

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 255

THIS IS MY MEMORIAL

A Covenant Deep Dive into *HaShem* (the Name) — Why Judaism Speaks a Substitute for the Name Yahweh, and What the Torah and the Tanakh Say About It

Where Did the Silence Come From, What Reasons Does the Tradition Give, and Does the Written Covenant Command the Name to Be Withheld or to Be Remembered? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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Elder Kepha Arcemont, Founder

miqdashbethel.ai • miqdashbethel@gmail.com

The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✠ ISLAM
Judaism keeps the four letters יהוה in every Torah scroll but does not say them aloud. In prayer and public reading the reader says <i>Adonai (my Lord)</i> ; in ordinary speech many say <i>HaShem (the Name)</i> , הַשֵּׁם. The tradition calls this reverence and a fence around Exodus 20:7 . Its record is historical witness here, not authority.	Most English Bibles print “ LORD ” in small capitals where the Hebrew has יהוה, following the Greek <i>Kyrios (Lord)</i> and the Latin <i>Dominus</i> . In 2008 the Vatican directed that the Name not be spoken in Catholic liturgy. Some Protestant, Messianic, and Sacred Name communities restore Yahweh or Jehovah .	Islam does not transmit the Tetragrammaton. It calls on Allah openly and teaches that “ <i>to Allah belong the most beautiful names, so call on Him by them</i> ” (Q. 7:180). Islam has no rule of silence about God’s name; it treats the names as meant to be spoken.

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 The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority.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

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document asks two questions: why does Judaism say *HaShem (the Name)* or *Adonai (my Lord)* instead of the Name **Yahweh**, and what do the Torah and the rest of the *Tanakh* say about it? **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in *bold italic* with English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**.

Because the first question is about a later practice, this document must *describe* what the rabbinic tradition says. It does so without leaning on it. Every rabbinic, Qumran, Greek, and inscription source is listed in the Comparative Texts table with a number (C-1, C-2, and so on). In the body of the study these sources are only pointed to by that number, as a record of what happened and what was believed. Only the Tanakh carries a doctrinal point. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The Name revealed and given as a memorial; calling on it; the priestly blessing; the command against empty use; the blasphemer; silence about other gods
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi	Calling on the Name; swearing by it truthfully; the warning against forgetting it; its promised restoration among all peoples
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, 1 Chronicles	Praise of the Name; the greeting of Boaz; the Psalms that use Elohim in place of the Name; books that do not use the Name

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

NO.	TEXT	WHAT IT RECORDS
C-1	Hebrew inscriptions: Mesha Stele (c. 840 BCE); Kuntillet Ajrud (c. 800 BCE); Ketef Hinnom silver amulets (late 7th–early 6th c. BCE); Lachish letters (c. 588 BCE)	The Name written and used in ordinary life before the exile: in blessings, oaths, and letter greetings such as <i>“May Yahweh cause my lord to bear news of peace”</i>
C-2	Elephantine papyri (5th c. BCE)	A Jewish colony in Egypt writing the short form יה (Yahu) in letters and petitions
C-3	Greek Septuagint manuscripts: 4Q120 (Ιαω, Ιαο); P. Fouad 266 (Hebrew letters inside Greek text); later copies with Κύριος (Kyrios)	Early Greek copies keeping the Name in some form; later copies replacing it with <i>“Lord”</i>
C-4	Dead Sea Scrolls: Community Rule (1QS 6:27–7:2); Name written in old Hebrew script or as four dots in several scrolls	A community that expelled any member who spoke the Name aloud; scribes setting the Name apart on the page
C-5	Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> 2.12.4; Philo	First-century Jewish writers saying they may not speak the Name

NO.	TEXT	WHAT IT RECORDS
C-6	Mishnah Sotah 7:6; Mishnah Yoma 6:2; Tosefta Yoma 2:2 (Talmud Yoma 39b)	In the Temple the priests blessed with the Name <i>“as it is written,”</i> and outside it <i>“by its substitute”</i> ; the high priest said the Name ten times on the Day of Atonement
C-7	Talmud Yoma 39b	After the death of Simeon the Righteous, <i>“his brethren the priests refrained from blessing with the Name”</i>
C-8	Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:5; 10:1	A blasphemer is liable only if he uses the Name itself; Abba Shaul: one who <i>“pronounces the Name by its letters”</i> has no share in the world to come
C-9	Mishnah Berakhot 9:5	The sages ruled that a person should greet his fellow <i>“with the Name,”</i> citing Ruth 2:4 and Judges 6:12
C-10	Talmud Pesachim 50a (also Kiddushin 71a)	<i>“This is My name le’olam (forever)”</i> read as <i>le’alem (to conceal)</i> ; <i>“Not as I am written am I read”</i> ; in the world to come the Name will be read as it is written (Zechariah 14:9)
C-11	Targum Onkelos, Leviticus 24:11, 16	The Aramaic translation renders the blasphemer’s act as <i>“pronounced distinctly the Name”</i>
C-12	Masoretic Text (Aleppo and Leningrad Codices, 10th–11th c.); Maimonides, Laws of Prayer 14:10; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 5	The Name pointed with substitute vowels; the rule that outside the Temple the priests bless with <i>Adonai</i> ; the intention to hold while saying it
C-13	New Testament: Matthew 6:9; John 17:6, 26; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13; Revelation 19:1–6	Early Christian prayer for the Name to be hallowed; Joel 2:32 quoted with <i>“Lord”</i> ; <i>“Hallelujah”</i> kept
C-14	Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship, letter of June 29, 2008; Liturgiam authenticam 41	The Name not to be spoken or sung in Catholic liturgy; to be rendered <i>“Lord”</i>
C-15	Qur’an 7:180; 17:110; reports on al-Isma al-A’zam (the Greatest Name) in the Sunan collections	Islam’s instruction to call on God by His names; a tradition of one hidden <i>“Greatest Name”</i>

