

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 298

BY THEIR FATHERS' HOUSES

A Covenant Deep Dive into Lineage, Tribe, and Inheritance in the Tanakh —
le-mishpechotam le-veit avotam (by their clans, by their fathers' houses), לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם

By Which Line Does the Tanakh Reckon Tribe, Inheritance, Priesthood, and Throne? Where Does the Rule of the Mother Come From, Who Reckons by the Father Today, and Does Descent Alone Make a Person Yahweh's? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Rabbinic law reckons by both lines. The Mishnah rules that in a valid marriage without transgression <i>“the offspring follows the male,”</i> and that the child of a foreign woman <i>“is like her”</i> (Mishnah Kiddushin 3:12). The Talmud draws the mother’s rule from Deuteronomy 7:3–4 (Kiddushin 68b). Priest, Levite, and tribe still pass from the father. Karaite tradition reckons the whole by the father, and Reform Judaism in America has accepted either parent since 1983. The written verse stands under all of	The New Testament opens with a list of fathers: <i>“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”</i> (Matthew 1:1). It names four mothers in that list: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah (Matthew 1:3–6). Paul then sets descent aside: <i>“if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed”</i> (Galatians 3:29). From this many churches teach that lineage no longer matters, and some that the Church has replaced Israel. The Tanakh speaks first: which line Yahweh Himself used, and what	The Qur’an commands: <i>“Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allah”</i> (Q. 33:5), and Islamic law reckons <i>nasab (lineage)</i> through the father. Yet the Qur’an denies that descent secures standing. When Abraham asked about his offspring, the answer was <i>“My covenant does not include the wrongdoers”</i> (Q. 2:124), and <i>“the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you”</i> (Q. 49:13). These stand close to the Tanakh’s own two findings: the

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
them: <i>“by their clans, by their fathers’ houses”</i> (Numbers 1:2).	He promised to the house of Israel by name.	father’s house for lineage, and faithfulness for standing.

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 applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to four questions about lineage: by which line the Tanakh reckons a person’s tribe and father’s house; by which line land, priesthood, and the throne pass; what became of the children when one parent was of Israel and the other was not, and whether the text holds a rule of the mother; and whether descent, by either line, makes a person **Yahweh**’s. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books are cited by their English names. Hebrew transliterations appear in *bold italic* with English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. **Verse numbers follow the English version. In a few chapters the Hebrew Bible divides the chapter at a different point, so the**

same verse carries a different number in the Hebrew text. Where that happens, the Hebrew number is given in brackets on first citation, for example Numbers 30:13 [Hebrew 30:14].

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 witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, the Qur'an and hadith, the positions of modern religious bodies, and modern historical and genetic studies are cited as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The census by fathers' houses; the statute of inheritance and the daughters of Zelophehad; the priesthood; the marriages of the fathers; the stranger and the covenant
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zechariah, Malachi	The Land allotted; the house of David and the mothers of its kings; the prophets on descent, on the stranger who joins, and on the tribes restored
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	The registers of Israel; the returned exiles and the foreign wives; Ruth of Moab; the teaching of the mother

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Kiddushin 3:12; Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 68b and Bava Batra 109b; Sifra Emor 14:1, with Rashi and Nachmanides on Leviticus 24:10 ; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Forbidden Intercourse 15:3–4	The rule of the mother and its proof text; tribe by the father; the son of the Israelite woman

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Karaite and Samaritan tradition	Statement of the traditional Karaite position (A Blue Thread, a Karaite Jewish blog, November 16, 2012); the Samaritan community's account of its marriage custom (the-samaritans.net)	Communities that reckon standing by the father
Modern Jewish bodies	Central Conference of American Rabbis, Report of the Committee on Patrilineal Descent (March 15, 1983); Rabbinical Assembly, Standard of Rabbinic Practice on Jewish identity (adopted 1986); Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, resolution of May 5, 1968	Who reckons by the mother, by the father, or by either today
State law	State of Israel, Law of Return (1950), sections 4A and 4B as amended March 10, 1970	The legal definition of a Jew and the wider right of return
New Testament	Matthew 1:1–16; Luke 3:23–38; Acts 16:1–3; Romans 9:6–8; 11:1; Galatians 3:28–29	Genealogy by fathers; Timothy; Abraham's seed by faith
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 2:124; 5:5; 33:5; 49:13; 60:10; Sahih Muslim 2699	Lineage through the father; descent and standing before Allah
Historical scholarship	Shaye J. D. Cohen, <i>"The Origins of the Matrilineal Principle in Rabbinic Law,"</i> AJS Review 10 (1985): 19–53	When the rule of the mother enters the record
Genetic studies	Skorecki et al., Nature 385 (1997); Hammer et al., Human Genetics 126 (2009); Behar et al., American Journal of Human Genetics 78 (2006); Costa et al., Nature Communications 4 (2013)	What paternal and maternal lines can and cannot show

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — ONE PEOPLE, TWO LINES

I-A. The Question as It Is Asked

The question was put to this Institution plainly. What genealogy does the Tanakh use to trace bloodlines and inheritance? Jewish practice today reckons a person by the mother, and yet some reckon by the father. Which did **Yahweh** use?

The question divides into four:

First: by which line does the Tanakh reckon a person's tribe and father's house?

Second: by which line do land, priesthood, and the throne pass?

Third: what became of the children when one parent was of Israel and the other was not, and is there a rule of the mother in the text?

Fourth: does descent, by either line, make a person **Yahweh's**?

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

The Tanakh has no word for bloodline. It does not ask whose blood a person carries. It asks whose house he belongs to.

The census of Israel was taken *le-mishpechotam le-veit avotam* (*by their clans, by their fathers' houses*), לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם (Numbers 1:2).

Three things hang on that house, and the Tanakh keeps them apart:

1. the tribe a person is counted in,
2. the land he inherits,
3. and his standing before **Yahweh** in the covenant.

Much confusion on this subject comes from treating the three as one.

Every finding below is graded. A finding is Corroborated when two or more independent witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is Single witness when only one text carries it. It is Not in the text when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

I-C. What This Study Builds On

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 267** (*Bless Me, Even Me Also*) and **Doc 268** (*The Right of the Firstborn Is His*) examined the birthright, the double portion, and the order of inheritance among sons. **Doc 288** (*A Covenant of Everlasting Priesthood*) examined the grant of the priesthood to the seed of Aaron. **Doc 259** (*Two Sticks in One Hand*) and **Doc 260** (*Blood*

Witnesses Against the Sword) examined the twelve tribes and who descended from the ancient people of the Land. **Doc 206** (*How Does **Yahweh** Know Who Is His Possession?*) examined how **Yahweh** knows His own. The present document takes up the question of those studies left standing: the line itself, the father's or the mother's.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The vocabulary of lineage is exact. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>toledot (generations)</i> , תולדות	H8435	What a person brought forth; a line of descent	Genesis 5:1; Ruth 4:18
<i>beit av (father's house)</i> , בית אב	H1004 / H1	The household under a father's name; the unit by which Israel was counted	Numbers 1:2; Ezra 2:59
<i>mishpachah (clan)</i> , משפחה	H4940	A group of fathers' houses within a tribe	Numbers 1:2; 27:11
<i>matteh (tribe)</i> and <i>shevet (tribe)</i> , מטה, שבט	H4294 / H7626	Both words mean a staff or rod, and then the tribe that stands under it	Numbers 36:7; 1 Chronicles 23:14
<i>nachalah (inheritance)</i> , נחלה	H5159	The portion of land that passes down in a family	Numbers 27:7; 36:7
<i>yarash (to inherit)</i> , ירש	H3423	To take possession as heir	Numbers 27:11; 36:8
<i>hityachos (to be enrolled by genealogy)</i> , התייחס	H3187	To be entered in a written register of descent	1 Chronicles 9:1; Ezra 2:62
<i>zera (seed)</i> , זרע	H2233	Offspring, of a man or of a woman	Genesis 3:15; 21:13
<i>she'er (near kin)</i> , שאר	H7607	Flesh; a relative by birth; the nearest kinsman	Leviticus 25:49; Numbers 27:11
<i>shem (name)</i> , שם	H8034	A man's name, carried on his land by his heirs	Numbers 27:4; Deuteronomy 25:6

