

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 201 (tentative — pending confirmation and MLI logging)

THE COVENANT AND THE FIRST PEOPLES

A COVENANT DEEP DIVE ON THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Land, Covenant, Boundary, and Bloodshed — A Three-Religion Witness

July 2026

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REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☾ ISLAM
The land is Mine (כִּי-לִי הָאָרֶץ), Yahweh tells even Israel — Vayikra 25:23. No nation, covenant or conqueror, holds the final title to the earth.	The 1493 papal bulls granted European crowns religious warrant to seize inhabited land as though it belonged to no one — a claim the Vatican itself repudiated in 2023 as contrary to the dignity of every person.	The Qur'an binds the believer to honor covenants made, even with those outside the faith (Q. 5:1; 9:4) — a standard the treaty record examined here did not meet.

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 The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and theological comparison only. The **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual and historical claims in this document. This standard is not incidental to this study — it is the very rule this document applies to the American Indian record: a claim of historical wrong is not accepted here on a single hostile or a single sympathetic account, but only where the record is corroborated by two or three independent witnesses, government and independent alike, per Malachi 3:6 (**Yahweh** does not change) and Tehillim (Psalms) 119:89 (His word is settled in heaven forever).

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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 historical record of the American Indian is drawn from the covenant institution's approved sources — archive.org primary texts, national archival records, and encyclopedic reference works — applied under the two-or-three-witness standard. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Bereishit (Genesis), Shemot (Exodus), Vayikra (Leviticus), Bemidbar (Numbers), Devarim (Deuteronomy)	Land covenant, image of Elohim, ger law, boundary law, law of warfare, bloodguilt of the land
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Yeshayahu (Isaiah), Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), Hoshea (Hosea), Amos, Michah (Micah), Yechezkel (Ezekiel)	Prophetic indictment of land theft, broken covenant, and false shepherds
Ketuvim (Writings)	Tehillim (Psalms), Mishlei (Proverbs)	Covenant witness to justice, the boundary marker, and the settled word of Yahweh

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I. WHO IS THE AMERICAN INDIAN IN COVENANT TERMS?

I-A. The Image of Elohim Is Not a Covenant Privilege

Tanakh's anthropology begins before any covenant is cut. **Bereishit (Genesis) 1:27** states that **Elohim** created humankind — **adam** (אָדָם) — in His own image, and **Bereishit (Genesis) 9:6**, given to Noah (Noah) long before Avraham (Abraham) was called and long before Sinai, grounds the prohibition of bloodshed in that same image:

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of Elohim He made man."

This is not a statement limited to Israel. It is the Tanakh's universal premise, stated to the whole of post-flood humanity, of which the peoples native to the Americas are as fully included as any other nation on earth.

This matters because the legal and theological instruments that opened the Americas to European settlement rested on the opposite premise. The papal bull *Inter Caetera* (1493) and its predecessor *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) treated land inhabited by non-Christian peoples as available for Christian discovery and dominion — a doctrine historians and the Vatican itself now identify by the name "**Doctrine of Discovery**." The United States Supreme Court incorporated this doctrine directly into American property law in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1823), and cited it as recently as a 2005 decision concerning the Oneida Indian Nation. In March 2023 the Vatican formally repudiated the doctrine, stating that the papal bulls "did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of indigenous peoples" and had been "manipulated for political purposes by colonial powers." This document does not adjudicate the Vatican's institutional history. It notes, under the Tanakh's own standard, that a legal doctrine treating inhabited land as though its people held no standing before Elohim was never compatible with Bereishit 9:6 to begin with — no repudiation was required to know this from the written covenant; the written covenant already said so.

I-B. Ger and Toshav: The Torah's Most Repeated Social Command

The Torah's command not to wrong the **ger** (גֵּר, sojourner / resident outsider) is repeated again and again across the five books (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33–34; Deuteronomy 10:19; 24:17–18). **Shemot (Exodus) 22:21 [Hebrew 22:20]** states it plainly:

"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:33–34 sharpens it further:

"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

The American Indian nations were not **gerim** within someone else's land in the way Torah's law envisions — they were the original inhabitants of their own territory, made strangers within it by an incoming power. This is, if anything, a graver inversion of the paradigm the law addresses, not a lesser one. The moral logic Torah gives for the ger command — remember what powerlessness in another's land feels like, and do not inflict it on the vulnerable — applies with undiminished force to a people rendered powerless on their own. A covenant

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community that has itself known dispossession, as Israel did in Egypt, is commanded to recognize dispossession when it sees it, not merely when it suffers it.

