

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS AND A HOLY NATION

A DEEP COVENANT STUDY OF SHEMOT (EXODUS) 19:6

וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ

Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution | June 2026 | Pearl River, Louisiana

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT — TANAKH BOOK NAMES

Every Tanakh reference in this study uses the Hebrew book name followed by the English equivalent in parentheses. The following books are cited in this document:

HEBREW NAME	ENGLISH	DIVISION	ROLE IN THIS STUDY
<i>Shemot</i>	Exodus	Torah	Primary text — 19:6 covenant declaration
<i>Beresbit</i>	Genesis	Torah	Covenant foundation — Abraham, Avrahamic promise
<i>Devarim</i>	Deuteronomy	Torah	Witness standard; am segulah parallel
<i>Vayikra</i>	Leviticus	Torah	Priestly function; kedushah law
<i>Yeshayahu</i>	Isaiah	Nevi'im	Kohanim of Yahweh — Yeshayahu 61:6 parallel
<i>Tehillim</i>	Psalms	Ketuvim	Covenant doxology and witness

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The Tanakh — the Written Torah — is the sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution. All scholars, lexicographers, commentators, and historical sources cited in this document — including BDB, HALOT, TWOT, Strong’s, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban — are employed as historical witnesses only. They are never granted binding doctrinal authority. Where commentary conflicts with the plain testimony of the Tanakh text, the Tanakh governs. This standard is applied throughout every document produced by this institution, pursuant to **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** — the two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard.

PART I – THE FULL TEXT IN CONTEXT: SHEMOT (EXODUS) 19:3–6

Shemot (Exodus) 19:6 cannot be read in isolation. It is the climax of a four-verse covenant declaration spoken by **Yahweh** to Mosheh at the foot of Sinai — the first formal covenant address after the liberation from Egypt. The full covenant proposal reads:

SHEMOT (EXODUS) 19:3–6 – HEBREW TEXT

HEBREW (WLC)	ENGLISH TRANSLATION (JPS 1985 / EVERETT FOX)
וּמֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים	Now Mosheh went up to Elohim
כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתֹגִיד לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	Thus shall you say to the House of Yaakov and tell the Children of Yisrael
אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם	You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt
וְאֲשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל־כַּנְּפֵי גְּזָרִים וְאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי	and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself
וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמְעָה תִשְׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי	And now, if you will hearken, yes, hearken to My voice and keep My covenant
וְהִייתֶם לִי סֻגְלָה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים כִּי־לִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ	you shall be to Me a segulah — a treasured possession — from among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine

<p>וְאַתֶּם תְּהִי־וּלִי מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ</p>	<p>And you shall be to Me a mamlekheth kohanim — a kingdom of priests — and a goy kadosh — a holy nation</p>
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The structure of Shemot (Exodus) 19:3–6 follows the pattern of an ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaty: the sovereign identifies himself (v. 4 — 'I bore you on eagles' wings'), states the covenant condition (v. 5a — 'if you hearken'), declares the covenant benefit (v. 5b — *segulah*), and pronounces the covenant identity (v. 6 — *mamlekheth kohanim, goy kadosh*). The verse under examination is not an isolated promise — it is the covenant declaration that defines the identity and function of the entire Hebrew nation before **Yahweh** and among all the nations of the earth.

PART II — COMPLETE LEXICAL TABLE: THE FIVE KEY TERMS

The following table examines the five primary Hebrew terms in Shemot (Exodus) 19:5b–6 against BDB, HALOT, TWOT, and Strong's Concordance. Every term carries covenant weight; together they form the complete covenant identity declaration.