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION

I-A. The Question as It Is Usually Asked

Anyone who spends time with observant Jewish neighbors soon hears the word *HaShem (the Name)*. It is used in conversation — “*thank HaShem,*” “*HaShem willing*” — while in the synagogue the reader says *Adonai (my Lord)* wherever the scroll has the four letters יהוה. Written English often has “*G-d.*” Many covenant believers ask why. If the Creator gave His Name, why do the people who have guarded His scrolls for three thousand years not say it? And the harder question: does the Torah tell them to keep silent, or does it tell them the opposite?

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 145** (*The Name Above All Names*) set out the Name as the covenant identity of the Creator. **Doc 210** (*The Name Written and the Name Spoken*) examined how the Name is spelled, the evidence for its pronunciation, and how “*Jehovah*” entered English. The **613 Laws** course, **Lesson 21**, taught the three laws of sanctifying, not blaspheming, and not profaning the Name. The present document does something those studies did not: it takes the Jewish practice itself — its history and its stated reasons — and tests each reason against the written covenant.

I-B. The Question in the Tanakh’s Own Terms

Tanakh does not use the word “*pronounce.*” It speaks of the Name being *zakhar (remembered, made mention of)*, *qara (called upon)*, *nasa (lifted up)*, *sim (placed)* upon a people, sworn by, proclaimed, forgotten, profaned, and cursed. The real question is therefore: which of these does the covenant command, which does it forbid, and which of them is the modern silence?

The plain answer, set out below, is that the written covenant commands the Name to be remembered, called on, sworn by in truth, placed on Israel in blessing, and proclaimed to the nations. It forbids lifting it up to emptiness, swearing falsely by it, profaning it, and cursing it. It commands silence only about the names of *other* gods. The practice of not speaking the Name is a later fence. Its motive, reverence, is commanded. Its form, silence, is not.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The vocabulary of the Name is precise. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>shem (name)</i> , שֵׁם	H8034	Name; identity, reputation, presence. With the article, <i>ha-shem (the Name)</i> , הַשֵּׁם	Exodus 3:15; Leviticus 24:11; Deuteronomy 28:58
<i>zekher (memorial, what is mentioned)</i> , זִכָּר	H2143	The spoken remembrance of a name; parallel to <i>shem (name)</i>	Exodus 3:15; Psalms 135:13; Hosea 12:5
<i>zakhar (to remember); causative hizkir (to make mention)</i> , זָכַר	H2142	To remember; in the causative, to mention aloud, bring to remembrance	Exodus 20:24; 23:13; Amos 6:10
<i>qara be-shem (to call on the name)</i> , קָרָא בְּשֵׁם	H7121	To call out, invoke, proclaim by the Name	Genesis 4:26; 12:8; Joel 2:32
<i>nasa (to lift up, carry)</i> , נָשָׂא	H5375	To lift, bear, take up — the verb of Exodus 20:7	Exodus 20:7; Psalms 24:4
<i>shav (emptiness, falsehood)</i> , שָׁוָא	H7723	Worthlessness, deceit, nothing	Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11; Psalms 24:4
<i>chalal (to profane)</i> , חָלַל	H2490	To make common, defile, pollute	Leviticus 19:12; 22:32; Ezekiel 36:20–23
<i>naqav (to pierce, specify, designate)</i> , נָקַב	H5344	To bore through; to mark out or name; in Leviticus 24 joined to cursing	Leviticus 24:11, 16; Numbers 1:17; Isaiah 62:2
<i>qalal (to curse, make light of)</i> , קָלַל	H7043	To treat as light, revile, curse	Leviticus 24:11, 14, 15, 23; Exodus 22:28
<i>adon (lord, master) / Adonai (my Lord)</i> , אֲדֹנָי	H113 / H136	A title of rank; used of Yahweh in address, often beside the Name	Genesis 15:2; Psalms 110:1; Jeremiah 44:26
<i>olam (forever, age)</i> , עוֹלָם	H5769	Long duration, perpetuity; often written without the letter vav	Exodus 3:15; 15:18
<i>alam (to hide, conceal)</i> , עָלַם	H5956	To hide, be hidden — the root behind the rabbinic reading <i>le'alem (to conceal)</i>	Leviticus 5:2; Psalms 10:1

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>yare (to fear, revere) / nora (awesome), נֹרָא</i>	H3372	To fear, stand in awe; the reverence due the Name	Deuteronomy 28:58; Psalms 111:9; Malachi 2:5

Three lexical observations govern what follows.

First: the word *HaShem (the Name)* is itself in the Torah. It appears in **Leviticus 24:11**, where the blasphemer “*pierced/designated ha-shem (the Name) and cursed,*” and in **Deuteronomy 28:58**, “*this glorious and awesome Name, Yahweh your Elohim.*” The Torah uses “*the Name*” as a reverent way of pointing to **Yahweh** — but in both places the Name itself is written out in the same passage.

Second: *zekher (memorial)* is the word for what is said aloud about a person. In **Exodus 3:15** it stands in exact parallel to *shem (name)*: “*This is My name forever, and this is My memorial from generation to generation.*” A *zekher (memorial)* that no one may say is not what the word means.