II. THE LAND COVENANT PRINCIPLE — "THE LAND IS MINE"

Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:23 states the Tanakh's central land principle in a single sentence, addressed to Israel at the height of the land promise itself:

"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine (בְּיָדִי הָאֲרֶץ); for you are strangers and settlers (gerim ve-toshavim, גֵּרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים) with Me."

This is a radical claim, and it is addressed to the covenant nation, not to its enemies. Even Israel — the people to whom the land was given by direct divine promise — is told it holds the land only as a tenant under Yahweh's ultimate title, never as an owner with unconditional right of disposal. No nation, ancient or modern, covenant or otherwise, escapes this principle: discovery does not confer ownership; conquest does not confer ownership; treaty does not confer ownership beyond its own terms. **Only Yahweh holds the final title to the earth.**

Bemidbar (Numbers) 33:53–54 reinforces the same principle from the opposite direction: even Israel's own entry into the land is governed by divine allotment by lot among the tribes, not by unilateral seizure or self-declared discovery. The mechanism of land transfer in Tanakh is never "we found it, therefore it is ours." **It is always covenant, allotment, and accountability to the One who owns the land in the first place.**

II-A. The Boundary Marker and the Curse Upon Moving It

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:14 commands:

"You shall not move your neighbor's boundary marker (gevul, גְּבוּל), set by previous generations, in the property that will be allotted to you in the land Yahweh your Elohim is giving you to possess."

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 27:17 places this command among the covenant curses read at Mount Ebal:

"Cursed is he who moves his neighbor's boundary marker."

Mishlei (Proverbs) 22:28 repeats the principle as a matter of ordinary household wisdom:

"Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set."

The historical record of United States treaty relations with Indian nations is, on its own official documentation, a record of the boundary marker repeatedly and incrementally moved. The *Treaty of Fort Laramie* (1868) established a Great Sioux Reservation of some sixty million acres. By 1877, following the discovery of gold in the Black Hills and renewed military pressure, the reservation had been reduced to approximately 21.7 million acres. The *Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887* — a federal statute, not a foreign invasion — reduced it further still, to roughly 12.7 million acres, barely one-fifth of the 1868 boundary. This is not a single violation. It is the boundary marker moved three times, each time by the party holding the greater

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power, against the party with the least recourse — precisely the pattern the covenant curse in Devarim 27:17 addresses.

III. TWO-OR-THREE WITNESSES TO THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Per the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** standard, no historical claim in this document rests on a single source. The five episodes below are each corroborated by at least two independent witnesses — primary historical narrative, United States government archival record, and independent encyclopedic reference.

III-A. The Spanish Record — Encomienda and Repartimiento

John Collier's *Indians of the Americas* (Digital Library of India digitization, archive.org) documents the Spanish colonial forced-labor systems of **encomienda** (a grant of Indian serfs attached to land) and **repartimiento** (a labor draft). Collier records that in the mercury mines feeding Spain's silver economy, colonial officials themselves reported Indian life expectancy of approximately four years under the mita labor system, and that in the combined jurisdictions of Lima and Charcas the Indian population fell from roughly 1,490,000 in 1561 to 612,000 by 1754. The Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas — whose advocacy produced the 1542 New Laws of the Indies abolishing chattel slavery of Indians — is Collier's primary internal witness that the Spanish Crown's own officials, including Francisco de Victoria of the Council of the Indies, reported by 1553 that "the abominations cried to heaven." This is not solely an outside indictment; it is corroborated by the correspondence and law of the colonizing power itself.

