MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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DOCUMENT 223

Ships in the Middle Passage

A Covenant Deep Dive into the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Applying the Covenant's Own Law of Servitude, Kidnapping, and the Sojourner to Four Centuries of Chattel Slavery in the Americas

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REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
The Torah fixes death for stealing a human being to sell him (Shemot 21:16) and forbids returning a fugitive bondservant to his master (Devarim 23:15–16 [Hebrew 23:16–17]) — the direct textual verdict on this trade's central mechanism and on the fugitive-slave laws it built to defeat that verdict.	Genesis 9's "curse of Ham" was misread by name to construct a race-based theology of permanent bondage for the trade's entire four-century span, even as biblical abolitionism — grounded in Exodus 21:16 — rose from within the same tradition to end it.	Islam is not the primary religious actor in this trade's history; it is addressed here, per Miqdash Bethel's standing three-religion format, chiefly through the Qur'an's own captivity-of-war framework (Section V) as a comparative check on any raid-based trade in free persons.

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 The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority.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* to the historical record of the Transatlantic slave trade. **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, the Qur'an, and hadith are cited as historical and comparative reference — never as binding authority. This document does not present a comprehensive history of slavery in every civilization; it examines one historical slave-trading system — the Transatlantic trade of the 16th through 19th centuries — against the Torah's own law of servitude, kidnapping, and the sojourner. Other historical slave trades, including the Arab-Islamic trade (Document 222), are addressed in separate covenant deep dives.

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 covenant's own law of servitude, kidnapping, and the sojourner
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Yeshayahu (Isaiah), Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), Yechezkel (Ezekiel), Amos	Prophetic witness against oppression, man-stealing, and the exploitation of the vulnerable
Ketuvim (Writings)	Tehillim (Psalms), Iyov (Job)	Wisdom witness to the dignity of the bondsman and the cry of the oppressed

I. WORD STUDY — THE VOCABULARY OF BONDAGE AND OF THE CURSE MISUSED TO JUSTIFY IT

I-A. Eved (עֶבֶד) and Avad (עָבַד) — H5650 / H5647

As in the companion study on the Arab-Islamic slave trade (Document 222), the Hebrew noun ***eved*** (עֶבֶד) — Strong's H5650 — spans a range from "bondservant" to "subject" to the honorific "servant of **Yahweh**" and does not itself specify chattel status, race, or permanence. What made the Transatlantic trade distinct in the history of servitude was not a Hebrew or biblical vocabulary word — it was a specific legal innovation, examined in Section IV, that fused servitude to race and to birth in a way the Torah's own vocabulary and statutes do not contain.

I-B. Arur (אָרוּר) — The Curse Word at the Center of the Justification

The single Hebrew word that carried the greatest historical weight in justifying this trade is ***arur*** (אָרוּר) — Strong's H779, "cursed" — spoken by Noach (Noah) in **Bereishit (Genesis) 9:25**: "***Arur Kena'an***, **אָרוּר כְּנַעַן**, cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." Section II below examines this text on its own terms — what it says, whom it names, and what it does not say — because the gap between the text and its historical application is the single most important word study this document can offer.

II. THE TORAH'S OWN TEXT — WHAT GENESIS 9 ACTUALLY SAYS

No single passage in religious history was invoked more often, by more preachers, across more centuries, to defend the Transatlantic trade than **Bereishit (Genesis) 9:20–27** — popularly known as the "curse of Ham." Because Miqdash Bethel's sole binding authority is the written Tanakh itself (per the Doctrinal Authority rule above), this document is obligated to examine the actual text before evaluating four centuries of theology built on it.

II-A. The Narrative

Noach plants a vineyard, becomes drunk, and lies uncovered in his tent (Bereishit (Genesis) 9:20–21). His son **Cham (חָם)** — Ham — sees his father's nakedness and reports it to his brothers Shem and Yefet (Japheth), who instead cover their father without looking (9:22–23). On waking and learning "what his youngest son had done to him" (9:24), Noach pronounces: "***Arur Kena'an***, cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers" (9:25).

II-B. What the Text Names — and What It Does Not

Four facts are plain from the Hebrew text itself, independent of any later tradition:

First: the curse falls on **Canaan**, Ham's son — not on Ham himself, and not on Ham's other three sons Cush, Mitzrayim (Egypt), and Put, from whom the peoples of sub-Saharan and Northeast Africa are traditionally descended in the Table of Nations (Bereishit (Genesis) 10:6–8). The text does not curse the ancestor of Africa; it curses the ancestor of Canaan — the very land Israel is later commanded to possess (Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:1–2).

