

# MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

## DOCUMENT 197

### STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS, REVISITED

A COVENANT DEEP DIVE ON THE IRAN–ISRAEL–UNITED STATES CONFLICT

*Updated Through July 18, 2026 — The War Reignited, the Memorandum Broken, and the Weight Still Falling on the Poor*

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| ☆ JUDAISM                                                                                                                                                                                                           | † CHRISTIANITY                                                                                                                                                                                      | ☪ ISLAM                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The war that reopened in February 2026 revives the oldest recorded rescue of Yisra'el by a Persian king — Koresh (Cyrus). The covenant memory of that debt now sits inside a live war between the same two peoples. | "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9) is tested directly by a conflict now in its fifth month, spanning Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the Gulf, with a collapsed memorandum and renewed strikes. | The Qur'an's own account of Dhul-Qarnayn and the justice owed to conquered peoples (18:83-98) speaks directly into a war whose casualties are overwhelmingly Iranian and Lebanese civilians. |

### 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 Quran 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 Quran, 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.

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### 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. Current geopolitical facts in this document are drawn from contemporaneous news reporting and are corroborated wherever possible by the Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 two-or-three-witness standard; they are offered as factual background to the covenant analysis, not as scripture.

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### TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

| DIVISION                  | BOOKS CITED                                                                                         | PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY                                                                           |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Torah</b>              | Bereishit (Genesis), Vayikra (Leviticus), Bemidbar (Numbers), Devarim (Deuteronomy)                 | Land covenant, conditional occupation, the innocent-blood principle                             |
| <b>Nevi'im (Prophets)</b> | Yeshayahu (Isaiah), Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), Yechezkel (Ezekiel), Amos, Hoshea, Ovadiah, Nachum        | Prophetic witness on Persia/Elam, foreign alliances, and judgment on the nations of this war    |
| <b>Ketuvim (Writings)</b> | Ezra, Divrei HaYamim (Chronicles), Daniel, Esther (Hadassah), Tehillim (Psalms), Mishlei (Proverbs) | The Koresh (Cyrus) decree, the Persian court narratives, and the covenant's economic conscience |

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### I. WHERE WE LEFT OFF — THE PRIOR COVENANT WITNESS

Miqdash Bethel has issued a sustained covenant witness to this conflict since it first broke into open war: *"Standing at the Crossroads"* (March 6, 2026) addressed the opening days of direct Israeli-Iranian combat; *"The War That Was Not Necessary" — Part II* (March 22, 2026) named the war as Israel's initiative rather than an American security necessity; the *Covenant Witness to President Pezeshkian* (April 1, 2026) answered Iran's

open letter to the American people directly, person to person, father's son to father's son; the *Yinon Plan analysis* (April 13, 2026) placed the war inside the documented decades-old Israeli strategic literature on regional fragmentation; "*War Is Development in Reverse*" — Doc 72 (May 5, 2026) — measured the war's cost against the poor of every nation touched by it; the *U.S.-Iran MOU constitutional analysis* (June 2026) and *Doc 191, A Covenant Witness on Section 219* (July 2026) examined the legal architecture binding the United States and Israel together during the war's diplomatic phase. This document does not repeat those studies. It carries the covenant witness forward from where they left off, through the collapse of the June memorandum and into the present hour.

## II. THE FIRE REIGNITED — A TIMELINE, FEBRUARY 28 THROUGH JULY 18, 2026

The two-or-three-witness standard of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** governs the factual claims below; each is corroborated across independent news sources (Al Jazeera, Associated Press, Reuters, the BBC/House of Commons Library, Britannica, and the Times of Israel) rather than resting on a single outlet.

