

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 303

SHOULD NOT A PEOPLE SEEK ITS ELOHIM?

A Covenant Deep Dive into Isaiah 8:19 and What the Tanakh Teaches About Seeking the Dead on Behalf of the Living

What Did Isaiah Forbid, What Test Did He Give in Its Place, and Is It Wrong to Keep the Teaching of a Teacher Who Has Died? — 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 tradition counts Deuteronomy 18:11 as a separate prohibition and defines it narrowly: the one who starves himself and lodges in a cemetery so that the dead will come to him (Talmud Sanhedrin 65b; Maimonides, Laws of Foreign Worship 11:13). Rashi gives Israel's reply in Isaiah 8:19 : a people that has an Elohim like ours should inquire of its Elohim . Yet the same tradition records going out to the graves on a fast day, and one of the two reasons given is <i>"so that the dead will ask for mercy on our behalf"</i> (Talmud Ta'anit 16a).	The New Testament carries the same test in a parable: <i>"If they do not bear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead"</i> (Luke 16:31). At the tomb the question is, <i>"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"</i> (Luke 24:5). The Catechism of the Catholic Church rejects <i>"conjuring up the dead"</i> and recourse to mediums (par. 2116), and in the same book teaches the faithful to ask those who have died to intercede for them (par. 956, 2683).	The Qur'an says, <i>"You cannot make those who are in the graves hear"</i> (Q. 35:22), and, <i>"Muhammad is no more than a messenger; messengers have passed away before him"</i> (Q. 3:144). At his death Abu Bakr said that whoever worshipped Muhammad should know that Muhammad is dead, and whoever worshipped Allah, that Allah lives and does not die (Sahih al-Bukhari 1241–1242). The hadith forbids making graves into places of worship (Sahih Muslim 532). Petitions at the shrines of the dead remain common, and Muslim scholars dispute them.

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 one verse, **Isaiah 8:19**, and to the verse that answers it, **Isaiah 8:20**. It asks what the prophet forbade, what he commanded in its place, what the Tanakh says of the dead, and whether it is wrong to keep the teaching of a teacher who has died. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in *bold italic* with their English meaning, also bold italic, in parentheses. 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 Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Section VII reports facts about modern religious bodies. Those facts come from published reports and from each body's own writings; they are not Tanakh findings, and they are marked where a report could not be confirmed. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously:

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, the Qur'an and hadith, the ancient versions, and the writings of modern movements appear 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 law against turning to the mediums and seeking the dead; what Yahweh gave in their place; the written Torah set as a witness; the death and hidden grave of Moses
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Malachi	The governing text and its setting; Saul and the medium; the kings who sought and the king who put away; the word that outlives the prophet; the test of every teacher
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	What the dead know and do; the verdict on Saul; the sleep and the waking of the dead; the Torah and the testimony set in Israel

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Matthew 17:3; Luke 16:31; 24:5; Acts 17:11; Galatians 1:8; 1 Timothy 2:5	The same test stated in the first century; the dead not sought; one mediator
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 2:170; 3:144; 5:44–48; 27:80; 35:22; 46:5; Sahih al-Bukhari 349, 1241–1242, 1330; Sahih Muslim 162, 532	The dead do not hear; the messenger dies and the message stands; graves not to be made places of worship; the fathers not to be followed blindly
Rabbinic literature	Talmud Sanhedrin 65b; Ta'anit 16a; Sotah 34b; Bava Metzia 59b; Rashi on Isaiah 8:19 ; Maimonides, Laws of Foreign Worship 11:13	How rabbinic law defines inquiry of the dead; the visiting of graves; the rule that a voice from heaven does not overrule the written Torah

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Church documents	Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 956, 2116, 2683; Augsburg Confession, Article 21	Mediums rejected; the dead asked to intercede; the Protestant objection
Ancient versions	Septuagint (Greek) of Isaiah 8:19–20 ; the Revised JPS translation (2023) and its note at Isaiah 8:19	The Greek renders the mediums as those who speak <i>“out of the belly”</i> and reads verse 20 as <i>“He has given the law for a help.”</i> The Revised JPS takes the second half of verse 19 as the tempters’ words and notes that the <i>“divine beings”</i> are <i>“the shades of the dead”</i>
Lexicons and scholarship	BDB; HALOT; H. A. Hoffner, Journal of Biblical Literature 86 (1967); P. Long in the Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary on 1 Samuel 28	The uncertain origin of <i>ov</i> ; the three proposals (a pit, a returning spirit, an ancestor)
Archaeology	M. J. Suriano, <i>“Feeding the Dead,”</i> Advances in Ancient Biblical and Near Eastern Research 1:3 (2021): tombs at Beth-shemesh and Gezer, eighth century BCE	Food set beside the dead in Judah in Isaiah’s own century
Writings of modern movements	Joseph Smith—History 1:30–35; Doctrine and Covenants 110; 128	A movement’s own account of its beginning, quoted so that it is not misstated
Published reports	News reports of October 2021 on the death of Yisrayl Hawkins; National Public Radio, 20 April 2013, on the Branch Davidians; the Jonestown digital archive of San Diego State University; reports on the Heaven’s Gate website (2020) and on Raël (2024)	Checking the list of fourteen in Section VII

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — ON BEHALF OF THE LIVING, TO THE DEAD?

I-A. The Question as It Is Asked

When a founder dies, his followers do not stop following. They keep his books, repeat his sayings, visit his grave, and sometimes wait for him to return. A list supplied for this study names fourteen religious bodies that, it says, follow the teaching of a man or woman who has died, from a small assembly in Texas to two of the largest religions on earth. The list was set beside one verse of Isaiah, and the question was asked: what does the Tanakh teach?

The verse is **Isaiah 8:19**. In the days of King Ahaz, with two armies on the border and the king of Assyria behind them, the people of Judah were being told to go to the mediums. The prophet answered with a question: should a people go to the dead on behalf of the living? Then he told them where to go instead. This study asks six questions of that verse.

First: what do the Hebrew words say, and who is speaking in each line?

Second: what law of the Torah stands behind the prophet's question?

Third: what happened to those in the Tanakh who sought the dead?

Fourth: what does the Tanakh say the dead know, and what they can do for the living?

Fifth: what did the prophet command in place of the medium?

Sixth: is it wrong to keep the teaching of a teacher who has died, and how does the answer bear on the list of fourteen?

I-B. The Governing Text

“And when they say to you, Seek the mediums and the knowing spirits, who chirp and who mutter: should not a people seek its Elohim? On behalf of the living should they seek the dead?” (Isaiah 8:19).

וְכִי־יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם דְּרֹשׁוּ אֶל־הָאֲבוֹת וְאֶל־הַיִּדְעָנִים הַמְצַפְצָפִים וְהַמְהַגִּים הַלֹּא־עִם אֶל־אֱלֹהֵיו
יִדְרֹשׁ בְּעַד הַחַיִּים אֶל־הַמֵּתִים

“To the Torah and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no dawn for them” (Isaiah 8:20).

לְתוֹרָה וּלְתַעֲוִדָּה אִם־לֹא יֹאמְרוּ כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לוֹ שָׁחַר

The two verses belong together and are studied together. The first has three parts. It reports what the people are being told: *dirshu (seek)* the mediums. It answers with a question about where a people ought to seek. And it names what is wrong with the other road in five Hebrew words: *be'ad ha-chayyim el ha-metim (on behalf of the living, to the dead)*. The second verse gives the command that replaces the medium and the test by which every voice is to be weighed.

I-C. The Setting — A King Who Would Not Ask

The words were spoken in a year of fear. Rezin king of Aram and Pekah king of Israel marched on Jerusalem, and when the house of David heard it, *“his heart and the heart of his people shook, as the trees of the forest shake before the wind”* (Isaiah 7:1–2). Yahweh sent Isaiah to Ahaz with a promise and an offer:

“Ask a sign for yourself from Yahweh your Elohim; make it deep, or make it high above.” And Ahaz said, *“I will not ask, and I will not test Yahweh”* (Isaiah 7:11–12).

The verb is *sha'al (to ask)*. The king was invited to ask of Yahweh and refused. He had already made his son pass through the fire (2 Kings 16:3), and he sent to the king of Assyria and said, *“I am your servant and your son; come up and save me”* (2 Kings 16:7).

Chronicles adds that *“in the time of his distress he was yet more unfaithful to Yahweh”* and sacrificed to the gods of Damascus because they had beaten him (2 Chronicles 28:22–23).

The people followed their king. Isaiah says they *“refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly”* (Isaiah 8:6). He was told not to walk in their way, not to call conspiracy what they called conspiracy, and not to fear what they feared (Isaiah 8:11–12). Then he did two things. He put the word he had been given into safekeeping, and he waited:

“Bind up the testimony; seal the Torah among My disciples. And I will wait for Yahweh, who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope for Him” (Isaiah 8:16–17).

צור תְּעוּדָה חֲתוּם תּוֹרָה בְּלִמְדֵי

That is the moment of Isaiah 8:19. Yahweh is hiding His face. The king will not ask. The people want an answer now, and there are those among them who know where an answer can be bought. A person does not turn to the dead when all is well. It turns when heaven is silent and it will not wait.

