

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam*

DOCUMENT 323

THE STANDARD OF YAHWEH'S COVENANT JUDGMENT

A Covenant Deep Dive into the Two and Three Witness Law of Deuteronomy 19:15

*Why Does Yahweh Refuse to Let One Witness Establish Any Matter, What Does the Hebrew Actually Require, What Happens When No Witness Stands, How Does Yahweh Hold His Own Covenant to Two Witnesses, and How Does Miqdash Bethel Apply the Standard Today?
— A Three-Religion Covenant Response*

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✞ ISLAM
The written covenant forbids any matter to stand on one witness: <i>"at the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall the matter be established"</i> (Deuteronomy 19:15). Rabbinic law built a large body of procedure on this verse (Mishnah Sanhedrin and Makkot), including the law of plotting witnesses. The Tanakh is the source; the procedure is commentary.	The New Testament cites the same verse for disputes and discipline in the assemblies (Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19). The standard did not begin with the churches. It is the Torah's own law of evidence, and it binds every public accusation exactly as written.	The Qur'an requires witnesses for debts and for divorce (Q. 2:282; 65:2), four witnesses for an accusation of adultery, and a penalty for the accuser who cannot bring them (Q. 24:4, 13). It commands that a report be verified before it is acted on (Q. 49:6). The Torah's witness law stands first in time beneath all of these.

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 The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority.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 the law that governs every other finding in the Miqdash Bethel library: the two-and-three-witness standard of **Deuteronomy 19:15**. It is the May 2026 study *The Standard of **Yahweh**'s Covenant Judgment*, rebuilt in the current format, checked against the Hebrew, and enlarged with what the Tanakh adds about the false witness, the duty of the judges, the matter that has no witness, and the witnesses **Yahweh** Himself calls. **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 the English meaning, also in bold italic, 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 Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**.

Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, church history, and the Qur'an and hadith are cited only 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 three primary passages; the false-witness law; the judges' duty to inquire; the matter with no witness; heaven and earth, the Song, and the Book as witnesses
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi	The stone of witness; Samuel's two witnesses; Naboth's trial; Isaiah's faithful witnesses; Israel as witness; the sealed deed; Yahweh as the swift witness
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Ruth	False witnesses rising up; the true and false witness in wisdom; the elders and people as witnesses at the gate

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Matthew 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28	Every New Testament use of the two-or-three-witness rule
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Sanhedrin 5:1–4; Mishnah Makkot 1:4–9; Talmud Gittin 71a; Talmud Makkot 5b; Rashi on Deuteronomy 17:6	The examination of witnesses; plotting witnesses; the rabbinic rule that testimony is <i>"from their mouths and not from their writing"</i> ; three compared to two
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 2:282; 4:15; 24:4, 13; 49:6; 65:2; Sahih Muslim 1711	Witnesses for debts, divorce, and accusation; verifying a report; the oath of the one accused

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Church history	Medieval inquisitorial procedure (Nicholas Eymerich, <i>Directorium Inquisitorium</i> , 1376)	Accusers' names withheld from the accused — a departure tested in Section XI

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — THE CORNERSTONE OF YAHWEH'S JUSTICE

I-A. Why a Law of Evidence Stands at the Center

The most foundational procedural standard in **Yahweh's** covenant law is not a command about worship, sacrifice, or food. It is a law about evidence — the number of independent witnesses required before any charge, accusation, or judgment can stand. It is stated most completely in **Deuteronomy 19:15**, and it governs every matter under the covenant, from capital cases to civil disputes.

The authority for this standard is not a rabbinic court, a church council, or a school of Islamic law. It is the word of **Yahweh**, given in the Hebrew text through Moses. The text, read word by word, makes the standard clear. What later scholars observed is set aside in the Comparative Texts table and the Three-Religion Audit, where it belongs.

What makes Yahweh's justice superior to every human court is this: the standard carries its own enforcement. The witness who lies to secure a conviction bears the punishment he sought for the accused (Deuteronomy 19:19). The deterrent is built into the law itself.

I-B. What This Revision Adds

The May 2026 study set out the three primary passages, a Hebrew word study, and six requirements. This revision keeps that structure and tests each claim against the text. Where the earlier study said more than the Hebrew says, the finding is regraded and the change is listed in Section XII. Four subjects are added: the false-witness law and the judges' duty read clause by clause (Section V); the matter that has no witness (Section VII); the witnesses **Yahweh** Himself calls (Section VIII); and the corrupted trial of Naboth, where two witnesses were produced and the judgment was still murder (Section V-E).

This study also gathers threads from later library documents. **Doc 217** (*Witnesses at the Gate*) applied the standard to a public broadcast; **Doc 220** (*Known by the Fruit*) applied **Deuteronomy 19:15–21** to the liar in office; **Doc 316** (*Therefore Choose Life*) studied heaven and earth as **Yahweh's** two

witnesses; **Doc 322** (*The Eye That Mocks a Father*) showed the father and mother standing as two witnesses before the elders; and **Doc 309** asked whether the standard teaches honesty to a machine that speaks to millions. The present document is the foundation those studies stand on.

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh 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.

