

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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DOCUMENT 194

SLAVERY, SERVITUDE, AND THE COVENANT: EVED (עֶבֶד) IN THE WRITTEN TANAKH

A Three-Religion Covenant Deep Dive

What Does Yahweh's Written Covenant Actually Say About Human Bondage?

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REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Eved (<i>eved</i> , עֶבֶד) servitude in Torah is time-bound, covenant-regulated bondservice — never race-based chattel property. The Yovel (<i>yovel</i> , jubilee) horizon governs every term of service.	Household codes (Ephesians, Colossians) address 1st-century Roman doulos relationships. The Tanakh's own manstealing law (Shemot 21:16) was the abolitionist movement's primary scriptural weapon against the transatlantic trade.	The Qur'an narrows lawful enslavement, multiplies paths to manumission (2:177; 24:33; 90:13), and treats freeing a captive as one of the highest acts of piety — a gradual, internal dismantling.

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 The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority.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. The **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

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.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Bereishit (Genesis), Shemot (Exodus), Vayikra (Leviticus), Devarim (Deuteronomy)	Foundation text — the eved (servitude) statutes, the manstealing prohibition, and the Yovel horizon
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), Amos	Prophetic witness against covenant violation of release and oppression of the bondservant
Ketuvim (Writings)	Iyov (Job), Tehillim (Psalms)	Wisdom witness to shared creation and equality of master and servant before Elohim

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — WHAT "SLAVERY" MEANS AND DOES NOT MEAN IN THE COVENANT TEXT

I-A. The English Word Carries Baggage the Hebrew Word Does Not

The English word 'slavery' arrives in the modern ear loaded with a single, specific historical referent: the race-based, hereditary, chattel bondage of the transatlantic trade — a system in which a human being was reduced by law to movable property, stripped of family, name, and legal personhood, on the basis of ancestry alone. When that word is used to translate the Hebrew *eved* (עֶבֶד, Strong's H5650), the reader imports an entire moral and historical apparatus that the Hebrew term does not carry. This document does not soften, hide, or explain away what the *Tanakh* actually says about *eved* status. It examines the text on its own terms, applies the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** two-or-three-witness standard to every historical claim, and then asks the harder question honestly: does the written covenant's law of servitude share a legal architecture with the transatlantic trade, or does it structurally forbid it?

I-B. The Hebrew Vocabulary of Bondservice

Three terms govern the Torah's servitude law. *Eved* (עֶבֶד, H5650) — from the root *avad* (עָבַד, *to work, serve*) — is the broadest term, applied to bondservants, to court officials ('*servants of the king*'), and even to Moshe (Moses) himself as '*eved Yahweh (servant of Yahweh)*' (**Devarim (Deuteronomy) 34:5**). The word does not inherently mean 'chattel property' — context and the governing statute determine the legal reality. *Amah* (אִמָּה, H519) and *shifchah* (שִׁפְחָה, H8198) designate a female bondservant, often within a household economy tied to marriage and inheritance law (**Bereishit (Genesis) 16:1, Bereishit (Genesis) 29:24**). None of the three terms is cognate with, or legally equivalent to, the property law that governed the transatlantic trade — a distinction this document develops in Section IV.

II. THE EVED IVRI — HEBREW BONDSERVICE LAW (SHEMOT 21:2–11; DEVARIM 15:12–18)

II-A. Shemot (Exodus) 21:2 — The Six-Year Limit

The Torah's first servitude statute sets an absolute time limit:

"If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing." (Shemot [Exodus] 21:2)

This is not a suggestion or an ideal — it is binding covenant law. An *eved ivri* (Hebrew bondservant) enters service typically through debt or poverty (**Vayikra [Leviticus] 25:39**) and is released automatically at the six-year mark, regardless of the master's wishes. No transatlantic slave code anywhere contained a mandatory, unconditional release provision of this kind.

II-B. The Ear-Piercing Provision — Voluntary Permanence, Not Imposed Bondage

The Torah records one path to extended service, and it is explicitly voluntary:

"But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to the judges... and pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever." (Shemot [Exodus] 21:5–6)

The servant himself must declare his preference before a judicial body — *elohim* in this verse referring to judges/magistrates in some readings, or brought *el ha-elohim* (to *Elohim*) at the sanctuary in others. The mark is a covenant sign of the servant's own choice, made in open court, not a brand imposed by force. This is the structural opposite of the transatlantic trade's system of coerced, hereditary, non-consensual bondage.