Third: the verb *naqav (to pierce, designate)* does not mean “*to pronounce*” in any other Tanakh passage. Elsewhere it means to mark out by name (“*these men who were designated by name,*” **Numbers 1:17**) or to name (“*a new name which the mouth of Yahweh will designate,*” **Isaiah 62:2**). Section VI-B shows why this matters.

III. WHAT JUDAISM DOES — AND THE REASONS IT GIVES

III-A. The Practice Today

Rabbinic Judaism uses a graded set of substitutes, each for its own setting. The table describes present practice. It is a description, not an endorsement.

SETTING	WHAT IS SAID	MEANING	SOURCE OF THE PRACTICE
Prayer, blessings, and public Torah reading	<i>Adonai</i> , אֲדֹנָי	My Lord	The Masoretic vowel marks on יהוה cue the reader to say <i>Adonai</i> (C-12)
Where <i>Adonai</i> already stands before the Name	<i>Elohim</i>	God	The Name is then marked with the vowels of <i>Elohim</i> (C-12)

SETTING	WHAT IS SAID	MEANING	SOURCE OF THE PRACTICE
Everyday speech, teaching, practice of blessings	<i>HaShem</i> , הַשֵּׁם	The Name	Custom of avoiding even <i>Adonai</i> outside prayer
Study outside prayer	<i>Adoshem; Elokim</i>	Blended or altered forms	Custom, so as not to say a holy name <i>“in vain”</i> while studying
Writing in English	<i>“G-d,” “L-rd”</i>	Letters left out	Extension of the rule against erasing holy names, from Deuteronomy 12:3–4 (C-12)
The Temple, while it stood	The Name <i>“as it is written”</i>	The Name itself	The priestly blessing and the high priest’s confessions (C-6)

III-B. The Five Reasons the Tradition Gives

The rabbinic tradition gives five reasons for not saying the Name. Each is reported here fairly and then tested in the sections that follow.

Reason One — Reverence. The Name is too holy for ordinary lips. Treating it as unspoken guards its honor. **Tested in VI-D.**

Reason Two — A fence around Exodus 20:7. If the Name is never said, it can never be said empty. **Tested in VI-A.**

Reason Three — The blasphemer of Leviticus 24. The Torah’s death penalty for one who *naqav (designated)* the Name was read as a penalty for pronouncing it (C-8, C-11). **Tested in VI-B.**

Reason Four — “Forever” read as “to conceal.” The word *le’olam (forever)* in **Exodus 3:15** is spelled without a vav and was read as *le’alem (to conceal)*: *“This is My name, to be hidden”* (C-10). **Tested in VI-C.**

Reason Five — The Temple is gone. The Name was spoken in the Temple by priests, and some hold it should wait for the Temple and for purity to return (C-6, C-7, C-12). **Tested in IX.**

The tradition is also honest in two places that deserve notice. It records that the sages once ruled a person should greet his neighbor *“with the Name,”* citing Boaz in **Ruth 2:4** (C-9). And it teaches that in the age to come the Name will be read as it is written (C-10), from **Zechariah 14:9**. The tradition itself does not claim that silence is how things were at the beginning, or how they will be at the end.

IV. HOW THE SUBSTITUTION CAME ABOUT

The silence did not begin at Sinai. The historical record, drawn from the Comparative Texts, shows it developing in stages over roughly a thousand years.

PERIOD	WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS	REF.
Patriarchs to the monarchy	The Name is called on at altars, sworn by, used in blessings and greetings, and built into personal names — Joshua, Jehoshaphat, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah. The Tanakh itself is the witness.	Genesis 12:8; Ruth 2:4; Judges 6:12
Kingdom of Judah, before the exile (c. 840–586 BCE)	The Name appears on a Moabite king's monument, on silver amulets carrying the priestly blessing, and in army letters: <i>“May Yahweh cause my lord to bear news of peace.”</i> It is used in ordinary life.	C-1
Persian period (5th c. BCE)	The colony at Elephantine writes the short form <i>Yahu</i> . The books of Esther and Ecclesiastes do not use the Name at all.	C-2
Greek period (3rd–1st c. BCE)	Greek translators keep the Name in some copies (Iao; Hebrew letters) and replace it with <i>“Lord”</i> in others. The Qumran community expels anyone who speaks it aloud. Scribes set it apart in old Hebrew letters or four dots.	C-3, C-4
Late Second Temple (to 70 CE)	The Name is spoken in the Temple — in the priests' daily blessing and ten times by the high priest on the Day of Atonement — and replaced by a substitute outside it. One report says the priests stopped blessing with the Name after the death of Simeon the Righteous. Josephus writes that he may not say it.	C-5, C-6, C-7
After the Temple (2nd–6th c. CE)	The Mishnah says one who pronounces the Name by its letters loses his share in the world to come. The Aramaic Targum renders the blasphemer's act as <i>“pronounced.”</i> The Talmud reads <i>“forever”</i> as <i>“to conceal.”</i>	C-8, C-10, C-11
Masoretic period (6th–10th c. CE)	Vowel marks are added to the Hebrew text. The Name receives the vowels of the word to be said instead, so that what is written and what is read differ at every one of its nearly 6,800 occurrences.	C-12

PERIOD	WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS	REF.
Medieval to modern	The codes fix <i>Adonai</i> for prayer. <i>HaShem</i> has become the everyday word. “ <i>G-d</i> ” spreads in English writing. Christian translation carries “ <i>LORD</i> ” into most English Bibles; the 2008 Vatican letter confirms it for Catholic worship.	C-12, C-14

Finding — how the substitution came about: the Name was spoken in ordinary covenant life in the Tanakh period (Tanakh witness **Corroborated**; inscriptions C-1 agree). Silence arose after the exile, grew through the Second Temple period, and became fixed after the Temple fell. A command to keep silent about the Name is **Not in the text**.