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>yibbem (to do the brother-in-law's duty), יָבַם</i>	H2992	To raise a son to a dead brother's name	Deuteronomy 25:5
<i>go'el (kinsman-redeemer), גֹּאֵל</i>	H1350	The near kinsman who buys back land or person	Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4:6
<i>ezrach (native), אֶזְרָח</i>	H249	One born in the people	Exodus 12:49; Ezekiel 47:22
<i>ger (stranger), גֵּר</i>	H1616	One of another people living among Israel	Exodus 12:48; Ezekiel 47:22
<i>nokhri (foreign), נֹכְרִי</i>	H5237	Belonging to another people; the word used of the foreign wives	Ezra 10:2; Nehemiah 13:26
<i>nilvah (joined), נִלוּהָ</i>	H3867	Attached to Yahweh or to His people	Isaiah 14:1; 56:3
<i>hitchatten (to intermarry), הִתְחַתֵּן</i>	H2859	To make oneself a son-in-law; to join two families by marriage	Deuteronomy 7:3; Joshua 23:12
<i>qahal (assembly), קָהָל</i>	H6951	The gathered congregation	Ezra 10:8; Nehemiah 13:1
<i>chillel (to profane), חָלַל</i>	H2490	To make common what was holy; used of a priest's seed	Leviticus 21:15

Four lexical observations govern what follows.

First, the unit is the house, and the house is named for the father. Israel is counted by *beit av* (*father's house*) from the first census to the last register. The phrase *beit em* (*mother's house*) also exists. It names the place a daughter runs to with news of a suitor and the place a widow returns to (**Genesis 24:28; Ruth 1:8**). No census, allotment, or register is taken by it.

Second, seed belongs to the woman as well as the man. *Zera* (*seed*) is spoken of a woman's offspring from the first pages: "*her seed*" (**Genesis 3:15**), Hagar's seed (**Genesis 16:10**), Rebekah's seed (**Genesis 24:60**), and Hannah's (**1 Samuel 2:20**). The Hebrew does not treat descent as running in the male alone. What runs through the father is the house: its name, its tribe, and its land.

Third, the Tanakh's word for kinship is flesh. A relative is *she'er* (*near kin*), or "*my bone and my flesh*." That phrase is used of kin on the mother's side as freely as on the father's. Laban says it to

Jacob, his sister's son (**Genesis 29:14**). Abimelech says it to his mother's brothers (**Judges 9:1–2**). David says it to Amasa, his sister's son (**2 Samuel 19:13** [Hebrew 19:14]). Blood in the Tanakh is the life (**Leviticus 17:11**) and the guilt of a life taken (**Doc 245**). It is never the name of a lineage.

Fourth, genealogy became a written register. The verb *bityaches* (*to be enrolled by genealogy*) occurs only in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, the books written after the exile, when a family's place had to be proved from a document: “*and all Israel were enrolled by genealogies,*” וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַתִּיחֲשׂוּ **Chronicles 9:1**). The first census uses an older word found nowhere else, *vayityaledu* (*and they declared their births*) (**Numbers 1:18**). In both, the declaration is made by clan and the father's house.

III. THE FATHER'S HOUSE — HOW ISRAEL WAS COUNTED

III-A. The Census at Sinai

“*Lift up the head of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their clans, by their fathers' houses, by the number of names, every male, head by head*” (**Numbers 1:2**).

The phrase *le-veit avotam* (*by their fathers' houses*) is repeated for every tribe in the chapter (**Numbers 1:20–42**). When the people assembled, “*they declared their births by their clans, by their fathers' houses*” (**Numbers 1:18**). The words are *vayityaledu al mishpechotam le-veit avotam* (*and they declared their births by their clans, by their fathers' houses*), וְיִתְּיָדוּ עַל־מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם.

The camp was laid out the same way: “*each man by his standard, with the signs of their fathers' house*” (**Numbers 2:2**). A man's place in the camp, his standard, and his tribe's count all came to him from his father.

III-B. The Clans Named for Sons

The second census was taken on the plains of Moab for the division of the Land. It names the clans, and each clan bears the name of a son: “*of Hanoch, the clan of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the clan of the Palluites*” (**Numbers 26:5**).

Daughters appear in this list twice, and both times the text stops to say so. “*The name of the daughter of Asher was Serab*” (**Numbers 26:46**). And Zelophehad “*had no sons, but daughters*” (**Numbers 26:33**), which prepares the case of the next chapter. Where there are sons, the clan runs through them.

III-C. After the Exile: The Same Test

Many generations later, after the exile, the test had not changed. Among those who came up from Babylon were families who *“could not declare their father’s house and their seed, whether they were of Israel”* (Ezra 2:59; Nehemiah 7:61).

The Hebrew is *beit avotam ve-zar’am im mi-Yisrael hem (their father’s house and their seed, whether they were of Israel)*, בֵּית־אֲבוֹתָם וְזָרְעָם אִם מִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם.

This is the one place where the Tanakh states in so many words how a person was shown to be “of Israel.” The proof asked for is a father’s house.

III-D. Named by the Father

Persons are named the same way throughout. Mordecai is *“a Jewish man ... the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjaminite”* (Esther 2:5). He is called a Jew, which by then meant a member of the people, and his tribe is Benjamin. Both are given through three fathers.

The sons of Moses were born to a Midianite mother, and they *“were named among the tribe of Levi”* (1 Chronicles 23:14), *yiqqare’u al shevet ha-Levi (were named among the tribe of Levi)*, יִקְרָאוּ עַל־שֵׁבֶט הַלֵּוִי.

Finding — tribe and father’s house are reckoned through the father: Corroborated (Numbers 1:2, 18; 2:2; Ezra 2:59; Esther 2:5; 1 Chronicles 23:14).

IV. THE INHERITANCE — HOW THE LAND PASSED

IV-A. Divided by the Fathers’ Tribes

The Land was divided by lot among the tribes, and *“by the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit”* (Numbers 26:55; compare Numbers 33:54).

Within the tribe each family held its portion, and the portion was not to leave the family. Naboth’s answer to the king states the whole law in a sentence: *“Yahweh forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you”* (1 Kings 21:3).

IV-B. The Daughters of Zelophehad

Zelophehad of Manasseh died in the wilderness and left five daughters and no son. They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and all the congregation (Numbers 27:1–2), and asked:

“Why should the name of our father be taken away from among his clan because he had no son? Give us a possession among the brothers of our father” (Numbers 27:4).

The words are *lammah yiggara shem avinu* (*why should the name of our father be taken away*), לָמָּה יִגָּרַע שֵׁם־אָבִינוּ. Moses brought the case before Yahweh, and Yahweh answered: “*The daughters of Zelophehad speak right*” (Numbers 27:7), *ken benot Tselofchad doverot* (*the daughters of Zelophehad speak right*), כֵּן בְּנוֹת צִלְפֹּחַד דְּבָרֹת.