Finding: that the turn to the mediums came at a time when Yahweh was not answering, and in place of waiting for Him, is **Corroborated** (Isaiah 8:17, 19; 1 Samuel 28:6–7).

I-D. What This Study Builds On, and How Findings Are Graded

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 232** (*Flesh of the Gods, Voice of the Nations*) studied the list of forbidden practices in **Deuteronomy 18:10–11** and used **Isaiah 8:19–20** as one of five witnesses. **Doc 280** (*Who Do His Word*) set the mediums among the things Israel is forbidden to seek, serve, or fear. **Doc 153** traced the road of Saul to the medium, and **Doc 264** (*As the Sin of Divination*) studied the rebellion behind it. **Doc 198** set out the Tanakh’s witnesses to the resurrection of the dead. **Doc 292** (*The Word That **Yahweh** Has Not Spoken*) applied the test of **Deuteronomy 18:20–22** to those who set dates, and **Doc 296** (*Do Not Add to His Words*) tested one founder’s booklet line by line. The present document takes the one verse those studies quote, asks what it forbids and what it commands, and then applies it to a question none of them asked: whether a people sins by keeping the words of a teacher who has died. It refines points in four earlier documents (Section X).

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is a **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.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The two verses are built from fourteen words that carry the weight. The table sets them out.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG’S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>darash</i> (to seek, to inquire), דָּרַשׁ	H1875	To seek with care; to inquire of a source for guidance; to resort to	Deuteronomy 18:11; Isaiah 8:19; 1 Chronicles 10:13–14
<i>ov</i> (ghost; the one who has it), אוֹב	H178	The spirit of a dead person that is consulted; by extension the medium	Leviticus 20:27; 1 Samuel 28:7–8; Isaiah 29:4
<i>yidde’oni</i> (knowing spirit), יִדְעֹנִי	H3049	From <i>yada</i> (to know); a spirit said to have knowledge; always named beside the <i>ov</i>	Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:11
<i>tsaphaph</i> (to chirp), צָפַף	H6850	The thin cry of a small bird; four times in the Tanakh, all in Isaiah	Isaiah 10:14; 29:4; 38:14

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>bagab (to mutter)</i> , הָגָה	H1897	A low sound in the throat: a dove, a lion, a man speaking under his breath	Isaiah 38:14; Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:2
<i>am (a people)</i> , עַם	H5971	A people as a body; here any people, with Israel in view	Isaiah 8:19; Deuteronomy 7:6
<i>Elohim</i> , אֱלֹהִים	H430	The Mighty One; in the plural sense, gods; once, of a figure rising from the earth	Isaiah 8:19; 1 Samuel 28:13
<i>be'ad (on behalf of)</i> , בְּעַד	H1157	For the sake of; in the interest of; in place of	Isaiah 8:19; Jeremiah 21:2
<i>chayyim (the living)</i> , חַיִּים	H2416	Those who are alive	Isaiah 38:19; Ecclesiastes 9:5
<i>metim (the dead)</i> , מֵתִים	H4191	Those who have died; from <i>mut (to die)</i>	Deuteronomy 18:11; Psalms 115:17
<i>Torah (instruction)</i> , תּוֹרָה	H8451	Teaching, direction, law; the instruction Yahweh gave	Isaiah 8:16, 20; Joshua 1:7–8
<i>te'udab (testimony)</i> , תְּעוּדָה	H8584	An attested word; from <i>ud (to bear witness)</i> ; three times in the Tanakh	Isaiah 8:16, 20; Ruth 4:7
<i>davar (word)</i> , דָּבָר	H1697	A word, a matter, a thing spoken	Isaiah 8:20; 40:8
<i>shachar (dawn)</i> , שַׁחַר	H7837	The first light of morning	Isaiah 8:20; 58:8; Hosea 6:3

II-A. Darash — One Verb, Two Directions

The verse turns on one verb used twice. The people are told, *dirshu (seek)* the mediums. The prophet answers, should not a people *yidrosb (seek)* its **Elohim**? The verb *darash* is more than asking a question. It is going to a source and relying on what it gives. It is the verb of the Torah's promise: "*you will find Him, when you search for Him with all your heart and with all your soul*" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

It is the verb of the prophets' call: *"Seek Me and live"* (Amos 5:4); *"Seek Yahweh while He may be found"* (Isaiah 55:6).

David used it of his own life: *"I sought Yahweh, and He answered me"* (Psalms 34:4 [Hebrew 34:5]).

The same verb names the sin. The Torah forbids the one who is *doresh el ha-metim (seeking the dead)* (Deuteronomy 18:11). Saul said, *"Seek for me a woman who is mistress of a ghost, and I will go to her and inquire of her"* (1 Samuel 28:7), and both verbs in that sentence are forms of *darash*.

King Ahaziah sent men to *"inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron,"* and Elijah met them with Isaiah's question in other words: *"Is it because there is no Elohim in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub?"* (2 Kings 1:2–3).

Isaiah charges his own generation with the same failure twice more: *"they have not sought Yahweh of hosts"* (Isaiah 9:13 [Hebrew 9:12]);

"they do not seek Yahweh" (Isaiah 31:1).

Finding: that the Tanakh uses one verb, *darash*, for seeking **Yahweh** and for seeking the dead, and treats the second as the refusal of the first, is **Corroborated** (Deuteronomy 4:29; 18:11; Isaiah 8:19; 2 Kings 1:3; 1 Chronicles 10:13–14).

II-B. The Ov and the Yidde'oni

The word *ov (ghost)* stands sixteen times in the Tanakh for what a medium consults, and the *yidde'oni (knowing spirit)* stands beside it eleven times and never alone. Three texts show what the words mean.

The law speaks of *"a man or a woman in whom there is a ghost or a knowing spirit"* (Leviticus 20:27), so the *ov* is something a person has.

The woman of En-dor is called *ba'alat ov (mistress of a ghost)*, בַּעֲלַת־אוֹב, and Saul says to her, *"divine for me by the ghost, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you"* (1 Samuel 28:7–8), so the *ov* is the means by which the dead are brought up.

And Isaiah says of fallen Jerusalem, *"your voice shall be like a ghost's from the earth, and from the dust your speech shall chirp"* (Isaiah 29:4), so the *ov* is thought of as speaking from below the ground in a thin voice.

The plural *ovot* in **Isaiah 8:19** therefore names the ghosts themselves and, by an easy step, those who traffic in them. English versions say *"mediums"* or *"those who have familiar spirits."* This study

keeps “*mediums*” in translation, as Doc 280 did, and notes that the Hebrew looks first at the spirit and then at its keeper. The origin of the word is uncertain. The lexicons record three proposals, and they are listed in the Comparative Texts table. Nothing in this study rests on any of them.

Finding: that the *ov* is a spirit of the dead consulted through a person who has it, and that it is pictured as speaking from the earth, is Corroborated (Leviticus 20:27; 1 Samuel 28:7–8, 13; Isaiah 29:4).

II-C. Who Chirp and Who Mutter

The prophet describes the mediums by their sound. They *metsaphtsephim* (*chirp*) and they *mahgim* (*mutter*).

The first verb is the peep of a nestling: when Assyria robbed the nations like a man gathering eggs, “*there was none that moved a wing, or opened the mouth, or chirped*” (Isaiah 10:14).

The second is the low moan of a dove; Hezekiah on his sickbed joins the two: “*Like a swallow, like a crane, so I chirped; I moaned like a dove*” (Isaiah 38:14).

The picture is of a whispered, bird-like voice that the medium gave out as the voice of the dead. Isaiah does not argue about whether a spirit is there. He lets the people hear what they are being asked to trust: a twitter and a mumble.

There is a second edge to the word. The verb *bagab* (*to mutter*) is the Torah’s own verb for what a man is to do with the written word.

Yahweh said to Joshua, “*This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, and you shall mutter in it day and night*” (Joshua 1:8).

The first psalm calls the man blessed whose “*delight is in the Torah of Yahweh, and in His Torah he mutters day and night*” (Psalms 1:2).

There is a muttering that is forbidden and a muttering that is commanded. A person will have a low voice in its ear one way or the other. The question is whose?

Finding: that the mediums’ speech is described as the chirping and moaning of birds, and that the same verb *bagab* is commanded of the one who keeps the Torah in his mouth, is **Corroborated** (Isaiah 8:19; 29:4; 38:14; Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:2).

II-D. Whose Words Are the Second Half?

The Hebrew has no quotation marks, and the second half of **Isaiah 8:19** can be heard in two ways.

The first reading. The tempters' speech ends with "*who chirp and who mutter,*" and the rest is the prophet's reply: should not a people seek its **Elohim**? Should it seek the dead on behalf of the living? In this reading *Elohav (its Elohim)* is **Yahweh**. Most translations take it so, and it is the reading the Library has used (Docs 232 and 280).

The second reading. The tempters are still speaking: of course a people consults its *elohim*, the dead on behalf of the living. In this reading *elohav* means "*its gods,*" and the gods in question are the spirits of the dead. The reading has a foot in the Tanakh.

When the woman of En-dor saw the figure rise she said, "*I see elohim coming up out of the earth*" (1 Samuel 28:13).

At Baal-peor Israel went "*to the sacrifices of their gods*" (Numbers 25:2), and the psalm calls the same meal "*the sacrifices of the dead*" (Psalms 106:28).

