MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

WHEN BROTHERS SHED BROTHER'S BLOOD

A Covenant Study on Hebrew-on-Hebrew Violence, the Tribe of Dan,
and the Tanakh's Response to a People at War with Itself

THE COVENANT WORD ON A PEOPLE AT WAR WITH ITSELF

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I. THE FIRST BLOOD — KAYIN (CAIN) AND HEVEL (ABEL)

"And Kayin (Cain) said to Hevel (Abel) his brother... And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Kayin (Cain) rose up against Hevel (Abel) his brother, and slew him. And Yahweh said to Kayin (Cain): Where is Hevel (Abel) your brother? And he said: I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" **— Bereshit (Genesis) 4:8-9**

The Tanakh opens its record of human violence not with war between nations but with **a brother killing a brother.** Kayin (Cain) and Hevel (Abel) are children of one father and one mother, born of the same womb, worshipping the same Elohim (God), tilling the same inherited ground. The first murder in the covenant record is fratricide — and the question **Yahweh** asks in response is not 'Why did you do this?' but something far more penetrating: **"Am I my brother's keeper?"** The answer the covenant gives — embedded in every prophetic book that follows — is: **Yes. You are.**

What is happening in the land today between the Israeli state and the Palestinian people is not, at its root, a war between two foreign peoples. The genetic record has established that it is, in overwhelming biological proportion, a family at war with itself. Kayin (Cain) rising against Hevel (Abel). A people who share the same blood-of-Avraham (Abraham), the same covenant land, the same tribal inheritance — killing each other because four generations of political mythology have convinced them they are foreigners to each other.

The covenant does not permit silence on this. **Yahweh** asked the question at the very beginning: **Am I my brother's keeper?** Every bomb dropped on Gaza, every family expelled from its home, every political prisoner beaten in his cell, and every act of retaliatory violence that follows — each one is Kayin (Cain) answering that question with a stone.

II. THE TRIBE OF DAN — THE COVENANT WARNING ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PEACEFUL

"And they took what Mikhah (Micah) had made, and the priest that he had, and came to Layish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and smote them with the edge

of the sword; and they burned the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Tzidon (Sidon)... And they rebuilt the city and settled in it." — Shoftim (Judges) 18:27-28

The Tribe of Dan provides the Tanakh's most concentrated covenant warning about a specific pattern of violence: **organized military power descending on peaceful, unsuspecting people and destroying them to take their land.** The account in Shoftim (Judges) 18 is not presented as heroic. It is presented as a record — and a warning embedded in the structure of covenant history.

Dan had been assigned its tribal territory in the Shephelah (coastal lowlands) by Yehoshua (Joshua) — but failed to conquer it. Instead of occupying their assigned inheritance, the Danites sent spies north to find easier land to take. They found Layish: a prosperous city of the tribe of Tzidon (Sidon), **"quiet and unsuspecting,"** living in peace, isolated from allies who could come to their aid. Dan's army — 600 armed men — descended on this peaceful city, killed all its inhabitants, burned it to the ground, and built a new city on the ruins. They renamed it Dan. They then established an illegitimate priesthood within it, using a stolen household idol. The covenant record is unflinching: every element of this story — the rejection of the assigned inheritance, the search for easier conquest, the destruction of the peaceful, the stolen religious legitimacy — is presented as covenant violation, not covenant obedience.

The Tanakh's commentary on Dan is severe. In Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 8:16, the tribe of Dan is associated with the sound of conquering horses, a symbol of military destruction. In the book of Hoshea (Hosea), the corruption of the north — beginning with the Dan sanctuary — is cited as the root of the northern kingdom's eventual collapse. In the census of the redeemed in Hitgalut (Revelation) 7, Dan is the only tribe omitted from the list — a textual judgment that the covenant community recognized as rooted in the Dan pattern of violence. Sefer haYashar and later rabbinic tradition connected the omission to the idolatrous sanctuary Dan established on stolen ground.