From their case came the standing order of inheritance, which Yahweh called *chuqqat mishpat* (*a statute of judgment*), חֻקַּת מִשְׁפָּט (Numbers 27:11):

#	THE HEIR	VERSE
1	The son	Numbers 27:8
2	The daughter, if there is no son	Numbers 27:8
3	The dead man’s brothers, if there is no daughter	Numbers 27:9
4	His father’s brothers, if he has no brothers	Numbers 27:10
5	The nearest kinsman of his clan	Numbers 27:11

Three things should be noticed. The daughters did not ask for a share of their own. They asked that their father’s name not be lost, and the answer was given on that ground. The daughter stands ahead of the dead man’s own brothers. And every later step runs through the father’s side: his brothers, his father’s brothers, his clan. Doc 268, Section VII-D, treats the place of daughters where there are also sons.

IV-C. The Heiress and Her Tribe

The ruling raised a second question, and the answer to it is the plainest statement in the Torah of which line a child follows.

The heads of the clan of Gilead came to Moses. If these daughters marry men of other tribes, they said, “*their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they shall belong*” (Numbers 36:3).

The objection assumes what everyone knew. A woman's children belong to her husband's tribe, and her land would go with them. Yahweh's answer accepts that and guards against it:

“Every daughter who possesses an inheritance from the tribes of the children of Israel shall be wife to one of the clan of the tribe of her father, so that the children of Israel may each possess the inheritance of his fathers. And no inheritance shall turn from one tribe to another tribe” (Numbers 36:8–9).

The rule is stated first in *ve-lo tissov nachalah li-vnei Yisrael mi-matteh el matteh* (*and no inheritance of the children of Israel shall turn from tribe to tribe*), וְלֹא־תִסֹּב נַחֲלָה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמַּטֵּה אֶל־מַטֵּה (Numbers 36:7).

The five daughters married the sons of their father's brothers (Numbers 36:10–12), and Joshua gave them their portion *“among the brothers of their father”* (Joshua 17:4).

A daughter could carry her father's land. She could not carry his tribe to her children except by marrying within it.

IV-D. The Name of the Dead

Lineage in the Tanakh is legal as well as natural, and two laws show it.

First: the brother-in-law's duty. When a man dies without a son, his brother takes the widow, *“and the firstborn whom she bears shall stand upon the name of his dead brother, that his name be not blotted out of Israel”* (Deuteronomy 25:6), *yaqum al shem achiv ha-met* (*shall stand upon the name of his dead brother*), יָקוּם עַל־שֵׁם אָחִיו הַמֵּת. The child is begotten by one man and counted to another.

Boaz says the same of Ruth. He takes her *le-haqim shem ha-met al nachalato* (*to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance*), לְהָקִים שֵׁם־הַמֵּת עַל־נַחֲלָתוֹ (Ruth 4:10).

Yet the register that follows lists the natural father, *“Boaz begot Obed”* (Ruth 4:21), and the women of Bethlehem say, *“A son is born to Naomi”* (Ruth 4:17). The Tanakh holds all three statements together.

Second: adoption into a house. Jacob said to Joseph of the two sons born in Egypt, *“they are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon”* (Genesis 48:5), *li hem* (*they are mine*), לִי־הֵם.

Two grandsons became two tribes by their grandfather's word (Doc 267, Section III-E).

The line that counts, then, is the line of the house: whose name a child stands upon, and whose land he will hold.

IV-E. The Kinsman-Redeemer

The same line governs redemption. When a man sells himself or his field, the right to buy back belongs to *“his uncle, or his uncle’s son, or any near kin of his flesh from his clan”* (Leviticus 25:49; compare Leviticus 25:25).

Jeremiah bought the field of his uncle’s son because *“the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours”* (Jeremiah 32:8).

IV-F. Where the Rule Bends

The father’s line is the rule. The Tanakh also records, without rebuke, cases where the line ran another way.

First: Jair. Hezron of Judah married the daughter of Machir of Manasseh, and her grandson Jair held twenty-three cities in Gilead (1 Chronicles 2:21–22). By his father’s line Jair was of Judah. The Torah calls him *“Jair the son of Manasseh”* (Numbers 32:41; Deuteronomy 3:14), and the Chronicler counts him with *“the sons of Machir the father of Gilead”* (1 Chronicles 2:23). He was reckoned where he inherited, in his grandmother’s tribe.

Second: Sheshan. *“Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. And Sheshan had an Egyptian servant whose name was Jarha. And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant as wife, and she bore him Attai”* (1 Chronicles 2:34–35). The register of Judah then names thirteen generations of that line, from Attai to Elishama (1 Chronicles 2:36–41). The house of Judah continued through a daughter and an Egyptian father.

Third: gifts to daughters. Caleb gave his daughter Achsah springs of water with her land (Joshua 15:18–19), and Job gave his daughters *“an inheritance among their brothers”* (Job 42:15).

Fourth: the tribe without land. Levi received no portion: *“I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel”* (Numbers 18:20). Tribe and land are joined in the law, but they are not the same thing.

The first two cases share one feature. The child was counted to the house that raised him and gave him his land. Jarha was Sheshan’s servant and a member of Sheshan’s house, so his son was Sheshan’s heir.

Finding — land passes within the father’s house, from father to sons; the daughter inherits where there is no son and keeps the land in her father’s tribe: Corroborated (Numbers 27:8–11; 36:6–9; Joshua 17:3–6). That the father’s line admits no exception: Not in the text (Numbers 32:41; 1 Chronicles 2:21–23, 34–35).

V. THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE THRONE

V-A. The Seed of Aaron

The priesthood was given to Aaron *“and his sons”* (Exodus 28:1) as *“an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations”* (Exodus 40:15).

It was confirmed to Phinehas: *“it shall be to him and to his seed after him, a covenant of everlasting priesthood”* (Numbers 25:13), *berit kehunnat olam (a covenant of everlasting priesthood)*, בְּרִית כְּהֻנַּת עוֹלָם.

No one *“who is not of the seed of Aaron”* may come near to burn incense (Numbers 16:40 [Hebrew 17:5]). Doc 288 sets out the grant in full.

The returned exiles enforced it by register. Certain priestly families, one of which had taken the name of a wife’s family (Ezra 2:61), *“sought their register, those enrolled by genealogy, but they were not found, and they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled”* (Ezra 2:62; Nehemiah 7:64).

The words are *ketavam ha-mityachsims (their register, those enrolled by genealogy)*, כְּתָבָם הַמִּתְיַחֲשִׁים. The governor ruled that they should not eat of the most holy things *“until a priest stood with Urim and Thummim”* (Ezra 2:63).

V-B. Where the Mother Is Counted

The priestly law is the one place where the Torah regulates the mother’s standing for the sake of the children. A priest may not marry a harlot, a profaned woman, or a divorced woman (Leviticus 21:7). The high priest must take *“a virgin of his own people,”* and the reason is given: *“that he not profane his seed among his people”* (Leviticus 21:14–15), *ve-lo yechallel zar’o be-ammav (that he not profane his seed among his people)*, וְלֹא יַחֲלִיל זָרְעוֹ בְּעַמִּי.

Ezekiel’s vision of the restored house requires priests to marry *“virgins of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest”* (Ezekiel 44:22).

So the Torah knows how to say that a mother’s standing affects her child’s. It says so for the priest, and for no one else.

Even here the line runs through the father. A priest’s daughter who marries outside the priesthood no longer eats the holy food. If she is widowed or divorced *“and has no seed,”* she returns to her father’s house and eats of her father’s bread (Leviticus 22:12–13). Her children by the outsider belong to his house, not to Aaron’s.

V-C. The House of David

The throne was promised to the seed of David *“who shall come out of your body”* (2 Samuel 7:12) and *“of the fruit of your body”* (Psalms 132:11).