HEBREW	TRANSLITERATION	STRONG'S	BDB/HALOT GLOSS	LEXICAL SIGNIFICANCE	COVENANT FUNCTION IN 19:6
סְגֻלָּה	<i>segulah</i>	H5459	Valued possession; personal treasure; private property	BDB: 'treasure, valued property.' HALOT: property one personally acquires and guards. Root: Arabic <i>sajala</i> — to fold up for safekeeping. Appears 8x in Tanakh. Always of Yahweh's personal treasured people (Devarim 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; Mal 3:17).	The covenant condition — IF the people obey, they become Yahweh's personal treasure. Not an ethnic guarantee. A conditional covenant identity.
מַמְלֶכֶת	<i>mamlekheth</i>	H4467	Kingdom; dominion;	BDB: 'dominion, estate of rule,	Establishes governance structure. The nation

			realm; reign; royal domain	country/realm.' Root: malak H4427 — to reign, to be king. HALOT: the realm over which a king exercises sovereign power. Occurs 117x in Tanakh. Always refers to organized political sovereignty — a functioning governance structure, not merely a spiritual metaphor.	is organized as a kingdom — a sovereign entity under Yahweh as King. This is political, priestly, and covenantal simultaneously.
כֹּהֲנִים	kobanim	H3548	Priests; officiating ministers; mediators; royal officers	BDB: 'one officiating, a priest.' Active participle of kaban H3547 — to act as priest, to officiate. Strong's: 'literally one officiating.' TWOT: The kohen is not a passive title but an active function — one who stands between Yahweh and the people, teaches Torah, judges cases, offers intercession. 750 occurrences in Tanakh. First use: Bereshit 14:18 — Malkizedek as priest-king.	The entire nation is called to the function of kohen — mediator, intercessor, teacher, and representative of Yahweh before the nations. Not an exclusive Levitical claim — a national covenant calling.
גּוֹי	goy	H1471	Nation; people group; political	BDB: 'nation, people' — with emphasis on political or ethnic grouping as distinct	Grounds the covenant identity in political and national reality, not in ethnic

			body; ethnos	<p>from <i>am</i> (people defined by relationship).</p> <p>HALOT: a people organized as a nation-state. The same word used for all nations, including non-Hebrew peoples. Remarkable: Yahweh describes Israel as a <i>goy</i> — the same category as Egypt, Canaan, Assyria. This is not a term of superiority but of covenant distinction within the family of nations.</p>	<p>superiority. Israel is a nation among nations — but a nation set apart. Holiness is the distinguishing characteristic, not ethnicity alone.</p>
קדוש	<i>kadosh</i>	H6918	Holy; set apart; consecrated; belonging to the sacred sphere	<p>BDB: 'sacred, holy, apart from the common or profane.'</p> <p>Root: <i>qdashb</i> H6942 — to be holy, to consecrate, to set apart for Yahweh's purpose.</p> <p>HALOT: the fundamental idea is separation from the common sphere and dedication to the divine. TWOT: <i>kadosh</i> always describes that which belongs to Yahweh, not merely moral purity. 119 occurrences in Tanakh as adjective.</p>	<p>The defining qualification of the covenant nation. Not ethnic purity — covenantal separation. A nation that belongs to Yahweh, reflects His character, and lives according to His instructions. Kedushah is the mission, not the achievement.</p>

PART III — WORD-BY-WORD COVENANT ANALYSIS

I. SEGULAH (H5459) — THE TREASURED POSSESSION

Before verse 6 is spoken, verse 5 establishes the covenant condition: *vi-byitem li segulah mi-kol ba-amim* — 'you shall be to Me a segulah from among all peoples.' The word *segulah* (H5459) appears only 8 times in the entire Tanakh, always in contexts of personal treasure and covenant election. BDB defines it as 'valued property, peculiar treasure,' derived from a root meaning to fold away or close up — as one guards something precious.

The critical covenant truth embedded in *segulah* is its conditionality: the sentence begins *'im shamo'a tishme'u be-koli'* — 'IF you hearken, yes hearken to My voice.' The treasure status is covenant-conditional. It is not an irrevocable ethnic grant. The parallel texts in **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:6** and **14:2** and **26:18** confirm this: the *segulah* identity is bound to covenant obedience. This single observation dismantles all theological frameworks — Jewish, Christian, or Islamic — that treat covenant election as unconditional ethnic privilege.

