

# Living Set Apart: A Multi-Point Devotional Journey Through the "Holy-Hood"

## 1. Redefining Holiness Beyond the "Holly"

Correctly defining "holiness" is a strategic necessity for every believer. In our modern culture, the word "holy" has become tangled up with "holly" trees and ancient myths. Many of us grew up thinking holiness was a "feeling," a supernatural "glow," or even a lucky charm that protects us from bad spirits. This comes from the word's history.

The English word "holy" is linked to the 11th-century Old High German *hulis*, the Old English *holan*, and even the ancient Gaelic *kulian*—all of which mean "holly." Modern etymology shows us the words are not linked academically, yet they are linked in how they were communally pursued together through actions and traditions.

Ancient Celts often viewed the holly tree as a consecrated symbol of the "Holly King," a figure believed to govern the waning light of the winter season. Within Celtic and Norse mythologies, this plant was frequently linked to deities of thunder, serving as a supposed mystical shield against the strike of lightning. The Druidic tradition attributed specific protective properties to the holly, treating it as a supernatural ward against misfortune or malevolent spirits. This evergreen came to embody the enduring nature of the earth; eventually, within various cultural shifts, it was rebranded as the "Holy Tree," blurring the lines between botanical tradition and sacred status. We still see this "luck" mythos today: people think holy water repels evil, or a crucifix can thwart monsters. But Biblical holiness isn't a vibe or a halo that "glows with power." Biblically speaking nothing has to glow, and nothing has to thwart off monsters for it to be sacred. The Hebrew word is *Kadosh* (H6918). It simply means to be separate, apart, and sacred. It is a status of being clean and free from the defilement of crimes and idolatry. Biblical holiness is a choice to be set apart for YHWH's purposes, regardless of whether it "feels" supernatural.

### Self-Reflective Questions:

- Have I been waiting to "feel" holy before I start obeying YHWH's instructions?
- In what ways have I let "good luck" or cultural traditions take the place of actual set-apart living?

**Actionable Challenge:** Identify one habit you have that is based more on "tradition" than on the Word. This week, replace that habit with a specific action that honors YHWH's definition of being clean and pure. **Connective Tissue:** Once we understand that holiness is a choice to be set apart, we must look at the very first thing YHWH ever declared holy.

## 2. The Sabbath—A Testimony, Not a Suggestion

The very first thing YHWH sanctified was not a person or a place, but a day. In Genesis 2:3, Elohim blessed the seventh day and set it apart ( *Va'yiQadesh* ) because He ceased ( *Shabbat* ) from His work. The Sabbath is holy because He declared it so. It doesn't matter if we recognize it or not; it remains holy. However, we face a massive "cultural drift."

Think of it like a "Cheeseburger." The hamburger came from Hamburg, Germany, but we took that word, added cheese, and now we "own" the cheeseburger as a completely different American tradition. There is no Cheseburg, Germany. We've done the same thing with the Sabbath. Cultural drift has led many to believe they can "choose" Sunday or any other day. This drift is even hidden in our Bibles. The word *Sabbaton* (G4521) appears 68 times in the New Testament. In the Greek, *Sabbaton* can refer to a "se'nnight"—the interval between two Sabbaths. Yet, translators often filled that linguistic gap by adding the phrase "first day of the week" to reflect community sentiment rather than what YHWH actually said. When we honor the seventh day, we aren't being "legalistic." We are giving a "community testimony" that YHWH is the one who defines time and holiness.

**Self-Reflective Questions:**

- Am I treating the Sabbath as a day I can "choose" for myself, or am I honoring the day YHWH specifically set apart?
- When I face resistance about the Sabbath, do I see it as a chance to give a testimony for YHWH's standards?

**Actionable Challenge:** This coming seventh day, practice "ceasing" ( *Shabbat* ). Stop your normal work and social media to focus entirely on learning the Word and resting in YHWH's presence.

**Connective Tissue:** Being set apart on the Sabbath is just the beginning; true holiness must also show up in how we treat the people around us.

