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Dear Mispochah (Family),

### Separated By What We Celebrate

Do you see the lines being drawn in a clearer, more defined way with each passing day? You are either for Israel or against Israel as a sovereign nation with a right to its own capital and its own land. You're either pro-life or pro-abortion. Your definition of marriage includes one man and one woman, or embraces any number of variations. You are either "tolerant" or "intolerant." You either celebrate "diversity" or you celebrate the "One True God." Let's face it: Those of us who have committed our lives to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and have accepted the Bible as the standard by which we live, have chosen a narrow way. We believe this narrow way leads to true life on earth and everlasting life after that. Believing this makes us SEPARATE from the world.

The Messiah Yeshua spoke about the narrow way that leads to life in Matthew 7:13-14, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* The road we are on as disciples of Messiah Yeshua was also prophesied in Isaiah chapter 35. It is called the *"Highway of Holiness,"* a road where the redeemed of the Lord walk upward to Zion with everlasting joy on their heads. (See Isaiah 35:8-10.)

As we journey to our Heavenly Promised Land, we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth (1Peter 2:11), celebrating not as the heathen, but as children of God Most High. As such, we celebrate His Feasts outlined in Leviticus 23: *"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My Feasts.'"* (Leviticus 23:1-2)

Are these Feasts only for the Jewish people? No, absolutely not! They are God's holy *moedim*, His appointed times to meet with His children in a special way. If you are His child, they are for you. But make no mistake: Celebrating the Feasts of the Lord will set you apart, make you different and "separate." You may have to wrestle with the "fear of man" vs the "fear of the Lord." Follow the leading of the Ruach HaKodesh. He will not lead you astray!

This fall, we will be celebrating three of the Feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23: The Feast of Trumpets (September 19), The Day of Atonement (September 28), and The Feast of Tabernacles (October 2-10). We have an entire month to prepare our hearts to meet with God during His Feasts.

### Shabbat: A Separation in Time

It is interesting to note that the FIRST of God's feasts is a WEEKLY FEAST, called the Sabbath, *Shabbat* in Hebrew. *"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord..."* (Leviticus 23:3) On a Hebrew calendar, the first six days have numbers, not names. Only one day has a name, the seventh day. It is called *Shabbat*. Sunday never was nor is the biblical Sabbath. The God of Israel was referring to what we know as Saturday when He said, *"...Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you..."* (Exodus 31:12-14).

The Sabbath was proclaimed by God to be a "holy day" to be observed by His people throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. Keeping the Sabbath has kept Israel as a separate people throughout the ages. In Israel, the week revolves around *Shabbat*. Preparations begin on Wednesday or Thursday and by Friday afternoon, the fresh flowers, linens, special foods, etc., are almost ready in anticipation of the weekly "guest" who is about to arrive. *Shabbat* is seen as a gift from God to His people. God Himself rested and was refreshed on the seventh day. When His people do likewise, they are demonstrating that they are no longer slaves to work, but free people, whose God has given them a day to give thanks, reflect, re-create, and delight in their Creator. Observing *Shabbat* is a way to honor God and acknowledge Him as Creator of all things.

Our Messiah Yeshua observed *Shabbat*, and never commanded the observance of Sunday as a day of meeting. The Apostle Paul's custom was to meet on *Shabbat* (Acts 17:2; 13:14, 42, 44; 16:13; 18:4). Neither Yeshua nor Paul ever spoke about the creation of a new "Christian Sabbath." Even the phrase, "The Lord's Day," which appears only once in the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, does not mean Sunday. Sunday became the Christian day of worship centuries after the resurrection, as part of the general Church rejection and replacement of everything Jewish. Biblically, however, there is no such thing as a "Christian Sabbath." There is only one Sabbath, God's seventh-day *Shabbat*.

There is an amazing promise in Isaiah 56:6-7 to non-Jews who decide to keep the *Shabbat*: *"Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants—Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer..."*

We say all this to educate and inform, not to condemn. God is a God of grace; He looks at the heart. *"One person esteems one day above another..."* (See Romans 14:5-13.) Seek the Lord. Be convinced in your own heart. Find a way to honor God's *Shabbat* in your life. He will show you!

### ***Havdalah: A Celebration of Separation***

There is a special ceremony that celebrates the end of the weekly Sabbath called *havdalah*, a Hebrew word meaning "separation" or "division." This ceremony highlights the separation between *Shabbat* and the rest of the week. It also affirms the separation between the sacred and the secular, between light and darkness, and between Israel and the Nations.

*Havdalah* was originally part of the *Amidah* synagogue prayer at the conclusion of the Sabbath, but later became a home celebration for the benefit of the children. The ceremony takes place after nightfall on Saturday. In some homes, the children are the ones who watch for the first three stars which signal that *Shabbat* is over and it's time for *havdalah*. They enjoy holding the multi-wicked *havdalah* candle, smelling the fragrant spices, and watching a cup of wine overflow. Songs are sung, including, *"Behold, God is my salvation..."* and prayers for the coming week are said. An example of this comes from our little book **Havdalah** that you can use as a guide in your own home or congregation: "Blessed art Thou, our Father, our King who has given us this holy day, a holy calling and Your Holy Spirit within us. We thank you, Lord, for calling us out of darkness and into Your marvellous light. We give You praise for separating us from our sin through the atoning sacrifice of our Messiah Yeshua. Help us, O God, to follow Him in this week, to walk in the light, to walk in love, and to glorify You in our lives. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen."