2. MAMLEKHET (H4467) — THE KINGDOM

The word *mamleket* is derived from the root *malak* (H4427) — to reign, to rule as king. BDB defines it as 'dominion, the estate of rule, the realm.' It is the fully political term for a kingdom — not a metaphor, not a spiritualized concept, but an actual governance structure. This word appears 117 times in the Tanakh and always refers to real political sovereignty.

The profound covenant declaration here is that **Yahweh** — not Pharaoh, not Caesar, not any human sovereign — is the King of this nation. The people are not called to build a human kingdom. They are called to live as citizens of a kingdom whose sovereign is the Creator of heaven and earth. The pairing of *mamleket* with *kohanim* is stunning: the kingdom's governing structure is not military or commercial — it is priestly. **The king of this kingdom rules through Torah, justice, and intercession.** The nation's primary function before the world is not conquest but witness.

3. KOHANIM (H3548) — THE PRIESTS

The word *kohen* (H3548) is an active participle — 'one who officiates.' This is not a passive title but a functional identity. Strong's defines it as 'literally one officiating.' BDB traces its root to *kahan* (H3547) — to act as priest, to minister, to stand in the mediating position between the holy and the common. The kohen in ancient Israel performed four distinct functions: (1) he stood before **Yahweh** on behalf of the people; (2) he stood before the people on behalf of **Yahweh**; (3) he taught Torah and adjudicated covenant law (Devarim/Deuteronomy 17:8–12; Vayikra/Leviticus 10:11); (4) he maintained the boundary between the holy and the profane.

The declaration that the entire nation shall be *kobanim* is therefore a declaration of national vocation: every individual Israelite is to embody the priestly function. The entire nation stands between **Yahweh** and the nations of the earth. This is the covenant mission of Yisrael: to mediate the knowledge and reality of **Yahweh** to the world. The first *kohen* to appear in the Tanakh is Malkizedek — **Bereshit (Genesis) 14:18** — priest-king of Shalem, before there was a tribe of Levi, before there was a Mosaic covenant. The function precedes the institution.

Significantly, *kobanim* appears in the plural construct here — a people of officiating mediators, not a single hierarchical priest. The covenant democracy of the priestly calling is stated directly and without qualification.

4. GOY (H1471) — THE NATION

The word *goy* (H1471) is one of the most misunderstood terms in the Tanakh. BDB distinguishes it from *am* (H5971): while *am* emphasizes a people bound by relationship (kinship, covenant, common identity), *goy* refers to a people defined by territory and political organization — a nation-state. The same word is used for Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, and every other national entity in the Tanakh.

Yahweh's use of *goy* in reference to Israel is deliberate and theologically significant: Israel is not called above the nations — Israel is called within the category of nations to be something distinct. The distinction is not ethnic supremacy; it is covenant identity. A *goy kadosh* is a nation that lives inside the covenant, operating according to **Yahweh's** instructions, among all the other nations that do not. The first use of *goy* for Israel's descendants is in **Bereshit (Genesis) 12:2** — 'I will make of you a *goy gadol*' — a great nation — spoken to Avraham. The Sinai covenant fulfills that promise with its content: the nature of the nation is now defined.

5. KADOSH (H6918) — HOLY

The word *kadosh* (H6918) is the adjective form of the root *qadash* (H6942) — to consecrate, to set apart, to dedicate to **Yahweh's** purpose. BDB: 'sacred, holy, set apart from the common or profane.' HALOT: the fundamental idea is separation from the ordinary and dedication to the divine sphere. TWOT notes that *kadosh* does not primarily describe moral purity as a static condition — it describes dynamic belonging. That which is *kadosh* belongs to **Yahweh**.

A *goy kadosh* — a holy nation — is therefore a nation that belongs to **Yahweh**, organized around His instructions, and set apart from the normal patterns of human political life. Its economy, justice system, calendar, land management, family structure, and warfare are all shaped by covenant law. Holiness is not pietism; it is comprehensive covenant ordering of all of national life. **Yahweh** Himself is called *HaKadosh* — **the Holy One** — and the nation's holiness is a reflection of His holiness. As **Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:2** declares: '*Kedoshim tihyu ki kadosh ani Yahweh Eloheikhem*' — '**You shall be holy because I, Yahweh your Elohim, am holy.**'

PART IV — THREE TRANSLATIONS EXAMINED

The institution's standard translation witnesses are the Jewish Publication Society (JPS 1985), Robert Alter, and Everett Fox (Schocken). Each brings distinct translational philosophy and covenant insight.

