

Ethan the Ezrahite: Praise strongly “breaking forth!”

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In leading worship this weekend, I thought about the text in [Psalm 89](#) because we were singing [“Stand up and Give Him the Praise,”](#) a song you may know! This song incorporates some of [Psalm 89](#).

Did you know that a man named Ethan wrote [Psalm 89](#)?

Today, we will take a look at Ethan the Ezrahite.

Who is like You, LORD God Almighty: Mi chamocha Adonai Elohei Tzva’ot

Ethan the Ezrahite wrote:

[“O LORD God of hosts,
Who is mighty like You, O LORD?
Your faithfulness also surrounds You.
You rule the raging of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them.” Psalm 89:8-9](#)



"O LORD God of hosts,
Who is mighty like You, O LORD?
Your faithfulness also surrounds You.
You rule the raging of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them."

Psalm 89:8-9

Stand up and Give Him the Praise

Do you know this praise song?

Who is like the LORD?

There is no one!

Who is like the LORD, He is strong and mighty!

Who is like the LORD?

He is worthy!

Stand up and give Him the praise!

*Praise the LORD, Praise the LORD, our God is worthy of glory!
From the rising of the sun, to its going down, the Name of the
LORD is to be praised!*

Here is a recording of it by Paul Wilbur from his *Shalom Jerusalem* album:

"Stand up and Give Him the Praise" by Paul Wilbur

Ethan the Ezrahite

Many [Psalms](#) are attributed to King David, but this particular [Psalm](#) was written by a much lesser known Levite, a man named Ethan the Ezrahite.

Ever heard of him?

Ethan as an Ezrahite comes from a Hebrew root word “zerah” meaning “arising” or “breaking out.” It has the connotation of strength: “strongly breaking forth.” It is thought the Psalmist Ethan is of the lineage of Zerah, dating back to the second son of Judah and Tamar as recorded in *Parashat Vayeshev*: [Genesis \(Bereshit\) 38:27-30](#). His name is also mentioned in the Chronicles:

[“The sons of Zerah were Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara—five of them in all.” 1 Chronicles 2:6, emphasis added](#)

Ethan: A Wise Man

The Bible does not give us very many clues about Ethan’s life, but there are just enough to give us a picture of a wise man. [King Solomon was granted wisdom](#), but King Solomon was compared to **Ethan the Ezrahite** in wisdom. This paints the picture that Ethan was certainly ranked among the wisest in the land, just a little beneath Solomon.

[“And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.” 1 Kings 4:29-31, emphasis added](#)

Ethan had a reputation. He was known as a wise man, and as a

psalmist, he would have been poetic and quite possibly a musician. He was passionate about the God of Israel and his Psalm resounds with exalting praise for the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Ethan emphasizes YHVH's matchless strength and the enormity of His reign. Intriguingly, Ethan was inspired to write prophetically as Psalm 89 also has messianic tones. The psalmist is not afraid to address life's difficulties: Ethan is secure knowing that the LORD is Almighty and unrivaled, but he is not afraid to ask those questions:

["How long, LORD?](#)

[Will You hide Yourself forever?" Psalm 89:46](#)



The power of language

Ethan the Ezrahite used language to bring glory to God.

Do you write for His glory?

Do you use your speech and your language to find ways to exalt His name and testify of His goodness?

Words are so incredibly powerful: so much so, that by the Word spoken, the world came into existence.

We must allow the Holy Spirit to influence our speech and writing and all levels of communication so that we, like Ethan, can bring enduring glory to our King.

May praise break forth!

Ethan called upon the Name of the LORD to praise Him for all He has done! The very meaning of Ethan's name invites us to allow praise to break forth from our lips! May we be inspired today to praise the Most High God, the King of all kings, the LORD God Almighty – *ADONAI ELOHEI TZVA'OT* without reservations, without anything coming between our worship.

Be set free from your apprehensions.

Don't worry about what others will say.

Your job, follower of Messiah, is to worship in Spirit and in Truth, with all you have in your being. As other psalmists once wrote:

["My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King;
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." Psalm 45:1](#)

Maybe God has called you to be a sanctified songwriter.

May He wants you to engage in demonstrative praise – to help others also experience freedom in worship.

Whatever ministry is bubbling up inside of you, whatever the Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*) is bringing out to your attention, pursue God passionately!

Let praises ring!