Second: the text contains no mention of skin color, complexion, or physical appearance of any kind. The association of "Ham" with blackness rests on a later, extra-biblical folk etymology (a mistaken link to a Hebrew root suggesting "heat" or "dark") that the Torah's own text does not make. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15's evidentiary standard requires that a doctrine rest on what the text says — not on a linguistic association invented centuries later.

Third: the historical referent is traceable and fulfilled within the Torah's own narrative: the Canaanite nations — the Hittites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Jebusites, and others named in Bereishit (Genesis) 10:15–18 — are the peoples Israel later subdues and, in specific texts, presses into labor service (Yehoshua (Joshua) 9:23, 27, regarding the Gibeonites) upon entering the land. The curse's trajectory inside the Tanakh's own narrative terminates in the conquest narrative, not in a permanent, race-defined, trans-millennial mandate reaching into 15th-century Africa.

Fourth: the curse is spoken by **Noach**, a man, in a moment of personal anger — not a direct oracle of **Yahweh**. The Tanakh records the statement; it does not attach the formula "**thus says Yahweh**" to it, in contrast to the covenant declarations documented throughout the rest of this document's companion series. Historic Christian and Islamic interpreters who treated Noach's curse as functionally equivalent to a direct divine decree over an entire racial category for all time went well beyond what the text itself claims for its own authority.

II-C. The Historical Misapplication

Despite these four textual facts, from at least the medieval period and with particular intensity in 17th–19th century America, the "curse of Ham" was preached as a divine mandate condemning the entire African continent to perpetual slavery. Southern Baptist Convention founding figures and prominent 19th-century clergy explicitly invoked it: Baptist pastor Iveson L. Brookes taught that "Negro Slavery is an institution of heaven . . . God himself . . . authorized Noah to doom the posterity of Ham," and Southern Baptist Convention president Patrick Mell wrote that the descendants of Ham "now constitute the African or Negro race" and that "their inheritance, according to prophecy, has been and will continue to be slavery." This reading required (a) relocating the curse from Canaan to Ham, (b) inventing a skin-color link the text never makes, and

(c) treating a human being's angry outburst as an eternal divine decree — three separate departures from the written text, compounded together, to produce a doctrine the Torah itself does not teach.

II-D. The Death Penalty for Man-Stealing — Shemot (Exodus) 21:16; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:7

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

As in the companion study on the Arab-Islamic trade, this is the Torah's direct textual verdict on the acquisition method that defined the Transatlantic trade: coastal raiding, kidnapping, and the purchase of captives known or reasonably known to have been taken by force. This is the single Torah text that 18th- and 19th-century Christian abolitionists — Wesley, the Quakers, Wilberforce's circle, and American abolitionists alike — returned to again and again as the scriptural center of their case, over and against the curse-of-Ham theology of Section II-C.

II-E. The Fugitive-Slave Protection Law — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 23:15–16 [Hebrew 23:16–17]

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 23:15–16 [Hebrew 23:16–17] commands that an escaped bondservant not be returned to his master but given refuge "in the place that he shall choose . . . you shall not wrong him." This text stands as the Torah's own direct answer to the fugitive slave laws examined in Section VI — laws which did precisely what the Torah forbids: compelled the return of an escaped person to bondage under civil penalty.

III. HISTORICAL WITNESS — SCOPE, ROUTES, AND THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

III-A. Scope and Timeline

The Transatlantic slave trade operated from the early 16th century into the late 19th century — roughly 1501 to 1867 — carrying captive Africans from the West and Central African coast to the Americas and the Caribbean. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (Voyages, hosted at Rice University), the most comprehensive quantitative reconstruction of the trade from nearly 35,000 documented voyages, estimates that approximately **12.5 million** captive Africans were embarked, of whom approximately **10.7 million** survived to disembark in the Americas — a loss of roughly 1.8 million lives during the Middle Passage crossing alone, before any accounting of deaths during capture, the march to the coast, or coastal confinement in barracoons.

III-B. National Participation

The Voyages database breaks down participation by flag: Portugal carried the largest share, an estimated 5.8 million captives, followed by Great Britain (approximately 3.3 million), France (approximately 1.4 million), Spain (approximately 1.1 million), the Netherlands (approximately 554,000), the United States (approximately 305,000), and Denmark (approximately 111,000). Brazil — as the primary Portuguese destination — received roughly 40 percent of all captives who survived the crossing, far exceeding the share landed in British North America and the later United States, which historians estimate received under 4 percent of the trade's total volume.