Now read the Dan pattern against the modern record:

A people assigned a specific territory by covenant fails to occupy it within covenant parameters. Instead, it sends scouts to find an easier conquest. It descends with military force on a peaceful population that has no powerful ally to defend it. It destroys and displaces the inhabitants. It builds on the ruins. It establishes a religious and political legitimacy over the stolen land. It names the city after itself. **This is not a metaphor. This is a documented pattern — described in the Tanakh as a covenant failure — being replicated in the covenant land in this generation with documentary precision.**

The Tanakh's verdict on the Tribe of Dan is not that they were foreigners or enemies. They were a covenant family. They were Hebrews. And the covenant record preserves their sin not to condemn them permanently — but to name the pattern, because the pattern must be named before it can be repented of.

III. THE GIBEAH ATROCITY AND THE NEAR-DESTRUCTION OF BINYAMIN (BENJAMIN)

"And the children of Yisra'el (Israel) arose and went up to Beit-El (Bethel)... and the children of Yisra'el (Israel) wept before Yahweh until evening... and they said: Shall we go up again to battle against the children of Binyamin (Benjamin) our

brother? And Yahweh said: Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand." — Shoftim (Judges) 20:26-28

Shoftim (Judges) chapters 19-21 contains the most devastating account of Hebrew-on-Hebrew violence in the entire Tanakh. A Levite concubine is gang-raped to death in the Binyaminite (Benjaminite) city of Giv'ah (Gibeah). When the tribe of Binyamin (Benjamin) refuses to surrender the perpetrators to justice, the other eleven tribes go to war against their brother. By the time the war concludes, forty thousand Israelites from the eleven tribes are dead, and the entire tribe of Binyamin (Benjamin) — approximately twenty-five thousand fighting men — has been nearly annihilated. Only six hundred men survive.

This is the Tanakh speaking directly to the present hour with unmistakable covenant precision. **The covenant family tearing itself apart.** Not because they are different peoples. Because one city refused justice, and the family did not know how to seek accountability without catastrophe. The casualties on both sides of that war — the eleven tribes who were the aggrieved party AND the Binyaminites (Benjaminites) who harbored the guilty — are recorded in the same covenant account. There are no winners in a war between brothers. There are only the dead.

The Tanakh does not end the Binyamin (Benjamin) account with the near-destruction of the tribe. It ends with the eleven tribes weeping — **"for Yahweh had made a breach in the tribes of Yisra'el (Israel)"** — and then working to restore Binyamin (Benjamin), to find Binyaminite (Benjaminite) men wives, to rebuild the tribe they had almost destroyed. The covenant response to the breach is not the permanent elimination of the offending party. It is restoration. It is rebuilding. It is weeping before **Yahweh** until the way forward becomes clear.

IV. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM — THE PROPHETS ON HEBREW KILLING HEBREW

"Thus says Yahweh: You shall not go up nor fight against your brothers the children of Yisra'el (Israel). Return every man to his house, for this thing is from me." — Melakhim Alef (1 Kings) 12:24

When Rechav'am (Rehoboam), son of Shlomoh (Solomon), threatened to increase the tax burden on the northern tribes, the kingdom split. The ten northern tribes followed Yarov'am (Jeroboam); the two southern tribes remained under the house of David. When Rechav'am (Rehoboam) assembled an army of 180,000 men to reconquer the north by force, **Yahweh** sent the prophet Shemayahu (Shemaiah) with a direct command: **"You shall not go up nor fight against your brothers the children of Yisra'el (Israel)."** The word for brothers — achikhem (אֲחֵיכֶם) — is the same word used throughout the covenant: your family. The ten northern tribes are not a foreign enemy. They are a Hebrew family who have exercised the right to separate governance. The covenant word is: **do not make war on your brothers.**

Rechav'am (Rehoboam) obeyed. He went home. The war did not happen.