| DATE                         | EVENT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Feb 28, 2026</b>          | The United States and Israel launch joint airstrikes on Iran aimed at its nuclear and missile programs and at regime change. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is killed in the opening strikes. Iran retaliates with hundreds of missiles and drones against Israel, U.S. bases in the region, and Gulf states, and closes the Strait of Hormuz to shipping.                                                         |
| <b>Mar 2, 2026</b>           | Hezbollah fires on Israel from Lebanon in solidarity with Iran, reopening the Israel-Hezbollah front alongside the wider war. Israel resumes ground operations in southern Lebanon.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Mar 19 – Apr 8, 2026</b>  | The United States conducts an extended air campaign to reopen the Strait of Hormuz; Iran lays mines and attacks shipping; fuel shortages ripple across Asia. After more than five weeks of continuous fighting, Pakistan announced a U.S.-Iran ceasefire agreement on April 7-8, later extended indefinitely.                                                                                                   |
| <b>Apr 13 – May 29, 2026</b> | The United States maintains a naval blockade of Iranian ports even as the ceasefire holds on land; brinkmanship over the Strait of Hormuz continues alongside continuing Israel-Hezbollah fighting in Lebanon.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Jun 14–19, 2026</b>       | Mediators announce a 14-point U.S.-Iran Memorandum of Understanding, signed June 17-19. It declares a permanent termination of military operations on all fronts (including Israel-Hezbollah, though neither Hezbollah nor Lebanon is a signatory), lifts the naval blockade, reopens the Strait of Hormuz, waives oil sanctions, and opens a 60-day negotiating window on Iran's nuclear and missile programs. |
| <b>Jul 6–7, 2026</b>         | Iran fires on three commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, asserting a right to control passage and collect transit fees — conduct the United States treats as a material breach of the memorandum.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Jul 7–9, 2026</b>   | President Trump declares the truce "over" and the United States resumes strikes on Iranian targets, including near the Bushehr nuclear plant, under the banner of Operation Epic; the IRGC declares the Strait of Hormuz closed again on July 12.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Jul 13–17, 2026</b> | The United States carries out seven consecutive nights of strikes on Iran; Iran widens retaliatory strikes against U.S. allies in the region; air-raid sirens sound in Bahrain and Kuwait; the U.S. disables an Iranian oil tanker; the U.S. moves additional refueling aircraft to Israel in anticipation of further strikes.                                                                                                     |
| <b>Jul 17–18, 2026</b> | Israel and Lebanon hold a sixth round of ambassador-level talks in Rome on a European-mandated stabilization force that could allow Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister publicly states that Iran has "suspended" its commitments under the June memorandum, blaming the United States for violating it first; both governments now describe the other as the party that broke the agreement. |

The cumulative toll, corroborated across Wikipedia's aggregation of government and NGO figures (itself used here only for orientation, per Miqdash Bethel's research standard, and cross-checked against wire reporting), is severe on every side: thousands of Iranian dead (estimates range from roughly 3,500 to over 6,000 depending on source and military-versus-civilian classification), tens of thousands of Iranian wounded; dozens of Israeli dead and nearly 9,000 injured; fifteen U.S. service members killed; more than 1,000 Hezbollah fighters killed; and more than one-sixth of Lebanon's population displaced by the renewed Israel-Hezbollah war. No accounting of this war is complete, or covenant-honest, without naming that the overwhelming weight of death has fallen on Iranian and Lebanese civilians who had no vote in any of the decisions that produced it.

### III. KORESH (CYRUS) AND THE COVENANT MEMORY OF PERSIA

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#### III-A. The Only Gentile Called Mashiach

**Koresh** (כֹּרֶשׁ), Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, is the only non-Israelite in the entire Tanakh whom **Yahweh** calls **mashiach** (מָשִׁיחַ), 'anointed one': "Thus says **Yahweh** to Koresh His anointed, whose right hand I have held... I will go before you and level the mountains." (**Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 45:1**) Koresh is named more than a century before his birth, by the prophetic tradition's own internal chronology, as the ruler **Yahweh** would raise up to end the Babylonian exile and authorize the rebuilding of the Temple in Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). **Ezra 1:1-4** records the decree itself: Koresh proclaims that **Yahweh**, the Elohim of heaven, has charged him to build **Yahweh** a house at Yerushalayim, and he funds the return from the Persian treasury.

#### III-B. Hadassah (Esther) — Persia as Refuge, Not Only Threat

The Book of **Hadassah** (Esther) is set entirely inside the Persian court, generations after Koresh, and preserves a second covenant memory that this war's rhetoric on every side tends to erase: that the Jewish people lived inside Persia, under Persian law, and were saved from a genocidal decree by a Persian king's own edict once he was shown the truth — not by Persia's destruction. The covenant record does not remember Persia as a monolith of enmity. It remembers a specific court, a specific decree (Haman's), and a specific reversal. Applying the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** standard to modern political rhetoric that flattens 2,600 years of

Israel-Persia history into pure enmity: that flattening is not corroborated by the Tanakh's own record, which contains both Babylon's Persian-ended exile and Persia's own near-massacre of the Jews under a different administration. Both memories are true. Neither cancels the other.