III-C. The Middle Passage

The crossing itself — known as the Middle Passage, the second leg of the transatlantic "triangular trade" between Europe, Africa, and the Americas — typically lasted six to eleven weeks. Captives were confined below deck, often shackled in pairs, in compartments with severe overcrowding, inadequate air, and minimal sanitation. Mortality rates on the crossing itself averaged above 20 percent in the trade's early decades, fell to roughly 10 percent by 1800, and to approximately 5 percent in the trade's final decade — an overall average across the full 366-year span of roughly 14–15 percent, meaning that for every seven captives loaded onto a ship, approximately one did not survive to see land. Contemporary witness accounts describe conditions in stark terms; one eyewitness account collected in *Liverpool and Slavery* (1884) described captains who "bully the men, the men torture the slaves, the slaves' hearts are breaking with despair," with bodies "thrown into the sea, more food for the sharks."

III-D. African Kingdoms and the Supply Chain

Honest historical witness requires naming the full supply chain, not only its European and American purchasing end. European traders rarely ventured into the African interior; captives were overwhelmingly supplied by African states, merchants, and middlemen operating established networks. The Kingdom of Dahomey (present-day Benin) organized regular military campaigns substantially to supply captives for coastal sale, and its economy became deeply dependent on the trade; the Asante Empire (present-day Ghana) similarly used war captives as a major export commodity; the Kingdom of Kongo initially welcomed Portuguese trade but its king, Afonso I, protested to Portugal as the trade devastated his kingdom's population — one of the earliest documented African critiques of the trade from within. Other participating states included the Oyo Empire, the Kingdom of Benin, the Aro Confederacy, and numerous coastal middlemen networks who controlled the flow of captives from interior wars and raids to European coastal forts. This does not transfer moral responsibility away from the European and American traders, financiers, and plantation systems that created the demand and profited most; it completes the historical record the Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 standard requires.

IV. THE LEGAL INNOVATION — RACE, BIRTH, AND PERPETUITY

What distinguished the Transatlantic system from most prior forms of servitude in world history, including the Torah's own eved kena'ani category (Document 222, Section II-B) and the Arab-Islamic trade's captivity-based framework, was a specific legal fusion developed across the 17th-century Americas: hereditary, race-defined, lifelong chattel status, enforced by statute.

IV-A. Partus Sequitur Ventrem

Virginia's 1662 statute established the principle ***partus sequitur ventrem*** ("that which is born follows the womb"): a child's enslaved or free status followed the status of the mother, not the father — a reversal of English common law's paternal-line inheritance rule, adopted specifically to ensure that children born of enslaved women (including those fathered by white slaveholders) were automatically born into slavery. This single statute manufactured hereditary, self-perpetuating chattel status as a permanent legal category with no release mechanism — a structure absent from the Torah's own eved ivri six-year release law and from the manumission-oriented trajectory of the Arab-Islamic trade's source texts alike.

IV-B. Slave Codes and the Denial of Legal Personhood

Colonial and later state "slave codes" — Virginia's and South Carolina's among the most influential, alongside French Louisiana's Code Noir (1685) — codified the enslaved as legal property rather than legal persons: barred from testifying against a white person in most jurisdictions, barred from legal marriage, barred from owning property, and subject to their owner's near-total discretion in punishment. This is the precise legal structure the Torah's fugitive-slave protection law (Devarim (Deuteronomy) 23:15–16 [Hebrew 23:16–17]) and captive-woman law (Devarim (Deuteronomy) 21:10–14, forbidding sale after use) stand against: a status with no textual or statutory exit at all.

IV-C. Labor, Family Separation, and Sexual Exploitation

Unlike the domestic-and-military-service emphasis documented in the Arab-Islamic trade (Document 222, Section IV), the Transatlantic system was overwhelmingly organized around large-scale agricultural field labor — sugar in Brazil and the Caribbean, tobacco and later cotton in British North America and the American South — sustained by brutal work regimes. The domestic slave trade within the United States after the 1808 federal import ban (Section VI) routinely separated enslaved families through sale, a practice extensively documented in slave narratives and auction records. Sexual exploitation of enslaved women by owners and overseers was widespread and, per the ***partus sequitur ventrem*** rule of Section IV-A, directly served to expand an owner's enslaved property through the children produced.