II. THE THREE PRIMARY PASSAGES

II-A. Numbers 35:30 — The Murderer and the Lone Witness

"Whoever strikes a person, at the mouth of witnesses the murderer shall be put to death; but one witness shall not testify against a person that he die." (Numbers 35:30)

כָּל־מִכֶּה־נֶפֶשׁ לְפִי עֵדִים יִרְצֶה אֶת־הָרֹצֵחַ וְעַד אֶחָד לֹא־יִעֲנֶה בְּנֶפֶשׁ לְמוֹת

In the order of the Torah, this is the first statement of the witness standard in a criminal law. It comes within the law of the cities of refuge, which separates the *rotzeach* (*murderer*) who struck with intent from the one who killed without intent (**Numbers 35:16–25**). The verse uses *le-fi edim* (*at the mouth of witnesses*) — the plural — and then closes the door on a single accuser: *ve-ed echad lo ya'aneh* (*and one witness shall not answer*). The verb *anah* (*to answer / to testify*) is the same verb used in the command against false witness (**Exodus 20:16** [Hebrew 20:13]). The next verse forbids taking a ransom for the life of a murderer (**Numbers 35:31**). The law that refuses to let money buy a guilty man's life also refuses to let one voice take an innocent man's life.

Finding — in a capital case one witness is never enough. **Corroborated** (**Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15**).

II-B. Deuteronomy 17:2–7 — Inquiry, Two or Three, and the Witnesses' Hands

"At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he who is to die be put to death; he shall not be put to death at the mouth of one witness." (Deuteronomy 17:6)

עַל־פִּי שְׁנַיִם עֵדִים אוֹ שְׁלוֹשָׁה עֵדִים יוֹמַת הַמֵּת לֹא יוֹמַת עַל־פִּי עֵד אֶחָד

Al pi shenayim edim o shelosbah edim yumat ha-met; lo yumat al pi ed echad.

The setting is the worship of other gods, a capital offense (**Deuteronomy 17:2–5**). Before the witnesses are even mentioned, the court is commanded to search: *"and it is told you and you hear,*

then you shall inquire diligently" (Deuteronomy 17:4). Here the Torah names both numbers, *shenayim* (two) and *sheloshah* (three), and states the negative plainly: not at the mouth of one.

Verse 7 adds the weight the witness must carry: *"The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people"* (Deuteronomy 17:7). The witness is not a bystander who files a report and walks away. He must be willing to carry out, with his own hand, the judgment his word has brought. No man who knew his testimony was false could do this without knowing he was committing murder.

Finding — the witnesses bear first responsibility for the sentence their testimony establishes. **Single witness** as a stated rule (Deuteronomy 17:7); the same weight on the witnesses is shown in **Leviticus 24:14**, where those who heard lay their hands on the offender's head.

II-C. Deuteronomy 19:15 — The Universal Statement

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin, in any sin that he sins; at the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall the matter be established." (Deuteronomy 19:15)

לֹא־יָקוּם עַד אֶחָד בְּאִישׁ לְכָל־עוֹן וּלְכָל־חַטָּאת בְּכָל־חַטָּא אֲשֶׁר יַחֲטָא

עַל־פִּי שְׁנֵי עֵדִים אוֹ עַל־פִּי שְׁלֹשָׁה־עֵדִים יָקוּם דְּבָר

Lo yaqum ed echad be-ish le-khol avon u-le-khol chatta't be-khol chet asher yecheta;

al pi shenei edim o al pi sheloshah edim yaqum davar.

Where **Numbers 35:30** addressed murder and **Deuteronomy 17:6** addressed idolatry, **Deuteronomy 19:15** is built to cover every category of wrong. It uses three words in sequence: *avon* (iniquity / guilt), *chatta't* (sin / sin-offense), and *chet* (a sinful act). Biblical Hebrew uses such strings of near-synonyms to close every gap. Under every name a wrong can carry, the standard applies. No *"obvious"* case bypasses it.

The verse opens and closes with the same verb. *Lo yaqum ed echad* (one witness shall not rise up) — and at the end, *yaqum davar* (the matter shall stand). The root *qum* (to rise / to stand / to be established) frames the whole law: one witness cannot make a matter stand; two or three can. Without the required witnesses the charge has no standing under **Yahweh's** law. It falls.

A plain-language rendering from the Hebrew:

"A lone witness shall not rise up and stand against a man for any iniquity, any sin, or any wrongful act he may commit; only at the testimony of two witnesses or at the testimony of three witnesses shall the matter stand as established." (Deuteronomy 19:15)

Finding — no matter of any kind is established on one witness. **Corroborated** (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15).

III. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The table sets out the terms this study relies on. The lexicons (BDB, HALOT) are used as language tools, and each meaning is checked against how the word is used elsewhere in the Tanakh.

