

The increase of Israel's border, little by little

The nation of Israel is truly flourishing. The land is prospering. Deserts are blossoming, becoming lush and full of greenery. Israel is an agricultural marvel and nations around the world are beginning to take note of their agri-tech, though it is no surprise to anyone familiar with the Scriptures:

Boundaries and Breakthroughs: Parashat Yitro

The boundary set at Mount Sinai

[Shemot/Exodus 19](#) describes the awe-inspiring events at Mount Sinai leading up to the giving of the renowned Ten Words, or better known as the Ten Commandments in [Exodus 20](#).

The holiness of Adonai, the Eternal One, is such that specific boundaries are given so that the people would not go up onto the mountain or even so much as touch its border. The consequence wasn't minuscule: anyone who dared to touch the mountain in disobedience would be killed. [Exodus 19:13](#), "[Not a hand is to touch it, but he will surely be stoned or shot through. Whether it is an animal or a man, it will not live.](#)"

This sounds harsh to our modern sensibilities, but this was not just any spectator event. The *LORD God – YHWH Himself* came down onto Mount Sinai, accompanied by thunderings, lightning,

a thick cloud and smoke, fire, and an earthquake.

This was the real deal: real special effects far more emotive than any movie you've seen. The bottom line: The people could *not* handle this.

They needed an intermediary and Moshe (Moses) was the one chosen for the job.

The Almighty Creator came down onto Mount Sinai and called Moses up to meet with Him.

A forbidden breakthrough

[Exodus 19:21, "Then ADONAI said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to see ADONAI, and many of them die."](#)

There is an interesting term: "break through." יַעֲרֹסוּ (transliteration: *yehersu*). The Hebrew root here is "*haras*" יָרָס, but what is interesting is that here in verse 21 and then again in verse 24, this verb appears as the intransitive verb (*yehersu*,) the only two occurrences in the Hebrew Scriptures. Perhaps it is a greater play on words in the English language than even in Hebrew, as what follows should surely grab the reader's attention:

[Exodus 19:24, "'Then ADONAI said to him, 'Go down. You are to come back up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the kohanim and the people break through to come up to ADONAI, or He will break out against them.'](#)



Many well-meaning devotional books and prayer leaders encourage believers to “pray for a breakthrough” or even “demand” that a spiritual door be opened unto them. These ideas are based off of Scripture, but can contribute to a proud, almost defiant attitude when not balanced with true rootedness in Scriptural teaching. Could this be the very attitude cautioned against in Exodus 19? A self-righteous posture can cause people to cross the line, risking quite the chastisement. The Lord God is Holy and His people must be made holy, brought near *only* by the blood of the Lamb.

Indeed, megachurch pastors and TV preachers have coined some phrases that have become extremely popular in Christian circles, but they are not all entirely Biblical:

3 popular Christian phrases that are not entirely Biblical

1. "The Prosperity Gospel."

The "Prosperity Gospel" refers to the teaching and focus on the idea that if a person prays hard enough and gives enough of their money (tithe *plus* offerings) they will *automatically* be prospered with wealth. **It is rooted in a very American mentality of material entitlement.**

A righteous person *will* prosper by faith, but not in the materially-obsessed manner propagated by self-aggrandizing tv "evangelists" who egregiously spend millions of their victims' dollars on private jets.

Might this be an example of how twisting truth *breaks through* what is right? How many famous people ultimately end up in shame?

2. "God won't give you more than you can handle."

Sometimes well-meaning people of faith will use this phrase to attempt to comfort someone in the face of tragedy. The Bible says you won't be *tempted* by more than you can handle([1 Cor.10:13](#)), but that is slightly different.

When I have served as a hospital and hospice chaplain, I have found it helpful at times to explain to fearful or grieving people that sometimes God actually *does* give you more than you can handle. You want to know why? Because then **you have to depend on Him** and "lean not upon your own understanding."

The congregation at Mount Sinai didn't lean upon their own understanding. They obeyed the word of God given through Moses and lived to tell about it.

3. "You need a spiritual *breakthrough*."

This one truly seems harmless enough. In fact, it *is* partly

true. Daniel prayed and fasted for 21 days and there was a “spiritual breakthrough:”

“Then [Gabriel] said to me, ‘Don’t be afraid, Daniel! For from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I have come because of your words. However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia resisted me for 21 days, but behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me because I had been detained there with the kings of Persia.’”