The two readings divide the sentence differently and arrive at the same place. If the prophet is speaking, the second half is his rebuke. If the tempters are speaking, their words are their own indictment, since they call the dead their gods, and the prophet's reply is the next verse. Either way the people are being sent to the dead for the sake of the living, and either way the answer is **Isaiah 8:20**.

Finding: that **Isaiah 8:19** opposes seeking the dead on behalf of the living is carried by both readings and is **Corroborated** by the law it rests on (**Deuteronomy 18:11; Leviticus 19:31**). That the words "*should not a people seek its Elohim*" are the prophet's own is the more common reading and is not certain. That the dead were spoken of as *elohim* by those who sought them is **Corroborated** (1 Samuel 28:13; Numbers 25:2 with Psalms 106:28).

II-E. The Torah and the Testimony

The answer of **Isaiah 8:20** is two nouns: *la-Torah ve-la-te'udab (to the Torah and to the testimony)*. They are the two nouns of **Isaiah 8:16**, four verses earlier, in reverse order: "*Bind up the testimony; seal the Torah.*" What the prophet bound and sealed among his disciples on the day of silence is what he sends the people to on the day of temptation.

The word *te'udab (testimony)* is rare. Outside these two verses it stands only in the book of Ruth, of the custom by which a man drew off his sandal to confirm a sale: "*and this was the attestation in Israel*" (Ruth 4:7).

A *te'udab* is a word that has been witnessed and can be produced. The chapter itself shows what that looked like.

Yahweh told Isaiah, *“Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it with a man’s pen,”* and the prophet adds, *“And I will have faithful witnesses attest for me: Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah”* (Isaiah 8:1–2).

The verb *“attest”* is from the same root as *te’udah*. Later he is told again: *“Now go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for a later day, forever and ever”* (Isaiah 30:8).

The pair is older than Isaiah. *“He established a testimony in Jacob and set a Torah in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to make known to their sons”* (Psalms 78:5). *“The Torah of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple”* (Psalms 19:7 [Hebrew 19:8]).

In both the word is *edut* (testimony), from the same root as *te’udah*. The Torah is the instruction. The testimony is that instruction attested, written, and kept.

Finding: that the standard of Isaiah 8:20 is a written and witnessed word, kept among disciples, is Corroborated (Isaiah 8:1–2, 16; 30:8; Psalms 78:5; Deuteronomy 31:26).

II-F. No Dawn

The last clause is hard, and it should be said plainly. The Hebrew reads *im lo yomeru ka-davar ha-zeh asher ein lo shachar*. Two renderings are possible.

The first rendering. *“If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no dawn for them.”* Here *“this word”* is the Torah and the testimony, and the one who will not speak by it is in the dark. The Hebrew *lo* (for him) is singular: each such speaker, one by one.

The second rendering. *“Surely they will speak according to this word, which has no dawn.”* Here *“this word”* is the saying of the tempters in verse 19, and it is their counsel that has no morning.

Both renderings give the same verdict, and the next two verses pronounce it in full. Those who went that way *“shall pass through it hard-pressed and hungry,”* shall curse their king and their Elohim, and *“shall look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish”* (Isaiah 8:21–22).

They looked to the earth for a voice and found the dark. The dawn belongs to the other road:

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2 [Hebrew 9:1]).

“Then your light shall break forth like the dawn” (Isaiah 58:8).

“Let us press on to know Yahweh; His going forth is sure as the dawn” (Hosea 6:3).

Finding: that those who turn from the Torah and the testimony to the mediums end in darkness is **Corroborated** (Isaiah 8:20–22; 1 Samuel 28:20–25; 1 Chronicles 10:13–14). Which of the two renderings of the last clause is right is not settled by the text, and this study does not build on the difference.

III. THE TORAH BEHIND THE PROPHET

Isaiah did not invent the rule he applied. His question quotes the law. Three passages of the Torah stand behind **Isaiah 8:19**, and a fourth says what **Yahweh** gave instead.

III-A. Do Not Turn to Them

“Do not turn to the mediums or to the knowing spirits; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am Yahweh your Elohim” (Leviticus 19:31).

“And the person who turns to the mediums and to the knowing spirits, to whore after them, I will set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people” (Leviticus 20:6).

“A man or a woman in whom there is a ghost or a knowing spirit shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:27).

The first command ends with the reason: *“I am Yahweh your Elohim.”* Israel has someone to turn to. The second names the act for what it is. To go to the medium is *liznot (to whore)*, the word the Torah keeps for leaving **Yahweh** for another. The third places the penalty on the medium. The law does not say the practice is empty. It says the practice defiles and that it is unfaithfulness.

III-B. One Who Seeks the Dead

“There shall not be found among you one who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who divines divinations, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or one who binds a spell, or one who asks of a ghost or a knowing spirit, or one who seeks the dead. For everyone who does these things is an abomination to Yahweh” (Deuteronomy 18:10–12).

The list has eight members after the passing through the fire, and the Hebrew gives them in this order.

#	HEBREW	MEANING	WHERE ELSE
1	<i>qosem qesamim (one who divines divinations), קֹסֵם קְסָמִים</i>	Reading an answer from lots, arrows, or signs	Ezekiel 21:21 [Hebrew 21:26]; 1 Samuel 15:23

#	HEBREW	MEANING	WHERE ELSE
2	<i>me'onen (soothsayer)</i> , מְעוֹנֵן	Reading times and omens	Leviticus 19:26; Isaiah 2:6
3	<i>menachesh (augur)</i> , מְנַחֵשׁ	Seeking signs of what is to come	Leviticus 19:26; 2 Kings 21:6
4	<i>mekhashef (sorcerer)</i> , מְכַשֵּׁף	Working by spells and potions	Exodus 22:18 [Hebrew 22:17]; Isaiah 47:12
5	<i>chover chaver (one who binds a spell)</i> , חֹבֵר חֶבֶר	Charming by words	Psalms 58:5 [Hebrew 58:6]; Isaiah 47:12
6–7	<i>sho'el ov ve-yidde'oni (one who asks of a ghost or a knowing spirit)</i> , שֹׁאֵל אוֹב וַיִּדְעֵנִי	Consulting a spirit through one who has it	Leviticus 19:31; 1 Samuel 28:7
8	<i>doresh el ha-metim (one who seeks the dead)</i> , דֹּרֵשׁ אֶל-הַמֵּתִים	Going to the dead themselves for a word or for help	Isaiah 8:19

The last entry is the one Isaiah quotes. The Torah's phrase is *doresh el ha-metim*. The prophet's phrase is *yidrosh ... el ha-metim*. It is the same verb, the same preposition, and the same noun. When Isaiah asks whether a people should seek the dead, he is holding up the last line of Moses' list and asking Judah whether it has read it.

The seventh and eighth entries are not the same thing. To ask for an *ov* is to go through a medium. To seek the dead is wider: it takes in every way a living person goes to one who has died in order to receive a word, a favor, or protection, with a medium or without. The law closes the door on the practice and then on everything like it.

Finding: that **Isaiah 8:19** applies the Torah's own prohibition, in the Torah's own words, is **Corroborated (Deuteronomy 18:11; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; Isaiah 8:19)**.

III-C. What Yahweh Gave Instead

The law does not leave Israel with silence. The same passage goes on:

“You shall be whole-hearted with Yahweh your Elohim. For these nations that you are dispossessing listen to soothsayers and to diviners; but as for you, Yahweh your Elohim has not given you so. A prophet from your midst, from your brothers, like me, Yahweh your Elohim will raise up for you; to him you shall listen” (Deuteronomy 18:13–15).

Three things are said. The nations *listen* to diviners, and Israel is to *listen* to the prophet; the two are set against each other as rival sources. The prophet is *“from your brothers”*: a living man among living men, whose words can be heard, written, and checked. And the gift answers a request. It is given *“according to all that you asked of Yahweh your Elohim at Horeb”* (Deuteronomy 18:16), where the verb is again *sha’al* (to ask). Israel asked for a human voice in place of the fire, and Yahweh granted it. The medium is a counterfeit of a gift already given.

The gift came with its own test, because a living prophet can lie as well as a dead one can be imitated.

“When the prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh and the thing does not happen and does not come, that is the word that Yahweh has not spoken” (Deuteronomy 18:22).

And if the sign does come to pass but the prophet says, *“Let us go after other gods,”* he is not to be heard (Deuteronomy 13:1–3 [Hebrew 13:2–4]). Doc 292 studied both tests.

The Tanakh names the lawful channels in one line. When Saul inquired, *“Yahweh did not answer him, neither by dreams, nor by the Urim, nor by the prophets”* (1 Samuel 28:6).

Dreams, the Urim in the hand of the priest (Numbers 27:21), and the prophets (Numbers 12:6): these three Yahweh opened. All three are His to open, and all three can be silent.

Finding: that Yahweh gave Israel the prophet and the written word in place of the diviner and the medium, and set a test on the prophet, is **Corroborated** (Deuteronomy 18:14–22; 13:1–3; 1 Samuel 28:6; Numbers 12:6).

III-D. Nothing Given to the Dead

The Torah fences the living from the dead in other ways, and they belong to the same picture. The Israelite who brought his tithe declared,

“I have not eaten of it in my mourning, nor removed any of it while unclean, nor given any of it to the dead” (Deuteronomy 26:14).