HEBREW TERM	HEBREW	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>ed (witness)</i>	עֵד	H5707	One who has seen or knows and can testify. Related to <i>ud</i> , H5749, whose causative form means to testify or to warn solemnly	Deuteronomy 19:15; Isaiah 43:10
<i>edah (witness, feminine)</i>	עֵדָה	H5713	A thing set up as a witness — a pillar, a heap of stones	Genesis 31:52; Joshua 24:27
<i>echad (one)</i>	אֶחָד	H259	One, single. With <i>ed</i> : a lone witness with no one beside him	Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6
<i>qum (to rise / to stand)</i>	קום	H6965	To rise up; to stand firm; to be confirmed and valid	Deuteronomy 19:15, 16
<i>davar (word / matter / case)</i>	דָּבָר	H1697	The matter or charge in dispute	Deuteronomy 17:4; 19:15
<i>al pi / le-fi (at the mouth of)</i>	עַל-פִּי / לְפִי	H5921 + H6310	Literally "upon the mouth of"; an idiom meaning "on the basis of / according to." Also used of acting "at the command of" Yahweh	Deuteronomy 19:15; Numbers 35:30; 9:18
<i>shenayim / shenei (two)</i>	שְׁנַיִם / שְׁנֵי	H8147	Two. The floor. <i>Shenayim</i> stands alone in 17:6; the joined form <i>shenei</i> in 19:15	Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15
<i>sheloshah (three)</i>	שְׁלֹשָׁה	H7969	Three. Named beside two as equally sufficient	Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15
<i>o (or)</i>	או	H176	Or. Joins two options of equal standing	Deuteronomy 19:15

HEBREW TERM	HEBREW	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>avon / chatta't / chet</i>	עון / חטאת / חטא	H5771 / H2403 / H2399	Iniquity (guilt); sin (sin-offense); a sinful act — three words covering every wrong	Deuteronomy 19:15
<i>ed chamas (malicious witness)</i>	עד חמס	H5707 + H2555	A witness of violence — one whose testimony is a weapon	Exodus 23:1; Deuteronomy 19:16
<i>ed sheqer (false witness)</i>	עד שקר	H5707 + H8267	A witness of falsehood	Exodus 20:16 [Hebrew 20:13]; Deuteronomy 19:18
<i>darash (to inquire / to search out)</i>	דָּרַשׁ	H1875	To seek, investigate. With <i>beitev</i> (<i>thoroughly</i>), H3190: search it out well	Deuteronomy 13:14 [Hebrew 13:15]; 17:4; 19:18
<i>zamam (to plot / to purpose)</i>	זָמַם	H2161	To devise, to intend. The false witness is judged by what he plotted	Deuteronomy 19:19

Three observations govern what follows.

First, the phrase *al pi (at the mouth of)* is an idiom. The same words describe Israel camping and journeying "*at the mouth of Yahweh*" (**Numbers 9:18**), that is, at His command. In the witness law the phrase means that the matter is established on the basis of two or three witnesses. The earlier study said the word *peh (mouth)* by itself proves that testimony must be spoken and can never be written. The idiom does not carry that much. That the witnesses stood in person and were examined is shown by other words in the same passage: "*the two men... shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges*" (**Deuteronomy 19:17**), and "*the judges shall inquire diligently*" (**19:18**). The rule that testimony must come "*from their mouths and not from their writing*" is a rabbinic ruling (Talmud Gittin 71a), listed with the comparative texts.

Second, the earlier study listed the second word in **Deuteronomy 19:15** as *chata'ah* (H2401). The word in the verse is *chatta't (sin / sin-offense)*, חטאת, H2403. The corrected form is used throughout this revision.

Third, the noun *ed (witness)* is used not only of people but of things: a heap of stones, a pillar, a song, a book, heaven and earth. The covenant's idea of a witness is whatever stands as evidence that a thing was said or done. Section VIII follows this through the Tanakh.

IV. WHY DOES YAHWEH NAME BOTH TWO AND THREE?

The text could have said "at the mouth of two witnesses." It says *shenei edim o sheloshah edim (two witnesses or three witnesses)*. The answer must come from the text itself.

IV-A. The Floor Is Named; Three Is Named Beside It

Two is the floor below which no matter can stand. Three is named beside it, joined by *o (or)*. The word *o* does not rank the two options; it puts them in one category: sufficient to establish the matter. Below two, the matter does not stand. At two or more, it may stand.

The earlier study called three "the ideal — what **Yahweh** prefers." The text does not say this. It names both numbers as complete. What can be said is that the law plainly allows more than the minimum, and that a court seeking the truth (**Deuteronomy 19:18**) will hear every witness who has seen the matter.

Finding — two witnesses are the minimum, and two or three are equally sufficient. **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15**). That three is "preferred" is **Not in the text**.

IV-B. The Third Witness Is Fully Accountable

The false-witness law does not count heads. "*You shall do to him as he plotted to do to his brother*" (**Deuteronomy 19:19**) falls on every witness proved false. Naming three in verse 15 does not let the third witness shelter behind the first two. Each one who testifies answers for his own words.

Finding — every witness, whether second or third, carries the full liability of the false-witness law. **Single witness** as a stated rule (**Deuteronomy 19:19**), supported by the general command against false witness (**Exodus 20:16** [Hebrew 20:13]; **Proverbs 19:5**).

IV-C. Must Each Witness Have Seen the Whole Matter?

The earlier study said that each witness must testify to the whole act, and that partial accounts from several witnesses cannot be pieced together. This is a reasonable reading of *yaqum davar (the matter shall stand)*: it is the matter itself that must stand on two or three mouths. But the Tanakh does not state the rule in those words. It is an inference from the text, and the detailed rule belongs to later rabbinic procedure.