II-C. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 15:12–18 — Release With Provision, Not Release Empty-Handed

The Deuteronomic restatement of the law adds a provision absent from Exodus: the released servant must be sent away with material sustenance.

"And when you send him out free from you, you shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress... for he has been worth a double hired servant to you." (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 15:13–14, 18)

The rationale given is explicitly historical and covenantal:

"Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your Elohim redeemed you; therefore I command you this today." (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 15:15)

The covenant community's own experience of Egyptian bondage is the stated legal warrant for humane treatment of every bondservant. Israel's national memory of slavery is the theological engine of the entire statute.

III. THE EVED KENA'ANI — FOREIGN BONDSERVICE AND THE YOVEL HORIZON (VAYIKRA 25:39–46)

III-A. The Israelite/Foreign Distinction — And Its Discomfort

The two-or-three-witness standard requires this document to state plainly what **Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:44–46** says, without softening it:

"As for your male and female slaves whom you may have — you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are around you... You may bequeath them to your sons after you, to inherit as a possession forever." (Vayikra [Leviticus] 25:44, 46)

This text applies a harsher, hereditary standard to non-Israelite bondservants than to the *eved ivri* described in Section II. The honest covenant position does not erase this distinction to make the text more comfortable; it holds the tension and examines what the same chapter's surrounding law does with it.

III-B. The Hebrew Behind "Forever" — Achuzah (אָחֻזָּה) and Le'olam (לְעֹלָם)

Two Hebrew terms carry the weight of this statute. *Achuzah* (אָחֻזָּה, H272) means a held possession or landed inheritance — the same word used throughout Vayikra (Leviticus) 25 for tribal land allotments. *Le'olam* (לְעֹלָם, H5769) is usually rendered "forever," but the underlying noun *olam* denotes an age, a lifetime, or an indefinite long duration bounded by context — not necessarily an absolute, unending eternity in every use. The same word describes the ear-pierced Hebrew servant of Shemot (Exodus) 21:6, who serves "forever" (*le'olam*) — yet Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:40, in the very same chapter, subjects every Israelite bondservant to the Yovel release regardless of any "forever" declaration. The word itself does not settle the question of an absolute, unconditional lifetime hold; the surrounding statutes do. For the foreign bondservant of Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:44-46, no Yovel-release clause is written into the text — this document does not manufacture one that isn't there. But the following subsection shows the written Torah does not leave that category of person legally unprotected either.

III-C. Real, Enforceable Limits the Written Torah Places on This Category

The "*possession forever*" language of **Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:46** is real and this document does not soften it. But three written Torah statutes, plus one documented historical practice, apply directly to the foreign bondservant and impose limits fundamentally absent from the transatlantic chattel-slavery codes:

Mandatory freedom for injury. *"If a man strikes the eye of his slave... and destroys it, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. And if he knocks out the tooth of his slave... he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake."* (Shemot [Exodus] 21:26-27)

The statute names no exception for the foreign-born bondservant, and the historical rabbinic tradition reads this provision as extending, by extrapolation, to any of the body's major limbs and organs — a mandatory, automatic manumission triggered by the master's own act of injury. No transatlantic slave code contained a comparable, self-executing freedom-for-injury clause; Southern slave codes instead granted masters wide legal latitude in the physical punishment of enslaved people.

Mandatory Sabbath rest. *"The seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your Elohim; in it you shall not do any work... nor your male servant, nor your female servant."* (Shemot [Exodus] 20:10; see also Shemot [Exodus] 23:12)

This command draws no line between Israelite and foreign bondservant. Every servant in an Israelite household, regardless of origin, was guaranteed one day in seven free from labor by the same Fourth Word that governs the master. The transatlantic system recognized no such universal, statute-guaranteed rest day.

Fugitive protection extends to this category as well. The statute already examined in Section IV-C

"You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you" (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 23:15-16)

This draws no textual distinction between an Israelite and a foreign-born fugitive. Historical rabbinic legal tradition (codified centuries later in the Mishneh Torah's Laws of Slaves) explicitly listed the

non-extradition of a fleeing bondservant among the Torah's binding obligations regarding servitude of any kind, applying it even to a foreign slave who fled to Israelite territory from abroad.