V. WHAT THE TORAH AND THE TANAKH SAY ABOUT SPEAKING THE NAME

The Tanakh speaks about the Name in five ways. Each is carried by more than two independent witnesses.

V-A. The Name Was Given to Be Remembered

“And Elohim said further to Moses: Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: Yahweh, the Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial from generation to generation” (Exodus 3:15)

The Name is given to Moses to *say* to Israel: *“Thus you shall say.”* It is then called *zikhri* (*My memorial*), the form in which a name is spoken from one generation to the next. The Psalmist repeats the pairing —

“Your name, O Yahweh, is forever; Your memorial, O Yahweh, from generation to generation” (Psalms 135:13)

— and so does the prophet: *“Yahweh is His memorial”* (Hosea 12:5 [Hebrew 12:6]).

“In every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and I will bless you” (Exodus 20:24)

The verb is *azkir* (*I cause to be remembered, I cause to be mentioned*). **Yahweh** ties His coming and His blessing to places where His Name is mentioned.

V-B. The Name Was Called Upon

“Then it was begun to call on the name of Yahweh” (Genesis 4:26)

Abraham built an altar *“and called on the name of Yahweh”* (Genesis 12:8; 13:4; 21:33), and so did Isaac (Genesis 26:25). On Mount Carmel Elijah drew the line between the covenant and Baal worship by a spoken name:

“You call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Yahweh” (1 Kings 18:24).

The Psalmist says, *“I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of Yahweh”* (Psalms 116:13).

“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32 [Hebrew 3:5])

V-C. The Name Was Placed on Israel in Blessing

“Yahweh bless you and keep you; Yahweh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; Yahweh lift up His face toward you and give you peace. So they shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:24–27)

The priestly blessing is not a silent rite. The priests *say* it to the people, and the Name appears three times. **Yahweh** calls this spoken act *“putting My name”* on Israel. The Levites were set apart *“to bless in His name”* (Deuteronomy 10:8; 21:5). The oldest surviving copy of any biblical words — the silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom (C-1) — carries this very blessing with the Name written out, worn by an ordinary Judahite.

V-D. The Name Was Sworn By and Used in Greeting

“Yahweh your Elohim you shall fear, and Him you shall serve, and by His name you shall swear” (Deuteronomy 6:13)

The command is repeated in Deuteronomy 10:20. The prophets set the standard for the oath:

“You shall swear, ‘As Yahweh lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in righteousness” (Jeremiah 4:2).

And to the nations: *“If they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, ‘As Yahweh lives’ ... then they shall be built up in the midst of My people”* (Jeremiah 12:16).

An oath by the Name was spoken aloud by definition.

“And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, Yahweh be with you. And they answered him, Yahweh bless you” (Ruth 2:4)

The Messenger of **Yahweh** greeted Gideon the same way:

“Yahweh is with you, mighty man of valor” (Judges 6:12).

Ordinary field workers and a heavenly messenger both use the Name as a greeting. The sages themselves once cited these two verses to rule that a person should greet his fellow with the Name (C-9).

V-E. The Name Was to Be Proclaimed to the Nations

“For I will proclaim the name of Yahweh; ascribe greatness to our Elohim” (Deuteronomy 32:3)

Yahweh raised up Pharaoh *“that My name may be declared in all the earth”* (Exodus 9:16).

Israel is told: *“Give thanks to Yahweh, call on His name; make known His deeds among the peoples”* (Psalms 105:1; 1 Chronicles 16:8; Isaiah 12:4).

And the last of the prophets: *“From the rising of the sun to its setting My name shall be great among the nations”* (Malachi 1:11).

Finding — what the Tanakh says about speaking the Name: the written covenant commands the Name to be remembered and mentioned (Exodus 3:15; 20:24), called upon (Genesis 4:26; 12:8; Joel 2:32), placed on Israel by a spoken blessing (Numbers 6:27), sworn by in truth (Deuteronomy 6:13; Jeremiah 4:2), used in greeting (Ruth 2:4; Judges 6:12), and proclaimed to the nations (Deuteronomy 32:3; Psalms 105:1). Corroborated on every point. No text anywhere in the Tanakh commands Israel not to speak the Name. That command is **Not in the text**.

VI. THE FOUR TEXTS BEHIND THE SILENCE, TESTED

VI-A. Exodus 20:7 — What “In Vain” Means

“You shall not lift up the name of Yahweh your Elohim to emptiness, for Yahweh will not hold guiltless the one who lifts up His name to emptiness” (Exodus 20:7)

The words are *lo tissa* (you shall not lift up) and *la-shav* (to emptiness / to falsehood). The Tanakh explains the command by its own parallels. **Leviticus 19:12** names the act:

“You shall not swear by My name falsely, so that you profane the name of your Elohim.”

Psalms 24:4 describes the one who may stand in the holy place as one

“who has not lifted up his soul to emptiness and has not sworn deceitfully.”