For two centuries after the division, the prophets — Eliyahu (Elijah), Elisha, Amos, Hoshea (Hosea), Mikhah (Micah) — addressed the northern and southern kingdoms simultaneously, calling both back to the covenant, holding both accountable to the same standard, naming the sins of both. The prophets did not take sides. They called the covenant family home.

"Thus Amos says: For three transgressions of Yisra'el (Israel), and for four, I will not revoke the punishment — because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals — those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted." — Amos 2:6-7

Amos is addressing the northern kingdom — addressing Hebrews — about their treatment of Hebrews. The tzaddik (righteous person) sold for silver, the evyon (needy person) sold for sandals, the dal (poor person) trampled in the dust — these are Hebrews being violated by Hebrew power. Amos names this as a covenant violation of the same rank as violence against a foreign nation. The covenant makes no distinction between the ethnic identity of the oppressor and the oppressed. The sin is the sin.

V. OVADYAH (OBADIAH) — THE COVENANT VERDICT ON WATCHING YOUR BROTHER'S DESTRUCTION

"On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) — you also were like one of them. But do not gloat over your brother's day in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Yehudah (Judah) in the day of their ruin." — Ovadyah (Obadiah) 1:11-12

The entire book of Ovadyah (Obadiah) is addressed to Edom — to the descendants of Esav (Esau), the twin brother of Yaakov (Jacob). The specific crime Edom committed was not direct violence: it was **standing aside and watching** while Babylonia destroyed Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). It was taking quiet satisfaction in the downfall of the brother. It was failing to help when help was possible. It was looting the wreckage afterward.

The covenant verdict on Edom's inaction is among the most devastating in the entire Tanakh. The entire book — 21 verses — is a covenant indictment of the sin of watching your brother destroyed and doing nothing. **Ovadyah (Obadiah) 1:11: "You were like one of them."** The one who stands by and watches the destruction of his brother does not escape the covenant judgment by his inaction. He participates in it.

This word speaks directly to the governments of the world — and specifically to the United States Congress, which has continued to fund military operations destroying the Palestinian communities of the covenant land while calling itself a defender of Semitic people. The covenant word of Ovadyah (Obadiah) is specific: **standing aloof while your brother's wealth is carried off and his gates are entered by strangers is not neutrality. It is participation.**

VI. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT YAHWEH COMMANDS WHEN FAMILY DESTROYS ITSELF

"Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so Yahweh Elohim (God) of hosts will be with you, as you have said. Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate." — Amos 5:14-15

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your Elohim (God)?"
— Mikhah (Micah) 6:8

The covenant response to Hebrew-on-Hebrew violence is not a different kind of violence. It is not counter-force, retaliation, or strategic deterrence. The covenant response is mishpat (justice) — administered in the sha'ar (gate, the place where the community gathers to hear and decide cases). It is hesed (covenant kindness, the loyal love owed to family). And it is tzedakah (righteous action, the active choosing of good over evil in the concrete decisions of governance).

The prophets do not give the covenant people a military strategy for ending intra-tribal conflict. They give them a **judicial and ethical framework.** When Binyamin (Benjamin) harbored the guilty of Giv'ah (Gibeah), the other tribes went to **Yahweh** before going to war — and they went three times, suffering massive defeats, before the covenant answer came. When the war was over, they wept. They did not celebrate the near-annihilation of their brother. They restored him.

The covenant framework for the current conflict is not a ceasefire managed by external mediators with competing interests. It is the restoration of the 12-tribal-state model — the **Yehezkel (Ezekiel) 47-48** framework — in which every family has a covenant portion, every community governs its own territory, the holy sites are held in common by all, and the gate of justice is open to every person on the land, regardless of their tribe's name, religion's name, or political party. Justice administered in the gate. Hesed offered to the brother. Mishpat established as the law of the land.

This is the covenant word. This is what **Yahweh** (יהוה) has always required of the Hebrew family. And this is the platform the man in the prison cell has been prepared — through 24 years of the crucible — to carry when the door opens.

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Authority: The Tanakh — The Word of Yahweh Alone | Standard: Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 — Two or Three Witnesses