A documented entry practice built on consent, not force. As historical and comparative reference only — not as text found explicitly within the written Torah itself, and not as binding authority per the Doctrinal Authority statement — later rabbinic legal tradition (codified in the Mishneh Torah's Laws of Slaves) records that a master had a limited window to secure a foreign bondservant's own consent to formally join the household; if the servant withheld consent, tradition records that the master was required to sell him onward rather than compel him by force. Whatever the precise historical practice, the written statutes above stand on their own as textual limits, independent of this later tradition.

Held together, these three written statutes mean the "possession forever" of **Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:46** was never a license for unlimited, unaccountable ownership of a human body. It authorized a long-term, hereditary household relationship — genuinely more severe than the six-year Israelite statute, and this document does not minimize that severity — but one still bound by mandatory rest, mandatory manumission upon injury, and mandatory non-return of a fugitive. This is a materially different legal architecture than a system in which an enslaved person had no legal standing to bring a claim of injury against an owner at all, a distinction the historical record bears out: American slave codes, unlike the written Torah, generally did not grant the enslaved person a legal claim against the master's own violence.

III-D. Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:39–40 — Even the Hebrew Statute Governs the Whole Chapter

The same chapter that permits hereditary foreign bond service opens with a stricter rule for the Israelite poor:

"If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave [*avodataved*]; he shall be with you as a hired servant... he shall serve you until the Year of the Yovel (Jubilee)." (Vayikra [Leviticus] 25:39–40)

The **Yovel** (יובל, *jubilee*) — a fixed fiftieth-year national reset — stands over the entire chapter as an outer horizon. Whatever else the chapter permits regarding foreign bondservants, it never contemplates a Yovel-less permanence for the covenant nation's own members, and later prophetic tradition (Section IV) extends the logic of release outward.

III-E. Ancient Near Eastern Corroboration — The Code of Hammurabi

Applying the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** evidentiary standard to the historical claim that Torah servitude law reflects its Ancient Near Eastern legal environment: the **Code of Hammurabi** (Babylon, c. 1750 BCE) contains parallel provisions — for example, laws prescribing death for anyone who removes a palace or freedman's slave beyond the city gates, or for harboring a fugitive slave without proclamation. Comparative Near Eastern law codes corroborate that the Torah's servitude statutes were written into, and in key places against, an existing regional legal culture rather than invented in isolation — a pattern this document returns to directly in Section IV, where the Torah's manstealing law departs sharply from its neighbors.

IV. THE MANSTEALING LAW — SHEMOT (EXODUS) 21:16 — THE TORAH'S STRUCTURAL REJECTION OF THE CHATTEL SLAVE TRADE

IV-A. The Text and Its Plain Meaning

Fourteen verses after permitting bondservitude, the Torah legislates the death penalty for the act that produces the transatlantic model of slavery:

"Whoever steals a man and sells him, or if he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death." (Shemot [Exodus] 21:16)

The Hebrew verb is *ganav* (גָּנַב, H1589, *to steal*). The statute covers both the kidnapper and anyone who knowingly holds the stolen person — a legal structure with direct bearing on any economy built on captured and purchased human beings. This is, per the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** standard, corroborated by a second independent witness: **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:7** restates the same capital prohibition against one *'who kidnaps one of his brothers... and treats him as a slave or sells him.'*

IV-B. New Testament Corroboration — 1 Timothy 1:9–10

As historical and comparative reference only — not as binding authority per the Doctrinal Authority statement above — the apostolic letter of **1 Timothy 1:9–10** lists *andrapodistai* (ἀνδραποδισταί, 'enslavers' or 'slave-traders') among those the law identifies as lawless, alongside murderers and perjurers. The term refers specifically to slave-traders and kidnappers, echoing the Torah's own manstealing prohibition and demonstrating a continuous, cross-testamental rejection of the trade in stolen human beings, distinct from regulated household servitude.

IV-C. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 23:15–16 — Protection for the Fugitive

A further statute stands in direct legal tension with any chattel-property model of servitude:

"You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose... You shall not wrong him." (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 23:15–16)

A legal system that treats bondservants as pure property does not, and cannot coherently, protect their unilateral flight from a master as a matter of covenant law. This statute — read together with the death penalty for manstealing in **Shemot (Exodus) 21:16** — establishes that the written Torah's servitude law occupies a fundamentally different legal category than the chattel-slavery codes of the American South, which criminalized the harboring of a fugitive and legislated the reverse: mandatory return.