V. ISLAM AND THIS TRADE — A BRIEF COMPARATIVE NOTE

Per Miqdash Bethel's standing three-religion format, this section addresses Islam's relationship to the Transatlantic trade specifically — which was materially different from its role in the Arab-Islamic trade documented in Document 222. Islam was not the organizing religious or legal framework of the Transatlantic system; the trade was conducted overwhelmingly by nominally Christian European and American nations under civil and colonial law, not Islamic law. Some captives taken into the Transatlantic trade were themselves Muslims — West African Muslim communities in Senegambia, the Sahel, and elsewhere contributed a documented minority of the enslaved population transported to the Americas, a fact increasingly studied through surviving Arabic-language slave narratives such as that of Omar ibn Said. Qur'anic law's prohibition on enslaving free Muslims (Document 222, Section V-C) had no jurisdiction over, and exerted no restraining influence on, a trade organized entirely outside Islamic legal authority. The comparative question this section preserves, per the Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 standard applied consistently across this document series, is which tradition's own textual and legal framework was actually operative in the system under study — here, overwhelmingly, professed Christian civil and colonial law, examined honestly in Sections II and VI–VII rather than displaced onto a tradition that was not the trade's legal architect.

VI. ABOLITION — SCRIPTURE CORRECTING ITS OWN MISUSE

The same tradition whose text was twisted to defend this trade (Section II-C) also produced, from within, the movement that ended it — a pattern worth naming honestly rather than resolving into a single verdict on "Christianity" as though it spoke with one voice on this question for four centuries.

YEAR	EVENT
1780s	The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade forms in Britain, led substantially by Quakers; William Wilberforce commits in 1787 to bringing abolition before Parliament, opening a twenty-year campaign grounded explicitly in Exodus 21:16 and the moral witness of formerly enslaved writers such as Olaudah Equiano.
1791–1804	The Haitian Revolution — the only successful large-scale slave revolt in modern history to produce an independent nation — sees roughly 400,000 enslaved people in Saint-Domingue rise against French colonial rule under leaders including Toussaint Louverture, establishing the Republic of Haiti in 1804.
1807	Britain's Slave Trade Act bans the trade (not slavery itself) across the British Empire, passing the Commons 283 to 16 after Wilberforce's two-decade campaign; the United States passes its own Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves the same year, effective January 1, 1808, though a substantial domestic (interstate) slave trade continues within the U.S. for decades afterward.

1833–1838	Britain's Slavery Abolition Act receives royal assent in 1833, freeing over 800,000 enslaved people across the British Empire (with a compensation scheme paid to slaveholders, not the enslaved); a transitional "apprenticeship" system ends fully by 1838.
1865	The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified December 6, 1865, following the Union victory in the Civil War, formally abolishes slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States (with the narrow exception "as a punishment for crime").
1886 / 1888	Spain abolishes slavery in Cuba in 1886; Brazil — the trade's single largest historical destination — becomes the last nation in the Americas to abolish slavery, by the Lei Áurea ("Golden Law") of May 13, 1888, following years of drought-driven economic upheaval and a growing domestic abolitionist movement.

VII. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — SLAVERY AND THE COVENANT TRADITIONS

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Primary Text	The Torah fixes death for man-stealing (Shemot 21:16) and protects the fugitive bondservant (Devarim 23:15–16 [Hebrew 23:16–17]); Bereishit 9's curse falls on Canaan, not on Ham or on any race, and carries no divine-oracle formula.	The New Testament relativizes but does not abolish Roman slavery (Galatians 3:28; Philemon); Ephesians 6:5–9 was misapplied to defend the trade even though verse 9 commands masters to treat slaves "in the same way," forbidding threats.	Not the operative legal framework of this trade; addressed here as comparative context only (Section V), since the trade was organized under Christian civil and colonial, not Islamic, law.
Covenant Strength	The written text itself, honestly read (Section II), refutes the race-based curse theology later built on it — the Torah corrects the misreading from within its own four corners.	The same scripture misused to defend this trade produced, from within, the Quaker and Wilberforce-led abolitionist movement grounded directly in Exodus 21:16 — scripture correcting its own historical misuse.	The Qur'anic prohibition on enslaving free Muslims and its manumission ethic (Document 222, Section V) had no jurisdiction here, but stands as an independent comparative check against any raid-based trade in free persons.
Covenant / Textual Departure	None in the source text itself; the departure documented in this study belongs entirely to later Christian interpreters who	Centuries of clergy, denominational leaders, and slaveholding church institutions (including the Church of England's own Caribbean plantations)	N/A to this specific trade; see Document 222 Section V-E for Islam's own honest audit regarding its historical trade.