### 3. The Community Standard of Kindness

Holiness is not just a private, individual decision; it is a "plural" command. In Leviticus 19:2, YHWH says *Kadoshim*—"Ye (in plural) shall be holy." This means holiness is our community standard. One of the best ways to understand this is through the word *Mishpat* . While often translated as "judgment," it includes action to stand in the gap for others. It's about standing up for someone when everyone else is pointing fingers at them or when they are in need.

Leviticus 19 gives us physical evidence of a set-apart heart. We are commanded not to reap the very corners of our fields or gather every single grape. We must leave room for the poor and the stranger. True holiness also means we refuse to be a "talebearer"—someone who goes "up and down between cities" spreading gossip that destroys lives. These actions are the "fruit" of our set-apart status. If we want to represent YHWH, we must care for our neighbors as much as we care for our own reputations.

**Self-Reflective Questions:**

- Am I "reaping the corners of my field" by keeping every bit of my profit and time for myself?
- Do I participate in "talebearing" (gossip) that breaks down the holiness of my community?

**Actionable Challenge:** Find a practical way to "leave the corners of your vineyard" this week by giving a portion of your time or a resource to someone who cannot pay you back.

**Connective Tissue:** While these rules for community are clear, we often face intense pressure to choose our "reputation" over YHWH's instructions.

#### 4. Choosing YHWH Over the "Nobles"

The story of King Herod and John the Baptist is a warning about the danger of "saving face." Herod actually "feared John" and recognized he was a holy man. Mark 6 tells us Herod even "observed" John and "heard him gladly." But Herod was trapped by his own pride and by the wife he should have never had. On a "convenient day" (his birthday) his wife put in action a plan to have John killed for speaking the truth. The plan succeeded and Herod made a boastful oath in front of his "lords, captains, and chiefs." To avoid looking foolish in front of these "nobles," Herod murdered the very man he knew was holy.

We often face the same sort of social pressure between cultural stations and YHWH's commands. Are we more afraid of looking "weird" in front of our social circles than we are of disobeying YHWH? We must be willing to flee from evil the moment it appears. We must value YHWH's opinion more than our station in the crowd.

#### **Self-Reflective Questions:**

- Am I more afraid of my friends' opinions than I am of disobeying YHWH?
- Like Herod, do I "gladly hear" the Word but then ignore it when I'm around people I want to impress?

**Actionable Challenge:** Identify a situation where you usually "go along to get along" with the crowd. Next time it happens, choose to quietly but firmly step away. Your legs are weapons so get to steppin!

**Connective Tissue:** Avoiding evil is only half the battle; we must actively "gird up" our minds to walk in the Spirit.

#### 5. Becoming a Doer of the Work (Shamar)

To truly live set apart, we must understand the Hebrew concept of *Shamar*. There is a difference between hearing and acting. King Herod *heard* John (he heard him gladly), and he even "observed" him, but he failed to *Shamar*—to actually guard the Word. True *Shamar* is an active form of worship where we guard YHWH's instructions by putting them into motion.

James 1:21-25 warns us not to be "forgetful hearers." He compares a hearer who doesn't act to a man who looks in a mirror and immediately forgets what he looks like. If we listen to a sermon but don't change our walk, we are "deceiving ourselves." We must lay aside the "superfluity of naughtiness" and receive the Word with meekness. Remember: Salvation is the starting line, not the finish line. We are called to be "obedient children," no longer fashioning ourselves after our old desires.

#### **Self-Reflective Questions:**

- When I look in the "mirror" of the Word, do I make changes, or do I walk away and forget?
- Am I treating my faith as a "finish line" I've already crossed, or a "starting line" for a new way of living?

**Actionable Challenge:** Read one chapter of the teachings of Yeshua today. Pick one specific instruction and "Shamar" it—act on it immediately so that you do not become a forgetful hearer.

**Final Thought:** YHWH is the one who sanctifies us, but He calls us to active obedience. When we choose to walk in His ways, we move from the myths of the world into the true, set-apart life of the Kingdom.