III-B. The Doctrine of Discovery

Pope Nicholas V's *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) and Pope Alexander VI's *Inter Caetera* (1493) granted Iberian crowns religious sanction to claim, subdue, and convert peoples in lands not previously held by Christian rulers. This legal-theological framework, later termed the "Doctrine of Discovery," was incorporated into United States common law by Chief Justice John Marshall in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1823) and was cited as recently as a 2005 U.S. Supreme Court decision denying the Oneida Indian Nation's claim to its own historic territory. On March 30, 2023, the Vatican's Dicasteries for Culture and Education and for Promoting Integral Human Development issued a joint statement formally repudiating the doctrine, acknowledging the papal bulls had been "manipulated for political purposes by colonial powers... to justify immoral acts against Indigenous peoples that were carried out, at times, without opposition from ecclesial authorities." The doctrine's civil legal afterlife in American courts and its 2023 ecclesial repudiation are independently documented and mutually corroborating.

III-C. The Removal Era and the Trail of Tears

President Andrew Jackson signed the *Indian Removal Act* into law on May 28, 1830, authorizing the forced relocation of Indian nations east of the Mississippi to territory west of it. The United States National Archives records that during the 1838–39 forced march of the Cherokee, "approximately 4,000 of 16,000 Cherokees died along the way" — a figure the Library of Congress independently confirms. Britannica's broader accounting of the full removal era estimates approximately 100,000 indigenous people were forced from their homes and some 15,000 died in the process, across the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole

nations. The Cherokee Nation had, in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), already won a favorable ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court affirming its sovereignty — a ruling the executive branch declined to enforce. The removal proceeded regardless of the nation's own highest court.

III-D. Wounded Knee, 1890

On December 29, 1890, the U.S. 7th Cavalry, having surrounded a band of Miniconjou and Hunkpapa Lakota at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, during a disarmament operation, killed an estimated 250 to 300 Lakota — the great majority of them, by encyclopedic and historical consensus, ill, unarmed, or women and children. This followed directly upon the Dawes Act's reduction of the Great Sioux Reservation described in Section II above, and upon the killing of Sitting Bull two weeks earlier during his own attempted arrest. Black Elk, a survivor and later subject of the classic oral history *Black Elk Speaks* (recorded by John G. Neihardt, 1932), described what he found in the gulch afterward without embellishment: dead and wounded women, children, and infants scattered where they had tried to flee. His own account — internal to the Lakota community, not a government or missionary record — corroborates the encyclopedic casualty and circumstance record independently.

III-E. The Dawes Act and the Boarding School Era

The *Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887* broke communal reservation land into individual private allotments, with "surplus" land beyond individual allotments opened to non-Indian settlement — the mechanism by which the Great Sioux Reservation, among many others, lost the bulk of its treaty-guaranteed acreage. In the same era, Indian children were removed from their families and placed in off-reservation boarding schools whose stated purpose was assimilation. Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, stated the policy's own governing philosophy directly: the schools existed, in his words, to "kill the Indian" in order to "save the man" — a formulation later widely cited by historians of the period as the boarding school movement's founding rationale. That the architect of the policy stated its intent in these terms in his own words removes any need for external characterization; the record here is the policy's own self-description.

IV. COVENANT LAW APPLIED TO THE RECORD

IV-A. The Law of Warfare — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:10 requires that before Israel besieges a city, it must first "*proclaim peace to it*" — an offer of terms short of war is a legal precondition, not an option. **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:19–20** forbids the destruction of fruit-bearing trees even in a legitimate siege, reasoning that "*the tree of the field is not man, that it should be besieged by you*" — the law restrains total destruction of a population's food source even under conditions of active war. The Removal-era record — deliberate destruction of Cherokee cornfields and villages, the razing of Creek and other towns, forced marches conducted without adequate provision documented by the National Archives' own casualty figures — falls outside both principles: no proclamation of peace preceded the Removal Act's enforcement, and the deliberate targeting of agricultural sustenance is precisely what Devarim 20:19–20 was written to forbid even against a

declared enemy in open war, let alone against nations most of which, by 1830, were at peace with the United States under standing treaty.