“David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel” (Jeremiah 33:17).

The books of Kings name the mother of nearly every king of Judah. The first of those notices reads: *“Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah ... and his mother’s name was Naamah the Ammonitess”* (1 Kings 14:21). The text says it twice (1 Kings 14:31), and the Chronicler a third time (2 Chronicles 12:13).

The heir of David’s covenant was the son of an Ammonite mother, and no writer of the Tanakh questions his place in Judah or on the throne. Rehoboam is judged for what he did (2 Chronicles 12:14), not for whose son he was.

Finding — priesthood and throne pass from father to son by Yahweh’s covenant: Corroborated (Exodus 40:15; Numbers 25:13; Ezra 2:62; 2 Samuel 7:12; Psalms 132:11). That the Torah regulates the mother’s standing for the priest’s seed: **Corroborated** (Leviticus 21:14–15; Ezekiel 44:22). That it does so for the rest of Israel: **Not in the text**.

VI. THE MOTHERS OF ISRAEL — WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

A law can be tested by whether Israel’s own history knows it. If standing in Israel had passed through the mother, the registers of the Tanakh would show it. They do not.

VI-A. Foreign Mothers, Sons of Israel — Eight Witnesses

Witness One — Shaul of Simeon. The household of Jacob that went down to Egypt included *“Shaul the son of the Canaanite woman”* (Genesis 46:10; Exodus 6:15), *Sha’ul ben ha-Kena’anit* (*Shaul the son of the Canaanite woman*), שָׁאוּל בֶּן־הַכְּנַעֲנִית.

In the census he is the father of a clan of Simeon: *“of Shaul, the clan of the Shaulites”* (Numbers 26:13).

Witness Two — Shelah of Judah. Judah’s first wife was *“the daughter of a Canaanite man whose name was Shua”* (Genesis 38:2), and the Chronicler calls her *“the Canaanitess”* (1 Chronicles 2:3). Her surviving son Shelah fathered *“the clan of the Shelanites”* in Judah (Numbers 26:20).

Witness Three — Ephraim and Manasseh. Joseph's wife was "*Asenath the daughter of Potiphera priest of On*" (**Genesis 41:45**), and she bore him both sons (**Genesis 41:50–52**). Jacob made them two tribes of Israel (**Genesis 48:5**).

Witness Four — Machir and Gilead. "*His Aramean concubine bore Machir the father of Gilead*" (**1 Chronicles 7:14**), *pilagsbo ha-Arammiyyah (his Aramean concubine)*, פִּילָגְשׁוֹ הָאַרְמִיָּיָהּ. Moses gave Gilead to the clan of Machir (**Numbers 32:40**), and the daughters of Zelophehad descend from it (**Numbers 27:1**).

Witness Five — The sons of Moses. Moses married Zipporah, daughter of the priest of Midian (**Exodus 2:21**), and she bore Gershom and Eliezer (**Exodus 18:3–4**). "*As for Moses the man of Elohim, his sons were named among the tribe of Levi*" (**1 Chronicles 23:14**).

Witness Six — Obed. "*Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife ... and she bore a son*" (**Ruth 4:13**). Ruth is called "*the Moabitess*" to the end of the book (**Ruth 4:5, 10**). Her son is the grandfather of David (**Ruth 4:17, 22**).

Witness Seven — Absalom. David's third son was "*Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur*" (**2 Samuel 3:3**). No one in the account of his revolt says that he was not of Israel.

Witness Eight — Rehoboam. The son of "*Naamah the Ammonitess*" sat on David's throne (**1 Kings 14:21**; Section V-C).

The law agrees with the record. A man may take as his wife a woman captured in war (**Deuteronomy 21:10–14**). The very next statute orders the inheritance of a man's sons by two wives, without a word to suggest that the captive's sons stand outside the house (**Deuteronomy 21:15–17**).

Two answers are commonly given, and both deserve a hearing.

The first answer is that each of these women joined herself to Israel. Of Ruth the text says so in her own words: *ammekb ammi ve-Elohayikh Elohai (your people shall be my people, and your Elohim my Elohim)*, עַמִּי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֶלְהֵי (Ruth 1:16).

Of the others it says nothing. And if they did join, the point stands. The child was counted through the father's house, and the mother's birth among the nations was no bar.

The second answer is that the fathers lived before Sinai, and the law changed there. But three of the eight witnesses stand after Sinai: Obed, Absalom, and Rehoboam. The census that counts the Shaulites and the Shelanites was taken after Sinai (**Numbers 26:13, 20**). And the law of the captive wife belongs to the Torah itself.

Finding — the children of Israelite fathers and foreign mothers are counted in Israel, as heads of clans, tribes, and the royal house: **Corroborated** (Genesis 46:10 with Numbers 26:13; Genesis 41:50–52 with Genesis 48:5; 1 Chronicles 7:14; 23:14; Ruth 4:13–22; 1 Kings 14:21).

VI-B. The Sons of the Handmaids

Four of the twelve tribes descend from Bilhah and Zilpah, the handmaids of Rachel and Leah: Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher (Genesis 30:3–13; 35:25–26). The Tanakh does not give the handmaids' origin, and it does not need to. **Their sons are sons of Jacob.**

The house of Abraham shows that the choice between sons was never made by the mother's rank. Ishmael, the son of Hagar, was set aside. So were the six sons of Keturah (Genesis 25:1–6). So was Esau, who had the same mother and father as Jacob (Genesis 25:23–26).

The reason given for Isaac is the word of Elohim: *ki ve-Yitschaq yiqqare lekha zara (for through Isaac shall seed be called to you)*, כִּי בִיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לְךָ זָרַע (Genesis 21:12).

Of Ishmael He said in the next breath, *“he is your seed”* (Genesis 21:13). **The covenant line was fixed by Yahweh's choice** (Genesis 17:19–21; Doc 267, Section IV).

VI-C. Israelite Mothers, Foreign Fathers — Four Cases

The reverse case is rarer, and the witnesses do not all point one way.

First: the blasphemer in the camp. *“The son of an Israelite woman, and he was the son of an Egyptian man, went out among the children of Israel; and the son of the Israelite woman and an Israelite man quarreled in the camp”* (Leviticus 24:10).

The phrase is *ben ishab Yisre'elit ve-hu ben ish Mitsri (the son of an Israelite woman, and he was the son of an Egyptian man)*, בֶּן־אִשָּׁה יִשְׂרָאֵלִית וְהוּא בֶּן־אִישׁ מִצְרִי.

His mother's name and tribe are recorded: Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan (Leviticus 24:11). The text sets him beside *“an Israelite man”* and does not give him that title. It also places him *“among the children of Israel”* and judges him by their law, adding twice that the stranger and the native have one judgment (Leviticus 24:16, 22). The passage does not say which he was.

Second: Hiram the craftsman. He was *“the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre”* (1 Kings 7:14). The Chronicler has *“a woman of the daughters of Dan”* (2 Chronicles 2:14 [Hebrew 2:13]). Solomon *“sent and brought Hiram out of Tyre”* (1 Kings 7:13). He lived in his father's city and served his father's king.

Third: Amasa. *“Abigail bore Amasa, and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite”* (1 Chronicles 2:17). The Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 17:25 calls the father *“Ithra the Israelite,”* and this study does not choose between the readings. On the Chronicler’s reading, the son of David’s sister and an Ishmaelite commanded the army of Israel, and David said to him, *“Are you not my bone and my flesh?”* (2 Samuel 19:13).

Fourth: Attai. The son of Sheshan’s daughter and Jarha the Egyptian carried on a house of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:34–35; Section IV-F).