Daniel 10:12-13, TLV, emphasis added

But notice, Daniel’s prayer influenced an outcome *in the heavenly realms*. In other words, **he prayed a breakthrough prayer that benefitted heaven, rather than himself**. His was a selfless prayer. The problem is, people get all excited and look to “make a breakthrough,” usually for their own plans or dreams. False preachers profit off of this emotionalism and encourage people to pray for their breakthrough, using quasi-Biblical allusions such as the widow persisting with the unjust judge in [Luke 18](#) or Jacob’s insistence in [Genesis 32](#) that he would not stop wrestling until he received a blessing.

Kingdom of kohanim, Holy Nation

The people were instructed not to come near, but they still had a role. They needed to be clean and part of creating a consecrated boundary around the mountain.

Exodus 19:23 “Moses said to ADONAI, ‘The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You are the One who warned us, saying ‘Set boundaries around the mountain, and consecrate it.’”

Earlier in the chapter, ADONAI reveals to Moses that He intends for the people to be His own treasure from among all people! He also reveals that He wants them to be a kingdom of priests (kohanim) and a holy nation.

The people responded positively when Moses shared this news.

[“All the people answered together and said, ‘Everything that ADONAI has spoken, we will do.’” Ex.19:8](#)

They were later given ten specific boundaries – those commands that would shape their identity, the first one recognizing first and foremost that this God, the God of this people, the God of Israel, ADONAI, YHWH, He alone is God.

Yeshua the High Priest

Moshe was a great leader. The Lord used him for so many mighty works, but there came someone even greater than Moses, the One who was and is and is to come, Yeshua ben Elohim:

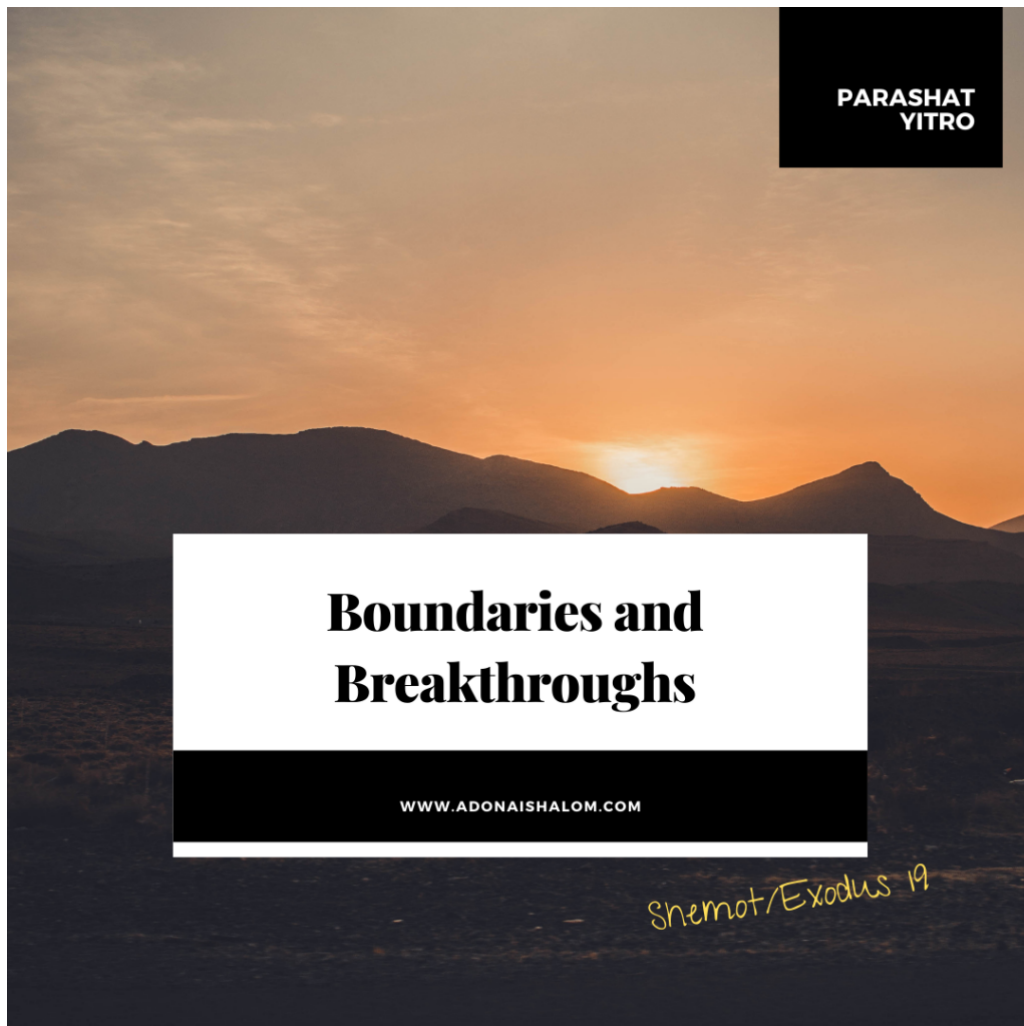
[Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partners in a heavenly calling, take notice of Yeshua—the Emissary and Kohen Gadol we affirm. He was faithful to the One who appointed Him in His house—as was Moses also. For He has been considered worthy of more glory than Moses, even as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses surely was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, for a witness of things to be spoken later. But **Messiah**, as Son, is over God’s house—and we are His house, if we hold firm to our boldness and what we are proud to hope.](#)