Finding — that the charge itself, not fragments of it, must stand on the witnesses is a fair inference from **Deuteronomy 19:15**. That each witness must have seen the entire act, stated as a rule, is **Not in the text**.

V. THE FALSE WITNESS AND THE COURT — DEUTERONOMY 19:16–21

Verse 15 sets the number. Verses 16–21 tell what happens when a witness lies. The two cannot be separated. A number without an examination can be gamed; an examination without a penalty can be ignored. The Torah gives both.

V-A. The Malicious Witness Rises Up (19:16)

"If a malicious witness rises up against a man to testify against him of wrongdoing..."
(Deuteronomy 19:16)

The phrase is *ed chamas* (*malicious witness / witness of violence*). *Chamas* is the word for the violence that filled the earth before the flood (**Genesis 6:11**). The same phrase appears in the law of the courts in Exodus: *"Do not put your hand with the wicked to be a malicious witness"* (**Exodus 23:1**). The Torah treats false testimony as violence done with the mouth.

V-B. Both Parties Stand Before Yahweh (19:17)

"Then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges who shall be in those days." (Deuteronomy 19:17)

The court is formal and accountable. The accused and the accuser stand together. No one is judged in absence, and no accuser speaks from hiding. The judgment is *"before Yahweh"* because, as Moses told the first judges, *"the judgment is Elohim's"* (**Deuteronomy 1:17**).

V-C. The Judges Must Search It Out (19:18)

"And the judges shall inquire diligently; and behold, the witness is a false witness; he has testified falsely against his brother." (Deuteronomy 19:18)

The words are *ve-dareshu ha-shofetim heitev* (*and the judges shall inquire thoroughly*). The bench is not passive. The same command to search before judging appears three times in Deuteronomy:

Witness One — the report of a city gone after other gods: *"you shall inquire, and search out, and ask diligently"* (**Deuteronomy 13:14** [Hebrew 13:15]).

Witness Two — the report of a man or woman serving other gods: *"you shall inquire diligently"* (**Deuteronomy 17:4**).

Witness Three — the accused witness: *"the judges shall inquire diligently"* (Deuteronomy 19:18).

Wisdom gives the reason: *"The first to plead his case seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him"* (Proverbs 18:17). The verb there, *chaqar* (to search / to examine), is the same verb used in Deuteronomy 13:14. Even Yahweh is described as going down to see before He judges Sodom: *"I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to Me; and if not, I will know"* (Genesis 18:21).

Finding — judges must investigate thoroughly before any matter is declared established. **Corroborated** (Deuteronomy 13:14 [Hebrew 13:15]; 17:4; 19:18; Proverbs 18:17).

V-D. Measure for Measure, and the Whole People Hear (19:19–21)

"Then you shall do to him as he plotted to do to his brother; so you shall purge the evil from your midst. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and shall never again do any such evil in your midst. Your eye shall not pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." (Deuteronomy 19:19–21)

The false witness is judged by what he *zamam* (plotted), not by what he achieved. If his lie was caught before the accused was harmed, he still bears what he intended. The measure-for-measure words of verse 21 are applied here to the liar in court. The purpose is stated: *"those who remain shall hear and fear."* The penalty protects every future accused person by teaching every future witness what a lie will cost.

Finding — the false witness receives the punishment he intended for the accused. **Single witness** as a court rule (Deuteronomy 19:19). That a false witness will not escape judgment is **Corroborated** (Proverbs 19:5, 9; 21:28).

V-E. Naboth's Trial — Two Witnesses and a Murder

The Tanakh records a trial that kept the outward form of the law and broke every part of its substance. Jezebel wrote letters in King Ahab's name to the elders of Jezreel:

"Seat two men, worthless men, before him, and let them testify against him, saying, You cursed Elohim and the king. Then take him out and stone him, that he may die." (1 Kings 21:10)

The number was right: two witnesses. The charge was a capital charge. The sentence was carried out outside the city by stoning (1 Kings 21:13). Everything Deuteronomy 17 describes was imitated —

except the truth and the inquiry. The elders did not *darash heitev* (*search it out thoroughly*). They obeyed a letter.

Yahweh was not deceived. He sent Elijah: *"Have you murdered, and also taken possession?"* (1 Kings 21:19). Years later He declared: *"Surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, says Yahweh"* (2 Kings 9:26). When the human court failed, the Witness who sees all things testified. David knew the same danger: *"false witnesses have risen up against me, and such as breathe out violence"* (Psalms 27:12); *"malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things I do not know"* (Psalms 35:11).

Finding — the right number of witnesses does not make a judgment just when the court does not examine them; the standard requires both the count and the inquiry. **Corroborated** (1 Kings 21:8–13; Deuteronomy 19:18; Exodus 23:1–2).

The Torah also warns against the crowd: *"You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; nor shall you answer in a dispute, turning aside after a multitude to pervert justice"* (Exodus 23:2). Two hired voices or two thousand repeating ones do not make a lie true.

VI. SIX REQUIREMENTS EMBEDDED IN THE STANDARD

Read together, **Deuteronomy 19:15–21** and its companion passages carry six requirements. The table gives each, its text, and its grade.