Two of the four are plainly counted in Israel, one lived as a man of Tyre, and one is left undefined. No verse states a rule. What separates the cases is the house. Attai was born into Sheshan’s own household, and Amasa appears among David’s kin. Hiram’s home was Tyre.

Finding — that the child of an Israelite mother and a foreign father was counted in Israel: the witnesses divide (1 Chronicles 2:17, 34–35 on one side; 1 Kings 7:13–14 on the other; Leviticus 24:10 open). That the Tanakh states a rule for the case: **Not in the text.**

VI-D. What the Mother Gives

None of this makes the mother small. The Tanakh gives her what no register can.

Leah and Rachel named the sons of Jacob (Genesis 29:32–30:24). The mother teaches: *“do not forsake the teaching of your mother”* (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20), *torat immekha (the teaching of your mother)*, תּוֹרַת אִמִּיךָ.

She is honored with the father in the Ten Words (Exodus 20:12), and she is named before him in the command to fear them (Leviticus 19:3).

The kings of Judah are introduced with their mothers’ names, and the king’s mother sat at his right hand (1 Kings 2:19). The sons of Zeruah, David’s sister, are called by her name and never by their father’s (2 Samuel 2:18; 1 Chronicles 2:16). The psalmist pleads his own standing before Yahweh as *“the son of Your handmaid”* (Psalms 86:16; 116:16).

And the Tanakh knows that the mother shapes the faith of the house, for good and for ill. Of King Ahaziah it says, *“his mother was his counselor to do wickedly”* (2 Chronicles 22:3).

Solomon’s foreign wives *“turned away his heart after other gods”* (1 Kings 11:4). This, and not any rule of descent, is the ground of the law examined next.

VII. INTERMARRIAGE AND THE RULE OF THE MOTHER — THE TEACHING TESTED

VII-A. The Teaching Stated Fairly

The teaching. Rabbinic law teaches two things together. **The child of an Israelite mother is of Israel, whoever the father is. The child of a foreign mother and an Israelite father is not of Israel unless he converts.** The proof offered from the Torah is **Deuteronomy 7:3–4**, and the proof offered from history is the sending away of the foreign wives under Ezra.

Those who hold this teaching have guarded the Hebrew text for two thousand years, and their reading deserves a fair hearing. Its sources are listed in the Comparative Texts table and weighed in Section X. Here the two proofs are tested against the text.

VII-B. Deuteronomy 7:3–4 in Its Place

“You shall not intermarry with them. Your daughter you shall not give to his son, and his daughter you shall not take for your son. For he will turn your son away from following Me, and they will serve other gods” (Deuteronomy 7:3–4).

The rabbinic reading turns on the words *ki yasir et binkha me-acharai* (*for he will turn your son away from following Me*), כִּי־יָסִיר אֶת־בִּנְךָ מֵאַחֲרַי. It takes “he” to be the foreign son-in-law and “your son” to be the grandson born to your daughter. It reasons that the daughter’s child is still called “your son,” while the child of a foreign daughter-in-law is not mentioned because he is no longer yours.

Four things in the text stand against building a law of descent on this verse.

First: the verse forbids marriage in both directions and gives one reason for both, which is other gods.

Second: the parallel law shows whom “your son” means: *“and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot after their gods and make your sons play the harlot after their gods”* (Exodus 34:16). The sons who are led astray are the Israelite husbands of the foreign wives. Read beside it, Deuteronomy 7:4 says the same thing: the son who marries into the foreign house will be turned. Nothing is said of the standing of the grandchildren on either side.

Third: the rest of the Tanakh reads the law this way. *“They took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods”* (Judges 3:6).

The charge against Solomon quotes the law and gives its reason: *“surely they will turn away your heart after their gods”* (1 Kings 11:2).

Fourth: the verse speaks of seven named nations (Deuteronomy 7:1). The Torah handles other peoples differently. The Edomite and the Egyptian may enter the assembly in the third generation (Deuteronomy 23:7–8 [Hebrew 23:8–9]), and a wife may be taken from among the captives of war (Deuteronomy 21:10–13).

Finding — that Israel was forbidden to give and take in marriage with the nations of the Land, because it leads to other gods: Corroborated (Exodus 34:15–16; Deuteronomy 7:3–4; Joshua 23:12–13; Judges 3:5–6). That Deuteronomy 7:3–4 makes a child’s standing follow the mother: **Not in the text.**

VII-C. Ezra and Nehemiah

After the return, the leaders reported to Ezra that the people, with priests and Levites among them, had taken wives from the peoples of the lands, *“so that the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands”* (Ezra 9:2), *zera ha-qodesh (the holy seed)*, זֶרַע הַקֹּדֶשׁ.

Shecaniah proposed the remedy: *“Let us make a covenant with our Elohim to put away all the wives and those born of them ... and let it be done according to the law”* (Ezra 10:3), *nashim ve-ha-nolad mehem (the wives and those born of them)*, נָשִׁים וְהַנּוֹלָד מֵהֶם. The assembly agreed, the cases were heard city by city, and the list of those who had taken foreign wives closes the book (Ezra 10:16–44).

Some years later Nehemiah found the same thing again: *“their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah”* (Nehemiah 13:24).

This is the strongest ground in the Tanakh for the rule of the mother, and it must be weighed honestly. The children of the foreign wives were sent away with their mothers. That much is Corroborated (Ezra 10:3, 44).

Five things in the same books limit what can be built on it.

First: the reason given is the reason of the Torah. Ezra’s prayer names *“their abominations”* (Ezra 9:1, 11, 14), and Nehemiah points to Solomon: *“even him the foreign women caused to sin”* (Nehemiah 13:26). The prophet of the same year defines the offense by the woman’s worship and not by her birth. Judah *“has married the daughter of a foreign el”* (Malachi 2:11), *bat el nekhar (the daughter of a foreign el)*, בַּת־אֵל נֶכָר.

Second: the same books forbid the other direction just as firmly: *“we would not give our daughters to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons”* (Nehemiah 10:30).

[Hebrew 10:31]; compare **Nehemiah 13:25; Ezra 9:12**). Nothing is said of the children of Judah's daughters who had married out, so nothing can be drawn from these chapters about them.

Third: those who joined were received. The Passover was eaten by the returned exiles *“and by all who had separated themselves to them from the uncleanness of the nations of the land, to seek Yahweh”* (Ezra 6:21).

The covenant was sealed by *“all who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of Elohim, their wives, their sons, and their daughters”* (Nehemiah 10:28 [Hebrew 10:29]).

The wives who were sent away are called *nokbriyot (foreign women)* throughout. The contrast suggests that they were women who had not so separated themselves.

Fourth: the remedy was a covenant of the assembly, made on the motion of one of its members and bound by oath (Ezra 10:3–5). Ezra urged it as the will of Yahweh (Ezra 10:11). The Tanakh records no word of **Yahweh** through a prophet commanding it.

Fifth: in the same book, the test of whether a family was “of Israel” is the father’s house (Ezra 2:59; Section III-C).

Finding — that the returned community put away foreign wives and their children: Corroborated (Ezra 10:3, 44; Nehemiah 13:23–27). That this establishes descent through the mother: Not in the text.

What the chapters show is that the children of wives who held to the worship of the nations were not counted in the covenant community.

VII-D. The Assembly Laws and Ruth

One group of laws does limit entry by descent. *“A mamzer shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh”* (Deuteronomy 23:2 [Hebrew 23:3]). *“An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh, even to the tenth generation”* (Deuteronomy 23:3 [Hebrew 23:4]). And of the Edomite and the Egyptian: *“the children who are born to them, the third generation, may enter the assembly of Yahweh”* (Deuteronomy 23:8 [Hebrew 23:9]).