[Hebrews 3:1-3, TLV](#)

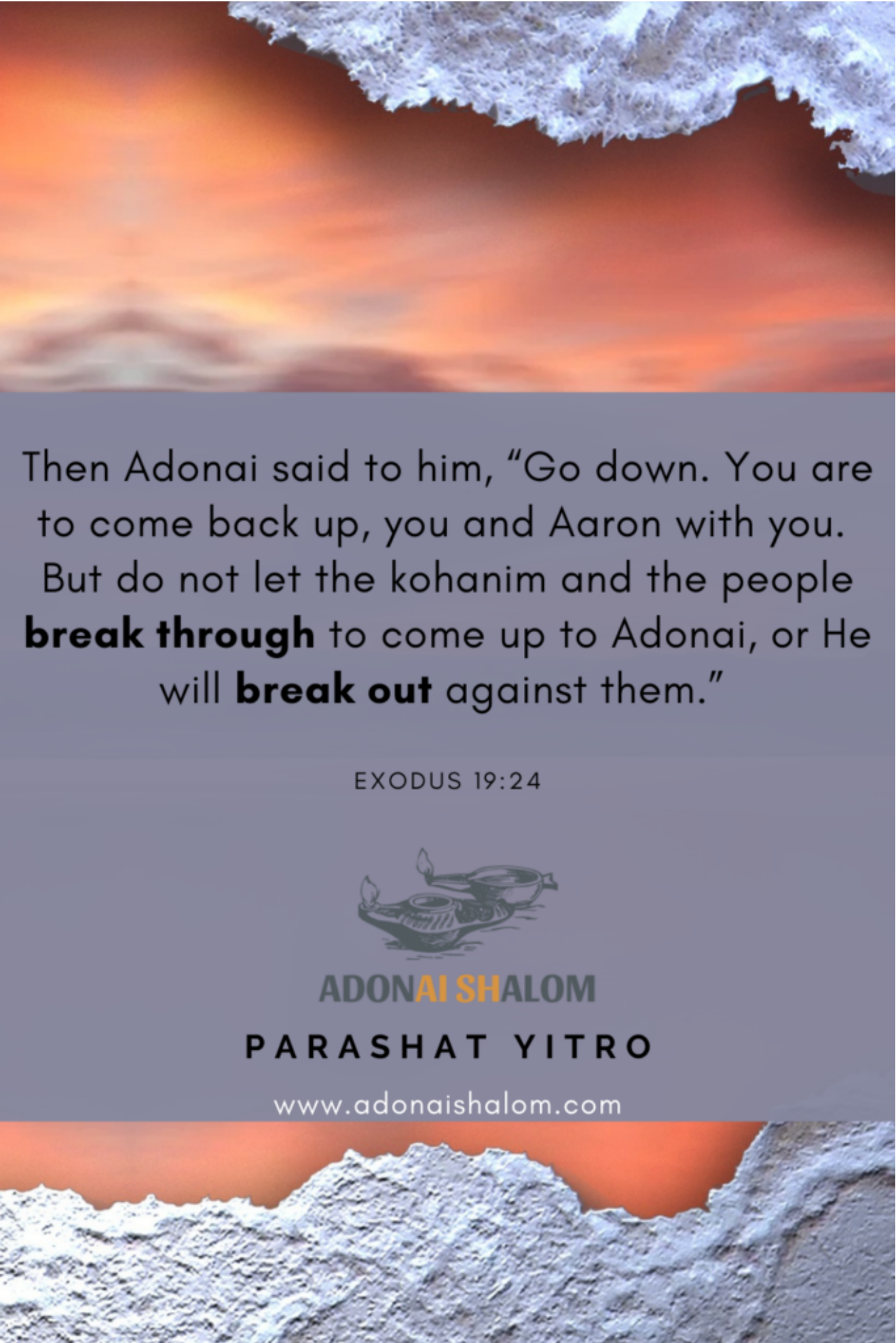
Yeshua’s death exemplified the reality that holiness and sin can’t mix when He took upon Himself the sin of the world. He took it all upon Himself so that He Himself could consecrate us, and we could now approach the throne of God without fear.