#	REQUIREMENT	TEXT	GRADE
1	At least two witnesses — never one, in any kind of case	Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15	Corroborated
2	The witnesses stand in person before the court, and the accused stands with them	Deuteronomy 19:17; 17:4–6; 21:19–20	Corroborated (in-person standing). The rabbinic ban on all written testimony is Not in the text
3	The witnesses are independent — two voices repeating one account, or a hired pair, are not two witnesses	1 Kings 21:10–13; Exodus 23:1–2	Corroborated by the negative case of Naboth and the law against joining the wicked

#	REQUIREMENT	TEXT	GRADE
4	The charge itself must stand, not fragments of it	Deuteronomy 19:15 (<i>yaqum davar</i>)	Fair inference from a Single witness ; the full "whole act" rule is Not in the text
5	The judges inquire thoroughly before declaring the matter established	Deuteronomy 13:14 [Hebrew 13:15]; 17:4 ; 19:18	Corroborated
6	The witnesses carry first responsibility, and the proven false witness bears what he plotted	Deuteronomy 17:7 ; 19:19 ; Proverbs 19:5	Corroborated (liability); the court penalty itself is a Single witness (19:19)

VII. WHERE NO WITNESS STANDS — THE MATTER IS LEFT TO YAHWEH

The witness law answers what a court may do when witnesses exist. The Torah also answers what must happen when there are none. In every case, the absence of witnesses is never permission for a human judge to guess.

Witness One — the animal lost with no one seeing. *"If it dies, or is hurt, or is driven away, and no one sees it, an oath of Yahweh shall be between them both"* (Exodus 22:10–11 [Hebrew 22:9–10]). The words *ein ro'eh* (*no one seeing*) describe a case with no witness. The matter is placed under an oath before **Yahweh**, not settled by suspicion.

Witness Two — the wife suspected with no witness. *"...and there is no witness against her, and she was not caught"* (Numbers 5:13). The phrase *ve-ed ein bah* (*and there is no witness against her*) opens a procedure that takes the matter out of the husband's hands and sets it *"before Yahweh"* (Numbers 5:16).

Witness Three — the slain man found in the field. *"If one is found slain... and it is not known who struck him"* (Deuteronomy 21:1). No one is accused. The elders of the nearest city declare, *"Our hands have not shed this blood, and our eyes have not seen it,"* and ask **Yahweh** to cover His people (Deuteronomy 21:7–8).

Witness Four — the young woman in the field. *"For he found her in the field; the betrothed young woman cried out, and there was no one to save her"* (Deuteronomy 22:27). No witness

heard her cry, and the law gives her the benefit of it. Where no witness can be produced, the Torah protects the one who could not produce one.

Behind these laws stands the reason the standard exists at all. Man cannot see the heart: *"man looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). Yahweh alone is the Witness who needs no second: *"I am He who knows, and I am witness, says Yahweh"* (Jeremiah 29:23); *"I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely"* (Malachi 3:5). The human court is limited to what two or three can testify. What lies beyond that is left to Him.

Finding — when no witness exists, the Torah does not permit conviction on suspicion; the matter is placed before Yahweh. **Corroborated** (Exodus 22:10–11 [Hebrew 22:9–10]; Numbers 5:13–16; Deuteronomy 21:1–9; 22:25–27).

VIII. YAHWEH HOLDS HIS OWN COVENANT TO TWO WITNESSES

The strongest proof that the standard is not a mere court rule is that Yahweh keeps it Himself. When He binds His people to the covenant, He calls witnesses — and He calls more than one.

VIII-A. Heaven and Earth

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you and your seed may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19)

הַעֲדָתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ

Heaven and earth are two. The same two are called in Deuteronomy 4:26 and 31:28, and Isaiah opens his book by summoning them again: *"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Yahweh has spoken"* (Isaiah 1:2). Doc 316 studied this at length. The Creator who needs no witness binds His own covenant by two, so that no one can say the covenant was never established.

VIII-B. The Song and the Book

Before Moses died, Yahweh gave two more witnesses. The Song: *"that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel... this song shall testify before them as a witness"* (Deuteronomy 31:19, 21). And the Book: *"Take this book of the Torah and put it beside the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your Elohim, that it may be there as a witness against you"*

(Deuteronomy 31:26). The written Torah is itself a witness. This is why the earlier study's claim that the witness law excludes every written witness cannot stand as written. The Torah forbids convicting a man on one voice. It does not forbid a written record from bearing witness.

VIII-C. The Heap, the Pillar, and the Stone

When Jacob and Laban made a covenant, they set up two witnesses of stone: *"This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm"* (Genesis 31:52). Laban named the heap in Aramaic and Jacob named it in Hebrew — *Gal-ed (heap of witness)* (Genesis 31:47). Joshua set up a great stone at Shechem: *"Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of Yahweh"* (Joshua 24:27) — and the people themselves answered, *"We are witnesses"* (Joshua 24:22).