TRANSLATOR	TRANSLATION OF SHEMOT (EXODUS) 19:6	COVENANT SIGNIFICANCE
JPS 1985	"you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"	Renders <i>mamlekheth</i> as 'kingdom' — the standard political translation. Maintains the national covenant framing. Clean and direct.
Robert Alter	"you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"	Follows JPS here. Alter's commentary notes the priestly kingdom as the defining national vocation — mediating Yahweh's presence to the world. The holiness is active, not passive.
Everett Fox	"you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"	Fox's Hebraizing approach preserves the weight of <i>mamlekheth kohanim</i> as a compound construct — a kingdom whose defining attribute is its priestly function. The nation does not merely have priests; it is organized as a priestly kingdom.

Scholarly translation note: Some commentators (Rashi, Rashbam) have read *mamlekheth kohanim* as 'a kingdom of princes' — understanding *kohen* in its secondary sense as 'officer' or 'principal official' (cf. 2 **Samuel 8:18** where David's sons are called *kohanim*). However, the plain reading of the Tanakh text in context — especially given the parallel in **Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 61:6** ('you shall be called the *kohanim* of Yahweh') — confirms the priestly-mediating function as primary. The institution applies the Tanakh text on its own terms, citing Rashi and Rashbam as historical witnesses, not binding authorities.

PART V — FIVE COVENANT DECLARATIONS EMBEDDED IN SHEMOT (EXODUS) 19:6

The single verse of Shemot (Exodus) 19:6 contains five distinct covenant declarations, each of which establishes a foundational principle of the covenant relationship between **Yahweh** and Yisrael.

#	DECLARATION	COVENANT CONTENT
1	Yahweh Is King	The existence of a <i>mamleket</i> — a kingdom — presupposes a king. Yahweh is the sovereign of this nation. No human political structure supersedes His authority. This is the foundation of the covenant theocracy declared at Sinai.
2	The Nation's Function Is Priestly	The entire nation — not just the tribe of Levi — is called to the mediating, teaching, and interceding function of the <i>kohen</i> . National life is organized around the priestly vocation of standing between Yahweh and the world.
3	Holiness Is Covenant Identity	A <i>goy kadosh</i> — a holy nation — defines Israel's identity not by race but by covenant relationship with Yahweh. Holiness is separation unto Yahweh, not separation from humanity. The purpose of the separation is the mission to humanity.
4	The Covenant Is Conditional	The declaration of verse 6 follows the conditional clause of verse 5: <i>'im shamo'a tishme'u'</i> — 'IF you hearken.' The covenant identity is not automatic or unconditional. It is the inheritance of obedience. Loss of covenant faithfulness means loss of covenant identity. This principle is confirmed throughout Nevi'im.
5	The Witness Standard — All Nations	The phrase 'from among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine' (v. 5) establishes that the covenant calling of Yisrael is not for its own benefit alone. The priestly kingdom exists within the family of nations. The holy nation is a witness nation. Yahweh owns the whole earth — the covenant people are His representative presence within it.

PART VI — CANONICAL CONNECTIONS: SHEMOT 19:6 ACROSS THE TANAKH

Shemot (Exodus) 19:6 does not stand alone. Its themes of priestly calling, covenant holiness, and national witness run throughout the Nevi'im and Ketuvim, confirming the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** two-witness standard.