Jeremiah 5:2 gives the case: *“Though they say, ‘As Yahweh lives,’ surely they swear falsely.”*

Zechariah 5:4 sends the curse into *“the house of the one who swears falsely by My name.”*

In every case the sin is a false or empty use of the Name — an oath not kept, a claim not meant, a holy Name attached to a lie. None of these texts makes the sound of the Name the sin. The same Torah that says *“do not lift it up to emptiness”* says *“by His name you shall swear”* (Deuteronomy 6:13). The command guards the *truthfulness* of the Name's use, not its silence.

The tradition's answer is that silence is a fence: if the Name is never spoken, it can never be spoken falsely. But the Torah has a warning about fences that become commands:

“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

A fence that removes what the Torah commands — calling on, swearing by, blessing with the Name — takes away from the word in order to guard it. The prophet names the result:

“their fear of Me is a commandment of men learned by rote” (Isaiah 29:13).

Finding — Exodus 20:7: the command forbids lifting the Name to emptiness or falsehood (Leviticus 19:12; Psalms 24:4; Jeremiah 5:2; Zechariah 5:4). Corroborated. That it forbids speaking the Name reverently and truthfully is Not in the text; the Torah commands exactly that (Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20).

VI-B. Leviticus 24:10–23 — The Blasphemer

This is the passage on which the strongest form of the silence rests (C-8, C-11). It must be read whole.

“And the son of the Israelite woman pierced the Name and cursed; and they brought him to Moses” (Leviticus 24:11)

“Bring out the one who cursed outside the camp ... Any man who curses his Elohim shall bear his sin. And the one who pierces the name of Yahweh shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 24:14–16)

The Hebrew of verse 11 is *va-yiqqov ... et ha-shem va-yeqallel* (*he pierced the Name and cursed*). The two verbs stand together. Throughout the passage the man is called *ba-meqallel* (*the one who cursed*) — in verse 14 and again in verse 23, where *“they brought out the one who cursed outside the camp and stoned him.”* Verse 15 states the general law in the same terms: *“any man who yeqallel (curses) his Elohim.”* The sin the passage describes is an attack on the Name: marking it out in order to revile it.

The verb *naqav* (*to pierce, designate*) is the key. As shown in Section II, everywhere else in the Tanakh it means to mark out or to name (**Numbers 1:17; Isaiah 62:2**), and its root sense is to pierce (**2 Kings 18:21**, a reed that “*pierces*” the hand). Reading verse 16 alone as “*whoever pronounces the Name shall die*” breaks it off from verses 11, 14, 15, and 23, all of which name cursing.

The history shows where the narrower reading came from. The Aramaic Targum renders *naqav* (*pierce*) as “*pronounced distinctly*” (C-11). The Mishnah still requires, for the death penalty, that the blasphemer *curse* using the Name itself — its own ruling joins the two acts, as the Torah does (C-8). Only the separate saying of Abba Shaul turns plain pronunciation into a loss of the world to come (C-8). The Torah’s own witnesses to the Name being spoken — the priests, Boaz, the oath-takers — would all fall under that later reading. The Torah cannot be read against itself.

Finding — Leviticus 24: the capital offense is using the Name to curse — *naqav* (*piercing*) joined to *qalal* (*cursing*) — (**Leviticus 24:11, 14, 15, 23**; compare **Exodus 22:28** [Hebrew 22:27]). **Corroborated.** That pronouncing the Name reverently is a capital offense is **Not in the text**; it comes from the Aramaic rendering and the later rabbinic rule (C-8, C-11).

VI-C. Exodus 3:15 — “Forever” or “To Conceal”?

The Talmud reports an elder who told the sage Rava not to teach the Name’s pronunciation, because the word *le’olam* (*forever*) in “*This is My name forever*” is written without a vav, so it may be read *le’alem* (*to conceal*). Another sage then set the two halves of the verse against each other: “*This is My name to be concealed*” and “*this is My memorial to be mentioned*” — and so the Name is written one way and read another (C-10).

The Torah answers this reading from its own pages. The same defective spelling, לְעֶלֶם without a vav, appears in the Song of the Sea:

“Yahweh shall reign forever and ever” (Exodus 15:18)

Here the Hebrew is *le’olam va’ed* (*forever and ever*), spelled exactly as in **Exodus 3:15**. No one reads it “*Yahweh shall reign to conceal and ever.*” The spelling without a vav is common in the Torah and tells us nothing about hiding. And **Exodus 3:15** itself sets *le’olam* (*forever*) in parallel with *le-dor dor* (*from generation to generation*). Both halves describe the same thing: a Name meant to last and to be passed on.

Finding — Exodus 3:15: the verse gives the Name as permanent and as a spoken memorial for every generation (**Exodus 3:15; Psalms 135:13; Hosea 12:5**). **Corroborated.** The reading “*to conceal*” rests on a spelling the Torah uses elsewhere with its plain meaning (**Exodus 15:18**). As a teaching of the text it is **Not in the text**.

VI-D. Reverence — The Tradition's Strongest Ground

“If you are not careful to do all the words of this Torah that are written in this book, to fear this glorious and awesome Name, Yahweh your Elohim” (Deuteronomy 28:58)

Here the tradition stands on real ground. The Torah does command fear of *ba-shem ha-nikhhbad ve-ha-nora* (the glorious and awesome Name). *“Holy and awesome is His name” (Psalms 111:9)*. Of the covenant with Levi, Yahweh says the priest *“feared Me and stood in awe of My name” (Malachi 2:5)*. Reverence for the Name is not a rabbinic invention. It is covenant law.