VIII-D. Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Boaz

When Samuel gave account of his years as judge, he called two witnesses: *"Yahweh is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand"* — and the people answered, *"He is witness"* (1 Samuel 12:5). When Isaiah wrote a prophecy on a tablet, he took two: *"I took for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah"* (Isaiah 8:2). When Jeremiah bought his cousin's field, he *"signed the deed and sealed it, and called witnesses, and weighed the silver in the balances"* (Jeremiah 32:10). When Boaz redeemed Ruth, he said to *"the elders and all the people, You are witnesses this day"* (Ruth 4:9–11).

These show the standard at work in prophecy, in the conduct of a judge, and in business. The earlier study said **Jeremiah 32:10** proves witnesses are required for all binding transactions. The text shows the practice; it does not state a command for every transaction. The finding is graded accordingly below.

VIII-E. "You Are My Witnesses"

"You are My witnesses, says Yahweh, and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He." (Isaiah 43:10)

Yahweh turns the word *ed (witness)* on His people. In the courtroom scene of **Isaiah 43:9–12**, the nations are challenged to bring their witnesses, and Israel is called to testify: *"you are My witnesses, says Yahweh, that I am El"* (Isaiah 43:12; see 44:8). A covenant people is a witness by what it has seen and by how it lives.

Finding — **Yahweh** binds His covenant by two or more witnesses and applies the witness standard to Himself and to His people. **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 31:19–28; Genesis 31:52; Joshua 24:22, 27; 1 Samuel 12:5; Isaiah 8:2; 43:10–12**). That witnesses were customary in binding transactions is **Corroborated** (**Jeremiah 32:10–12; Ruth 4:9–11**); that they are commanded for every transaction is **Not in the text**.

IX. THE WITNESS STANDARD ACROSS THE TANAKH

The witness principle runs through the Tanakh wherever **Yahweh** addresses justice, evidence, and truth. The table gathers the texts.

REFERENCE	CONTEXT	COVENANT APPLICATION
Numbers 35:30–31	The murderer; no ransom	One witness cannot take a life; money cannot buy a guilty one
Deuteronomy 17:4–7	Idolatry before the court	Diligent inquiry; two or three; the witnesses' hands first
Deuteronomy 19:15	Every iniquity, every sin	The universal statement: no matter stands on one witness
Deuteronomy 19:16–21	The malicious and false witness	Both parties stand before Yahweh ; judges search; the liar bears what he plotted
Exodus 20:16 [Hebrew 20:13]; Deuteronomy 5:20 [Hebrew 5:17]	The ninth word	<i>Ed sheqer (false witness)</i> in Exodus; <i>ed shav (empty witness)</i> in Deuteronomy — both forbidden
Exodus 23:1–2, 7	The law of the courts	No false report; no joining the wicked as a malicious witness; no following the crowd; <i>"keep far from a false matter"</i>
Leviticus 5:1	The witness who keeps silent	One who saw or knew and does not speak when adjured bears his iniquity
Leviticus 19:15–16	Righteous judgment; no talebearing	No partiality to poor or great; no going about as a slanderer

REFERENCE	CONTEXT	COVENANT APPLICATION
Exodus 22:10–11 [Hebrew 22:9–10]; Numbers 5:13; Deuteronomy 21:1–9; 22:25–27	No witness	The matter is placed before Yahweh ; no conviction on suspicion
Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 31:28	Heaven and earth	Yahweh 's two witnesses to the covenant
Deuteronomy 31:19–26	The Song and the Book	A song and a written scroll as witnesses
Genesis 31:44–52; Joshua 24:22, 27	Heap, pillar, stone	Covenants bound by witnesses set in stone
1 Samuel 12:3–5; Isaiah 8:2	A judge and a prophet	Each calls two witnesses to his own record
Jeremiah 32:10–12, 44; Ruth 4:9–11	Field and redemption	Witnesses at the sale and at the gate
1 Kings 21:8–13; 2 Kings 9:26	Naboth	Two false witnesses, no inquiry, and Yahweh the eyewitness
Psalms 27:12; 35:11	False witnesses rise up	The righteous man's danger and his appeal to Yahweh
Proverbs 6:19; 12:17; 14:5, 25; 19:5, 9; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18	Wisdom on witnesses	The faithful witness does not lie; a true witness delivers lives; the false witness will not go unpunished
Isaiah 43:9–12; 44:8	Israel as witness	A covenant people testifying to the nations
Jeremiah 29:23; Malachi 3:5	Yahweh as witness	He knows, and He testifies swiftly

X. MIQDASH BETHEL'S APPLICATION OF THE STANDARD

Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution applies **Deuteronomy 19:15** as the governing standard for every covenant study, witness document, and judgment paper it issues. This is what the grading of findings in every library document means.

First — no claim without corroboration. A doctrinal finding is published as established only when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it. A finding with one text is labeled **Single witness**. A teaching the Tanakh does not contain is labeled **Not in the text** — including teachings found in Miqdash Bethel's own earlier work.

Second — primary sources for facts of history and science. When a document reports facts outside the Tanakh, the true *ed (witness)* is the primary source: the original record, the published study, the court document. Secondary summaries are orientation only. Josephus is always corroborated.

Third — the matter must stand, not merely be alleged. *Yaqum davar (the matter shall stand)* is the difference between what we assert and what we establish. Where the evidence does not reach two witnesses, the document says so plainly. An unestablished matter is not declared false; it is declared not established (**Doc 217**).