REFERENCE	TEXT	CONNECTION TO SHEMOT 19:6
Devarim (Deut.) 7:6	'For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God... am segulah — a treasured people'	Direct parallel to Shemot 19:5–6. Confirms that the <i>segulah</i> and <i>goy kadosh</i> identities are covenant-conditional and tied to covenant faithfulness. Devarim renews what Shemot declares.
Yeshayahu (Isa.) 61:6	'You shall be called the kohanim of Yahweh; men shall call you the ministers of our God'	The great prophetic restoration text directly echoes Shemot 19:6 — the eschatological covenant restoration includes the full realization of the priestly-kingdom vocation. The Torah declaration and the prophetic promise are one covenant.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:2	'You shall be holy because I Yahweh your God am holy'	The <i>goy kadosh</i> of Shemot 19:6 receives its content here. Holiness is defined in practical covenant terms — honoring parents, keeping Shabbat, just weights, protecting the vulnerable. The covenant nation's holiness is communal and practical.
Bereshit (Gen.) 12:2–3	'I will make of you a great nation... and all families of the earth shall be blessed in you'	The Avrahamic covenant establishes the purpose: Yisrael exists as a blessing conduit to all nations. The priestly kingdom of Shemot 19:6 is the fulfilled structure through which that Avrahamic calling operates — a whole nation of mediators.
Devarim (Deut.) 17:18–20	'He shall write for himself a copy of this Torah... and he shall read it all the days of his life...'	The covenant king himself is not exempt from the priestly-kingdom structure. Even the monarch is subject to Torah. The kingdom of priests is a Torah-governed kingdom — no human authority stands above the covenant instruction.

PART VII — THREE-RELIGION APPLICATION TABLE

Shemot (Exodus) 19:6 is the covenant foundation that speaks simultaneously to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three traditions claim the Sinai covenant's inheritance in some form. The covenant plumb line of the Tanakh evaluates each tradition's handling of this text and its implications.

THEME	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Claim to 19:6	Judaism holds Shemot 19:6 as the declaration of Israel's national covenant vocation — the foundational text of Jewish peoplehood and mission. The entire nation is called to priestly holiness.	Christianity applies the text to the 'new covenant' community via 1 Peter 2:9, which quotes Shemot 19:6 directly and applies it to the church. This is a post-biblical interpretive move — not found in the Tanakh itself.	Islam does not directly cite Shemot 19:6, but affirms the Torah's revelation to Musa (Moses) and the covenant at Sinai as foundational. The Quran calls Israel the chosen people in several surahs (Al-Baqarah 2:47, 2:122), while critiquing their faithfulness.
Where Each Tradition Stands	Strong: Judaism preserves the Tanakh text and the priestly-kingdom calling as national identity. Challenge: post-biblical rabbinic tradition sometimes substitutes rabbinic authority for direct Tanakh covenant application, as examined in our Talmud at the Plumb Line study.	Significant departure: Christianity's application of 19:6 to the church removes the text from its covenant context — the Hebrew nation at Sinai — and repositions it as a 'spiritual' identity for a multinational religious institution. The Tanakh text speaks to a specific covenant nation.	Islam's acknowledgment of the Sinai covenant is consistent with the Tanakh's own testimony. However, Islam's claim to supersede the Mosaic covenant through the Quran cannot be established from the Tanakh, which contains no such transfer of covenant authority.
Covenant Plumb Line	The Tanakh calls Judaism to recover the full priestly-kingdom vocation — a nation organized	Christianity is called by the Tanakh to honor the covenant text in its original context, recognize the	Islam is called to affirm the Sinai covenant's authority in its Tanakh form — the very Torah it acknowledges

	<p>around covenant justice, not merely religious observance. The condition of verse 5 applies: <i>im shamo'a tishme'u</i>.</p>	<p>Hebrew nation as the covenant recipient, and understand that the 'priestly kingdom' is not a metaphor to be spiritualized away.</p>	<p>was given to Musa — and to apply its witness standard directly: what does the Torah text say? Let the text speak.</p>
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PART VIII — COVENANT WITNESS TO CURRENT EVENTS

A. THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE PRIESTLY-KINGDOM STANDARD

The modern State of Israel claims its covenant inheritance while operating as a modern nation-state under secular and post-biblical structures. The question **Shemot (Exodus) 19:6** places before Israel's current governance is direct: Is the State of Israel organized as a *mamleket kohanim* — a kingdom whose governing function is priestly, Torah-instructed, and oriented toward witness to the nations — or as a conventional military-political state measured by the standards of international realpolitik?