“You are sons of Yahweh your Elohim; you shall not cut yourselves nor make baldness between your eyes for the dead” (Deuteronomy 14:1).

Whoever touched a dead body was unclean seven days (Numbers 19:11), and the priest was kept from the dead altogether except for his nearest kin (Leviticus 21:1–3). Isaiah later describes those who cross the fence: a people *“who sit among the graves and lodge in the guarded places”* (Isaiah 65:4).

As historical background, and not as a Tanakh witness: excavators have found food set beside the dead in tombs of Judah from Isaiah’s own century, among them a covered plate of mutton and a stoppered

jug in a tomb at Beth-shemesh (see the Comparative Texts table). The declaration of **Deuteronomy 26:14** was not made against an imaginary practice.

Finding: that the Torah forbids giving to the dead and cutting oneself for the dead, and sets a boundary of uncleanness between the dead and the worship of **Yahweh**, is Corroborated (Deuteronomy 14:1; 26:14; Numbers 19:11; Leviticus 21:1–3).

IV. THE CASE THE TANAKH TELLS — SAUL AND THE KINGS

The Tanakh does not leave the law as a rule on a page. It tells what happened to a king who broke it, and it measures later kings by the same rule.

IV-A. What Happened at En-dor

The account begins with two facts set side by side: *“Samuel had died ... and Saul had put away the mediums and the knowing spirits from the land”* (1 Samuel 28:3). The prophet was dead, and the king had once obeyed the law. Then the Philistines gathered, and Saul was afraid.

“And Saul asked of Yahweh, and Yahweh did not answer him, neither by dreams, nor by the Urim, nor by the prophets. And Saul said to his servants, Seek for me a woman who is mistress of a ghost, and I will go to her and inquire of her” (1 Samuel 28:6–7).

He went disguised and by night. He asked the woman to bring up Samuel.

“And the woman saw Samuel, and she cried out with a loud voice” (1 Samuel 28:12).

She told the king what she saw: *“I see elohim coming up out of the earth ... an old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” “And Saul knew that it was Samuel”* (1 Samuel 28:13–14).

IV-B. What the Dead Prophet Said

“And Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disturbed me, to bring me up?” (1 Samuel 28:15).

“Why then do you ask me, when Yahweh has turned from you and has become your adversary? And Yahweh has done for Himself as He spoke by my hand: Yahweh has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David. Because you did not listen to the voice of Yahweh ... tomorrow you and your sons will be with me” (1 Samuel 28:16–19).

Four things in the account should be marked, and one thing that is not in it.

First: the narrator calls the figure Samuel, and does so five times (1 Samuel 28:12, 14, 15, 16, 20). The text does not say *“a spirit that looked like Samuel.”*

Second: the woman cried out when she saw him. Whatever she was used to seeing, this was not it. The text gives no credit to her craft for what happened.

Third: Samuel brought no new word. *“Yahweh has done for Himself as He spoke by my hand.”* Every part of the message had been spoken while the prophet lived: the kingdom torn away (1 Samuel 15:28), the reason for it (1 Samuel 15:23, 26). The one thing added was the day. The man who went to the dead for guidance received the sentence he already had.

Fourth: the first words from the dead are a rebuke for asking: *“Why have you disturbed me?”* and *“Why then do you ask me?”* The verb is *sha'al (to ask)*, the root of Saul's own name. Doc 153 traced that thread.

What is not said: the text does not explain how Samuel came to be there. It does not say the woman's art raised him, and it does not say that Yahweh sent him. Readers in every tradition have filled that silence in different ways. This study leaves it where the text leaves it.

Finding: that the narrative presents the speaker as Samuel is a **Single witness** (1 Samuel 28:12–20), the only place in the Tanakh where one who has died speaks to the living. That the message added nothing to the word given in the prophet's lifetime is **Corroborated** (1 Samuel 15:23, 26, 28; 28:17–18). That a medium has power to bring up the dead is **Not in the text.**

IV-C. The Verdict

“And Saul died for his breach of faith which he committed against Yahweh, concerning the word of Yahweh which he did not keep, and also for asking of a ghost, to seek; and he did not seek Yahweh, and He put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:13–14).

The Hebrew sets the two seekings against each other in six words: *lish'ol ba-ov lidrosh (to ask of a ghost, to seek)*, לִשְׁאוֹל בְּאוֹב לְדָרוֹשׁ, and *ve-lo darash ba-Yahweh (and he did not seek Yahweh)*, וְלֹא־דָרַשׁ בַּיהוָה.

This is **Isaiah 8:19** written as a verdict. Saul sought the dead and did not seek his Elohim.

One question should be faced. The book of Samuel says that Saul *asked* of **Yahweh** and was not answered (1 Samuel 28:6). Chronicles say he did not *seek* **Yahweh**. The verbs differ. Saul asked a question and wanted a reply. He did not turn. He had not kept the word he had already been given (1 Samuel 15:22–23), and when no fresh word came he went elsewhere the same night. In the Tanakh,

to seek **Yahweh** is to return to Him and wait for Him. A question sent upward by a man who means to get his answer one way or another is not that.

Finding: that the Tanakh names the seeking of a ghost as a cause of Saul's death, and calls it the opposite of seeking **Yahweh**, is a **Single witness** as a verdict (**1 Chronicles 10:13–14**) and is **Corroborated** as a rule by the law and the prophet (**Leviticus 20:6; Isaiah 8:19**).

IV-D. The Kings Measured by the Same Rule

Ahaziah of Israel. He fell through a lattice and was sent to inquire of Baal-zebub whether he would recover.

Elijah's word was, *"Is it because there is no Elohim in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up"* (2 Kings 1:16).

Manasseh of Judah. *"He made his son pass through the fire, and practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with a ghost and with knowing spirits; he did much evil in the eyes of Yahweh"* (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chronicles 33:6). The list is **Deuteronomy 18:10–11** turned into a record of a reign.

Josiah of Judah. *"Josiah put away the mediums and the knowing spirits and the teraphim and the idols ... that he might establish the words of the Torah that were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of Yahweh"* (2 Kings 23:24). The verse joins the two halves of Isaiah's answer: away with the mediums, and back to the written book.

Egypt and Babylon. The prophet says the nations will do the same in their distress and gain nothing by it. Of Egypt: *"they shall seek the worthless things and the mutterers and the mediums and the knowing spirits"* (Isaiah 19:3).

Of Babylon: *"Stand now with your spells and with the multitude of your sorceries ... let them stand up and save you"* (Isaiah 47:12–13).

Yahweh is the one *"who frustrates the signs of liars and makes diviners mad"* (Isaiah 44:25).

Finding: that the kings of Israel and Judah are judged by whether they sought the mediums or put them away, and that the putting away is joined to the written Torah, is **Corroborated** (2 Kings 1:16; 21:6; 23:24; 2 Chronicles 33:6).

V. WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS OF THE DEAD

The prophet's question assumes something about the dead: that they are the wrong place to go. The rest of the Tanakh says why.

V-A. They Have No Part in What Is Done Under the Sun

“For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing ... their love and their hatred and their envy have already perished, and they have no more portion forever in all that is done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6).

“His sons come to honor, and he does not know it; they are brought low, and he does not perceive it” (Job 14:21).

“Do not trust in nobles, in a son of man in whom there is no salvation. His breath goes out, he returns to his ground; on that very day his plans perish” (Psalms 146:3–4).

The psalms say the same of praise: *“The dead do not praise Yah, nor any who go down into silence”* (Psalms 115:17).

“In death there is no remembrance of You; in Sheol who will give You thanks?” (Psalms 6:5 [Hebrew 6:6]).

Hezekiah, raised from his sickbed, drew the line between the two companies and said where teaching is done:

“For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You ... The living, the living, he shall thank You, as I do this day; a father makes known Your truth to sons” (Isaiah 38:18–19).

That verse is the positive side of **Isaiah 8:19**. Truth is made known by the living to the living; a father to his sons. It is not fetched up from the grave.

Two passages should be set beside these so that nothing is hidden. Samuel at En-dor speaks and knows (Section IV-B). And in a taunt-song the shades in Sheol rise to greet the king of Babylon and say, *“You also have become weak as we”* (Isaiah 14:9–10).

The second is poetry about the fall of a tyrant. The first is one night, and the king who brought it about died for it. Neither gives the living any leave to go to the dead.

Finding: that the dead take no part in the affairs of the living and do not teach them is **Corroborated** (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6, 10; Job 14:21; Psalms 146:4; Isaiah 38:18–19). That one who had died once spoke to a living man is a **Single witness** (1 Samuel 28:15–19), and it is recorded as a sin and not as a way.

V-B. They Do Not Plead for the Living

If the dead cannot be asked for guidance, can they be asked to pray? The Tanakh answers with the names of the greatest intercessors Israel ever had.

“Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My soul would not be toward this people” (Jeremiah 15:1).

“Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they by their righteousness would deliver only their own lives” (Ezekiel 14:14).

“For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; You, Yahweh, are our Father; our Redeemer from of old is Your name” (Isaiah 63:16).