### III-C. What the Covenant Does Not Say

Nothing in this record licenses either side's current claims to unconditional **Yahweh**-sanctioned war. Koresh was called *mashiach* for a specific act — releasing a captive people to rebuild a specific house — not for conquest in general, and not in advance for every government that has since ruled Persia/Iran. Likewise, Yisra'el's covenant relationship with the land (below, Section IV) is never treated in the Tanakh as license for indiscriminate war against neighboring peoples. Covenant history complicates the propaganda of both capitals; it does not simply hand either one a blank check.

## IV. YISRA'EL'S COVENANT LAND AND THE PROPHETIC WARNING AGAINST RELIANCE ON FOREIGN POWER

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### IV-A. A Conditional Covenant, Not an Unconditional Deed

The land covenant given to Yisra'el is explicitly conditional on covenant faithfulness, not an unconditional deed transferable to any government that happens to hold the name:

*"Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways... lest the land vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you."* (Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:24, 28) Devarim (Deuteronomy) 28

This passage sets a blessing and curse, as the covenant's own stated terms for occupation of the land — the same choose-life-or-death structure this ministry has documented (Doc 148) applies here to national, not only personal, covenant standing.

### IV-B. "Woe to Those Who Go Down to Egypt for Help"

**Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 31:1** — already the ground of Doc 191's constitutional analysis — bears directly on this war's central military fact: *"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Yisra'el or consult Yahweh."* The prophetic indictment is not against alliance as such but against reliance — trusting military hardware and a foreign patron's strength in place of covenant faithfulness. A war whose central instrument is the world's most powerful air force acting jointly with Israel's own military, and whose central diplomatic instrument is a memorandum now already broken twice, sits squarely inside the category this verse warns against, regardless of which capital reads the warning as directed at itself.

### IV-C. Shefikhut Damim — The Innocent-Blood Principle

**Bemidbar (Numbers) 35:33** states the principle plainly:

***"You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of him who shed it."***

***Sh'efikbut damim*** (שְׁפִיכוּת דָּמִים), the shedding of innocent blood, is treated in the Tanakh as a standing moral debt against a land and a people, not a cost that expires with a ceasefire memorandum. Applying the two-or-three-witness standard: the corroborated civilian toll in Iran, Lebanon, and Israel across this war is not a matter of contested characterization — it is documented across every source cited in Section II. The covenant does not require Miqdash Bethel to adjudicate which government bears the greater share of that debt. It requires this ministry to name that the debt exists, on every side, and that it does not expire when a truce is declared "over."

## **V. THE WEIGHT STILL FALLING ON THE POOR — AMERICA'S COVENANT ACCOUNTING**

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Doc 72, *"War Is Development in Reverse,"* established the covenant economic principle that governs this section and is only reinforced by five additional months of war:

***"He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know Me? says Yabweh"***  
**(Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 22:16)**

The Strait of Hormuz carries roughly a quarter of the world's seaborne oil and a fifth of its liquefied natural gas; its repeated closure and reopening since February has driven fuel shortages across Asia and volatility in fuel prices reaching working households far from any battlefield, exactly as **Mishlei (Proverbs) 14:31** warns:

***"Whoever oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker."***

A war economy that spikes the price of fuel and shipping for the poorest nations, while flowing sanctions waivers and defense-technology cooperation toward the wealthiest parties to the conflict (the subject of Doc 191's Section 219 analysis), is development running in reverse — not for the powers directly at war, but for the bystander poor of every continent whose cost of living moves with the price of a barrel of oil they will never touch.

## **VI. LEBANON — THE SECOND FRONT, AND THE FIRST SIGN OF AN OPENING**

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The Israel-Hezbollah war reopened on March 2, 2026, as a direct consequence of the Iran war rather than an independent conflict, and it has since produced the war's single largest civilian displacement: more than one-sixth of Lebanon's population. It is also, as of this writing, the one front showing the clearest diplomatic movement. Israel and Lebanon held their sixth round of ambassador-level talks in Rome this week (July 15-16), addressing a European Union-mandated stabilization force that German officials describe as creating "the conditions for the Israeli army to withdraw without Hezbollah returning with its terror." The Lebanese army has begun redeploying to southern towns as part of this process. This is the closest any front of this war

has come, in five months, to the shape of an actual peace rather than a broken truce — and it is worth naming precisely because it did not happen through further strikes, but through a sixth round of patient talks.