IV-B. Bloodshed Pollutes the Land — Bemidbar (Numbers) 35:33

Bemidbar (Numbers) 35:33 states a principle with no statute of limitations attached to it in the text:

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

The Hebrew verb here, **chanaf** (חָנַף, to pollute or defile), describes the land itself as bearing the moral consequence of unaccounted bloodshed — not merely the individuals involved. **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 21:1–9** provides the covenant's own procedural answer to bloodshed whose perpetrator is unknown or unaccounted for: the **egla arufah** (עֵגְלָה עֲרוּפָה, the broken-necked heifer) ritual, performed by the elders of the nearest town, publicly declaring *"our hands have not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it"* — a formal, communal reckoning required even when no individual is charged. The principle embedded in both texts is that a nation may not simply move past bloodshed on its own soil without some form of acknowledgment. Applied to Wounded Knee and to the documented Removal-era death toll, this is not a demand this document invents; it is the text's own insistence that land carries the memory of blood shed upon it until it is reckoned with.

IV-C. The Ger Law Applied

Section I-B above established that **Shemot (Exodus) 22:21 [Hebrew 22:20]** and **Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:33–34** are the Torah's most repeated social commands. Their logic is not merely sentimental — it is legal memory: a nation that has itself experienced dispossession is under a heightened, not a lessened, obligation to recognize dispossession inflicted on others. A covenant institution addressing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously cannot apply this law selectively to its own historical grievances while setting it aside where it inconveniently implicates the nations that produced its own religious and civil inheritance.

V. THE PROPHETS AND THE LANDMARK

The Nevi'im (Prophets) do not treat land theft as a private property dispute. They treat it as a covenant crime against Yahweh Himself, exercised through the poor and the powerless. **Hoshea (Hosea) 5:10** condemns Judah's own leadership in exactly the language of Section II above:

"The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark; I will pour out My wrath upon them like water."

Michah (Micah) 2:1–2 indicts the powerful directly:

"Woe to those who devise iniquity and work out evil upon their beds!... They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; so they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance."

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 5:8 extends the same woe to accumulation without limit:

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"Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land."

The mechanism these prophets describe — incremental legal and economic pressure that steadily narrows a vulnerable population's holding until nothing remains — is not a metaphor requiring strain to apply to the allotment and reservation-reduction record of Section II and III. It is the same mechanism, named by name, three prophets deep, more than two thousand years before the Dawes Act.

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 34:2–3 completes the indictment by turning it toward those entrusted with care of the vulnerable rather than their outright dispossession:

"Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep."

The historical record of Indian agency corruption, diverted or withheld treaty-guaranteed rations, and the suppression of religious practice such as the Ghost Dance and the Sun Dance under reservation administration — documented in the same sources cited in Section III-D above — falls within this same prophetic category: institutional stewardship converted into institutional exploitation of exactly the population it was charged to protect.

VI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — LAND, COVENANT, AND TREATY

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Primary Land Claim	Eretz (אֶרֶץ) is held by covenant grant, not by discovery or conquest; even Israel is ger ve-toshav (גֵּר וְתוֹשָׁב, stranger and settler) upon it — Vayikra 25:23.	The Doctrine of Discovery (Inter Caetera, 1493; Romanus Pontifex, 1455) claimed Christian discovery of inhabited land conferred sovereignty over it — a legal fiction later embedded in United States law (Johnson v. M'Intosh, 1823).	The Qur'an recognizes prior possession and binds the believer to honor treaties made, including with non-Muslims (Q. 9:4) — a standard largely unmet by the American treaty record examined below.
Covenant Strength	The ger laws — repeated more than any other social command in Torah — establish a legal floor beneath every vulnerable outsider in the land.	The 2023 Vatican repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery acknowledges the papal bulls 'did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples' and were 'manipulated for political purposes.'	Sabr (صَبْر, patient endurance) under trial and the obligation of 'adl (عَدْل, justice) toward the wronged echo the prophetic demand of Micah 6:8.
Covenant Departure	Where covenant communities have themselves justified land seizure by appeal to divine promise while ignoring the ger	The papal bulls fused missionary purpose with military and economic conquest, producing exactly	Where conquest theology overrides treaty-keeping obligations explicit in the Qur'an itself, the departure is

