

# Kohanim & the Priesthood of all Believers

*Parashat T'tzaveh (Exodus 27:20-30:10)*

[Hebrews 5:1](#) tells us "For every *kohen gadol* [high priest] taken from among men is appointed to act on behalf of people in matters relating to God, so that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."

This verse shows that every priest

1. is chosen/set apart from others
2. is appointed
3. serves as an intermediary between people and G-D
4. offers gifts and sacrifices for sins

## Worthiness

The priest has garnered a level of favor making him "more worthy" than others to stand before the throne of the Most High.

We must realize that to be the appointee means there is an Appointer. In Torah, we see that the LORD Himself chooses who will serve as His priests. In the B'rit Chadasha (New Testament), the Eternal One reveals that His Son, Yeshua, (Jesus), is the Great High Priest for us, the divine and perfect *kohen gadol*.

While Aaron, Eleazar, and the other priests (*kohanim*) certainly did their best in their human capacity to serve this important role of standing between the people and God, they would never be "worthy enough" to completely save the people from their sin. Every year, on Yom Kippur, atonement would be made, but after that appointed hour, sin would continue to hold a grasp on the people and guilt would never be fully

eradicated. The sacrificial system was in place to help cleanse an imperfect people of their sin, but a perfect sacrifice was needed: the perfect Lamb of God.

[1 Peter 2](#) exhorts followers of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) to understand that they are now part of the royal priesthood.

Yeshua (Jesus) came for us, served as our Great High Priest, died for us, and is resurrected in eternal new life and is seated at the right hand of God our Father. He lived on the earth in this way to teach us how to live. He served as High Priest not only to save us, but to empower us in our new roles as among the divinely-appointed priesthood. Peter describes our role as to be “pleasing” to God. We obey the LORD, not because we must or should, but because we love Him.

Now, let us consider what is truly remarkable!

## From unworthy to made worthy

Formerly, we were **all** completely *unworthy*.

We could not be appointed to such a noble task as standing between earth and heaven in the Holy Place.

**No sacrifice we would have offered could have ever been enough to earn forgiveness.**

No gift, no gold, nothing on this earth could have served as a gift fine enough to present before the King of kings in exchange for His favor and forgiveness.