None of these verses distinguish the father’s side from the mother’s. The word *mamzer* occurs only here and in **Zechariah 9:6**, and its exact meaning is not certain.

The reason given for Ammon and Moab is again conduct: they did not meet Israel with bread and water, and they hired Balaam (**Deuteronomy 23:4** [Hebrew 23:5]).

Beside this law stands the book of Ruth. A woman of Moab says, *“your people shall be my people”* (Ruth 1:16).

Boaz blesses her in the name of *“Yahweh, the Elohim of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge”* (Ruth 2:12).

The elders at the gate pray that she be *“like Rachel and like Leah, who together built the house of Israel”* (Ruth 4:11), and her great-grandson is David.

The Tanakh does not explain how the two stand together. The book gives its own witness: she left her people and her gods (Ruth 1:15–16) and came under the wings of Yahweh.

Finding — that Ruth the Moabitess was received into Israel and into the line of David: **Corroborated** (Ruth 1:16; 4:11, 13–22). How this stands with **Deuteronomy 23:3**: the text does not say, and this study does not supply an answer the text does not give.

VIII. DOES DESCENT MAKE A PERSON YAHWEH’S?

The first three questions concern the house. The fourth concerns the covenant, and here the Tanakh speaks with one voice.

VIII-A. The Sign Reached Beyond the Seed

The first covenant sign was given to the house of Abraham, and the house was wider than his seed: *“he who is born in the house, or bought with silver from any foreigner, who is not of your seed”* (Genesis 17:12). All of them were circumcised with Abraham on the same day (Genesis 17:27).

And any male of the house who lacked the sign *“shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant”* (Genesis 17:14). From the beginning, descent neither secured the covenant nor closed it.

VIII-B. One Law for the Native and the Stranger

“A mixed multitude also went up with them” (Exodus 12:38). The law of the Passover received them. When a stranger is circumcised, *“he shall be as a native of the land”* (Exodus 12:48),

and *torah achat yihyeh la-ezrach ve-la-ger (one law shall be for the native and for the stranger)*, תּוֹרָה אַחַת יִהְיֶה לָאֶזְרָח וְלַגֵּר (Exodus 12:49).

“As you are, so shall the stranger be before Yahweh” (Numbers 15:15).

When Moses renewed the covenant on the plains of Moab, those who stood to enter it included *“your stranger who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water”* (Deuteronomy 29:11 [Hebrew 29:10]).

VIII-C. Those Who Joined

The record names them. Caleb, who received Hebron, is *“the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite”* (Numbers 32:12). Kenaz is a name from the line of Esau (Genesis 36:11), and the Kenizzites are listed among the peoples of the Land (Genesis 15:19). The text does not explain the title. It counts Caleb in Judah (Numbers 13:6), and the reason it gives for his inheritance is that *“he wholly followed Yahweh, the Elohim of Israel”* (Joshua 14:14).

Rahab of Jericho *“has dwelt in the midst of Israel to this day”* (Joshua 6:25).

Uriah the Hittite stands in the list of David’s mighty men (2 Samuel 23:39).

In Esther’s day *“many of the peoples of the land became Jews”* (Esther 8:17). The word is *mityahadim* (became Jews), מִתִּיְהָדִים, and this is the only place the verb occurs.

The prophets carry it forward. *“Let not the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to Yahweh say, Yahweh will surely separate me from His people”* (Isaiah 56:3), *ha-nilvah el Yahweh* (who has joined himself to Yahweh), הַנִּלְוָה אֶל־יְהוָה.

“Many nations shall join themselves to Yahweh in that day, and shall be My people” (Zechariah 2:11 [Hebrew 2:15]).

And Ezekiel, in the same vision that redraws the tribal portions, gives the stranger land:

“You shall divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves and for the strangers who sojourn among you, who have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as natives among the children of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe the stranger sojourns, there you shall give him his inheritance” (Ezekiel 47:22–23).

The phrase is *ke-ezrach bi-vnei Yisrael* (as a native among the children of Israel), כְּעֶזְרַח בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Inheritance in the Tanakh begins with the father’s house. In its last word on the subject, **Yahweh** gives a father’s house in Israel to the stranger who has none.

VIII-D. Descent Does Not Shield, and Does Not Condemn

The prophets deny that birth protects anyone. To Jerusalem, proud of her fathers, Ezekiel says: *avikh ha-Emori ve-immekh Chittit (your father was the Amorite and your mother a Hittite)*, אַבִּיךָ הָאֲמֹרִי וְאִמְךָ חִתִּית (Ezekiel 16:3).

Amos asks, “*Are you not as the children of the Cushites to Me, O children of Israel?*” (Amos 9:7).

Jeremiah says that Yahweh will punish “*all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised,*” for “*all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart*” (Jeremiah 9:25–26 [Hebrew 9:24–25]).

Those who argued “*Abraham was one, and he inherited the land*” were answered with their own deeds (Ezekiel 33:24–26).

Nor does birth condemn. “*Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine*” (Ezekiel 18:4).

“*The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father*” (Ezekiel 18:20; compare Deuteronomy 24:16). Doc 206 and Doc 238 set out how Yahweh knows and keeps His own.

VIII-E. One Father

Tanakh's last answer to the question of lineage is that Israel itself is a father's house, and the Father is Yahweh.

“*Israel is My son, My firstborn*” (Exodus 4:22).

“*Is He not your Father, who acquired you?*” (Deuteronomy 32:6).

“*You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; You, Yahweh, are our Father*” (Isaiah 63:16).

He keeps a register of His own. In it men of Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Cush are entered as born in Zion: “*Yahweh shall count, when He writes up the peoples: This one was born there*” (Psalms 87:4, 6).

Finding — covenant standing rests on Yahweh's choice and on keeping His covenant; it is open to the stranger who joins, and it is neither secured nor barred by descent: Corroborated (Genesis 17:12–14; Exodus 12:48–49; Isaiah 56:3–7; Ezekiel 18:4; 47:22–23; Amos 9:7).

IX. WHAT THIS MEANS TODAY

IX-A. The Tanakh's Answer in One Table

WHAT IS ASKED	HOW THE TANAKH RECKONS IT	WITNESS
Tribe and clan	By the father's house	Numbers 1:2, 18; Ezra 2:59
Land	From father to sons; to the daughter where there is no son, kept within her father's tribe	Numbers 27:8–11; 36:8–9
Priesthood	The seed of Aaron, father to son; the standing of the priest's wife is also regulated	Numbers 25:13; Leviticus 21:14–15
Throne	The seed of David, father to son	2 Samuel 7:12; Psalms 132:11
The child of a foreign mother	Counted in his father's house	Genesis 46:10; 1 Kings 14:21
The child of a foreign father	No rule is stated; he is counted where his house was	1 Chronicles 2:34–35; 1 Kings 7:13–14
Standing before Yahweh	By His covenant, which is open to the stranger who joins	Exodus 12:48–49; Isaiah 56:3–7

IX-B. No Tribe Can Be Proved Today

The Tanakh's standard for a claim of descent is a written register, and where the register fails, a priest with Urim and Thummim (**Ezra 2:62–63**). No priest stands with Urim and Thummim today, so no doubtful claim can be settled by the Tanakh's own test.

That holds for every community that claims descent. Rabbinic, Karaite, and Samaritan communities each keep their own traditions, and Jewish families hand down the standing of priest and Levite from father to son. Those traditions deserve respect, but they are not a register that has been tested (**Doc 288**, Section IX-C). It holds also for every modern movement that names itself Israel, Judah, Ephraim, or the lost tribes. **Miqdash Bethel makes no claim of tribe for itself or its members.**

The prophets say who will settle the matter. **Yahweh** will *“assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah”* (**Isaiah 11:12**).