V. IYOV (JOB) 31:13–15 — COVENANT EQUALITY BEFORE THE ONE WHO MADE BOTH

The wisdom tradition supplies the Tanakh's clearest statement of the underlying theology that governs every servitude statute above:

"If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me, what then shall I do when Elohim rises up? When He punishes, what shall I answer Him? Did not He who made me in the womb make him? And did not One fashion us both?" (Iyov [Job] 31:13–15)

Iyov (Job) grounds the ethical treatment of the bondservant not in social custom but in shared creation under **Elohim**. The master and the servant are formed by the same hand in the same womb-process — a theological claim that permits no caste of inherent, ancestry-based inferiority. This is the same *tselem Elohim* (*image of Elohim*) principle documented in Document 158- (Tselem Elohim (צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים) ("the image of Elohim") — In the Image and Likeness of Yahweh), applied here directly to the master-servant relationship.

VI. HISTORICAL APPLICATION — THE TORAH'S OWN LAW AGAINST THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE

VI-A. The Historical Record

The transatlantic slave trade (roughly the 16th through 19th centuries) forcibly transported an estimated twelve million or more captive Africans, overwhelmingly obtained through raiding, warfare, and kidnapping, into a hereditary, race-based, chattel-property legal system in the Americas — a system that, unlike the Torah's *eved ivri* statute, had no mandatory release term, no wage-equivalence provision, and criminalized rather than protected the fugitive. Applying the two-or-three-witness standard: the mechanism of acquisition (kidnapping and raiding) is independently documented across historical, archaeological, and missionary-record sources, and squarely matches the act condemned by name in **Shemot (Exodus) 21:16**.

VI-B. The Quaker and Abolitionist Use of Shemot (Exodus) 21:16

The manstealing statute became the central scriptural weapon of the earliest organized abolitionist movement. Following the 1688 Germantown Quaker protest, George Keith published *An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes* (1693), grounding his argument directly in **Shemot (Exodus) 21:16**. John Woolman and Anthony Benezet carried the same argument through the mid-eighteenth century. In the antebellum period, George Bourne, Lydia Maria Child, and Theodore Weld extended the argument: because the transatlantic trade began in documented kidnapping, holding any person acquired through that trade was, in covenant terms, holding stolen property — a direct application of the **Shemot (Exodus) 21:16** standard to the American institution.

VI-C. The Pro-Slavery Clergy Counter-Argument and Its Weakness

Southern defenders of the institution, including the Presbyterian theologian James Henley Thornwell of Columbia, South Carolina, attempted to separate the origin of enslavement (which Thornwell conceded could be sinful kidnapping) from the ongoing legal relationship of master and servant, arguing the latter could stand independent of the former's sin. The abolitionist rebuttal — applying **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** corroboration across multiple independent witnesses — held that American slaveholders were not ignorant of the trade's documented, publicly known origins in

kidnapping and raiding, and that **Shemot (Exodus) 21:16** condemns not only the kidnapper but 'anyone found in possession of him' — closing precisely the loophole Thornwell's argument required.

VI-D. The Curse of Ham — A Misapplied Text

A separate and distinct argument, unrelated to the servitude statutes examined above, was drawn from **Bereishit (Genesis) 9:20–27**, in which **Noach (Noah)** curses his grandson **Kena'an (Canaan)** — not **Cham (Ham)** — to servitude after Cham's act of disrespect. Nineteenth-century writers such as Josiah Priest extended this curse racially onto all of Cham's African descendants to construct a permanent, divinely sanctioned racial hierarchy. The text itself names **Kena'an (Canaan)** alone as the object of the curse — the ancestor of the Canaanite nations later dispossessed in the conquest narrative, not a racial category encompassing the African continent. Applying the two-or-three-witness standard, no second or third Tanakh witness extends this curse racially; the argument is a nineteenth-century construction read backward into the text, not a conclusion the written covenant itself supports.

VI-E. Institutional Reckoning

The **Southern Baptist Convention**, founded in 1845 in part to preserve a theological defense of slavery, issued a formal apology for this history in June 1995 — a documented, public institutional acknowledgment that the pro-slavery reading of these texts had been in error. This document treats that reckoning as historical corroboration, not as a doctrinal source, consistent with the Doctrinal Authority statement above.