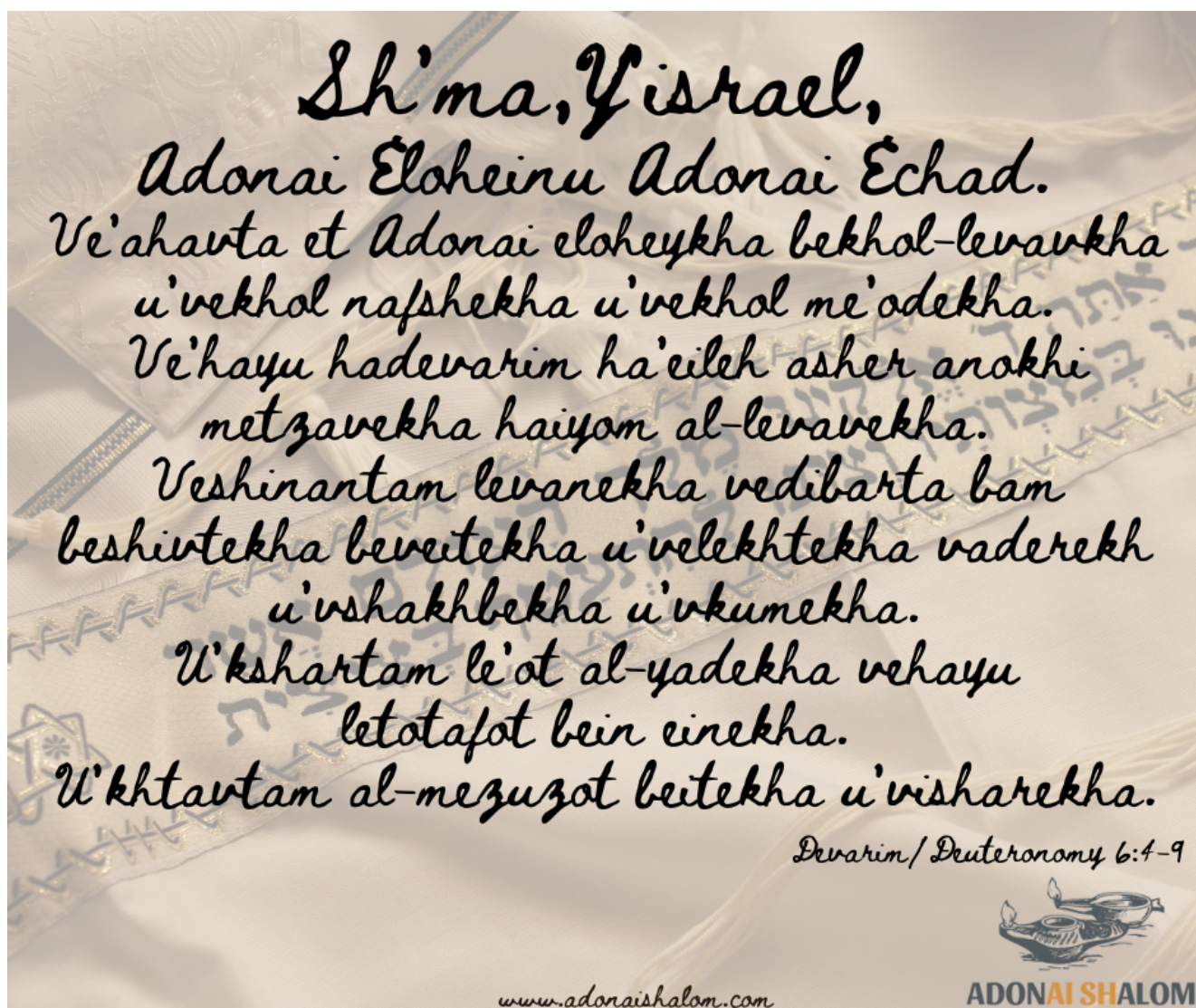
Nothing.

**We were without hope.** We were completely dependent upon the mercy of God and the obedience of an earthly priest.

Now, **we** are appointed as priests, and not just any old priest: **we are priests of the royal lineage.** We are princes and princesses, sons and daughters of the King of kings, and He

delights that we serve Him. No longer does an earthly man stand between us and our Creator. We need only turn to Yeshua (Jesus), who makes intercession for us, and He Himself welcomes us, for He and the Father are One. ([John 10:30](#)).

It was *revolutionary* for our Lord Yeshua to say this. Every day, Jews would recite [the Sh'ma](#), that the LORD our God, the LORD is One ([Deut.6:4](#)). So when He said, ["I and the Father are One"](#) in [John 10:30](#), many eyes would have been opened to the Truth of His identity. [Truly, this is the Son of God!](#)



Sh'ma Y'Israel

## Priestly garments

The vestments of YHVH's priests were very specific. Today,

when many people think of priests, they think of the Catholic or Mormon religion or pagan priesthods. The fact that there are so many different religious groups that have their own priesthods and priestly rituals shows that humanity in general understands its need for a priestly function, a moderator between us and the divine. Deep down, we know that we ourselves can do nothing and are in desperate need of a spiritual connection with the Holy One.

Unfortunately, everything *outside* of Scripture is errant, so we must look to what the Bible actually required and instituted. Roman Catholic priests, for example, base their apparel and actions on papal directives, not on Biblical mandate. One most obvious difference – Roman Catholics priests are famously not allowed to marry or have children, but **Biblically**, we know that **Aaron the priest married Elisheba and had four sons.**

Let's look further at what the Bible describes as related to Biblical priesthood.