But look at how **Deuteronomy 28:58** says to fear the Name: *“to do all the words of this Torah.”* The fear of the Name is shown by obedience. And look at how the Torah says the Name is profaned. In **Ezekiel 36:20–23**, Israel profaned the Name among the nations — not by saying it, but by the way they lived, so that the nations said, *“These are the people of Yahweh, yet they have gone out of His land.”* Yahweh's answer is: *“I will sanctify My great name ... and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh.”* The Name is profaned by conduct and sanctified by conduct (Leviticus 22:31–32).

Finding — reverence: reverence and fear of the Name are commanded (**Deuteronomy 28:58; Psalms 111:9; Malachi 2:5**). **Corroborated.** The Tanakh shows that reverence by obedience, truthful oaths, and holy conduct (Leviticus 22:32; Ezekiel 36:20–23). That reverence requires silence is **Not in the text**.

VII. THE MIRROR COMMAND — SILENCE WAS COMMANDED FOR OTHER GODS

The Torah *does* command silence about certain names. They are not the Name of Yahweh.

“And in all that I have said to you, take heed; and make no mention of the name of other gods; let it not be heard from your mouth” (Exodus 23:13)

The verb is *lo tazkiru* (you shall not mention) — the same root, *zakhar* (to remember, mention), that **Exodus 20:24** uses for the Name of Yahweh: *“every place where I cause My name to be mentioned.”* Joshua repeats the command: *“Do not mention the name of their gods, nor swear by them” (Joshua 23:7)*. David says of other gods: *“I will not take up their names upon my lips” (Psalms 16:4)*. And Hosea foretells that Yahweh *“will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name” (Hosea 2:17 [Hebrew 2:19])*.

The Torah's pattern is exact and deliberate. Other gods: do not mention, do not swear by, remove from the mouth. Yahweh: mention, swear by, call on, proclaim. The same rule appears in

writing. **Deuteronomy 12:3–4** commands Israel to destroy the names of the idols from their places and then says: ***“You shall not do so to Yahweh your Elohim.”*** The later practice of not writing the Name in full is built on that verse (C-12), yet the verse itself contrasts destroying idol names with honoring Yahweh's.

The practice of silence about the Name ends up treating Yahweh's Name the way the Torah told Israel to treat the names of idols. That is not the tradition's intention — its intention is reverence — but it is the practical effect, and the Tanakh warns of exactly this outcome. Jeremiah condemns prophets ***“who think to cause My people to forget My name ... as their fathers forgot My name for Baal”*** (Jeremiah 23:27). Baal means *“lord”* or *“master.”* Hosea foretells the day when Israel will call **Yahweh Ischi** (*my husband*) and no longer **Baali** (*my master*) (**Hosea 2:16** [Hebrew 2:18]).

Fairness requires a limit on that comparison. **Adonai** (*my Lord*) is a biblical title for **Yahweh**, used by Abraham (**Genesis 15:2**), by David (**Psalms 110:1**), and by **Yahweh** Himself beside His Name (**Jeremiah 44:26**). It is not the name of a false god, and the Jewish reader who says **Adonai** means the God of Israel and no other. The problem is not the title. The problem is a title replacing the Name that the covenant gave to be remembered.

Finding — the mirror command: the Torah commands silence about the names of other gods (**Exodus 23:13; Joshua 23:7; Psalms 16:4; Hosea 2:17**) and forbids treating Yahweh's Name as it treats theirs (**Deuteronomy 12:3–4**). Corroborated. **Adonai** (*my Lord*) as a title for **Yahweh** is biblical (**Genesis 15:2; Psalms 110:1**). Corroborated. Using the title to replace the Name at every occurrence is **Not in the text**.

VIII. HONEST COUNTER-WITNESSES

The two-or-three-witness standard requires that texts pointing the other way be set out and weighed, not left out. Three deserve attention.

VIII-A. Amos 6:10 — *“Hush!”*

“Then he shall say, Hush! For we must not make mention of the name of Yahweh” (Amos 6:10)

This is the one verse in the Tanakh where someone says the Name must not be mentioned. The setting is judgment: a house where ten men have died, a relative carrying out the bones, a survivor hiding in the back. The speaker is a terrified man in a plague, afraid that mentioning the Name will draw more judgment down. It is a picture of what judgment does to a people, not a command of **Yahweh**. Amos

elsewhere proclaims the Name freely: *“Yahweh, Elohim of hosts, is His name”* (Amos 4:13; 5:8, 27).

Finding: Amos 6:10 records fear of mentioning the Name as a symptom of judgment. As a command to keep silent it is **Not in the text** (Single witness to the practice, and that witness is descriptive).

VIII-B. The Psalms That Use Elohim, and Books Without the Name

In **Psalms 42–83**, many scholars call the group the *“Elohistic Psalter,”* because **Elohim** stands where other psalms have the Name. The clearest case is a pair: **Psalms 14** uses **Yahweh** in verses 2, 4, and 7, while its near-twin **Psalms 53** has **Elohim** in the same places. This may show an early editorial preference, inside the Tanakh itself, for the general word over the Name in one collection. The books of Esther and Ecclesiastes also do not use the Name.

This deserves to be taken seriously. It is the closest the Tanakh comes to showing restraint with the Name. But it proves less than it seems. The same collection still uses the Name — its closing psalm prays:

“that they may know that You, whose name alone is Yahweh, are Most High over all the earth” (Psalms 83:18 [Hebrew 83:19]).

The books written after the exile — Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi — use the Name hundreds of times; Daniel prays it aloud in confession (**Daniel 9:4, 13–14**). And no book gives a reason or a rule for leaving it out.

