

## Set Apart Holy

By Moshe Schwab

It says in Leviticus that God has separated us. "And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine;" Leviticus 20:26 NKJV.

To be separated means to be separate in thought and deed so that we imitate God's character. God created us in His image so that we could be like God and with His characteristics – good, kind, merciful, tenderhearted, forgiving etcetera. We are to elevate our lives above base character that is evil so that we are people of goodness and honor. We are to be a special people who are separate and holy.

Not all Old Testament Israelites were holy and not all Christians are holy. God knows who is holy and who isn't. Some don't do what God tells them to do. It is wrong to think that just because He deemed all of Israel as holy that they were perfectly separated for God. "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer." Deuteronomy 10:16 NKJV. If they all were holy and separate, there would not have been need for any encouragement.

How can you circumcise your heart? Circumcision is a sign of covenant commitment to God. We can be committed to God only on the surface, but God wants commitment to Him to be deep within us. Not all the motivations of every Israelite were pure and neither are our motivations. Even though they experienced the true God, some may have only included God among their other beliefs. The same is also true today.

We see an example of the lack of holy separation in Psalm 4:2-3 NKJV. "How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? Selah. But know that the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the Lord will hear when I call to Him." God knows our hearts and whether or not we have godly thoughts and deeds.

When Rabbi Shaul (Paul) says we are "set apart" or "separated" he is thinking of a people who have separated themselves to be holy by keeping God's commandments. Yeshua (Jesus) said, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, accompanied by all the angels, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be assembled before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats." Matt. 25:31-32 CJB. The sheep are those who decide to live holy lives and the goats are the rebellious who do not choose to follow God and keep His commandments.

The terms set apart and separated were used for separating oneself from sinful despicable acts or separation of oneself from those that engage in sinful acts. It was part of Jewish culture at the time of Yeshua; they understood what it meant to separate oneself. Kefa (Peter) goes with the Gentiles in Acts 10 only after God tells him to go. Kefa then must explain himself to the top leaders of Nazarene Judaism in Acts 11. A consensus is reached after some contention. Worthy Gentiles who decide to live holy and good lives can also believe on Yeshua and receive the Holy Spirit.

Later, we learn in Acts 15 that Gentiles must also learn and obey the Torah. This scripture in Acts 15 is about Gentiles learning the Torah: "Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat." Acts 15:21 CJB. Even though Gentiles were made part of Nazarene Judaism, the Gentiles were to obey the Torah. Being an observant believer depended on separating oneself and doing what is right and good.

Even in the Quran community at the time of Yeshua, they were expected to be separate. "The men of holiness who walk in perfection, it shall not be merged with that of the men of injustice who have not

purified their life by separating themselves from iniquity and walking in the way of perfection." From 4 Q 255-264.<sup>1</sup>

To what degree are we to separate ourselves? Those that were sinning could not be part of the community unless they repented, see 1 Cor. 5. Those in the community could associate with those who did not believe. 1 Corinthians 5:10 CJB says, "I didn't mean the sexually immoral people outside your community, or the greedy, or the thieves or the idol-worshippers—for then you would have to leave the world altogether!" Most certainly those who were interested in learning about the community were welcome. When the great ancient Rabbi Hillel was asked by a Gentile if he could become part of the Jewish community he said to the man, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow."<sup>2</sup> In others words, yes he can be Jewish and he gave him something to start working on. Of course, the inquirer would then learn all the commandments of God and do them.

Shaul says we are not to team up with sinful people. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 it says: "Do not yoke yourselves together in a team with unbelievers. For how can righteousness and lawlessness be partners?" "Yoke" was a common term referring to keeping the Torah, God's laws. Early believers would have understood Shaul (Paul) to be saying not to team up with people who don't keep the Torah, God's commandments. Shaul says, 'How can those who do what is right (the righteous) be partners with the lawless (anomia – those not keeping the Torah; nomia is used in the Septuagint for the Torah)?' Here again we see the idea of separation. Shaul uses very strong language in 2 Cor. 10:5-6: "We demolish arguments and every arrogance that raises itself up against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey the Messiah. And when you have become completely obedient, then we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience."

When Shaul talks about himself being separated he means that he has taken a position of holiness. "Set apart for the Good News of God." Rom. 1:1 CJB. It would be easy to pass over the words "set apart," but the words meant something specific in that culture. When he talks about us not being separated from the love of Messiah in Romans 8, we perhaps think of it in a physical sense; namely that we cannot be physically separated from Messiah. It should be more the idea that we are a holy people who keep God's commandments and therefore cannot be separated from Yeshua.