He will make the two sticks one in His hand (**Ezekiel 37:19–22; Doc 259**), and He will set each tribe in its portion (**Ezekiel 48**). Until then, a claim of tribe is a claim no one can test.

IX-C. The Child of Two Peoples

Many believers today are children of one covenant parent, or have such children, and have been told by one tradition or another that they do not count. The Tanakh shuts out neither. The son of a foreign mother fathered clans and kings (Section VI-A). The son of a foreign father was counted in Judah (Section IV-F).

And the one with no parent in Israel at all is told not to say, *“Yahweh will surely separate me from His people”* (Isaiah 56:3).

What **Yahweh** asks of every one of them is the same: to join himself to **Yahweh**, to keep His Sabbaths, and to hold fast His covenant (Isaiah 56:6).

IX-D. Marriage

The law against marrying into the nations was never about blood.

Its stated reason is “other gods” (Deuteronomy 7:4), and that reason holds now. A covenant believer who marries one who serves another god brings into the house the very thing the law warns of, whatever the ancestry of either. And one who marries a man or woman of any nation who has come under the wings of Yahweh does what Boaz did (Ruth 2:12; 4:13).

IX-E. The Duties of Father and Mother

The house is the Tanakh’s unit, and both parents carry it. The father is charged to *“command his sons and his house after him, that they keep the way of Yahweh”* (Genesis 18:19), and to teach these words diligently to his children (Deuteronomy 6:7). The mother’s teaching is called *torah* (teaching) (Proverbs 1:8). A child needs both.

IX-F. Inheritance in a Believer’s House

The statute of **Numbers 27:8–11** was given for tribal land in Israel, and no family today holds such land. Its principles remain. A father’s name and estate go to his children. Daughters are not to be left out where there are no sons, and they may be given a share where there are (**Job 42:15**). And the matter should be settled openly while the father lives (Deuteronomy 21:16–17). Doc 268, Section VII, works these out for a household today.

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION RECKONS DESCENT

The tables set the traditions against the Tanakh's own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

X-A. The Three Traditions

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☉ ISLAM
Teaching and practice today	Orthodox and Conservative Judaism hold that a child's standing follows the mother (Mishnah Kiddushin 3:12). The tribe and the standing of the priest and Levite follow the father, as the Talmud says from Numbers 1:2 (Bava Batra 109b). Karaite tradition reckons standing by the father. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism accept the child of either parent who is raised as a Jew (Section X-B).	Descent is given no weight for standing: <i>“there is neither Jew nor Greek”</i> (Galatians 3:28). Yet the New Testament records lineage by fathers, and Paul calls himself <i>“of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin”</i> (Romans 11:1). Timothy, the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, was uncircumcised until Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:1–3). Some churches teach that the Church has taken Israel's place.	<i>Nasab (lineage)</i> follows the father (Q. 33:5). Most jurists count a child with one Muslim parent as a Muslim. A Muslim man may marry a woman of the People of the Book (Q. 5:5); a Muslim woman may not marry outside Islam (Q. 60:10). Lineage gives no standing before Allah (Q. 49:13): <i>“he who is slow-paced in doing good deeds, his (high) lineage does not make him go ahead”</i> (Sahih Muslim 2699).
Covenant strength	Rabbinic law has kept the father's house for tribe and priesthood exactly as the Torah gives it. Its concern in the rule of the mother, that a house not be drawn after other gods, is the concern of Deuteronomy 7:4 . Karaite practice keeps the line of Numbers 1:2 for standing as well. Every stream receives the sincere convert, as Isaiah 56:3 requires.	The teaching that the nations may join themselves to the Elohim of Israel agrees with Isaiah 56:3–7 and Zechariah 2:11 . Romans 9:6–8, that not all who descend from Israel are Israel, agrees with Amos 9:7 and Ezekiel 18:4 .	Q. 2:124, that the covenant does not reach the wrongdoers among Abraham's offspring, stands close to Ezekiel 33:24–26 . Naming a child by his father agrees with the Tanakh's practice throughout.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Covenant departure	A rule that the child of an Israelite father and a foreign mother stands outside Israel is not in the text, and Shaul, Ephraim, Manasseh, the sons of Moses, and Rehoboam stand against it. Reading Deuteronomy 7:4 as a law of descent goes beyond the verse. Where any stream treats descent as enough without the covenant, it departs from Jeremiah 9:25–26 .	Teaching that the Church has replaced Israel, or that the promises to the house of Israel and the house of Judah have passed to others, has no Tanakh witness (Jeremiah 31:35–37 [Hebrew 31:34–36]). Treating the tribes as of no further account sets aside Ezekiel 47:13–23 .	Islamic tradition traces the Prophet's line to Abraham through Ishmael. The Tanakh blesses Ishmael and makes him a great nation, but it places the covenant with Isaac by name (Genesis 17:19–21). Honoring descent from the Prophet as a rank among believers sits uneasily with the Qur'an's own word in Q. 49:13 and with Ezekiel 18:4 .
Covenant witness	The synagogue still calls a man to the Torah by his father's name, and a priest or Levite by his father's standing. The tradition that has guarded the registers of Chronicles has the standing to ask whether its rule of the mother is written in them.	The first page of the New Testament is a list of fathers that stop to name Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah. Read from the Tanakh outward, it says what the registers of Judah say: the house is the father's, and the stranger who joins is written into it.	The Qur'an's rule, to call each by his father and to honor no one for lineage, asks of Muslims what the Tanakh asks of Israel.

X-B. Who Reckons by the Mother, and Who by the Father

COMMUNITY	STANDING FOLLOWS	TRIBE AND PRIESTHOOD FOLLOW	SOURCE
Orthodox Judaism	The mother, or conversion	The father	Mishnah Kiddushin 3:12; Maimonides, Forbidden Intercourse 15:4
Conservative Judaism	The mother, or conversion	The father	Rabbinical Assembly, Standard of Rabbinic Practice (adopted 1986)

COMMUNITY	STANDING FOLLOWS	TRIBE AND PRIESTHOOD FOLLOW	SOURCE
Reform Judaism (United States)	Either parent, with <i>“appropriate and timely public and formal acts of identification”</i>	—	Central Conference of American Rabbis, March 15, 1983
Reconstructionist Judaism	Either parent, if raised as a Jew	—	Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, May 5, 1968
Karaite Judaism	The father (the traditional and majority view), or joining the community	The father	A Blue Thread (a Karaite Jewish blog), 2012
Samaritans	The father; a woman who marries in joins the community	The father	The Samaritan community’s account of its marriage custom
State of Israel (Law of Return)	<i>“Born of a Jewish mother”</i> or converted; the right of return also reaches the child and grandchild of a Jew	No tribal category	Law of Return, sections 4A and 4B (1970)
The Tanakh	The father’s house, and the stranger who joins	The father	Numbers 1:2; Ezra 2:59; Exodus 12:48–49

X-C. When the Rule of the Mother Enters the Record

A historical note, not a covenant witness. The rule that standing follows the mother is first stated in the Mishnah, compiled about 200 CE (Kiddushin 3:12). Rabbinic tradition holds that it was given at Sinai and reads it out of **Deuteronomy 7:4**.

The rabbinic sources themselves preserve another view of the one Torah case. On the son of the Israelite woman and the Egyptian man, the early commentary Sifra says that the words *“among the children of Israel”* teach that he became a proselyte, and Rashi repeats it. Nachmanides reports that the rabbis of France explained why: before the Torah was given, a child’s standing followed the father. Nachmanides himself disagrees.