[Hebrews 4:16](#) “Therefore let us draw near to the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and [find grace for help in time of need.](#)”

Never forget the majesty and awe that accompanies the holiness of our God. We must not approach Him casually! Yes, Yeshua is our Friend and our Brother, but He is also the Almighty God and King Forever, the Victorious One who conquered sin and death so that we might be saved from the wrath of God and come to His Holy Mountain.



Boundaries and Breakthroughs



Then Adonai said to him, "Go down. You are to come back up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the kohanim and the people **break through** to come up to Adonai, or He will **break out** against them."

EXODUS 19:24



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Replacing replacement theology: is the church the “New” Israel?

For many, many, many years . . . centuries, to be more precise, believers were taught that there is a stark contrast between “the Church” and “Israel.” “Israel” was seen as the “rebellious,” “law-bound,” “old,” “outdated,” “Jewish-other” while the “Church” was seen as the “sanctified,” “free,” “mostly-Gentile,” “new,” “grace-based” non-religion, though “religion” it was and has been. This dichotomy has created a needless split between most of Judaism and modern Christianity.

What will be written on the gates in New Jerusalem?

What will New Jerusalem look like?

One day, the Holy City, a.k.a. the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven. *Voilà!* All things made new!

John, the author of Revelation, describes this:

Jerusalem will have the **glory** of God ([Rev.21:11](#)).

Jerusalem will be like a radiant precious stone like [REDACTED] ([Rev.21:11](#)).

Jerusalem will be [REDACTED] like crystal ([Rev.21:11](#)).

Will it have the famed “streets of **gold**?” Of course! *You can find that in [Revelation 21:21](#).*

Jerusalem will also have a **great, high wall** made of [REDACTED] around it ([Rev.21:12, 14](#)) with **12 gates** and **12 angels** above the gates. The Holy City will be laid out as a square shape ([Rev.21:16](#)) and is made of pure **gold**, “clear as glass” ([Rev.21:18](#)). Besides the gates, the city wall will have 12 foundations. On each of those will be written the names of the 12 apostles/emissaries of Yeshua (Jesus).

These believers made a huge evangelical impact on the world during their lifetimes and history shall never forgotten their contribution.

The foundations of the city wall will reflect the beauty of their devotion, for in order, the foundations will be made of [REDACTED], **sapphire**, [REDACTED], **emerald**, **sardonyx**, **carnelian**, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], **jacinth**, and [REDACTED] ([Rev.21:19-20](#)).

But history has more-than-occasionally forgotten the contribution of some very important others. Which leads to this question:

What is so special about the gates?

The gates are 12 pearls, *dare I say, of great price* – each gate from a single [REDACTED] ([Rev.21:21](#)). There are 3 gates per cardinal direction: north, south, east, west ([Rev.21:13](#)).



Each gate will be inscribed with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel ([Rev. 21:12](#)).

Wait? Doesn't traditional Christianity say that the 12 tribes have been basically replaced by the 12 apostles?

Doesn't mainstream theology teach that the "New" Testament is far more relevant to us today than the contents of the "Old"?

Isn't it taught in most seminaries that the "Church" has replaced the Jews as the chosen people?

Sadly, the answer is, "yes" . . . despite the flawed theology.

Supersessionism is (*lamentably*) alive and well. Antisemitism flourishes due to these types of errant doctrines.

Will the gates be etched with the names of Israel's tribes as though it were some type of politically correct memorial to days gone by?

Or is there a greater meaning here?

The God of the Bible is the God of ISRAEL

An honest hermeneutic (interpretation) must allow Scripture to speak, not impose an agenda on the Biblical text.

We must ask questions. What is Scripture saying to us? What is it that the Eternal One wants us to glean?

How have we injected our own biases into the text?