Fourth — scholars as comparative witnesses only. Rabbis, church writers, and Islamic jurists are cited in the comparative tables and the Three-Religion Audit, never as support for a doctrine. Their agreement with the plain text is noted; their disagreement does not move it.

Fifth — the institution stands under its own law. Because the false witness bears the judgment he sought for another (**Deuteronomy 19:19**), Miqdash Bethel holds itself to the same standard it applies. When an earlier document is found in error, the error is named in the Corrections section and corrected in the document itself. This revision is an example: Section XII corrects the May 2026 study on which it is built.

Sixth — the duty to speak. The witness law has a positive side: *"if he has seen or known, and does not tell, he shall bear his iniquity"* (**Leviticus 5:1**). Silence before a truth one has seen is not neutrality. A covenant institution that has studied the text must testify to what it has found.

XI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION KEEPS THE WITNESS STANDARD

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

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Practice	Rabbinic law built a full court procedure on Deuteronomy 19:15–21 : cross-examination of witnesses (Mishnah Sanhedrin 5:1–4), the law of plotting witnesses (Mishnah Makkot 1:4–9), and the ruling that testimony is " <i>from their mouths and not from their writing</i> " (Talmud Gittin 71a). Rashi on Deuteronomy 17:6 compares three witnesses to two: if two are proved plotting, so are three.	The New Testament applies the verse to disputes between brothers (Matthew 18:16), to an apostle's own word (2 Corinthians 13:1), and to accusations against an elder (1 Timothy 5:19), and recalls that the Torah's penalty fell "on two or three witnesses" (Hebrews 10:28; see John 8:17).	The Qur'an asks for two witnesses for a debt and for divorce (Q. 2:282; 65:2), and four for an accusation of adultery (Q. 4:15; 24:4, 13). The hadith places the oath on the one who denies the claim (Sahih Muslim 1711). A report from an unreliable source must be verified before action (Q. 49:6).
Covenant strength	The examination of witnesses honors <i>darash beitev (inquire thoroughly)</i> (Deuteronomy 19:18). The plotting-witness law keeps the measure-for-measure rule of 19:19 .	Requiring two or three witnesses before an elder is accused protects leaders from the single accuser, as Deuteronomy 19:15 protects every man.	The penalty for the accuser who cannot bring his witnesses (Q. 24:4) follows the same logic as Deuteronomy 19:19 : accusation is not costless. The oath of the accused echoes Exodus 22:11 [Hebrew 22:10].
Covenant departure	The blanket exclusion of every written testimony goes beyond the text, which itself names a written book as witness (Deuteronomy 31:26). Some later rulings set procedural barriers so high that the law could scarcely be applied — a fence the Torah did not build.	Medieval inquisitorial courts allowed accusers' names to be withheld from the accused (Eymerich, <i>Directorium Inquisitorium</i> , 1376) — the opposite of both parties standing together (Deuteronomy 19:17). Today, public accusation in pulpits and media without two witnesses breaks the standard the churches themselves cite.	The rule of four witnesses for adultery and the weighing of a woman's testimony as half (Q. 2:282) are measures the Tanakh does not contain. The Torah's floor is two or three in every matter, and it gives no sex-based weight to a witness.
Covenant witness	Where rabbinic procedure serves the inquiry the Torah commands, it is honored as an aid. Where it adds, the text governs.	Read from the Tanakh outward, the New Testament uses of Deuteronomy 19:15 are a call to keep the Torah's own standard, not to replace it.	Q. 49:6 — verify before acting — is a true echo of <i>darash beitev (inquire thoroughly)</i> , and a fitting word for an age of instant reports.

XII. 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. This document replaces the May 2026 study *The Standard of Yahweh's Covenant Judgment* (file "WitnessStandard_DevarimI19v15_MiqdashBethel_May2026_v3"). The corrections below are applied in this document; the May 2026 copies on the website and in Drive should be replaced by Doc 323. Corrections were also made in **Doc 217**.

Correction 1 — the second sin-word of Deuteronomy 19:15. The May 2026 study gave *chata'ah* (H2401). The word in the verse is *chatta't* (*sin / sin-offense*), תַּחַת, H2403 (Section III).

Correction 2 — what "al pi" proves. The May 2026 study said the word *peh* (*mouth*) in *al pi* (*at the mouth of*) proves that testimony must be oral and excludes written statements, and that "this is not a later rabbinic interpretation; it is what the word means." *Al pi* is an idiom for "on the basis of" (**Numbers 9:18**). In-person testimony is shown by **Deuteronomy 19:17–18**, not by the word *peh* alone. The exclusion of written testimony is a rabbinic ruling (Talmud Gittin 71a), and the Torah itself names a written book as a witness (**Deuteronomy 31:26**). The statement is withdrawn and replaced by Section III and Section VIII-B.

Correction 3 — "three is the ideal." The May 2026 study said three witnesses are "what Yahweh prefers." The text names two or three as equally sufficient. Regraded **Not in the text** (Section IV-A).

