Industry reports themselves admit that on a \$200,000 loan, the total interest and fees can add up to more than \$180,000 over just ten years. That's not a rare worst-case example — that's what the math does when interest compounds monthly against a fixed asset like a house.

I-B. "No Monthly Payment" Doesn't Mean "No Risk"

- You still have to pay your property taxes and homeowner's insurance every year for the rest of your life in that house — miss those, and the company can foreclose on you, even though you never missed a "mortgage payment."
- The debt grows every month whether you touch it or not, which means the older you get and the longer you stay, the more of your home's value gets eaten up.
- It's your house — the one thing most families plan to leave to their children — that's on the line, and it's slowly shrinking in value to the family the whole time the loan sits there.

II. REAL STORIES — WHAT HAS ACTUALLY HAPPENED TO REAL PEOPLE

Yahweh (God)'s law in Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 says a matter must be established by two or three witnesses, not rumor or feeling. So here are real, documented cases — from federal courts, federal investigators, and news reporting — not exaggeration.

A Man Went to Prison for This

A businessman in Chicago named Mark Steven Diamond was sentenced to **more than seventeen years in federal prison** for tricking over 100 elderly homeowners into signing reverse mortgage paperwork they thought was for home repairs. He took the loan money and, in many cases, never even did the work. A federal investigator called it a scheme that "preyed upon their trust and devastated them financially."

A Family Was Given Three Days to Leave

In a 2026 federal lawsuit, a woman's elderly relative passed away with a reverse mortgage on her home. The company allegedly lied and said foreclosure had already started, refused to hand over the loan paperwork the family was legally entitled to, and sent an unknown, unsupervised worker into the house who damaged personal belongings. Public complaints connected to that same company describe families being given as little as **three days' notice** to move out of homes their parents had lived in for decades.

A Widow Lost the Ability to Save Her Own Home

A lawsuit filed on behalf of an older homeowner describes a company's product that took a share of her home's value in exchange for cash. When she fell behind on a different bill, she discovered she couldn't refinance her way out of trouble — because the company's claim on her equity blocked her. Her only way to keep her house was to pay the entire balance back in cash, all at once, which she couldn't do. Advocates who work with elderly homeowners say this pattern looks exactly like a foreclosure scam: someone profits by stepping in when a person is desperate, and walks away with the house.

The Government's Own Warning List

Even the federal housing department's own fraud investigators publish a warning list of common tricks: contractors who talk seniors into a reverse mortgage to pay for repairs the house didn't need; salesmen who push the loan money into investments that earn less than the loan is costing in interest; family members or caregivers who take out a reverse

mortgage in an elderly relative's name and pocket the money; and scammers who simply disappear once the check clears, leaving the homeowner's equity gone and their home at risk over unpaid taxes on an inflated home value.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice, Northern District of Illinois; Mattia v. PHH Mortgage Corp., E.D.N.Y. (2026); Legal Counsel for the Elderly litigation as reported by Street Sense Media (2026); HUD Office of Inspector General Fraud Bulletin.

III. WHY YAHWEH (GOD) CALLS INTEREST A "BITE"

When the Bible talks about charging interest on a loan, it doesn't use a neutral word like "fee" or "charge." The Hebrew word is *nesbekh*, and it literally means **a bite** — the same word used elsewhere in Scripture for a snake bite. That's not an accident. **Yahweh (God)** chose that word on purpose, and the other places it shows up in the Bible help explain why.

A Bite You Don't See Coming

In **Bereshit (Genesis) 49:17**, a snake is described lying in the road, waiting to bite a horse's heel as it passes by. The horse never sees the attack coming from the front — it gets struck from below, in a spot it wasn't watching, and only falls after the damage is already done. That's exactly how interest works on a loan like a reverse mortgage. Nobody signs the papers thinking, "This is going to cost me my house." The danger isn't in front of you at closing. It's underneath the deal, and you don't feel it until much later.

A Bite That Happens in Your Own Home

In **Amos 5:19**, a man runs from a lion, escapes a bear, finally makes it home safe — and gets bitten by a snake hiding in his own wall. The point of that verse is that the danger caught up with him in the one place he thought he was finally safe. That's the tragedy of reverse mortgage abuse: the harm doesn't happen out in the world. It happens inside the very house the person was trying to protect. The home that was supposed to be their safety net becomes the thing that bites them.

A Bite That Feels Good at First

In **Mishlei (Proverbs) 23:32**, wine is described as smooth and pleasant going down — but "at the last it bites like a serpent." In other words, the harm is hidden behind something that feels fine, even good, at the beginning. This is exactly how reverse mortgages are marketed: "no monthly payment," "free money," "peace of mind in retirement." It sounds good going down. The bite comes later — years down the road, when the interest has piled up and the family finds out how much of the house is gone.