Sh'ma: The Greatest Commandment

Parashat Va'etchanan ([D'varim/Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11](#)) 5782 B"H

A Question about the Torah (שאלה *sh'eilah*)

One day a Pharisee asked Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) this question:

["Rabbi, which is the greatest commandment in the Torah?"](#)
[Matthew 22:36](#)

He was asking what is known as a *sh'eilah* – a question regarding the Torah. This Pharisee happened to be a lawyer. As such, he was trying to set up an argument *against* our Savior, but our LORD All-Wise and All-Knowing answered *perfectly*:

[And He said to him, "You shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."](#) [Matthew 22:37-40](#)

The *Sh'ma* in the New Testament

"Rabbi, which is the greatest commandment in the Torah?"

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and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:36-40

Yeshua quoted Scripture to answer the Pharisee's question

Yeshua (Jesus) recited [D'varim \(Deuteronomy\) 6:4-9](#) to respond to the Pharisee's question about the Greatest Commandment. Messiah faithfully pointed back to the Scriptures that even the Pharisees knew so well. Rabbi Yeshua couldn't be accused of "adding" or "inventing" a new faith.

He was pointing out that it was time to **live the faith!**

Because in Him, **having a living faith would be possible** because the Lord Yeshua alone was Perfect and He alone would fulfill Torah, giving us the possibility of new and eternal life if we will trust in Him.

The Greatest Commandment(s) are about love.

The Sh'ma

[D'varim/Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) is known in Judaism as the *Sh'ma* (also spelled out as *Shema*):

"Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These words, which I am commanding you today, are to be on your heart. You are to teach them diligently to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign on your hand, they are to be as frontlets between your eyes, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."
D'varim/Deuteronomy 6:4-9



This text is recited daily by Jewish people around the world.

Sh'ma means "Hear." "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah." Romans 10:17

There are many Jewish people who know this passage very well, but have no idea it is the Greatest Commandment according to the Messiah! By reciting it with such passion and dedication, they are actually **in agreement** with the New Testament (*Br'it Chadashah*)! The testimony of generations proclaims the importance of *Sh'ma*, but not everyone has yet realized its fulfillment in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ).

When we speak or sing the words of the Sh'ma, all of us can be reminded of several important truths that I believe can be listed out like note-taking . . .

Important Truths about the Greatest Commandment:

1. The LORD: YHWH: ADONAI: He is.
2. The LORD is our God. This is collective. He is the God of our nation and our communities if we will choose to follow Him.
3. He is One. He has made Himself known as our Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is Elohim (*a plural term in Hebrew*), but He is also One. There are no other gods. We are not pluralists or polytheists. These verses establish monotheism.
4. We are Israel. These verses speak to a Holy Nation, a set apart people. Whether native-born or grafted in, those who have chosen to follow Messiah are part of Israel. So these verses are true for you and me.
5. We are to love the LORD our God. The Sh'ma points back to the First Commandment, which was given just one chapter earlier ([D'varim/Deuteronomy 5](#)). The Ten Words (aka "Ten Commandments") cannot be lived out and obeyed without first loving their Author. **Notice, the first four commandments require us to love God. The last six commandments require us to love our neighbor.**
6. These words are so important they are to remain on our heart. [Proverbs 3:3 "Let kindness and truth never leave you— bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart."](#) Whatever is on our hearts will also be on our minds, and in this way we will have right thoughts and actions.
7. Children are valued. The Sh'ma assumes there will be children who must be taught. We are responsible to care for them and to "diligently" teach our children. If we

are to do this task, we ourselves must be prepared. Therefore, study is expected and each generation is tasked to continue to teach the next.

8. We are to discuss the words of Scripture. We are to speak of these good things when we are in our homes but also when we are walking somewhere. We are to speak of the goodness of God when we are going to bed and when we wake up.
9. Our faith is a part of us – it is to be bound to us. It should be known by your kindness and hospitality that your home is a house where disciples live. Your home should not house idols or worthless things. Your home is a reflection of your faith. Some of us have *mezuzot* מְזוּזוֹת (plural for *mezuzah*) on our doorposts – beautiful reminders that contain the words of Sh'ma in them.