The covenant plumb line is not a political judgment from the outside. It is the standard that the Tanakh itself establishes for the covenant nation. The verse does not say 'you may be' — it says 'you shall be.' The conditional remains operative: *if you hearken to My voice and keep My covenant*. When any Jewish government — ancient or modern — departs from the covenant standard, the prophets arose to call it back. That prophetic function is itself an expression of the priestly-kingdom vocation.

B. THE NATIONS AND THE WITNESS STANDARD

Shemot (Exodus) 19:5 establishes the geopolitical frame: *'for all the earth is Mine.'* Yahweh's sovereignty is not limited to the borders of Yisrael. The priestly kingdom exists within a world that belongs to its sovereign. This has direct implications for current events across the Middle East, where land, sovereignty, and covenant identity are the contested questions of the moment.

Any nation or political structure claiming authority over the covenant land, the covenant people, or the covenant's outcomes must answer to the declaration of **Shemot (Exodus) 19:5: Yahweh owns the earth**. No political charter, UN resolution, or military claim supersedes the covenant landowner's declaration. The institution applies this standard without political partisanship — the covenant witness is to all parties simultaneously.

C. THE PRIESTLY KINGDOM AS THE AI AND INTELLIGENCE STANDARD

In an age of artificial intelligence and mass surveillance — the Tower of Silicon — the priestly-kingdom standard of **Shemot (Exodus) 19:6** speaks directly. A *kohen's* primary function includes guarding the boundary between the holy and the profane — distinguishing truth from falsehood, the genuine from the counterfeit. As AI systems become capable of generating false witness at scale, the covenant calling of a nation of priests becomes more urgent, not less.

The *goy kadosh* — the holy nation — is called to be a nation of discernment, of honest testimony, of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15**-caliber evidence standards. The institution's research and outreach apply these priestly standards directly to every domain of public life, from media accountability to intelligence operations to covenant correspondence with national leaders.

COVENANT DECLARATIONS — SUMMARY

The following five covenant declarations emerge from this study, established by the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** two-or-three witness standard:

- **FIRST: Yahweh is the sovereign King of the covenant nation. No human political structure holds ultimate authority over the covenant people.**
 - **SECOND: The entire covenant nation — not an elite priestly class — is called to the vocation of mediator, teacher, intercessor, and witness. This is a democratic priestly calling.**
 - **THIRD: The covenant identity is conditional: IF the nation hearkens to Yahweh's voice and keeps His covenant, it receives and maintains its covenant status. Disobedience forfeits the status.**
 - **FOURTH: Holiness is covenant belonging and practical covenant ordering of all of national life — not spiritual pietism, not ethnic exclusivism, not religious ritual without justice.**
 - **FIFTH: The priestly kingdom exists for the sake of all nations. 'For all the earth is Mine' — Yahweh's covenant purpose through Israel is a purpose for all humanity.**
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SCRIPTURE INDEX

SCRIPTURE	CONTEXT IN THIS STUDY
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Shemot (Exodus) 19:3–6	Primary text — full covenant declaration
Bereshit (Genesis) 12:2–3	Avrahamic covenant — blessing to all nations
Bereshit (Genesis) 14:18	Malkizedek — first kohen in Tanakh, priest-king function
Vayikra (Leviticus) 10:11	Kohen's teaching function in Torah
Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:2	You shall be holy — the content of goy kadosh
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:6	Am segulah — treasured people — covenant parallel
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 14:2	Segulah and goy kadosh parallel
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 17:18–20	The covenant king under Torah — no one above covenant law
Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15	Two-or-three witness evidentiary standard — institutional standard
Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 61:6	Eschatological fulfillment — you shall be called kohanim of Yahweh

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Reaching Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously — through the authority of the Tanakh alone

All the earth is Mine — Shemot (Exodus) 19:5