Why "Bite" and Not Just "Interest"

A snake bite often doesn't hurt right away. The poison is small and quiet at first — you might not even notice it entered your body. It's only afterward, as it spreads, that you realize real damage was done, and by then it's often too late to undo. That's exactly how compounding interest works on a reverse mortgage. In year one, it's a small percentage, barely noticeable. Nobody feels it. But it keeps spreading month after month, year after year, and by the time the borrower has passed away or moved out, the "small bite" has consumed a huge portion — sometimes nearly all — of the equity in the home. **Yahweh (God)** named the sin this way because that's exactly what usury does: it doesn't attack all at once. It bites quietly, and the real damage is only discovered once it's already done.

The Other Side of the Same Coin: "Increase"

The Bible pairs *nesbekh* ("bite") with another word, *tarbit* ("increase") — same transaction, described from the lender's side instead of the borrower's side. What the lender's paperwork calls **growth** — the loan balance climbing higher every month — is the very same money that, from the homeowner's side, is a **bite** out of their home. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:36-37** names both words together on purpose, so that no lender could ever say, "I didn't take a bite, I only took a fair increase." **Yahweh (God)** calls it both, because it is both — one act, two names, and both of them forbidden.

IV. NEHEMIAH'S STORY — PEOPLE LOSING THEIR HOMES, JUST LIKE TODAY

Long before reverse mortgages existed, this exact problem happened to God's own people, and the Bible tells the story plainly in **Nehemiah (Nehemiah) 5:1-13**. People were so poor and in debt that they had put up their fields, their vineyards, and even their houses as collateral just to get food and pay their taxes. They cried out, "Our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children as their children; yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves." They were losing everything, to their own countrymen, because of interest.

The lenders were the wealthy nobles and officials — people from their own community, charging interest against their own neighbors. Nehemiah didn't offer them a counseling session or a new disclosure form. He confronted them directly and said, **"What you are doing is not good... Let us abandon this exacting of interest. Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses."** And the lenders agreed. They gave it all back. The whole assembly said "Amen," and they praised **Yahweh (God)** for it.

Nehemiah's Day and Our Day, Side by Side

Nehemiah's Time (About 2,500 Years Ago)	Today's Reverse Mortgage
People put up their houses and land to get a loan	People put up their one house to get a loan
Interest kept growing against people who had little	Interest and fees compound every month against the balance
Families were at risk of losing everything, even their children	Families are at risk of losing the home and the inheritance
The lenders were supposed to be helping their own people	The industry markets itself as helping seniors in retirement
Nehemiah made them stop and give everything back	No one is currently requiring anything be given back

God's law also had a built-in safety net called the Jubilee (Vayikra/Leviticus 25) — every fiftieth year, land that had been lost to debt automatically went back to the original family, no matter what was still owed. Why? Because, as the verse says, "the land is Mine." A family was never supposed to be able to lose everything forever over a debt. A financial product built so that compounding interest can quietly consume an entire family home, with no limit and no year of return, runs directly against that principle — whether or not it's technically legal today.

V. WHAT JEWS, CHRISTIANS, AND MUSLIMS ALL AGREE ON

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☾ ISLAM
Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Jewish law took the Torah's command against neshekh and tarbit so seriously that it built out detailed rules covering not just the lender, but anyone who helps arrange an interest-bearing loan between fellow believers. It all still traces back to the same verses this document is built on.	Yeshua (Jesus) himself told His followers to "lend, expecting nothing in return" (Luke 6:34-35). For well over a thousand years, the Christian Church taught that charging interest was a serious sin — it was only in more recent centuries, under commercial pressure, that this teaching was quietly set aside. That was a departure from the Bible's own standard, not a correction of it.	The Qur'an forbids riba (interest) in some of its strongest language, warning that those who continue the practice are at war with God Himself, and instructing lenders to accept back only what they originally lent — nothing more. On this specific point, it lines up remarkably closely with what the Torah already said.

Three very different faiths, each claiming roots in God's revelation, all arrive at the same conclusion: charging interest that grows and grows against a vulnerable person is wrong. Defenders of reverse mortgages point out that the loans are regulated, require counseling, and guarantee you'll never owe more than the house is worth. All of that may be true — but regulating a bite is not the same as removing it. The law God gave doesn't say "charge interest carefully." It says don't take the bite at all.

VI. WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

None of this means every reverse mortgage is a criminal scam, or that every family who has one was cheated. The court cases in Section II involve specific bad actors, not every lender or every loan. But the underlying design of the product — interest and insurance premiums compounding every month against one fixed, irreplaceable asset, owned mostly by elderly people, many of them widowed or alone — is *neshekh* by the Bible's own definition. And it's aimed at exactly the group of people Scripture goes out of its way to protect: the elderly, the widow, the person with no one left to fight for them.

Nehemiah didn't just regulate the interest his people were charging each other — he ended it and made things right. **Yechezkel (Ezekiel)** put usury in the same category as violence. **Tehillim (Psalms) 15** says that living free of usury is part of what it means to dwell safely with **Yahweh (God)**. This document is a plain-spoken call — to lenders, to regulators, and to every family considering one of these loans — to weigh this practice against God's own standard, not just against what the law currently allows.

If you or someone you love is considering a reverse mortgage, or already has one, this isn't a reason for shame or fear — it's a reason to ask hard questions, get outside help from someone who isn't selling you anything, and understand exactly what is compounding against your home, and how fast.