Correction 4 — "each witness must testify to the whole act." Stated in the May 2026 study as a requirement of the text. It is a fair inference, but the Tanakh does not state it as a rule. Regraded (Sections IV-C and VI).

Correction 5 — the wording of Deuteronomy 19:18. The May 2026 study quoted the judges' command as *v'darash v'chakkar beitev*. **Deuteronomy 19:18** reads *ve-dareshu ba-shofetim beitev* (*and the judges shall inquire thoroughly*). The added verb *chaqar* (*to search out*) belongs to **Deuteronomy 13:14** [Hebrew 13:15] (Section V-C).

Correction 6 — the phrase in Numbers 35:30. The May 2026 study implied that all three primary passages use *al pi*. **Numbers 35:30** uses *le-fi edim* (*at the mouth of witnesses*), the same idiom with a different preposition (Section II-A).

Correction 7 — Jeremiah 32:10. The May 2026 study said this verse shows witnesses are required for all binding transactions. The text records the practice; it gives no command for every transaction. Regraded (Section VIII-D).

Correction 8 — Exodus 20:16. The Hebrew verse number was missing. It is **Exodus 20:16** [Hebrew 20:13]. The transliteration is *ed shaqer (false witness)*.

Correction 9 — format and authority. The May 2026 study used a shortened doctrinal paragraph, cited Rashi and Ramban in the body as corroborating witnesses, used Hebrew book names first, and carried a superseded contact block (miqdashbethel.org, a retired phone number, and state locations). This revision uses the standing doctrinal paragraph word for word, moves all rabbinic citations to the comparative tables, gives English book names, and uses the current contact line. A typing error in the word-study table ("Brookings no qualification") is removed.

Correction 10 — Doc 217 (made in its Google Doc). *Witnesses at the Gate* quoted **Deuteronomy 19:15** as *al pi shenayim edim* with the Hebrew שְׁנַיִם. That form belongs to **Deuteronomy 17:6**; verse 19:15 reads *al pi shenei edim*, עַל-פִּי שְׁנֵי עֲדִים. Also corrected there: the Hebrew spelling of **Exodus 20:16** (בְּרָעָךְ) with its bracket [Hebrew 20:13]; שְׁמַע שׁוֹא in **Exodus 23:1**; and בְּעֵמֶיךָ and עַל-דָּם in **Leviticus 19:16**. Doc 217's older format (Hebrew book names, old contact block) is left for Kepha's decision on a full rebuild.

XIII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE WITNESS STANDARD

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	No matter of any kind — criminal, civil, or doctrinal — is established on the word of one witness.	Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15
II	Two witnesses are the floor; two or three are equally sufficient; the number alone never replaces the truth.	Deuteronomy 19:15; 1 Kings 21:10–13; Exodus 23:2
III	The judges must search the matter out thoroughly, and both parties stand together before Yahweh .	Deuteronomy 13:14 [Hebrew 13:15]; 17:4; 19:17–18; Proverbs 18:17
IV	The false witness bears what he plotted against his brother, and he will not escape Yahweh's judgment.	Deuteronomy 19:19; Proverbs 19:5, 9; 21:28

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
V	Where no witness stands, no man may convict on suspicion; the matter belongs to Yahweh , who sees the heart.	Exodus 22:10–11 [Hebrew 22:9–10]; Numbers 5:13–16 ; Deuteronomy 21:1–9 ; 1 Samuel 16:7
VI	Yahweh binds His own covenant by two or more witnesses — heaven and earth, the Song and the Book.	Deuteronomy 4:26 ; 30:19 ; 31:19–26 ; Isaiah 1:2
VII	One who has seen the truth must speak it; a covenant people is Yahweh 's witness among the nations.	Leviticus 5:1 ; Isaiah 43:10–12 ; 44:8

XIV. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO HEARS AN ACCUSATION

Behind every study of the witness law there is a person — one who has been accused, one who is tempted to accuse, or one who is asked to believe a report. The Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: do not let one voice make a matter stand. However sincere, however loud, one witness is not enough (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). Wait for the second.

Second: search it out. Before you believe, inquire; before you repeat, examine. *"The first to plead his case seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him"* (**Proverbs 18:17**).

Third: count the cost of your own testimony. If you speak against your brother, you stand under **Deuteronomy 19:19**. *"Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause"* (**Proverbs 24:28**).

Fourth: where there is no witness, leave it to Yahweh. You are not the Judge of what no one saw. He is *"He who knows, and witness"* (**Jeremiah 29:23**).

Fifth: be a true witness yourself. Do not keep silent about what you have seen (**Leviticus 5:1**), and do not add to it.

"A true witness delivers souls, but a deceitful witness breathes out lies." (**Proverbs 14:25**)

The covenant does not ask you to believe less. It asks you to believe only what stands.

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REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
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Proverbs 19:5, 9; 21:28	The false witness will not go unpunished	IV-B; V-D; VI; IX; XIII
Proverbs 24:28; 25:18	Do not testify without cause; the false witness is a sword	IX; XIV
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“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin, in any sin that he sins; at the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall the matter be established.”

Deuteronomy 19:15 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

DOCUMENT 323 • THE STANDARD OF YAHWEH’S COVENANT JUDGMENT • OCTOBER 2026

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