**The priesthood garments of the Bible were made specifically to endow “splendor and beauty.” (Shemot/[Exodus 28:2](#))**



You are to make holy garments for your brother Aaron,  
*for splendor and for beauty.*

Exodus 28:2



Exodus 28:2

The garments were skillfully woven ([Ex.28:8](#)), made of finely twisted linen ([Ex.28:6, 8](#)), and crafted of the beautiful colors of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet ([Ex.28:5, 6, 8](#)). The colors are repeated and reflect the same color scheme used for the Tabernacle. Gold surely reminds us of the Glorious nature of HaShem. Blue was an incredibly expensive color sourced using exotic snails.

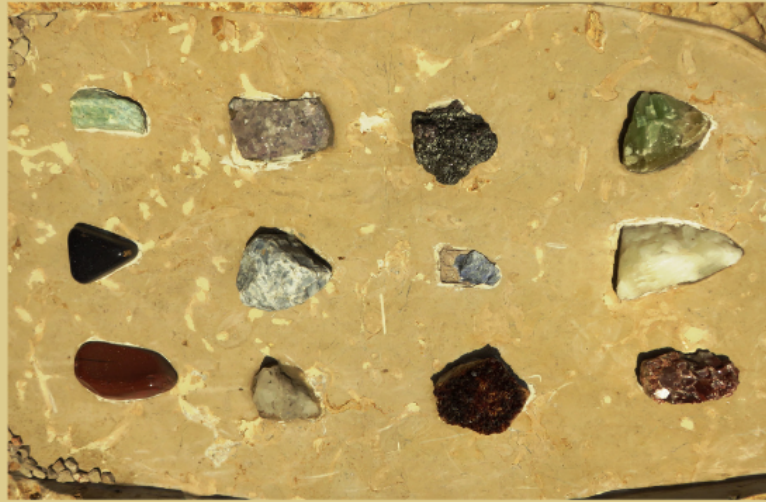
I recently saw a documentary that reminded me of this. In it, the presenter explained that the land of Phoenicia translates to the “land of purple,” as the people there were famous for their dyes. Did you know it took more than 20,000 snails to source the ink just to make *one* purple-dyed Roman toga! It was a costly process and not just anybody could afford purple or blue clothing and tapestries.

The Israelites were a people familiar with oppression and hardship. Can you imagine the self-esteem boost the LORD was giving them by instructing them to use the most expensive of products to prove their esteemed status as the chosen people?

The crimson red reminds us of course of the costly sacrifice Yeshua made, a reality foreshadowed by the tabernacle and priestly vestments and paid for in full on the cross of Calvary.

The priests wore a breastplate covered in precious jewels engraved with the names of the children of Israel (*B'nei-Y'israel*) ([Ex.28:15ff](#)). Notice that in [Exodus 28:15](#), this is a breastplate of *judgment*. It is reasonable to say here judgment is synonymous with such an expression as *discernment* rather than a more punishing role.

Yeshua's people are exhorted to use the full armor of God in [Ephesians 6:10ff](#). Here, the breastplate of the royal priesthood of all believers is called the breastplate of *righteousness* ([Eph.6:14](#)). Good judgment can be termed "right-thinking," "right-decision-making," but that which makes us righteous is the shed blood of the Righteous One alone. The breastplate is intended as a protection for the heart – so discernment and judgment become tempered and perfected by the righteousness imputed to the saved ones.



"Make a breastplate of judgment, the work of a skillful craftsman.  
 You are to make it like the design of the ephod—of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and finely twisted linen.  
 It is to be square and doubled over, a span in length and a span in width.  
 Set within it four rows of jewels: a row of ruby, topaz and emerald for the first row;  
     a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond for the second row;  
     a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst for the third;  
     and a beryl, an onyx and a jasper for the fourth row.  
 They are to be enclosed in gold filigree settings.  
 The stones are to be engraved in the order of the names of Bnei-Yisrael,  
     twelve according to their names,  
     like the etchings of a signet seal,  
     one corresponding to each name of the twelve tribes."

SHEMOT/EXODUS 28:15-21



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### Shemot/Exodus 28:15-21

Today, we wear the breastplate of righteousness and our feet present the Good News of peace. Scholars believe the Israelite priests entered barefoot into the Holy of Holies. We too, ought be bare of anything except the glorious message of salvation. The garments of the priesthood were intended to display splendor and beauty.