Finding: an editorial preference for **Elohim** in some psalms is a real feature of the text (Psalms 14 and 53). Single witness to restraint, within one collection. That it reflects a command to withhold the Name is **Not in the text**; the same collection and the post-exilic books use the Name freely.

VIII-C. Jeremiah 44:26 — The Name Withdrawn as Judgment

“Behold, I have sworn by My great name, says Yahweh, that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, As the Lord Yahweh lives” (Jeremiah 44:26)

Here the Name *is* withdrawn from Judah’s mouth — by **Yahweh**, as a sentence on the Judahites in Egypt who had returned to the queen of heaven. This is the single text in the Tanakh where the Name ceasing to be spoken is **Yahweh’s** own act. It is a curse, not a devotion. The loss of the Name from a people’s mouth appears in the Tanakh as a sign of broken covenant, never as a mark of holiness.

Finding: when the Tanakh does describe the Name ceasing to be spoken, it is judgment (Jeremiah 44:26; compare Amos 6:10). Corroborated as a pattern of judgment. As a model for piety it is Not in the text.

IX. FORGETTING THE NAME, AND ITS PROMISED RESTORATION

The Tanakh foresaw a time when the Name would be forgotten, and it named who would be to blame.

“How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies ... who think to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams which they tell each man to his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal?” (Jeremiah 23:26–27)

Doc 218 examined this passage as the test of true prophecy. **Here it matters for another reason:** the forgetting of the Name is treated as the work of false teachers, and the forgetting of the fathers is tied to Baal — a name that means “master.”

The prophets then promise the reverse. Not a hidden Name, but a known one:

“Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day they shall know that I am He who speaks: Here I am” (Isaiah 52:6)

“They shall know that My name is Yahweh” (Jeremiah 16:21). “I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name any more” (Ezekiel 39:7). “For then I will turn to the people a pure lip, that they may all call on the name of Yahweh, to serve Him with one shoulder” (Zephaniah 3:9). “They shall call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘It is My people’; and they shall say, ‘Yahweh is my Elohim’” (Zechariah 13:9).

“And Yahweh shall be King over all the earth; in that day Yahweh shall be one, and His name one” (Zechariah 14:9)

The rabbinic tradition itself reads this verse to mean that in the age to come the Name will be read as it is written (C-10). On this point the written covenant and the tradition agree: the substitution is not the final state. Where they differ is on timing. The Tanakh gives no instruction to wait for a rebuilt Temple before calling on the Name. Abraham called on it at a stone altar in the open country (**Genesis 12:8**). Jonah called on it from inside a fish (**Jonah 2:2**). Daniel prayed it toward a ruined Jerusalem (**Daniel 9:4, 13–14**). The Name was not locked in the Temple.

Finding — forgetting and restoration: causing the people to forget the Name is condemned (Jeremiah 23:26–27); its restoration among Israel and the nations is promised (Isaiah 52:6; Jeremiah 16:21; Ezekiel 39:7; Zephaniah 3:9; Zechariah 13:9; 14:9). **Corroborated.** That calling on the Name must wait for a Temple is **Not in the text** (Genesis 12:8; Jonah 2:2; Daniel 9:4).

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES THE NAME

The table sets the three traditions against Tanakh’s findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Practice today	The Name is written in every scroll and never said. <i>Adonai (my Lord)</i> in prayer; <i>HaShem (the Name)</i> in speech; “ <i>G-d</i> ” in English writing (C-12). Pronouncing the Name is treated as a grave sin (C-8).	Most Bibles print “ <i>LORD</i> .” Catholic liturgy forbids speaking or singing the Name (C-14). Jehovah’s Witnesses say “ <i>Jehovah</i> ”; Sacred Name groups say Yahweh or similar; many Protestants use Yahweh in study but “ <i>LORD</i> ” in worship.	Muslims call on Allah and His names openly and constantly — “ <i>In the name of Allah</i> ” opens nearly every act. The Tetragrammaton is not part of the Arabic tradition. A tradition speaks of one hidden “ <i>Greatest Name</i> ” (C-15).
Covenant strength	Keeps the four letters exactly in every scroll and has never altered them. Its reverence for the Name answers Deuteronomy 28:58 . It admits the silence is not the original or final state (C-9, C-10).	The prayer “ <i>hallowed be Your name</i> ” (C-13) echoes Leviticus 22:32 and Ezekiel 36:23 . “ <i>Hallelujah</i> ” keeps <i>Yah</i> (Psalms 68:4 [Hebrew 68:5]) on Christian lips.	Q. 7:180 and 17:110 teach calling on God by His names — close to Psalms 105:1 and Joel 2:32 . Islam has no rule of silence about God’s name.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Covenant departure	A fence that removes what the Torah commands: calling on, swearing by, and blessing with the Name (Deuteronomy 4:2). Reads <i>naqav</i> (<i>pierce</i>) as “ <i>pronounce</i> ” (C-11) and <i>le’olam</i> (<i>forever</i>) as “ <i>to conceal</i> ” (C-10) against the text’s own usage (Exodus 15:18; Leviticus 24:11–23).	Took over the Greek substitution and printed a title where the Hebrew has a name, so that most readers of Exodus 3:15 never see the Name. The 2008 directive gives tradition as its reason, not the text (C-14).	Does not transmit the covenant Name given to Moses (Exodus 3:15; 6:2–3). The hidden Greatest Name tradition rests on hadith reports, not on the Tanakh.
Covenant witness	The same tradition ruled that a man should greet his neighbor with the Name (C-9) and expects the Name to be read as written (C-10). It holds the key to its own correction.	The New Testament quotes Joel 2:32 — “ <i>whoever calls on the name</i> ” — as a promise for all (C-13), which only works if the Name can be called on.	Islam shows that deep reverence for God and constant spoken use of His name can live together — the point the Tanakh makes.