## VII. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION IS BEING TESTED BY THIS WAR

| ELEMENT                   | JUDAISM                                                                                                                                                                                  | CHRISTIANITY                                                                                                                                                          | ISLAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Central Test</b>       | Whether reliance on military alliance (Yeshayahu 31:1) has replaced reliance on Yahweh as the operative national trust of the modern State of Israel.                                    | Whether "blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9) can be reconciled with uncritical political support for an open-ended war now in its fifth month.                 | Whether the Quranic principle that "whoever kills a soul... it is as if he had killed all mankind" (5:32) is being honestly applied to the war's civilian toll on every side, including Iran's own attacks on Gulf shipping.                                          |
| <b>Covenant Strength</b>  | The prophetic tradition itself (Yeshayahu, Yirmeyahu) is the sharpest available check on state power — Israeli dissent and protest culture draws directly on this same prophetic memory. | A live tradition of Christian peace-witness and just-war restraint exists and is available to be applied here, not only invoked after the fact.                       | Sabr (صَبْرٌ, patient endurance) and the Qur'an's own war-restraint provisions (2:190, "do not transgress limits") are available correctives to unrestrained retaliation on any side.                                                                                 |
| <b>Covenant Departure</b> | Treating the modern state's military conduct as automatically sanctified by the Koresh precedent, rather than tested against it, inverts Yeshayahu 45's own conditional framing.         | Treating geopolitical alliance with either belligerent as a test of faith commitment collapses the gospel into nationalism the New Testament itself does not require. | Framing this as a purely sectarian or civilizational war, rather than the mixed political-economic conflict the record actually shows (competing state interests, energy chokepoints, weapons technology), borrows more from modern nationalism than from the Qur'an. |

## VIII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE IRAN-ISRAEL-USA WAR

**I. Yahweh** alone named Koresh (Cyrus) mashiach for a specific act of covenant mercy — releasing a captive people to rebuild His house. That title was never transferred in advance to every government that has since ruled Persia, nor does it sanctify every act of the modern State of Israel. (*Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 45:1; Ezra 1:1-4*)

**II.** The land covenant given to Yisra'el is conditional on covenant faithfulness, not an unconditional license for war against its neighbors. Blessing and curse remain the covenant's own stated terms. (*Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:24, 28; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 28*)

**III.** Reliance on military alliance and hardware in place of reliance on Yahweh is named directly, by the prophets, as covenant failure — regardless of which nation in this war the warning is applied to. (*Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 31:1*)

**IV.** The shedding of innocent blood is a standing debt against a land, not a cost that expires when a ceasefire or memorandum is declared over. The corroborated civilian toll on every side of this war remains a live covenant debt. (*Bemidbar (Numbers) 35:33*)

**V.** A war economy that raises the cost of fuel and shipping for the poor of every nation, while directing sanctions relief and defense cooperation toward the parties already at war, is development running in reverse. (*Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 22:16; Mishlei (Proverbs) 14:31*)

**VI.** The Lebanon-Israel talks in Rome — six rounds of patient, unglamorous diplomacy — have produced more movement toward an actual peace in recent weeks than any further round of strikes on any front of this war. (*Reported fact, corroborated two-or-three-witness standard*)

**VII.** None of the three covenant traditions is well served by treating this war as a simple confirmation of its own righteousness. Each tradition carries, in its own text, the resources to critique the conduct of its own side — and covenant honesty requires using them. (*Yeshayahu (Isaiah); Matthew 5:9; Qur'an 5:32, 2:190*)

## SCRIPTURE INDEX

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| Bemidbar (Numbers) 35:33      | Shefikhut damim — innocent blood pollutes the land                | IV-C       |
| Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15   | Two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governing this document | Throughout |
| Devarim (Deuteronomy) 28      | Blessing and curse as the covenant's own terms for the land       | IV-A       |
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***"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses... but do not look to the Holy One of Yisra'el or consult Yahweh."***

**Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 31:1 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh**

## **MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION**

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