Moses pleaded for Israel while he lived, and was heard (**Exodus 32:11–14**). Samuel said it would be sin for him to stop praying for the people (**1 Samuel 12:23**). But no one in the Tanakh asks Moses to pray after Moses has died. No psalm is addressed to Abraham. When the people plead with the fathers, they speak to **Yahweh** and ask Him to remember what He swore:

“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself” (**Exodus 32:13**).

And **Yahweh** says the remembering is His: *“I will remember My covenant with Jacob”* (**Leviticus 26:42**). The fathers are remembered before Him. They are not sought.

One account might seem to point the other way. A dead man thrown into the grave of Elisha *“touched the bones of Elisha, and he revived and stood on his feet”* (**2 Kings 13:21**).

No one in that account sought Elisha. No one prayed at the grave, before or after. The text records an act of **Yahweh** and no shrine.

And of the greatest prophet of all it is written, *“And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab ... and no man knows his burial place to this day”* (**Deuteronomy 34:6**). Israel was given the book of Moses and was not given his grave.

Finding: that the righteous dead do not intercede for the living, and that no one in the Tanakh prays to them, is **Corroborated** (**Jeremiah 15:1; Ezekiel 14:14; Isaiah 63:16; Psalms 49:7** [Hebrew 49:8]). That the grave of Moses was hidden is a **Single witness** (**Deuteronomy 34:6**).

V-C. They Sleep, and They Are in Yahweh’s Hand

None of this is said in contempt of the dead. The Tanakh says they sleep and that **Yahweh** will wake them. *“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake”* (**Daniel 12:2**).

“Your dead shall live ... awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust” (Isaiah 26:19). Job asked, *“If a man dies, shall he live again?”*

and answered, *“All the days of my service I will wait, until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You”* (Job 14:14–15). Doc 198 set out these witnesses in full.

The point for **Isaiah 8:19** is who does the calling. *“Yahweh kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and brings up”* (1 Samuel 2:6).

The dead are His to raise. The medium claims to do in a back room what Yahweh has kept for Himself.

V-D. Honoring the Dead Is Not Seeking Them

The Tanakh does not forbid grief or memory.

Abraham bought a field to bury Sarah (**Genesis 23:19**).

Jacob set a pillar on the grave of Rachel (**Genesis 35:20**).

Israel wept for Moses thirty days (**Deuteronomy 34:8**).

David wrote a lament for Saul and Jonathan (**2 Samuel 1:17**). *“The memory of the righteous is for a blessing”* (**Proverbs 10:7**).

The command to honor father and mother (**Exodus 20:12**) does not end at the funeral.

The line is drawn at the verb of **Isaiah 8:19**. To bury, to mourn, to remember, and to keep what a faithful parent taught is to honor the dead.

To go to them for a word, to ask them for help, to feed them, or to ask them to speak to Yahweh for us is to seek them.

David stood on the right side of the line when his child died: *“I shall go to him, but he will not return to me”* (**2 Samuel 12:23**).

Finding: that the Tanakh commends burial, mourning, and memory, and forbids seeking the dead, is Corroborated (**Genesis 23:19; Deuteronomy 34:8; Proverbs 10:7; Deuteronomy 18:11; 2 Samuel 12:23**).

VI. TO THE TORAH AND TO THE TESTIMONY

Isaiah did not only say where not to go. This section takes up what he commanded, and it reaches the question the list of fourteen raises.

VI-A. A Word That Outlives Its Messenger

The first chapter of Joshua opens with a death and a command, in that order.

“Moses My servant is dead; now arise, cross this Jordan ... Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the Torah that Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left” (Joshua 1:2, 7).

Yahweh Himself says that Moses is dead, and in the next breath binds Joshua to what Moses commanded. Israel was never told to go to Moses. They were told to go to the book.

Moses had seen to that before he died: he *“wrote this Torah and gave it to the priests”* (Deuteronomy 31:9), ordered it read to all Israel every seventh year so that *“their sons, who have not known, may hear”* (Deuteronomy 31:10–13), and said:

“Take this book of the Torah and put it beside the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your Elohim, and it shall be there as a witness against you ... For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly” (Deuteronomy 31:26, 29).

The book was written for the time after the prophet’s death. That is what a testimony is for. The prophets say so as a principle:

“Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?” (Zechariah 1:5–6).

“Remember the Torah of Moses My servant, which I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel, statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4 [Hebrew 3:22]).

The last prophet’s last command is to remember the teaching of a man who had been dead for centuries. The reason is in the words *“which I commanded him.”*

The teaching was never Moses’ own. *“The word of our Elohim stands forever”* (Isaiah 40:8). *“My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your seed, nor from the mouth of your seed’s seed”* (Isaiah 59:21).

Finding: that the Tanakh commands Israel to keep the written teaching delivered through prophets who have died, because the word is Yahweh’s, is Corroborated (Joshua 1:2, 7–8; Deuteronomy 31:26, 29; Zechariah 1:5–6; Malachi 4:4; Isaiah 59:21).

VI-B. Is It Wrong to Keep the Teaching of One Who Has Died?

The answer has to be stated with care, because **Isaiah 8:19** is sometimes pressed to say more than it says. The verse forbids *seeking* the dead. It does not forbid *keeping* what a man taught before he died. If it did, it would forbid the Torah of Moses, the psalms of David, and the scroll of Isaiah himself, who sealed his teaching among his disciples so that it would outlast him (Isaiah 8:16).

The Tanakh even records a household that kept the command of an ancestor long dead and was praised for it.

Jonadab, son of Rechab, had charged his sons to drink no wine, build no house, and live in tents (**Jeremiah 35:6–7**). He had lived in the days of Jehu (**2 Kings 10:15**). More than two centuries later, in the days of Jehoiakim, his descendants were still keeping the charge, and **Yahweh** held them up to Judah:

“The words of Jonadab son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons, are performed ... for they obey their father’s commandment. But I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, and you have not listened to Me” (**Jeremiah 35:14**).

Yahweh did not rebuke the Rechabites for following a dead man. He rebuked Judah because a dead man’s sons obeyed their father better than Judah obeyed the living Elohim.

The same Tanakh tells Israel not to keep what the fathers taught when the fathers taught wrongly. *“Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor keep their judgments ... I am Yahweh your Elohim; walk in My statutes”* (**Ezekiel 20:18–19**). *“Surely our fathers inherited lies, vanity, and things in which there is no profit”* (**Jeremiah 16:19**). *“Do not be as your fathers”* (**Zechariah 1:4**). *“Their fear of Me is a commandment of men, learned by rote”* (**Isaiah 29:13**).

So the Tanakh commends keeping one dead father’s words and condemns keeping another’s. Whether the father is dead plays no part in the difference. The difference is what he said.

Finding: that **Isaiah 8:19** forbids keeping the teaching of a teacher because he has died is **Not in the text**. That the Tanakh judges a teaching by what it says, and commends or condemns keeping it on that ground alone, is **Corroborated** (**Joshua 1:7; Jeremiah 35:14, 18–19; Ezekiel 20:18–19; Jeremiah 16:19; Isaiah 8:20**).

VI-C. The Test Stated

Isaiah 8:20 is a test, and the Torah had already laid out its parts. Taken together they make five questions that can be put to any teacher, living or dead, and to any book.

#	THE QUESTION	THE TEXT
1	Does the word agree with the Torah and the testimony already given?	Isaiah 8:20; Deuteronomy 13:1–3
2	Does it add to what Yahweh commanded, or take away from it?	Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [Hebrew 13:1]; Proverbs 30:5–6
3	When the teacher spoke of things to come in the name of Yahweh , did they come?	Deuteronomy 18:21–22; Jeremiah 28:9
4	Does it lead the hearer to Yahweh alone, or to another?	Deuteronomy 13:1–3; Exodus 20:3
5	Is the hearer’s trust placed in Yahweh , or in the man?	Jeremiah 17:5; Psalms 146:3; Isaiah 2:22

The fifth question is the one a founder’s death brings into the open.

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm” (Jeremiah 17:5).

“Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for of what account is he?” (Isaiah 2:22).

While a teacher lives, it can be hard to tell whether his hearers trust Yahweh or trust him. When his breath goes out, it shows. If the people turn to the book he pointed to, they were taught well. If they turn to his grave, his recordings, and his name, they were following the man.

Finding: that every teacher and every writing is to be tested by the word already given, and that trust is owed to **Yahweh** and not to the messenger, is Corroborated (Isaiah 8:20; Deuteronomy 4:2; 13:1–3; 18:21–22; Jeremiah 17:5).

VI-D. Seek from the Book, and Wait

The mediums said, *dirshu* (*seek*). Isaiah uses the same word, in the same form, for what the people are to do instead:

“Seek from the book of Yahweh, and read” (Isaiah 34:16).

דַּרְשׁוּ מֵעַל-סֵפֶר יְהוָה וּקְרְאוּ

Where the book has not spoken to a matter, the Torah sends the asker to the living and not to the dead:

“You shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who shall be in those days, and you shall inquire” (Deuteronomy 17:9).

The verb is once more *darash*, and the judge is the one *“in those days.”* The people may ask a living prophet to seek **Yahweh** for them, as Zedekiah’s men asked Jeremiah: *“Inquire of Yahweh on our behalf”* (Jeremiah 21:2). There the two words of Isaiah 8:19 stand together in their lawful use: *darash* and *be’ad*, a seeking on behalf of the living, addressed to **Yahweh**.