**May your life be reflective of the splendor and beauty that is yours as a child of the Most High!**

**We'd love to hear your thoughts about the Biblical priesthood and the priesthood of all believers! Please leave a comment, like, and share with your friends!**

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# 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.” פָּרָצוּ (transliteration: *yehersu*). The Hebrew root here is “*haras*” פָּרָצוּ, 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.\*](#)

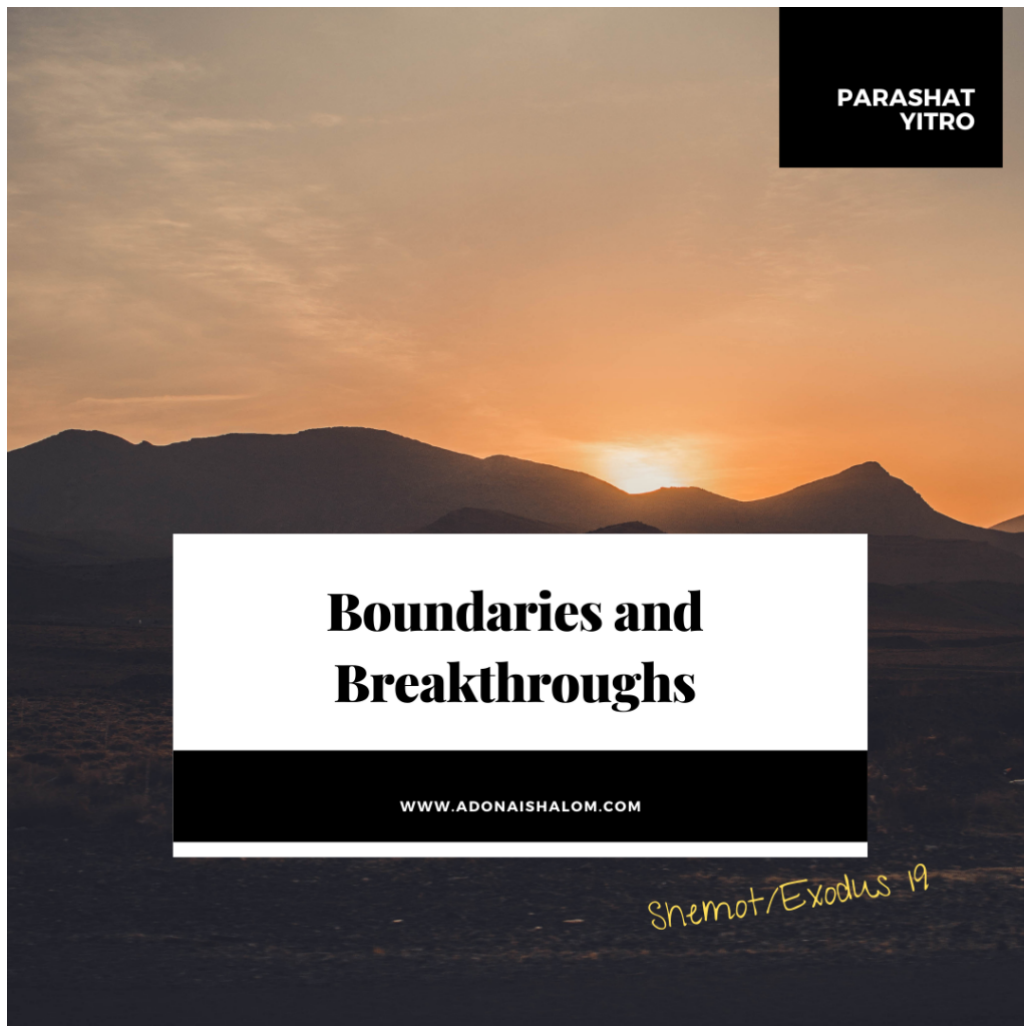
[Hebrews 3:1-3, TLV](#)

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.