Are we reading from a posture of humility or from the lens of an entitlement culture?

Do we recognize that the God of the Bible is the God of *Israel*?

In regards to those 12 gates, we can ask a very simple question:

What is the function of a gate? Does it not “allow for”, or “inhibit” as the case may be, an entrance?

Would the church even have a prayer if it were not for God’s chosen people and the revelation of God entrusted to them?

Could the church even know a Savior if it were not for the prophetic words of the Hebrew Scriptures?

The gates allow for all to come in who have accepted and love our Messiah Yeshua (Jesus!).

The names of the 12 tribes of *B’nei-Yisrael*, the house of Israel, will be forever etched on the eternal gates.

No longer shall their names be diminished, forgotten, or

tossed aside.

Their heads shall be lifted up in redemption.

We must pray for Israel, for those who do not yet know that Messiah has come!

*Lift up your heads, O gates,
and be lifted up, you everlasting doors:
that the King of glory may come in.*

“Who is this King of glory?”

ADONAI strong and mighty,

ADONAI mighty in battle!

*Lift up your heads, O gates,
and lift them up, you everlasting doors:
that the King of glory may come in.*

“Who is this King of glory?”

ADONAI-TZVA’OT—He is the King of glory! Selah

Psalm 24:7-10 TLV (emphasis added)

The foundations of the wall are bound by the apostolic witness of the first believers, who themselves kept the very Jewish (and of course, Biblical) practices of keeping the Sabbath day holy, participating in the *moedim* (Biblical feast days), and honoring the **entirety of the Scriptures** available to them which at that time included most prominently the *Torah*.

The first believers, Jew and Gentile alike, had joined themselves to a *Jewish* movement founded by a Jewish Rabbi who also happens to be the Messiah – the Promised One, Yeshua haMashiach (Jesus the Christ), who came to save all of Israel, both the native born Israeli and the grafted in.

We must re-evaluate our

relationship to Israel

Yesterday was Holocaust Remembrance Day. It coincided this year with Tu B'Shevat, a tree planting day in Israel.

For too much of history, the church as a whole has held a very poor witness toward the Jewish people.

Some orthodox Jewish rabbis have concluded that the Holocaust was a judgment of *Christians* – demonstrating that the Christian Gospel fails the Jew due to the church's inaction and willingness to look the other way as Jewish lives were lost to Hitler's evil monstrosities.

Even today, many Christians seem indifferent to the Jewish homeland despite the miracle that is modern day Israel.

We are living in a time when prophecies are constantly being fulfilled and the favor of Adonai continues to rest upon His people, Israel.

As believers, we must take up the task of a course correction!

We need to re-evaluate our frame of reference and **pastors must commit to preaching *accurately* from the entirety of Scripture.**

The enemy, *ha-satan*, has worked diligently to sow confusion among believers and has been successful.

Many believers today are **incredibly distanced** from the Truth, and don't realize it. It is no coincidence that the Catholic Church changed the Sabbath Day observance to Sundays, that new liturgical seasons were invented, and the Biblical feast days were **abandoned** in favor of manmade celebrations that focus on egg-laying rabbits and decorated evergreen trees. All of these **distractions** have lured the church as a whole away from the very Gospel we want to share!

Even Bible Studies tend to focus on what the apostles

achieved, and would likely highlight their place in the New Jerusalem, but so many gloss right over the fact that **united within the design of the city wall will also be the heritage of the twelve tribes of Israel.**

The New Jerusalem shows us the continuity from Old to New Testament.

All of the confusion that the devil has sown will be forever defeated. Continuity, unity, and justice will all be restored.

The gates of the enemy shall be forever torn down and the New Jerusalem gates will gleam in all their glorified splendor. Won't it be amazing?!