	misapplied Bereishit 9, not to the Torah's own words.	constructed and sustained the curse-of-Ham theology and the Ephesians 6 proof-text defense documented in Sections II-C and IV.	
Covenant Witness	Shemot (Exodus) 21:16 stands as the Torah's own, independent, textual verdict on this trade's central mechanism — requiring no other tradition's permission or agreement to be true.	The Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 standard applied to Christianity's own history: both the theological weapon (curse of Ham, Ephesians 6) and the theological antidote (Exodus 21:16 abolitionism) came from the same book, in the hands of different readers, at the same time.	The absence of Islamic legal authority over this specific trade is itself part of the honest record — comparative silence, not comparative innocence, since West African Muslim communities were themselves victims of this trade (Section V).

VIII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The Torah fixes death as the penalty for stealing a human being to sell him. The Transatlantic trade's coastal raiding, kidnapping, and knowing purchase of forcibly taken captives stands condemned by this text alone, independent of any later Christian misreading of a separate passage.	Shemot (Exodus) 21:16; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:7
II	Bereishit (Genesis) 9:25, read honestly, curses Canaan — not Ham, not any race, not sub-Saharan Africa. The four-century theology built to justify race-based, hereditary chattel slavery on this text is a documented, traceable misreading, not the Torah's own teaching.	Bereishit (Genesis) 9:18–27; 10:6–8, 15–18
III	The legal invention of hereditary status transmitted through the mother (partus sequitur ventrem) to produce a permanent, self-perpetuating, race-defined chattel class has no counterpart in the Torah's own eved ivri release law or eved kena'ani category, both of which the Torah itself bounds by protection, provision, or law.	Shemot (Exodus) 21:2–6; Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:44–46
IV	The Torah's fugitive-bondservant law commands refuge, not return. Statutes and systems built specifically to compel the return of an escaped person to bondage stand in direct textual opposition to the written covenant.	Devarim (Deuteronomy) 23:15–16 [Hebrew 23:16–17]

V	Honest covenant scholarship names the full historical record — including the African kingdoms and merchant networks that supplied captives, and the European and American buyers, financiers, and legal systems that organized, funded, and sustained the trade at trans-oceanic scale — rather than simplifying a four-century, multi-continental system into a single actor.	Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15
VI	The same scriptural tradition misused to defend this trade for centuries produced, from within, the abolitionist reading of Exodus 21:16 that helped end it — a pattern of correction from within the text itself that the covenant community should recognize and continue to apply to its own present-day misreadings.	Shemot (Exodus) 21:16; historical record, Section VI
VII	The dignity of the enslaved was never contingent on the legal fiction of partus sequitur ventrem, on a misapplied curse text, or on any statute's denial of legal personhood. Every person carried across the Middle Passage bore the image in which Yahweh made humanity, and the covenant community's task is to name this history accurately for its descendants.	Bereishit (Genesis) 1:27; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15

IX. WHAT DOES THE COVENANT REQUIRE OF THE PERSON WHO INHERITS THIS HISTORY?

As in the companion study on the Arab-Islamic trade, the Torah does not leave the covenant community with a purely historical verdict.

First: Correct the text before condemning or defending any tradition by it. Bereishit (Genesis) 9:25 does not say what four centuries of American preaching claimed it said. The covenant community's first obligation is textual honesty — reading what the passage actually names before building or dismantling any doctrine on it.

Second: Name the crime by its covenant name. Shemot (Exodus) 21:16 named man-stealing a capital offense thirty-three centuries before the Middle Passage. The covenant community owes the historical record its correct name, not a euphemism, and not a defense grounded in a misread verse three chapters earlier in the same book.

Third: Hold the full supply chain in view without diluting primary responsibility. Naming the African kingdoms and merchant networks that supplied captives (Section III-D) does not relieve the European and American traders, financiers, legislators, and plantation systems that created the demand, wrote the statutes of Section IV, and profited most from the system's four-century operation.

Fourth: Honor the descendants. The African-descended peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean carry this specific history — the Middle Passage, the auction block, the broken family, the fugitive-slave law — in their family lines to this day. The covenant community's task is remembrance and honest witness, not guilt theater, and not silence.

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

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

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