Sh'ma, Yisrael,
Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad.
Ve'ahavta et Adonai eloheykha bekol-levavkha
u'bekhol nafshekha u'bekhol me'odekha.
Ve'hayu hadevarim ha'eileh asher anakhi
metzavekha hayom al-levavekha.
Veshinantam levavekha vedibarta bam
beshivtekha beveitekha u'velekhtekha vaderekh
u'vshakhekha u'vkumekha.
U'kshartam le'ot al-yadekha vehayu
letotafot bein einekha.
U'khtavtam al-mezuzot beitekha u'visharekha.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:4-9



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Yeshua (Jesus) cited the Sh'ma as the Greatest Commandment!

Yeshua cited the *Sh'ma* as the Greatest Commandment.

We learn from His example that Jesus came not to abolish the Torah, but to fulfill it.

["Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17](#)

He shows us the law of love – that we must love God and love our neighbor and He did so by pointing back to the Scriptures and demonstrating it by His way of life.

We are challenged to live out the Greatest Commandments as well.

The Sh'ma in Revelation

Would you be surprised to know the *Sh'ma's* influence is even found all the way in the book of [Revelation](#)?

When Yochanan (John), the writer of [Revelation](#), describes [New Jerusalem](#), he describes the river of the water of life and the throne of God. Notice in verse [Revelation 22:4](#), he writes that "His name shall be on their foreheads." For those who had grown up with the *Sh'ma*, this would be a very obvious allusion to [Deuteronomy 6](#).

["Then the angel showed me a river of the water of life—bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's street.](#)

[On either side of the river was a tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.](#)

[No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the city, and His servants shall serve Him.](#)

[They shall see His face, and **His name shall be on their foreheads.**](#)

[Night shall be no more, and people will have no need for lamplight or sunlight—for *ADONAI Elohim* will shine on them. And they shall reign forever and ever!" Revelation 22:1-5,](#)
emphasis added

The *Sh'ma* in the New Testament

"Then the angel showed me a river of the water of life—bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's street.

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The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the city, and His servants shall serve Him.

They shall see His face, and **His name shall be on their foreheads.**

Night shall be no more, and people will have no need for lamplight or sunlight— for ADONAI Elohim will shine on them.

And they shall reign forever and ever!"

Revelation 22:1-5, emphasis added



The Consistency and Continuity of Scripture

No other book contains so many cross-references and clear fulfillments of its words as the Bible.

When I first became a follower of Messiah, I was truly fascinated by this reality. For so many years, I had been taught lies that the Scriptures (even from their original form) contained errors and that they were not to be fully trusted.

When I discovered for myself, through the study of the original languages, that the Scriptures were most certainly trustworthy and that their testimony proves the Truth of our Savior's love and sacrifice, I felt free. Scripture is consistent and what I love most is that it proves itself time and time again through God-inspired verses that reveal His Truth.

The *Sh'ma* being the Greatest Commandment proves the continuity of Scripture.

Let us look to Messiah Yeshua's example

Messiah Yeshua taught us to know Scripture, believe it, and use it!

When questioned by a Pharisee about the Greatest Commandment or by the devil himself tempting him in the desert, our LORD always had Scripture to use as armor. His responses were right out of Scripture. This is why Scripture memorization is so important!

When we feel that our faith is being challenged, we must look to our Savior's example. We, too, need the sword of the Spirit to rightly divide the Word of God and stay armed for any spiritual battle. We will not be able to live out the Greatest Commandment to love the LORD our God without dedication to Him and His Word.

["Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15, emphasis added](#)

["And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17](#)

Scripture Memorization

It isn't always easy to memorize Scripture, but I find that the more I read the Word of God, it naturally becomes etched in my memory. So read your Bible! Study the Word! And you will reap the benefits of being able to [stand against the wiles of the devil](#) and [give praise to the Almighty One whose Word is so intricately designed and perfect.](#)

Let us love God and love one another, and in so doing, we will fulfill the Greatest Commandments.

What is *your* favorite aspect about Scripture? Are you familiar with the Sh'ma? What tips can you give to others to help them memorize the Word of God? Leave a comment below! We'd love to hear from you!

Shabbat shalom, mishpocha!

["Remember Yom Shabbat, to keep it holy. Ex.20:8, TLV](#)

May you have a peaceful and restful Sabbath, dear friends.

So Bnei-Yisrael is to keep the Shabbat,

to observe the Shabbat throughout their generations

as a perpetual covenant.

It is a sign between Me and Bnei-Yisrael forever,

for in six days Adonai made heaven and earth,

and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested.'"