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	laws attached to that same promise, they have taken half the covenant and discarded the other half.	the false-shepherd pattern of Yechezkel 34 — feeding the shepherds, not the flock.	from the text's own stated standard, not merely from a modern human-rights framework.
Covenant Witness	Devarim 21:1–9's unsolved-bloodshed ritual insists a nation may not simply move past bloodshed on its land without reckoning — a pattern this document applies to Wounded Knee and the Removal era.	Institutional repentance — however late — is itself a covenant category (Yechezkel 18:21–23); the Church's 2023 statement is evaluated here on those terms, not political ones.	The Qur'anic principle that Allah does not burden a soul beyond capacity (Q. 2:286) parallels the Tanakh's insistence that Yahweh's justice, though delayed, is not denied (Kohelet 12:14).

VII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE AMERICAN INDIAN

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The land belongs to Yahweh, not to the nation that occupies it, discovers it, or conquers it. "The land is Mine; you are strangers and settlers with Me" applies to every nation that has ever held ground, covenant Israel included.	Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:23
II	Every human being bears the image of Elohim without ethnic or covenant qualification. A legal doctrine that treats inhabited land as though its people had no standing collides directly with this foundation.	Bereishit (Genesis) 1:27; 9:6
III	Moving a boundary marker — enlarging one's own holding at a neighbor's expense — is under a curse in the written covenant. A treaty repeatedly renegotiated downward at the point of power is the boundary-marker sin at national scale.	Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:14; 27:17; Mishlei (Proverbs) 22:28
IV	The law of warfare requires an offer of peace before assault and forbids indiscriminate destruction of a people's sustenance. Deliberate destruction of villages, cornfields, and food supply as an instrument of subjugation stands outside this law.	Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:10, 19–20
V	Innocent bloodshed pollutes the land itself and cannot be atoned for except by the reckoning the covenant requires. Unresolved bloodshed is not a closed historical account in Tanakh's own legal logic — it remains a live covenant claim on the land.	Bemidbar (Numbers) 35:33; Devarim (Deuteronomy) 21:1–9
VI	You shall not wrong or oppress the sojourner, for you were sojourners yourselves — this is the most repeated social command in the Torah, and its logic (remember what	Shemot (Exodus) 22:21 [Hebrew 22:20]; Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:33–34

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	powerlessness in another's land feels like) applies with full force to any people made strangers within their own territory.	
VII	Woe belongs to those who join house to house and field to field until no room is left, and to shepherds who feed themselves rather than the flock entrusted to them. The prophetic word does not exempt any nation, ancient or modern, from this indictment.	Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 5:8; Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 34:2–3

VIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE

This document does not conclude with a policy prescription — that is beyond the scope of a covenant deep dive grounded in the written Tanakh. It concludes, as the covenant itself concludes such matters, with four obligations placed on the covenant reader regardless of religious tradition.

First: Name the bloodshed honestly. **Bemidbar (Numbers) 35:33** does not permit silence about blood shed on the land. The historical record in Section III is not offered here as accusation for its own sake — it is offered because the text itself forbids treating unaccounted bloodshed as a closed matter.

Second: Refuse the doctrine that inhabited land is available for the taking because its people stand outside one's own covenant. **Bereishit (Genesis) 9:6** grounds the prohibition of bloodshed in the image of Elohim borne by every human being, not merely the covenant nation. The Doctrine of Discovery inverted this from its foundation, and its 2023 ecclesial repudiation confirms rather than originates the judgment the Tanakh already rendered.

Third: Apply the *ger* command to power, not only to sentiment. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:33–34**'s command to love the stranger as yourself is not satisfied by sympathy for a distant historical wrong. It requires recognizing the same pattern — the boundary moved, the shepherd who feeds himself rather than the flock — wherever it appears in the present, inside or outside any single nation's borders.

Fourth: Trust that Yahweh's accounting is not yet complete. **Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 12:14** and **Amos 3:6** together affirm that the covenant Elohim who governs both blessing and calamity has not lost the ledger of any nation's dealings with the vulnerable, even where human courts and human generations have moved on without a reckoning.

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"For the land is Mine; you are strangers and settlers with Me."

Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:23 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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