And when no answer comes, the prophet shows what to do by doing it.

“I will wait for Yahweh, who is hiding His face” (Isaiah 8:17).

“In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15).

“Though it tarries, wait for it” (Habakkuk 2:3).

“I will wait for the Elohim of my salvation; my Elohim will hear me” (Micah 7:7).

“Yahweh is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him” (Lamentations 3:25).

Saul could not wait at Gilgal (1 Samuel 13:8–13), and he could not wait at Gilboa. The silence of **Yahweh** is not permission to look elsewhere. It is a call to return and wait.

Finding: that the lawful seeking is from the written word, through the living, and with waiting, is Corroborated (Isaiah 8:16–17; 34:16; Deuteronomy 17:9; Jeremiah 21:2; Lamentations 3:25).

VII. THE LIST OF FOURTEEN — APPLYING THE TEST

VII-A. The List and Its Measure

The list supplied for this study names fourteen entries and gives one measure for all of them: after a leader’s death they *“continue to strictly adhere”* to that person’s writings, prophecies, and mandates. Its last entry says that the largest religions *“operate on this exact definition,”* and names Islam and Buddhism.

Two things about that measure need to be said before any name is discussed.

First: the list leaves out two bodies that fit its definition as well as any on it.

Judaism keeps the teaching of Moses, who died on Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:5).

Christianity keeps the reported teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, who died at Jerusalem and whom it holds to have risen.

And this Institution keeps the words of Moses and the prophets, every one of whom is dead. If following the recorded words of a teacher who has died were the fault, the fault would begin with **Joshua 1:7**.

Second: as Section VI-B found, the Tanakh does not use that measure. It asks two other questions. Do these people *seek the dead*, for words, for help, or for presence (**Isaiah 8:19**)? And does the word this people follow *stand when it is tested* by the Torah and the testimony (**Isaiah 8:20**)? A body may be innocent of the first and fail the second. The sections below take the list's facts first, and then each question.

VII-B. The List's Facts, Checked

The standard of **Deuteronomy 19:15** applies to facts about people as much as to doctrine, and "*you shall not bear a false report*" (**Exodus 23:1**) applies to reports about those with whom one disagrees. The list's statements were checked against published reports. Most stand. Several need correcting.

#	BODY	FOUNDER NAMED, AND DEATH	WHAT THE CHECK FOUND
1	The House of Yahweh	Yisrayl Hawkins, earlier known as Buffalo Bill Hawkins; October 2021	Confirmed by news reports of 10 October 2021, which give his age as 87. His dated predictions of nuclear war were examined in Docs 292 and 296.
2	Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	Rulon Jeffs; 2002	Death confirmed. The body traces its authority through a line of leaders, and many members still hold his son Warren Jeffs, imprisoned since his conviction in 2011, to be their prophet. It does not follow a dead man only.
3	Heaven's Gate	Marshall Applewhite; March 1997	Confirmed. Thirty-nine died together. A few former members keep the website and answer mail. There is no assembly.
4	Christian Science	Mary Baker Eddy; 1910	Confirmed. Her book <i>Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures</i> is read beside the Bible in every service.
5	Scientology	L. Ron Hubbard; 1986	Confirmed. His writings and lectures are held to be scripture that may not be altered.

#	BODY	FOUNDER NAMED, AND DEATH	WHAT THE CHECK FOUND
6	The Peoples Temple	Jim Jones; November 1978	Death confirmed, with more than nine hundred others. The body ended at Jonestown. The large collection of its papers online is a university archive that presents many views. A continuing following that promotes his teaching was not confirmed .
7	Branch Davidians	David Koresh; April 1993	Confirmed in part. Some survivors were reported in 2013 to be waiting for his resurrection. A separate small group on the property follows another teacher.
8	Unification Church	Sun Myung Moon; 2012	Confirmed. His book <i>Divine Principle</i> is held as scripture. His widow has led the main body, and other bodies have formed under his sons.
9	Raëlism	Claude Vorilhon (Raël); the list says 2024	Not confirmed. No report of his death was found. Reports of 2024 describe him as living and leading the movement from Japan. On the evidence found, this entry does not fit the list's own definition.
10	Worldwide Church of God; Philadelphia Church of God	Herbert W. Armstrong; 1986	Confirmed. The parent body gave up his distinctive teachings and took a new name in 2009. Bodies that broke away keep and reprint his books.
11	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	Joseph Smith; 1844	Death confirmed. The body is governed by a living president whom it holds to be a prophet, so it follows living men as well as its founder's books. Membership is reported above seventeen million.
12	Jehovah's Witnesses	Charles Taze Russell, 1916; Joseph F. Rutherford, 1942	Deaths confirmed. Teaching is set by a living Governing Body, which has revised much of what Russell taught. Active members are reported at about nine million.
13	The Bahá'í Faith	Bahá'u'lláh; 1892	Confirmed. His writings are held as scripture, and the body is governed by an elected council.
14	Islam; Buddhism	Muhammad, 632 CE; Siddhartha Gautama, about 483 BCE	Confirmed, with the note that scholars dispute the Buddha's dates and many place his death near 400 BCE. Judaism and Christianity fit the same definition and are not listed.

The list's opening line says **"10 groups"** and then gives fourteen. That is a slip of drafting and changes nothing. The correction at No. 9 matters more: a man should not be reported dead on one unsupported line. The corrections at Nos. 2, 11, and 12 matter for the argument, because those bodies are led by living men whom they hold to carry authority from **Elohim** today. For them the question is not only a dead founder. It is the test of **Isaiah 8:20** applied to the living.

VII-C. The First Question — Does the Body Seek the Dead?

Most of the fourteen do not consult the dead in the sense of **Deuteronomy 18:11**. Reading a dead man's book is not necromancy, and it should not be called that. One entry, however, touches **Isaiah 8:19** by its own account of its beginning, and it is quoted here from its own scripture so that it is not misstated.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that in 1823 its founder was visited at night by a messenger named Moroni, a man who had lived and died on the American continent some fourteen centuries earlier, and who told him where a buried record lay (Joseph Smith—History 1:30–35). It teaches that in 1836 Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared in turn to him and to an associate and committed authority to them (Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16). And it teaches that the living are to be baptized on behalf of the dead (Doctrine and Covenants 128). That body holds that these were messengers sent from **Elohim** and not spirits called up, and that distinction is its own to make.

Tanakh's reply does not depend on settling how a visitor came. It depends on what the visitor says.

"If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass ... you shall not listen to the words of that prophet"

If he leads away from what **Yahweh** commanded (**Deuteronomy 13:1–3** [Hebrew 13:2–4]). A new book of scripture, a new priesthood, and rites for the dead are measured by **Deuteronomy 4:2** and **Isaiah 8:20** whoever is said to have delivered them. In the one case where the Tanakh does show a dead prophet speaking, he added nothing to the word already given (Section IV-B).

Other bodies on the list wait for a dead founder to return or keep watch over his recorded voice, as the reports at Nos. 3 and 7 describe. Waiting for a man to rise is not the same act as consulting him. But it shows where the hope has been placed, and the fifth question of Section VI-C applies.

Finding: that keeping a dead founder's writings is, by that fact alone, the sin of **Deuteronomy 18:11** is **Not in the text**. That a message said to come from one who has died is to be tested by the written word, and refused if it adds to it, is **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 4:2; 13:1–3; Isaiah 8:20**).

VII-D. The Second Question — Does the Word Stand the Test?

This is where the list of fourteen meets **Isaiah 8:20**, and it meets it in different places. This study does not try fourteen cases; each would need a document of its own, and the Library has given that to some already. It sets out where the five questions of Section VI-C press, using each body's own published claims.

THE TEST	WHERE IT PRESSES	THE TEXT
Things foretold that did not come	Dates were set for the end, or for war, and passed: by the founder of the House of Yahweh (2006, 2007, 2008; see Docs 292 and 296); in the literature of the Jehovah's Witnesses (1914, 1925, 1975); and by Herbert Armstrong (1975). David Koresh and Marshall Applewhite each taught that the end was at their own door.	Deuteronomy 18:21–22; Jeremiah 28:9
Words added to the word	A second or third book is set beside or above the Tanakh as scripture: the Book of Mormon and its companion volumes; <i>Science and Health</i> ; <i>Divine Principle</i> ; the writings of L. Ron Hubbard; the books of Raël; the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. The Qur'an says of itself that it confirms the Torah (Q. 5:44–48), and by that claim it asks to be tested by the Torah.	Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5–6
Another god, or none	Raëlism teaches that the <i>elohim</i> of Genesis were scientists from another world. Heaven's Gate taught a physical kingdom reached by leaving the body. Scientology teaches the salvation of an immortal self through its own methods. Buddhism in its oldest form teaches a path that does not depend on a Creator.	Deuteronomy 13:1–3; Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 45:5
Trust placed in the man	A founder is called the last prophet, the only teacher of the true doctrine, the one who alone could open what was sealed, or a parent of all mankind; his words may not be questioned; and after his death his followers wait for him.	Jeremiah 17:5; Psalms 146:3–4; Isaiah 2:22
The Torah set aside	Where a body teaches that the commandments given at Sinai are ended, replaced, or kept only as its founder revised them, it has parted from the standard by which Isaiah measures every word.	Isaiah 8:20; Malachi 4:4

One caution belongs here. A body is not proved true because its founder kept some of the commandments, and it is not proved false in everything because he failed the test of a prophet. Armstrong taught the Sabbath, and so does the Torah. The House of **Yahweh** uses the Name, and so does the Tanakh. What a teacher took from the written word stands because it is written. What he added falls with him. The hearer's work is to tell the two apart, and **Isaiah 8:20** is the tool for it.