We should get this sense from Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" God is for us because of the mutual separation of us by God and our decision to be a separate holy people. The context of Romans 8 should be understood in this way. Some people mistakenly say that the term being separate had to do with not being around Gentiles; it has more to do with staying pure spiritually. Others say that being separate means that we have eternal security; they mean that once we believe in Yeshua we are permanently "saved." Actually, it is more correct to say that we are secure in that we have decided to follow Yeshua and keep God's commandments. It says in Isaiah 59:2, "It is your own crimes that separate you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you." And in Isaiah 1:18-19 it says, "'Come now,' says ADONAI (God), 'let's talk this over together. Even if your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; even if they are red as crimson, they will be like wool. If you are willing and obedient...'"

Holiness is not just a rubber stamp of holiness and separateness as some teach. Shaul tells us to be to the praise of God's glory in Ephesians. We are to be a people of goodness and honor and therefore to God's glory.

<sup>1</sup> The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English (7th Edition) (Penguin Classics) (p. 110). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel\\_the\\_Elder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_the_Elder)

Things can even be holy if they are separated for holy use:

Marriage – between a man and a woman who are living right.

Our body – the Holy Spirit in us is holy; we are holy and separate if we do what is right and are led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our helper to do what is right.

Our Giving – everyday money when used right and our giving for the purposes of God is holy.

Prophets – if they are doing what is right and truly hearing from God.

Yehováh – Yehováh is God's true name and it is Holy; Exodus 3:15

Yeshua – Yeshua is Jesus' true name and it is holy.

The Sabbath – Every Sabbath is holy (Genesis 2:1-3)

Other believers – if they are living separate lives of goodness and godliness.

Spiritual leaders – Those who are leading people to do what is right and they also do what is right.

Places of worship – if they are actually holy places where doing what is right is taught.

Our marriage, our friendships, our transactions, our family, etcetera can be holy. Our dishes can even be holy. "Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts;" Zechariah 14:21 NKJV. Isn't that amazing. I love the idea of having a holy marriage and a holy home. Shabbat was made holy by God and is always holy. "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made;" Genesis 2:3 NKJV.

Years ago, I wondered if the day we say is Shabbat is the same day as Shabbat from antiquity (in ancient times). There was someone in the 1800s who went around the world to see which day the Jews celebrated Shabbat. It was the same day we now think that Shabbat is, our Friday evening at sunset to Saturday evening at sunset, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week. The biblical day begins in the evening. ("So the evening and the morning were the first day;" Genesis 1:5 NKJV).

Not everything we do is holy though. The Bible says we are separated from God by our sins (Isaiah 59:2 CJB, "It is your own crimes that separate you from your God."). Some Israelites and Christians think they cannot be separated from God, but when we don't follow God's commandments, we separate ourselves from God and we need God's forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us;" 1 John 1:9-10 NKJV. We are to seek God and be a separate holy people by keeping God's commandments. When we sin, we are to get back right with God and ask for forgiveness.

Some theology has taught us that righteousness doesn't have to do with doing what is right. How ridiculous is it to think that when we don't do what is right we are still doing what is right. That is a ridiculous contradiction. Righteousness is actually doing what is right. Justified means living a just life. Being holy is actually living a good and godly separate life. Holiness is the result of something that is used right or someone who does what is right. Again, we separate our lives from wrongdoing and are then God's holy separate people. It is not scriptural to say a person is holy if they don't separate themselves by keeping God's commandments.

I find it very encouraging though that we can be a holy separate person. When Shaul (Paul) writes to the holy ones (saints), he is writing to people who have actually separated themselves in attitude and what they do and are God's set apart holy people who follow Him and keep His commandments. This is what a saint (holy separate one) is.

We are to be a righteous people (who do what is right) and be clean spiritually (because we do what is right and follow God's commandments). Holiness is being special, but a person who does evil is not special. The Bible says an evil person is destined for the lake of fire. "He who overcomes shall inherit all

things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death;" Revelation 21:7-8 NKJV. Be a holy separate person who does what is right. The Bible says that God will be with us in the present, and then sometime in the future, we will be with a good and kind God for all eternity.

The reason for our closeness to God is because we follow God. This makes perfect sense, so don't be confused by theology that doesn't understand how the New Testament has its roots in the Old Testament. It says in Proverbs in the Old Testament, "Do not let grace and truth leave you— bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and esteem in the sight of God and of people. Trust in ADONAI with all your heart; do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him; then he will level your paths." Prov. 3:3-6 CJB.

We are to be a holy people that follow God's commandments. Shaul reasons from the Old Testament portion<sup>3</sup> in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, "Go out from their midst; separate yourselves; don't even touch what is unclean. Then I myself will receive you. In fact, I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters." 2 Cor. 6:17-18.

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<sup>3</sup> When Shaul speaks, he speaks as a Rabbi would and has scriptures from the Old Testament in mind. Isa. 52:11 CJB says, "Leave! Leave! Get out of there! Don't touch anything unclean!"