Exodus 31:16-17

["Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Ex.20:8, KJV](#)

The Ten Commandments are favored even by postChristian society. They are considered the Tanakh commands that remain "relevant." *Nevermind the 603 other commandments* that just so happen to reveal the heart of the Father.... It would be good to

at least begin with the 10 that are well-known. Perhaps if we can learn to obey these, we will be on our way to obeying the others. Do we obey out of obligation? No. We obey because we love YHVH.

Why not begin with such a special command? The command to take time on the 7th day of the week to spend time with your Creator.

[“Worship God! For the testimony of Yeshua is the Spirit of Prophecy.” Revelation 19:10cd TLV](#)



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.” יַחַדְרִי (transliteration: *yehersu*). The Hebrew root here is “*haras*” יָחַדְרָה, 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:

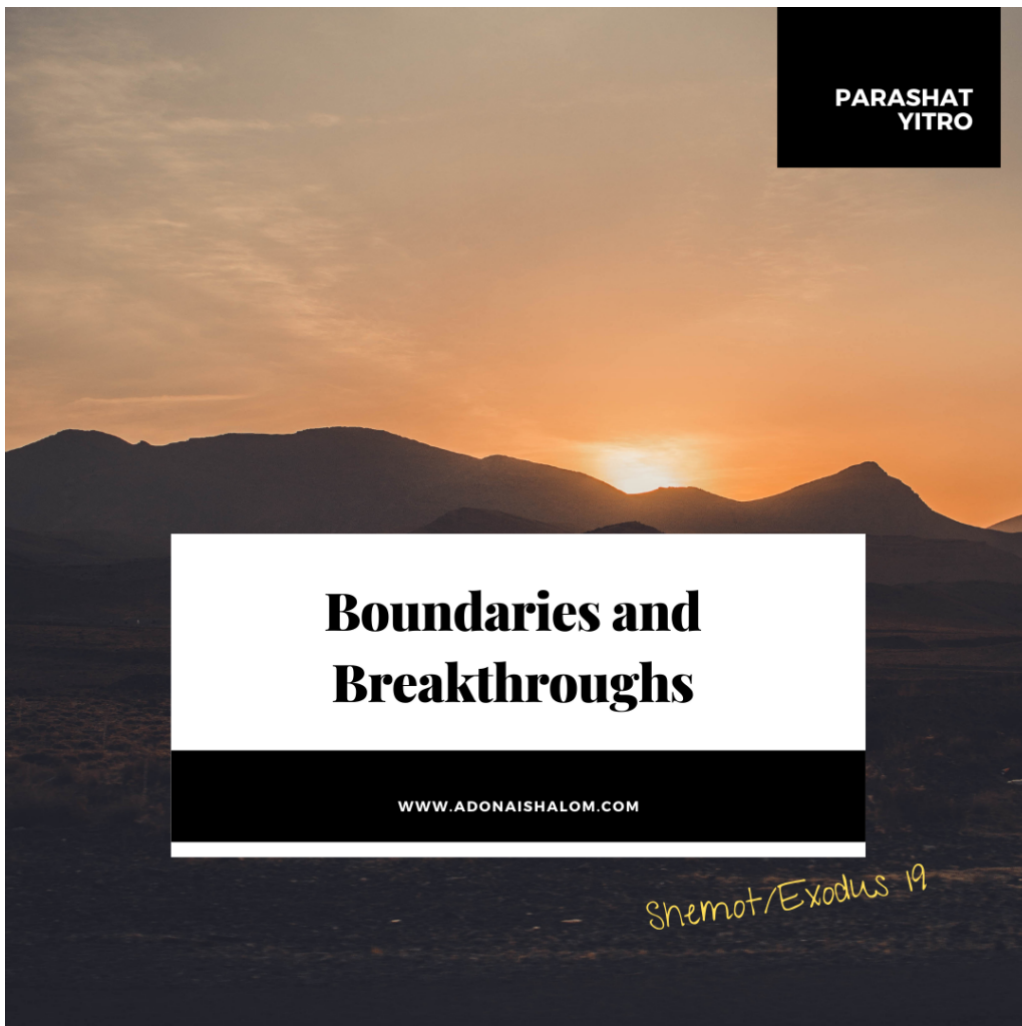
[*Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partners in a heavenly calling, take notice of Yeshua—the Emissary and Kohen Gadol we affirm. He was faithful to the One who appointed Him in His house—as was Moses also. For He has been considered worthy of more glory than Moses, even as the builder of the house 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](#)