### **Separated Unto God**

What makes God's people separate? What sets them apart? God gave Moses the answer to these questions, after leaving Mount Sinai, as recorded in Exodus 33:14-16: *"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' Then He said to Him. 'If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth.' "*



THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN A PERSON'S LIFE MAKES THEM SEPARATE. This kind of separation is also called **Holiness**. The root meaning of the Hebrew word for holy, *kadosh*, is separation. Just as God called Israel to be a holy nation, distinct, separate, chosen and special, He calls all believers in Messiah to be set apart for Himself. He has said to both, *"Be holy, for I am holy"* (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15). Believers in Messiah are even called a *"chosen generation," "a royal priesthood," "a holy nation,"* and *"His own special people"* (1 Peter 2:9). Just as God separated the light from the darkness at Creation, He has called a people—separated them—from darkness—to light, God's light.

The Hebrew letter *koof* ק is the letter that symbolizes holiness in the Jewish mind. Grant Luton, in his book, **In His Own Words**, mentions that if someone found a container marked with the letter ק in Yeshua's day, it was assumed that its contents were consecrated. ק was used to label sacred objects because this letter traditionally symbolizes holiness. "In its strictest sense the word *kadosh* is a neutral word having neither good nor bad connotations. To be holy—*kadosh*—basically means to be set aside for a special purpose. Other terms commonly used for this are 'sanctified' or 'consecrated.' " The Bible speaks of people, animals and other objects being made *kadosh*.

Holiness—being set apart or separate—is a pre-condition of righteousness. When God makes a person holy, righteous acts are the result. They are the natural fruit of a life set apart unto God. We are made holy by our relationship with Yeshua, the Holy One. Immersion is a public statement of having been separated, made holy—*kadosh*—unto God. If you have never been immersed in water since you believed, we strongly suggest that you take this step of obedience. It will strengthen your walk with the Lord.

Luton explains that there are two aspects of holiness, the aspect of being made holy and the aspect of developing holiness. "The more one yields one's mind, time, strength, and talents in service to God, the more one sets oneself apart entirely to Him in holiness...There is a holiness whereby Yeshua takes hold of us, and there is the exercise of holiness whereby we take hold of Him. The first brings salvation; the second brings fruitfulness. Again, God is holy and therefore desires us to be holy by separating ourselves from the standards and appetites of this world and pledging our loyalty to Him."

### Separate From The World

God, through the Apostle Paul, makes some strong statements concerning the believer's separation from the world in 2 Corinthians chapter 6. He forbids believers to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, emphasizing that believers are the temple of the living God, and as such should have no communion with darkness. He even connects experiencing the Fatherhood of God with separation from the world, *"...Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"* (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Just as the priests in temple times were instructed to "distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Leviticus 10:10), believers, as a New Covenant priesthood, are required to do the same. Do we readily discern the difference between good and evil? Is our standard the Word of God? Are we politically correct instead of biblically correct? Are modesty and purity values that we uphold? What about respect for authority? Do we consider R-rated movies acceptable? Do we love the world more than we love God? Consider what John, the beloved disciple of Yeshua said about this, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."* (1 John 2:15-17)

Yeshua made it clear, in His last time of sharing with His disciples, that His followers are not

of the world, just as He was not of the world. He prayed that God would set His disciples apart in a special way: *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."* (John 17:17) That is the bottom line. THE TRUTH SETS US APART. IT MAKES US SEPARATE. GOD'S WORD IS THE TRUTH.

Obedience to the Word of God always brings about a "separation test" according to Howard Katz, author of **Seven Essential Relationships**. Many of you have experienced separation in various forms since becoming believers in Yeshua. Like Him, you became "separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26) and may have suffered the loss of relationships or been misunderstood because of your new life in Him. Separation from the world may bring persecution (Queen Esther, Daniel, and Yeshua would agree), but cleaving to God brings joy, victory, blessings, and great rewards in heaven (Matthew 5:10-12).

### Separation of Sheep and Goats

While separation **unto** God is a wonderful thing, separation **from** God is a dreadful prospect. This is the destiny of unbelievers, those whom the Bible calls "goats." *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ...' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...' "* (Matthew 25:31-34, 41)

The verses in between 34 and 41 tell us the basis upon which the separation is made: ministering to the Lord by ministering to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the prisoner, the poor, and the sick. Yeshua said, *"...inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me"* (Matthew 25:40). The Bible tells us that, in the end, God has given final judgment to His Son, Yeshua (John 5:22). This portion of Scripture involves what is known as the Last Judgment. The word "nations" is *"goyim"* in Hebrew and refers to Gentiles.

When Yeshua comes in His glory, He will judge everyone who has ever lived. Each will receive his sentence from the King of Kings, to whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). All who are judged will be separated into two classes: disciples of Yeshua (those who had faith **and** works, especially acts of mercy, and those who were not true believers in Yeshua, by **His** definition, which includes a demonstration of faith through loving deeds.

It is interesting to note that there must be **evidence** to support one's faith in Yeshua in order to be placed among the sheep "on His right." The question will not merely be what we professed, but what we practiced, especially in regard to "Yeshua's brethren." Who are they? Many believe that this refers to the Jewish people, others that it refers to fellow believers. Whichever it is, separation occurs on the basis of service and acts of kindness (even though salvation is by grace, through faith). Be assured of this: *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9)

If the Trumpet (*Shofar*) sounds **this Yom Teruah**, will you be ready to meet the Messiah? Are you one of His sheep? It's not too late to get on the right side. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). God has been preparing a kingdom for YOU since the creation of the world. That kingdom is made available to each of us even now—in the form of righteousness, peace, and joy through the Messiah Yeshua! Commit your life to following Him.

Loving you and our Shepherd,

P.S. Our **Mercy** Mission to Israel was a "supremely sheeply" deed. **You** ministered to Yeshua and His brethren, both Israeli pre-believers and believers!