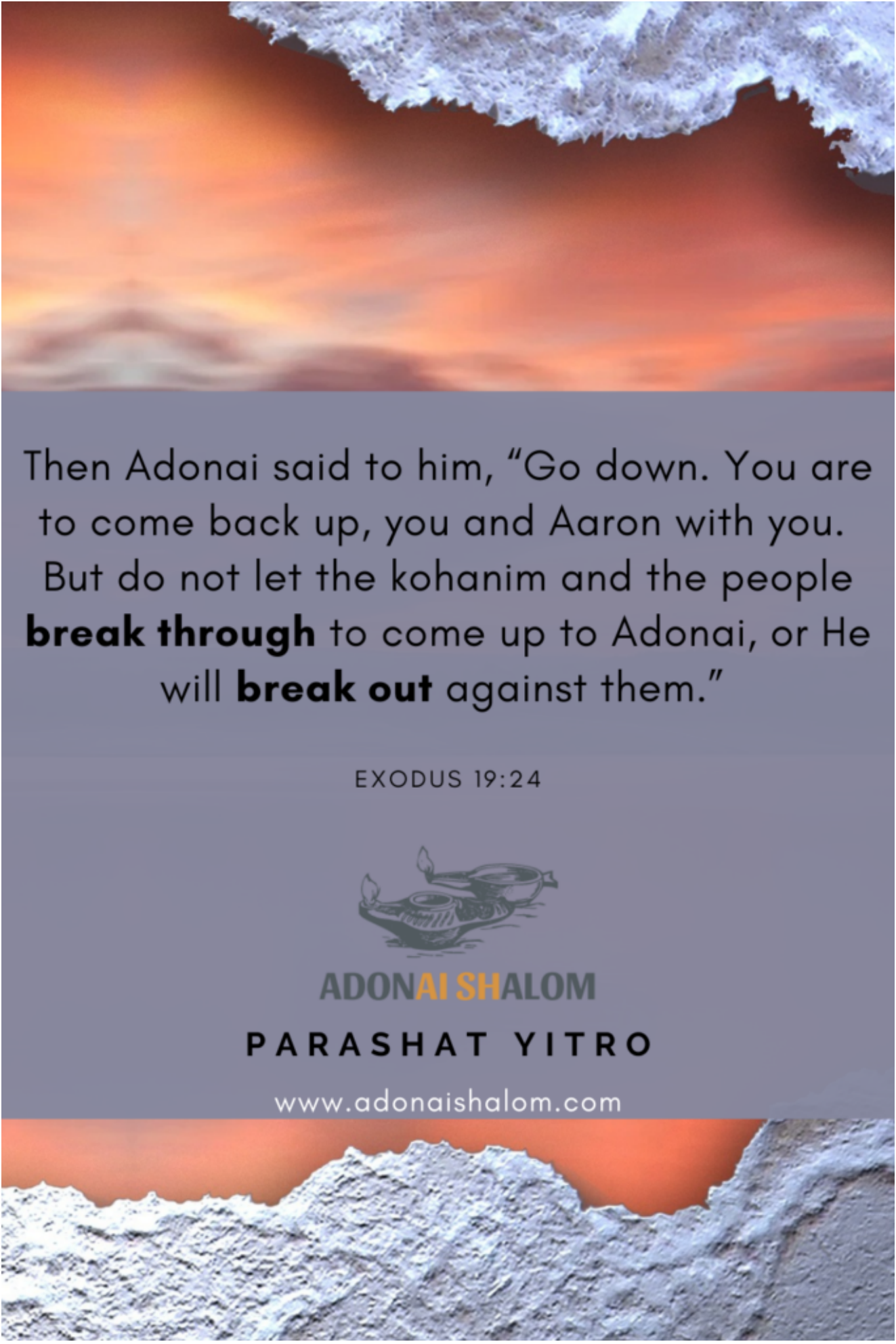
[Hebrews 4:16](#) "Therefore let us draw near to the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and [find grace for help in time of need.](#)"



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



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EXODUS 19:24



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