Among modern historians, Shaye J. D. Cohen has argued that the rule is unknown to the Tanakh and to the writers of the Second Temple period, and that it arose among the early rabbis, perhaps under the influence of Roman law on the status of children, or by analogy with the Torah's law of mixed kinds. Other scholars place its beginning with Ezra.

This Institution takes no side in that debate. Its finding rests on the text: the Tanakh does not state the rule, and its registers do not follow it.

X-D. What the Genetic Record Can and Cannot Show

A historical note, not a covenant witness. Studies of the Y chromosome, which passes from father to son, have found that nearly half of the men who carry the priestly family tradition share one paternal lineage going back roughly three thousand years (Skorecki et al., 1997; Hammer et al., 2009). That agrees with a priesthood handed from father to son. The Library's research report *The Hebrew Relation in the Y Chromosome* (September 2026) reviews the paternal-line studies.

Studies of mitochondrial DNA, which passes from mother to child, divide. One found that about forty percent of Ashkenazi Jews descend in the maternal line from four women, and judged those lines Near Eastern (Behar et al., 2006). A later study traced the same four lines, and most of the rest, to women of Europe who joined the community (Costa et al., 2013).

If the later study is right, many Jewish communities began as the Tanakh's own houses did, with fathers of Israel and mothers who came from the nations. No test can name a tribe, and none can show who is in covenant (**Doc 259**, Section IV-D).

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's. Three points in the 613 Laws listing needed correction, and each has been corrected in its Google Doc so that the website copy can be replaced. Three further points are left for the Founder's decision.

Correction 1 — intermarriage. The 613 Laws listing, No. 56, read ***“Not to intermarry with gentiles (Deut. 7:3).”*** The verse speaks of the seven nations of the Land (**Deuteronomy 7:1**) and gives its reason, that they will turn the children away to other gods. The Tanakh itself applies the command to other nations for the same reason (**1 Kings 11:1–2; Ezra 9:1–2**). A note saying so has been added at No. 56.

Correction 2 — the assembly laws. Nos. 64, 65, and 66 gave the laws of **Deuteronomy 23:1–3** [Hebrew 23:2–4] as rules that the eunuch, the *mamzer*, and the Ammonite or Moabite shall not marry a daughter of Israel, and cited them by their Hebrew verse numbers. The verses say that such a

one *“shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh.”* Reading them as rules of marriage is the later rabbinic reading. The citations now give the English number with the Hebrew in brackets, and a note has been added to each.

Correction 3 — Edom and Egypt. Nos. 67 and 68 read *“Not to exclude a descendant of Esau ... for three generations”* and the same for the Egyptian, citing Deut. 23:8-9. The verses are **Deuteronomy 23:7–8** [Hebrew 23:8–9], and they say something different: *“You shall not abhor an Edomite ... you shall not abhor an Egyptian,”* and the children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly. The citations have been corrected and a note added.

Left for the Founder’s decision. First: the March 2026 study *Who Owns the Land?* states that *“the Tanakh records tribal identity, inheritance rights, and covenant standing through the father’s line throughout.”* For tribe and inheritance that is the rule, with the exceptions set out in Section IV-F. For covenant standing it says more than the text says (Section VIII), and the study’s own Part III already affirms the place of the stranger. The sentence could be reworded to speak of tribe and inheritance only.

Second: the June 2026 study *The Book of Generations* states that *“covenant identity requires covenant lineage”* and that *“without the recorded generations, there is no legitimate claim to any covenant inheritance.”* **Ezekiel 47:22–23** gives the stranger an inheritance among the tribes, and **Isaiah 56:3–7** gives him a place in the house of **Yahweh**. A qualifying sentence could be added. That study is also still in the old format, cites Acts 7:4 in support of a date, and gives the fourth-century date for the fixed calendar without the caution of **Doc 240**.

Third: the 613 Laws listing still cites many verses by their Hebrew numbers alone, among them Nos. 54, 55, 58, 69, 172, 203, and 209. Only the entries named in the three corrections above were changed. A single pass through the whole listing could bring every citation to the English number with the Hebrew in brackets.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON LINEAGE AND INHERITANCE

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	The Tanakh counts Israel by the father’s house. Tribe and clan are reckoned through the father.	Numbers 1:2, 18; 36:3–9; Ezra 2:59; 1 Chronicles 23:14

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
II	Land passes within the father's house. The daughter inherits where there is no son, and keeps the land in her father's tribe.	Numbers 27:8–11; 36:6–9; Joshua 17:3–6
III	Priesthood and throne pass from father to son by the covenant of Yahweh , and a claim to either must be proved.	Exodus 40:15; Numbers 25:13; 2 Samuel 7:12; Ezra 2:62–63
IV	A mother born among the nations did not put her child outside Israel. Clans, tribes, and kings came from such mothers.	Genesis 46:10; 48:5; 1 Chronicles 7:14; 23:14; Ruth 4:13–22; 1 Kings 14:21
V	The Tanakh states no rule that standing in Israel passes through the mother. Marriage with the nations was forbidden because it turns the heart to other gods.	Exodus 34:15–16; Deuteronomy 7:3–4; 1 Kings 11:1–4; Malachi 2:11
VI	The covenant has always been open to the stranger who joins himself to Yahweh , and Yahweh gives him an inheritance among the tribes.	Genesis 17:12–13; Exodus 12:48–49; Isaiah 56:3–7; Ezekiel 47:22–23
VII	Descent neither secures covenant standing nor bars it. Yahweh is the Father of the house, and He Himself will name its tribes.	Ezekiel 18:4; Amos 9:7; Isaiah 63:16; Malachi 2:10; Ezra 2:63; Ezekiel 37:19–22

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

The question was which line the Tanakh uses. The answer is sixfold.

First: to the one who asks which line. The Tanakh counts by the father's house. Tribe, land, priesthood, and throne pass from father to son, and the daughter carries her father's name where there is no son (**Numbers 1:2; 27:8**). The mother is honored, named, and heard, and her teaching is called torah (**Proverbs 1:8**). But the register is her husband's and her father's.

Second: to the Jewish reader. The registers are yours, and you have kept them. They say that Shaul was the son of a Canaanite woman, that Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of an Egyptian, and that the house of David runs through Ruth of Moab and Naamah of Ammon. Weigh whether the rule that would shut such sons out is written in the Torah or beside it. ***"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it"*** (**Deuteronomy 4:2**).

Third: to the Christian reader. Do not say that lineage is nothing. **Yahweh** made promises to the house of Israel and the house of Judah by name, and He will keep them (**Jeremiah 31:35–37**). And do not say that you have replaced them. The stranger who joins is given an inheritance “*among the tribes of Israel*” (**Ezekiel 47:22**). He is not given it instead of them.

Fourth: to the Muslim reader. Your own book tells you to call each by his father and to honor no one for his descent. The Tanakh says the same, and it adds what **Yahweh** said to Abraham: the covenant is with Isaac, and Ishmael is blessed (**Genesis 17:19–21**). Neither son’s children may boast against the other.

Fifth: to the child of two peoples, and to the stranger. No verse of the Tanakh shuts you out for your mother’s birth or for your father’s. Join yourself to **Yahweh**, keep His Sabbaths, and hold fast His covenant, and His word to you is this: “*even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer*” (**Isaiah 56:7**).

Sixth: to the covenant father and mother. Your house is the unit **Yahweh** counts. Give your children your name, your teaching, and your inheritance, and settle openly what you intend. Teach them that they belong to a house older than any tribe: “*You, Yahweh, are our Father; our Redeemer from of old is Your name*” (**Isaiah 63:16**).

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“Have we not all one Father? Has not one El created us?”

Malachi 2:10 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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