Finding: that a prophet whose word in the name of **Yahweh** did not come to pass is not to be feared or followed is **Corroborated (Deuteronomy 18:22; Jeremiah 28:9, 15–17)**. That a true statement taken from the Torah remains true in the mouth of a teacher who failed elsewhere follows from **Isaiah 8:20** itself: **the measure is the word, not the man.**

VII-E. The Same Test Turned on This Library

A study that measures others by **Isaiah 8:20** must stand under it. Miqdash Bethel was founded by a living man, and the Tanakh says of every living man that his breath is in his nostrils (**Isaiah 2:22**). This Library now runs to more than three hundred documents. A day will come when its founder cannot be asked what he meant.

On that day these documents will be exactly what the list describes: the writings of a teacher who has died. The Tanakh has already said what is to be done with them. Not one line is to be kept because Elder Kepha wrote it. **Each line is to be kept only so far as it speaks according to the Torah and the testimony, and where it does not, it is to be corrected by anyone who can show the error from the text.** That is why every document in this Library carries a section of corrections to its own earlier work (Section X), and **why its doctrinal rule names no authority but the written Tanakh.**

No one is to seek guidance at a grave, wait for a founder's return, or treat a recording as an oracle. ***"Seek from the book of Yahweh, and read"*** (**Isaiah 34:16**).

VIII. SEEKING THE DEAD TODAY — THE COVENANT BELIEVER

Few readers of this study will ever visit a medium. **Isaiah 8:19** still reaches further into ordinary life than it first seems to, because the wish behind it has not changed: to hear once more from someone who is gone, or to get help from someone holier than oneself.

VIII-A. The Practices the Law Names

The séance, the medium who offers messages from the departed, the board or the cards used to call a spirit, the ***"reading"*** that claims to pass on what a dead relative wants said: these are the ***ov*** and the

yidde'oni in modern dress. The command has not changed: ***“Do not turn to the mediums or to the knowing spirits; do not seek them out”*** (Leviticus 19:31). The covenant believer does not attend, does not pay, and does not listen at second hand to what was said. Whether a spirit is present or the whole thing is a performance makes no difference to the command. The law forbids the turning.

VIII-B. Prayers and Offerings to the Dead

In much of the world the dead are not consulted through a medium at all. They are addressed directly. Families set out food and drink for ancestors, pour out an offering before a journey, or ask a grandfather's spirit to guard the house. Worshippers kneel at the tomb of a holy man and ask him to carry their request to **Elohim**.

The Torah speaks to each of these. Nothing is to be “given to the dead” (Deuteronomy 26:14). The meal at Baal-peor is remembered as ***“the sacrifices of the dead”*** (Psalms 106:28).

And the dead do not carry requests: ***“Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; You, Yahweh, are our Father”*** (Isaiah 63:16).

This is a hard word for a believer whose whole family honors its ancestors in this way, and it should be heard together with the Fifth Commandment. **Yahweh commands honor for father and mother. He does not command that they be fed after death or asked for protection.** A son honors a faithful father by living as he taught, by keeping his name in good repute, and by teaching his own children. The father is in **Yahweh's** hand, and the son may leave him there.

VIII-C. The One Who Grieves

The person most tempted by **Isaiah 8:19** is not the curious one. It is the one who has just buried a husband, a wife, or a child, and would give anything for one more word. The Tanakh does not scold that grief. ***“Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted”*** (Psalms 34:18 [Hebrew 34:19]). But it does not offer the mourner a voice from the grave.

It offers three things:

1. the truth that the dead are at rest and beyond harm (**Ecclesiastes 9:5–6; Job 3:17**),
2. the promise that **Yahweh “will swallow up death forever, and will wipe away tears from all faces”** (Isaiah 25:8),
3. and the word of David, who rose from the floor when his child had died and said, ***“I shall go to him, but he will not return to me”*** (2 Samuel 12:23).

VIII-D. A New Imitation

One thing is new in this generation. Programs can now be made to write, and even to speak, in the manner of a person who has died, by drawing on the messages and recordings that person left behind. They are offered to the bereaved as a way to go on talking.

The Tanakh has no law that names such a thing, and this study will not pretend it does. No ghost is involved. What answers is a likeness assembled from a dead person's words. But two things in Isaiah's verse bear on it.

The first is his description of what the mediums offered: a voice made to sound like the dead, which chirped and muttered. An imitation of the dead, whatever makes it, speaks no word of theirs.

The second is the test of the next verse, which the Library has applied before to whatever ***"a person, a spirit, a medium, or a machine"*** may say. A believer who takes counsel, comfort, or direction from a likeness of the dead is taking it from the wrong place. The honest course is to keep what the person truly said and wrote, and to let the dead be dead.

Finding: that the Tanakh names a likeness of the dead made by a machine is **Not in the text**. That counsel is not to be taken from the dead, or from what speaks in their name, is **Corroborated (Deuteronomy 18:11; Isaiah 8:19–20)**.

VIII-E. What to Do Instead

The prophet's answer was practical, and it can be set out in seven steps drawn from the texts of this study.

#	THE STEP	THE TEXT
1	Go to the written word first, and read it for yourself.	Isaiah 8:20; 34:16
2	Keep it in your mouth day and night, as the one voice allowed to mutter in your ear.	Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:2
3	Ask Yahweh directly. He is the Elohim of the living who ask.	Psalms 34:4; Jeremiah 33:3
4	Where the matter is hard, inquire of the living who keep the word, and test what they say.	Deuteronomy 17:9; Malachi 2:7
5	Keep the word among others who keep it. The testimony was sealed among disciples.	Isaiah 8:16; 54:13

#	THE STEP	THE TEXT
6	When no answer comes, wait. Do not go looking for another voice.	Isaiah 8:17; Lamentations 3:25
7	Leave what is hidden with Yahweh , and do what has been revealed.	Deuteronomy 29:29 [Hebrew 29:28]

IX. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION STANDS TOWARD THE DEAD

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

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☉ ISLAM
Practice today	Rabbinic law forbids inquiry of the dead and defines it as fasting and lodging in a cemetery so that the dead will come and tell what is asked (Talmud Sanhedrin 65b; Maimonides, Laws of Foreign Worship 11:13). Beside this stands a long custom of praying at the graves of the righteous. The Talmud says Caleb went to the graves of the fathers at Hebron (Sotah 34b). Pilgrims go each year to the grave of Rabbi Nachman at Uman, whose followers have named no successor since his death in 1810, and written requests are brought to the grave of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who died in 1994.	The Catholic and Orthodox churches ask Mary and the saints who have died to intercede, keep relics, and build shrines over graves (Catechism, par. 956, 2683), while rejecting mediums and the calling up of the dead (par. 2116). Protestant confessions refuse prayer to the saints (Augsburg Confession, Article 21). Modern spiritualism, with its séances, began in Protestant America in 1848. The New Testament shows Moses and Elijah appearing beside Jesus (Matthew 17:3); they are not sought, and they give no new law.	The Qur'an tells the Prophet that he cannot make the dead hear (Q. 27:80; 35:22). Visiting graves to remember death is approved. Asking the dead for help or for intercession at the shrines of saints and imams is widespread among Sufi and Shia Muslims and is condemned as <i>shirk</i> (<i>associating others with Allah</i>) by other scholars. The account of the Night Journey has Muhammad meet Moses, who counsels him to ask that the daily prayers be reduced (Sahih al-Bukhari 349; Sahih Muslim 162).

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✧ ISLAM
Covenant strength	Rashi reads Isaiah 8:19 as Israel's answer to the nations: we have an Elohim , and we inquire of Him. Rabbinic tradition also holds that the Torah <i>"is not in heaven"</i> : once given, it is not overruled even by a voice from heaven (Bava Metzia 59b). That is Isaiah 8:20 in other words.	<i>"If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead"</i> (Luke 16:31) sends the living to the written word and denies them a messenger from the grave. <i>"Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed"</i> (Galatians 1:8) and the Bereans who <i>"searched the scriptures daily"</i> (Acts 17:11) apply the same kind of test.	<i>"Muhammad is no more than a messenger"</i> (Q. 3:144), and Abu Bakr's words at his death, separate the message from the man more sharply than many of his followers have. The Qur'an rebukes those who say, <i>"We follow what we found our fathers doing"</i> (Q. 2:170), and those who call on what cannot answer (Q. 46:5). The hadith forbids making graves places of worship (Sahih Muslim 532; Sahih al-Bukhari 1330).
Covenant departure	The second reason given in Ta'anit 16a, that the dead should ask mercy for us, crosses from remembering the dead to seeking them, against Jeremiah 15:1 and Isaiah 63:16 . A written request left for a dead teacher is addressed to the dead. Where the rulings of sages long dead are held binding beyond what is written, the fifth question of Section VI-C is in play.	The line the Catechism draws between <i>"conjuring"</i> the dead and <i>"invoking"</i> them is not drawn in the Tanakh. Isaiah's words are <i>"to the dead on behalf of the living,"</i> and a request that the dead plead for the living is that. Where church teaching sets aside the Torah on the word of later writers, it fails the test of Isaiah 8:20 , whoever the writer and however he is honored (see Docs 281 and 284).	Petitions at shrines depart from the Qur'an's own words as well as from Deuteronomy 18:11 . The sayings of a man who died in 632, gathered some two centuries later, are given binding force beside the book. And the Qur'an's claim to confirm the Torah (Q. 5:44–48) submits it to the Torah's test wherever the two differ.
Covenant witness	Judaism kept Deuteronomy 18:11 as law and kept the scroll of Isaiah. Read from the Tanakh outward, it has every reason to bring its requests to Yahweh alone.	Read from the Tanakh outward, Luke 16:31 and 1 Timothy 2:5 (<i>"one mediator"</i>) add no new rule. They restate Isaiah's.	Q. 35:22 and Q. 3:144 stand as witnesses beside Ecclesiastes 9:5 and Zechariah 1:5–6 : the dead do not hear, and the messenger dies while the word remains.