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library tests its own earlier work by the same standard it applies to others. Three points need correction or refinement.

Correction 1 — where and when the Name was spoken in the Second Temple. Doc 210 (Section IV-C) said that by the Second Temple period the Name “*was spoken only by the High Priest, only in the Holy of Holies, only on Yom Kippur.*” The sources it relies on say more than that. The Mishnah records that in the Temple the priests said the Name “*as it is written*” in the priestly blessing, which was given daily, and used a substitute only outside the Temple (C-6). The high priest’s ten utterances on the Day of Atonement were made mainly in the confessions over the bull and the goat and at the lots, in the Temple court, not only inside the Holy of Holies (C-6). The later report that the priests stopped using the Name after Simeon the Righteous (C-7) shows the practice narrowing over time. The earlier sentence should be refined accordingly.

Correction 2 — the Hebrew line in 613 Laws, Lesson 21. The Hebrew of **Leviticus 22:32** at the head of Lesson 21 (Laws 5, 8, and 9) reads “**דַּשׁ**” where the text has **דַּשׁ** (name); one Drive copy of

the lesson also shows a corrupted character in place of the word **אֶת**. The English translation in the lesson is correct. The Hebrew line should read:

וְלֹא תַחֲלִילוּ אֶת שֵׁם קֹדֶשִׁי

Correction 3 — the Shema in Doc 185. The subtitle of **Doc 185** renders **Deuteronomy 6:4** as “*Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.*” That is the synagogue *reading*, which says *Adonai (my Lord)* in place of the Name. The written text is *Shema Yisrael, Yahweh Eloheinu, Yahweh Echad (Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our Elohim, Yahweh is one)*. For consistency with the Library’s own standard and with this study’s findings, the subtitle should give the written Name, with a note that the synagogue reads *Adonai* there. This is offered for the Elder’s decision.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE NAME

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	Yahweh gave His Name to be spoken and remembered from generation to generation, not to be hidden.	Exodus 3:15; 20:24; Psalms 135:13; Hosea 12:5
II	The covenant commands the Name to be called on, sworn by in truth, placed on Israel in blessing, and proclaimed to the nations.	Genesis 12:8; Deuteronomy 6:13; Numbers 6:27; Deuteronomy 32:3; Joel 2:32
III	“ <i>In vain</i> ” means emptiness and falsehood. The command guards the truthfulness of the Name’s use, not its silence.	Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Psalms 24:4; Jeremiah 4:2; 5:2
IV	The blasphemer of Leviticus 24 was put to death for cursing by the Name, not for speaking it.	Leviticus 24:11, 14, 15, 23; Exodus 22:28
V	The Torah commands silence about the names of other gods and forbids treating Yahweh ’s Name as it treats theirs.	Exodus 23:13; Joshua 23:7; Psalms 16:4; Deuteronomy 12:3–4
VI	Reverence for the Name is commanded, and it is shown by obedience and holy conduct. The Name is profaned by how a person lives.	Deuteronomy 28:58; Leviticus 22:31–32; Ezekiel 36:20–23; Malachi 2:5
VII	Causing the people to forget the Name is condemned; the Name will be known and called on by Israel and the nations.	Jeremiah 23:26–27; Isaiah 52:6; Zephaniah 3:9; Zechariah 13:9; 14:9

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question “*why do they say HaShem?*” there is usually either honest curiosity or a temptation to scorn. Tanakh answers both.

First: honor the reverence, and name the fence for what it is. The Jewish reader who will not say the Name is trying to obey **Exodus 20:7** and **Deuteronomy 28:58**. That motive is right. The fence around it is a human addition (Deuteronomy 4:2), and it has come to forbid what the Torah commands. Both things can be said at once, without contempt.

Second: speak the Name the way the Torah commands. Call on it in prayer (**Psalms 116:13**). Swear by it only in truth, justice, and righteousness (**Jeremiah 4:2**). Bless with it (**Numbers 6:24–27**). Greet with it, as Boaz did (**Ruth 2:4**). Never attach it to a lie, a joke, a curse, or a sales pitch (Leviticus 19:12).

Third: do not make the Name a weapon. The Tanakh profanes the Name by conduct (**Ezekiel 36:20**). A believer who says **Yahweh** correctly while treating a Jewish, Christian, or Muslim neighbor with scorn has profaned the Name more than the neighbor who says *HaShem (the Name)* with fear. Pronunciation is not a test of fellowship; Doc 210 showed that even the exact vowels are not certain.

Fourth: to the Christian reader. Open **Exodus 3:15** in your own Bible and find “**LORD**” in capitals. Behind it is the Name. The prayer you already pray — “*hallowed be Your name*” — asks for the very thing **Ezekiel 36:23** promises.

Fifth: to the Muslim reader. You already call on God by His names openly and without fear (Q. 7:180). The Tanakh asks the same, and it gives the Name by which the God of Abraham made Himself known to Moses: “*I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by My name Yahweh I did not make Myself known to them*” (**Exodus 6:2–3**).

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Genesis 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25	Abraham and Isaac call on the Name at altars	V-B; IX
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REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
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“This is My name forever, and this is My memorial from generation to generation.”

Exodus 3:15 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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