Hope for Israel

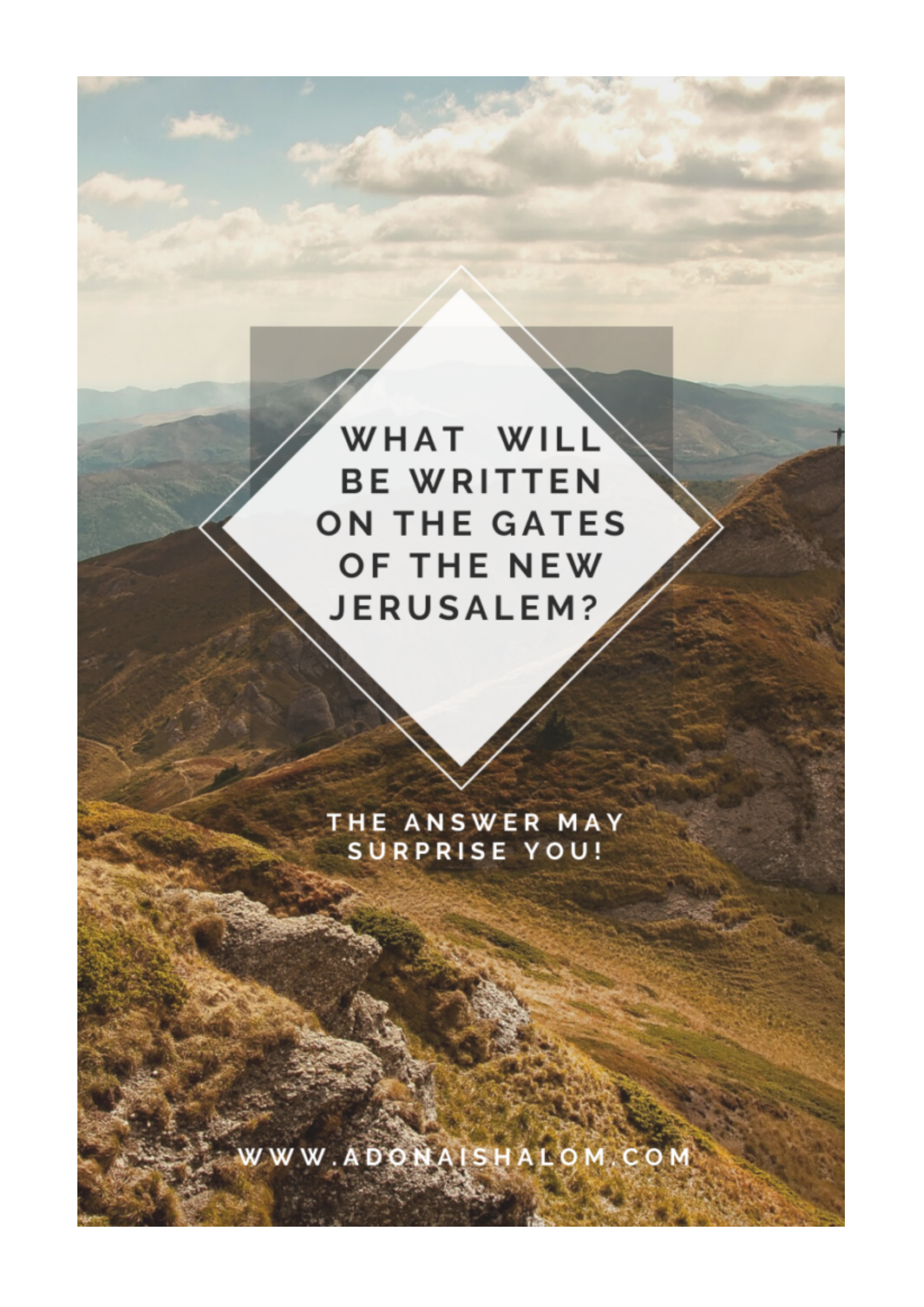
Lift up your heads, O gates!

For the King of Glory shall come in, shall restore all things, and His people shall forever live together with the Lord Most High in the New Jerusalem!

The New Jerusalem will be a beautiful place! Whenever you feel discouraged, remember one day all things will be made new!

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**WHAT WILL
BE WRITTEN
ON THE GATES
OF THE NEW
JERUSALEM?**

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What will be written on the gates of New Jerusalem?

6 stone jars, 120 gallons of wine, and an extraordinary wedding in Cana

But: have you ever thought about the mechanics of this miracle?

Let's look to the John's account: John 2:6. "Now there were 6 stone jars, used for the Jewish ritual of purification, each holding 2-3 measures."

Besorah: the Good News

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not condemned; but whoever does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not put his trust in the name of the one and only *Ben-Elohim*."

John 3:16 TLV

Psalm 19:8-10

The ***Torah*** of ADONAI is perfect, restoring the soul.

The **testimony** of ADONAI is trustworthy, making the simple wise.

The **precepts** of ADONAI are right, giving joy to the heart.

The ***mitzvot*** of ADONAI are pure, giving light to the eyes.

The **fear** of ADONAI is clean, enduring forever.

The **judgments** of ADONAI are true and altogether righteous.

TLV