X. 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. Four earlier documents touch the subject of this study, and each needs a refinement. Every correction marked “*Made*” below was made in the Google Doc on October 10, 2026, so that the website copy can be replaced.

Correction 1 — Doc 232 (*Flesh of the Gods, Voice of the Nations*), Section IV. In the quotation of **Deuteronomy 18:10–11** the Hebrew labels were set against the wrong terms. “*Practices divination*” was labeled *menachesh*, and the augur was left without a label. The Hebrew order is *qosem qesamim* (*one who divines divinations*), *me’onen* (*soothsayer*), *menachesh* (*augur*), *mekhashef* (*sorcerer*) (Section III-B above). Made. One further point is left for Elder Kepha’s decision. Section I-B defines *ov* as “*medium*” and says it was “*later paired*” with *yidde’oni*. The *ov* is first the ghost and then the one who has it (**Leviticus 20:27**), and the two words stand together from their first appearance (**Leviticus 19:31**). Doc 232 also predates the September 2026 rules on names, location, and the website.

Correction 2 — the 613 Laws listing, Nos. 339 and 341. No. 339 reads **Deuteronomy 18:10** as a ban on “*specific magic by using stones, herbs or objects.*” The Hebrew is *qosem qesamim* (*one who divines divinations*); the stones and herbs are a later explanation. No. 341 reads **Deuteronomy 18:11** as “*casting spells over snakes and scorpions.*” The Hebrew is *chover chaver* (*one who binds a spell*); the snakes and scorpions are a rabbinic interpretation (compare **Psalms 58:5**). A note was added to each entry. Made. Nos. 337, 338, and 342 to 344 state the commands on mediums and on seeking the dead correctly.

Correction 3 — Doc 198 (*Techiyat HaMetim*), Section II-A. The Hebrew of **Daniel 12:2** was transliterated “*dziroan olam.*” The words are *dir’on olam* (*everlasting abhorrence*). Made. Two further points are left for Elder Kepha’s decision. The Hebrew letters printed for “*my corpse, they shall rise*” at **Isaiah 26:19** in Section II-B are damaged and should be reset. And the English quoted for **Daniel 12:2** is labeled “*JPS 1985*” but is not the wording of that version; the label should be removed or the wording changed. Doc 198 also predates the September 2026 rules.

Correction 4 — Doc 153 (*Sha’ul ben Kish: The Trajectory of Disobedience*), Sections I-A and II-G. Section II-G says that Saul asked for a king and that the people asked for a king. Saul did not ask for the kingdom; he was found hiding among the baggage (**1 Samuel 10:22**). It was the people who asked (**1 Samuel 8:10; 12:13**). The word-play on *sha’al* (*to ask*) stands without that clause: the people asked for a king, the king asked of **Yahweh** and was not answered, and he asked of a ghost (**1 Samuel 28:6; 1 Chronicles 10:13**). The same section speaks of “*Samuel’s shade.*” The text says

“Samuel” (Section IV-B above). The lexical table gives the root of *ov* as **“skin bottle / hollow voice.”** That is one proposal among several and should be marked uncertain. And the section cites **Deuteronomy 18:11** for the word **“abomination,”** which stands in **Deuteronomy 18:12**. Doc 153 is in the older format and is due to be rebuilt; all four points are left for Elder Kepha’s decision.

A point confirmed — Doc 280 (Who Do His Word), Section VIII-A. Doc 280 rendered the verse, **“Should not a people seek its Elohim? On behalf of the living should they seek the dead?”** and found that Israel is forbidden to seek spirits, to serve them, or to fear them. This study uses the same rendering and confirms the finding. One note: the second half of the verse can also be heard as the tempters’ own words (Section II-D above). The finding stands on either reading. Nothing was changed.

A note on Isaiah 8:20. Doc 232 rendered the last clause **“they have no dawn,”** and Doc 296 **“there is no dawn in them.”** Both are fair. The Hebrew pronoun is singular, and a second rendering of the clause is possible (Section II-F above). Nothing was changed.

XI. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON SEEKING THE DEAD AND TESTING THE LIVING

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	A people is to seek its Elohim . To seek the dead on behalf of the living is forbidden by the Torah and refused by the prophet.	Deuteronomy 18:11; Leviticus 19:31; Isaiah 8:19
II	Seeking the dead is not a lesser way of seeking Yahweh . It is the opposite of seeking Him, and the Tanakh names it unfaithfulness.	Leviticus 20:6; 1 Chronicles 10:13–14; 2 Kings 1:16
III	The dead take no part in what is done under the sun. They do not teach the living, and they do not plead for them. They sleep, and Yahweh alone will wake them.	Ecclesiastes 9:5–6; Isaiah 63:16; Jeremiah 15:1; Daniel 12:2
IV	The dead are to be buried, mourned, and remembered. They are not to be fed, consulted, or prayed to.	Genesis 23:19; Proverbs 10:7; Deuteronomy 26:14; Psalms 106:28

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
V	The word of Yahweh outlives the messenger who carried it. Israel is commanded to keep the written Torah after the death of Moses, and to keep it because it is Yahweh's .	Joshua 1:2, 7; Zechariah 1:5–6; Malachi 4:4; Isaiah 40:8
VI	Every teacher and every writing, of the living or of the dead, is tested by the Torah and the testimony. What agrees is kept because it is written. What adds or departs is refused, whoever said it.	Isaiah 8:20; Deuteronomy 4:2; 13:1–3; 18:21–22
VII	Trust is owed to Yahweh and not to any man whose breath is in his nostrils. When Yahweh is silent, His people wait for Him and do not look for another voice.	Jeremiah 17:5; Isaiah 2:22; 8:17; Lamentations 3:25

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

Behind the question about Isaiah 8:19 there is usually a person: someone who has lost a husband, a wife, a parent, or a child; someone raised to pray at a grave; or someone who has given years to a teacher now dead and wonders what to do with all he was taught.

Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: bring it to Yahweh. *“Should not a people seek its Elohim?”* (Isaiah 8:19). Whatever you would have asked of the dead, ask of Him. *“I sought Yahweh, and He answered me”* (Psalms 34:4).

Second: let the dead rest. They are in His hand and not in yours. *“I shall go to him, but he will not return to me”* (2 Samuel 12:23). Honor them by what you keep and by how you live. Do not ask them for what only **Yahweh** gives.

Third: test what you were taught, and do not throw it all away. Take the teacher's words one at a time to the Torah and the testimony. Keep what is written. Let the rest go with him. *“What is the straw to the wheat?”* (Jeremiah 23:28).

Fourth: put no man where Yahweh belongs, living or dead. *“Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils”* (Isaiah 2:22). That holds for the founder you have left, for the one you may be tempted to follow next, and for the founder of this Institution.

Fifth: wait for the morning. Those who went to the mediums looked to the earth and saw darkness (Isaiah 8:22). The promise to those who wait is the other half of the same passage: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”* (Isaiah 9:2). *“Your dead shall live”* (Isaiah 26:19). The living do not need a word from the dead. The dead are waiting for a word from the living **Elohim**.

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 23:19; 35:20	Sarah buried; a pillar on the grave of Rachel	V-D; XI
Exodus 20:3, 12	No other gods; honor father and mother	V-D; VI-C; VII-D
Exodus 22:18	The sorceress	III-B
Exodus 23:1	No false report	VII-B
Exodus 32:11–14	Moses pleads; Yahweh asked to remember the fathers	V-B
Leviticus 19:26, 31	No augury or soothsaying; do not turn to the mediums	II; II-D; III-A; III-B; VIII-A; X; XI
Leviticus 20:6, 27	Turning to the mediums is whoring; the one in whom is a ghost	II; II-B; III-A; III-B; IV-C; X; XI
Leviticus 21:1–3	The priest kept from the dead	III-D
Leviticus 26:42	Yahweh remembers His covenant with the fathers	V-B
Numbers 12:6	Visions and dreams given to a prophet	III-C
Numbers 19:11	Uncleanness from the dead	III-D
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“The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our Elohim stands forever.”

Isaiah 40:8 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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