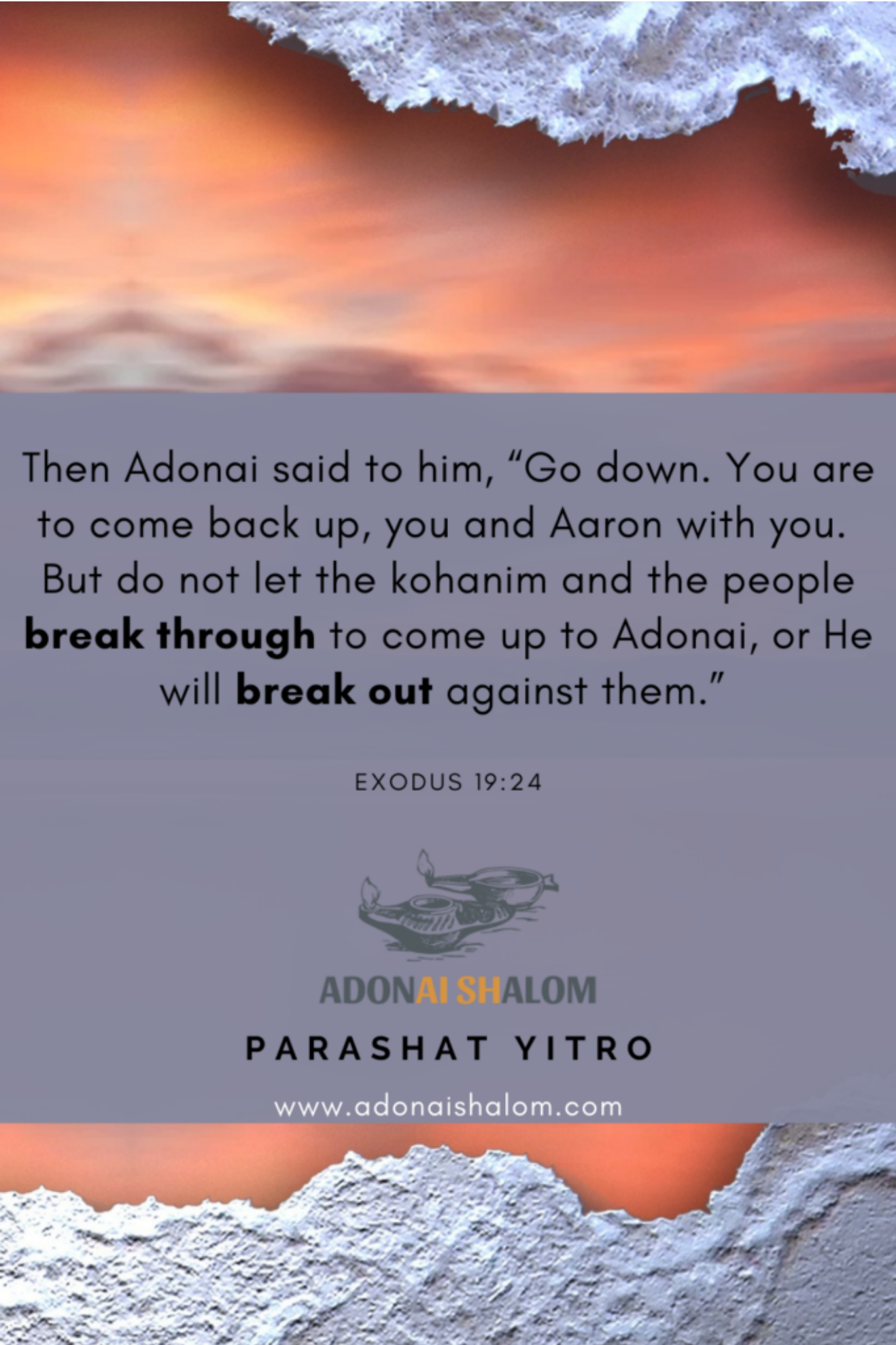
Yeshua’s death exemplified the reality that holiness and sin can’t mix when He took upon Himself the sin of the world. He took it all upon Himself so that He Himself could consecrate us, and we could now approach the throne of God without fear.

[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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