VII. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES BONDAGE

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Governing frame	Eved ivri: six-year limit, Yovel horizon, mandatory generous release (Shemot 21:2; Devarim 15:12-18)	Household codes (Ephesians 6:5-9) address Roman-era doulos relationships; manstealing (1 Tim 1:10) condemned	Gradual restriction of lawful enslavement; manumission as paramount piety (Q. 2:177; 24:33; 90:13)
Covenant strength	Manstealing is a capital crime (Shemot 21:16); fugitive protection (Devarim 23:15-16); shared creation ethic (Iyov 31:13-15)	Abolitionist reading of Exodus 21:16 as foundational anti-slave-trade law; Paul lists enslavers among the lawless (1 Tim 1:10)	Manumission incentivized through zakat and atonement (kaffara); slaves recognized as spiritually equal

Covenant departure	Vayikra 25:44-46's hereditary foreign-servant provision sits in tension with the Yovel horizon and is not resolved by a single verse	Pro-slavery clergy (e.g., Thornwell) separated origin from ongoing relationship to defend chattel slavery; SBC apologized in 1995	Historical Umayyad/Abbasid-era practice did not fully realize the Qur'an's own gradualist trajectory toward abolition
Covenant witness	Devarim 19:15 standard applied to history itself: kidnapping-based acquisition is documented and condemned by the Torah's own statute	Genesis 9's curse of Canaan misapplied racially to Africans by 19th-century writers; no second Tanakh witness supports the extension	Freeing a captive named among the highest acts of righteousness (Q. 2:177; 90:13)

VIII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON SLAVERY AND SERVITUDE

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The Hebrew eved (עֶבֶד) statute is a time-bound, covenant-regulated bondservice with a mandatory six-year limit and a generous release provision — not chattel property.	Shemot (Exodus) 21:2; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 15:12-18
II	Extended service beyond six years requires the servant's own voluntary declaration before judges — it cannot be imposed by the master.	Shemot (Exodus) 21:5-6
III	Kidnapping a person to enslave or sell him is a capital offense under the written Torah, corroborated by two independent statutes.	Shemot (Exodus) 21:16; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:7
IV	The Torah protects the escaped bondservant from forced return — a legal structure incompatible with a pure chattel-property model.	Devarim (Deuteronomy) 23:15-16

V	Master and servant are formed by the same Creator in the same womb-process; no ancestry-based hierarchy of worth is supported by the text.	Iyov (Job) 31:13-15
VI	The hereditary foreign-servant provision of Vayikra 25:44-46 stands in genuine tension with the Yovel horizon of the same chapter; this document does not erase that tension to make the text more comfortable.	Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:39-46
VII	The nineteenth-century racial extension of the curse on Canaan (Bereishit 9:20-27) to justify race-based slavery fails the two-or-three-witness standard and is not a conclusion the written covenant itself supports.	Bereishit (Genesis) 9:20-27; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15

IX. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE WRITTEN TANAKH DEMANDS OF THE READER TODAY

First: do not flatten the text in either direction. The written covenant neither invents the transatlantic trade nor fully anticipates a modern abolitionist ethic in every clause. It regulates an ancient bondservice economy while simultaneously outlawing, by name and by capital statute, the specific mechanism — manstealing — that produced the chattel slavery of the Americas.

Second: apply the Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 standard to history as rigorously as to doctrine. The documented, multiply-corroborated origin of the transatlantic trade in kidnapping and raiding places it squarely inside the Torah's own capital prohibition — a conclusion the abolitionist reading reached and the pro-slavery reading could not overturn.

Third: hold the uncomfortable text honestly. The hereditary foreign-servant provision of Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:44-46 is part of the written covenant and is not erased by this document. It stands in tension with the Yovel horizon of its own chapter and with the shared-creation ethic of Iyov (Job) 31:13-15 — a tension the covenant reader is called to sit with rather than resolve by force.

Fourth: refuse every racial extension the text itself does not make. The curse on Kena'an (Canaan) in Bereishit (Genesis) 9 names one man and his line — not a continent, not a race. Nineteenth-century readers who extended it did so without a second or third witness, in direct violation of the covenant's own evidentiary standard.

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"Whoever steals a man and sells him, or if he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death."

Shemot (Exodus) 21:16 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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