

Elders Meetings

Dear Caleb and Jonathan,

I am very happy to write you both because there are many things on my heart which we have been receiving from Yoneq at the responsible brothers meetings. I desire that the same encouragement which has come to us could be received by all you brothers there. I am also glad to write to you because I remember both of you fondly and I am encouraged to hear of the marvelous grace which is upon you to keep the Body there in coordination with and under the Head. I was thrilled when I heard how Caleb, for Jerusalem's sake, is not keeping silent but is lifting up his voice in the midst of the assembly and is being heard as a trumpet proclaiming the truth about our Elohim and His Son. I know that our Father has found you both worthy to appoint you as watchmen on the walls.

All of us who gather for our meetings have been hearing about the awesome responsibility that is upon us if we have been called to a place of responsibility. Yoneq has been laboring here as a wise master builder to lay a solid foundation for the establishment of the government here in Sus. One of the most important things that is being deeply communicated to our hearts is that none of us — not any one of us — can do anything without being vitally connected to the Vine. Apart from Him we can do nothing. Yoneq shared how 17 years ago, this very word was indelibly imprinted upon his heart. He came to see that we must acknowledge and admit to our Father that we cannot do anything apart from him. We are totally helpless without him. A worm is totally helpless, so in the right sense of the word, we must be as even our Father calls Jacob sometimes. If we acknowledge Him, He will direct our paths. We must come to see that the flesh profits nothing, but that if we don't acknowledge him and we walk in the strength of our own flesh, then we are only walking by our own natural abilities, our own light. Unless we are enlightened by Him, then we are enlightened by our own nature. In Him is life and His life is the light of men. He is the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man (Jn 1:4,9).

To be enlightened means to be endowed with spiritual understanding, to be able to comprehend the truth. If we are enlightened by our Master, then this is how we will walk, but if we are living by our own light, our own natural abilities, then sorcery will come in. This is what overtook the Edah in the first century and we see the power of walking in your own light today because men are actually able to do miracles today through this magic. The same could happen to us if we do not come to the point of seeing that we cannot do any thing without Him. We cannot speak, lead, teach, work, or coordinate anything, without Him (Mt 7:22-23).

Our Father desires so much for us to make it. He desires that we would abide in the Vine. If we don't abide in Him we will be cut off, but He doesn't desire that. He desires that we would bear much fruit by keeping our part of the covenant, abiding in Him. In Him we have life and peace. We can also know this absolutely that if we abide in Him we don't sin. It would be impossible for someone to sin if he is abiding in Him (1 Jn 3:6).

Our Father doesn't want us to fall. All things have been written down for us, the last generation, so that we don't fall. The First Church had to fall. Israel had to fall so that by their example, we could build perfectly now after 2000 years. We have all their mistakes and errors written down for us to look back on so that we won't make the same mistakes. We stand at the highest vantage point now to see how the others didn't make it. We can look back as far as Adam, Cain, Ham, Nimrod, Esau, Israel, the first Edah.

All these things are written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor 10:1; Rom 15:4). We can be enlightened more than any men so far. Paul's ministry and all the work our Father has done has not been in vain. Paul wrote the Scriptures and we have them, but he did not bring about the Jubilee for twelve tribes. Paul is the most respected of the apostles. He had a ministry to the nations. His very words in Acts 13:47 were directly from Isaiah 49. But there were things hidden from them, like, for example, His return. We can actually be men who do not have to have anything hidden from us if we are enlightened men. We must have revelation. If we don't have revelation we are worthless. A man's worth is measured by his revelation.

Yahshua is the only one who can enlighten us. It was through Him that all things were created and all things are committed to Him, even the church. He is the builder of the Edah, He is restoring it. In Mt 16:18 He declares that He will build His Edah. He will build it through men to whom He has given gifts. The Father entrusted the Son with everything and now the great miracle is that the Son entrusts men with the Holy Spirit. His authority has been delegated today to men. If you don't recognize that authority you don't recognize Him. Today we have the Scriptures but the apostles are dead. So the Word today cannot be brought to us through dead apostles. It must come through living apostles. We need both the living Word and the written Word. We must acknowledge our Father's way, unity comes through men. If you can't receive men you can't receive Yahshua. If a person is committed to Messiah there in Island Pond, then that person will come under your authority and be committed to you.

The first Edah fell because of its rejection of Paul. It is evident in the Word about the rejection of authority, of not receiving the sent one. They questioned Paul, they came against him, and entertained thoughts. We must have nothing to do with Satan, the accuser. We must leave no room for him in our spirit. Satan can speak to us, to our spirit, trying to put things into our heart. He tries to put things into us that will cause us to divide. We can see that it is a powerful thing that Satan puts ideas into us through the example of Judas. Satan suggested things to him in his spirit and then Judas started entertaining them, and then having already these things in his heart, Judas betrayed our Master. We must leave no room for him but we must take every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah (Jn 13:2; 2 Cor 10:5). Other translations say we must carry every thought as into slavery. We cannot allow the thought to register, we cannot take it in and own it as our own thought, but we must realize where it is coming from. Whenever these thoughts are taken captive by the Edah, then something will happen (2 Cor 10:6).

Yahshua is waiting for all these things to be put under His feet. He desires that we would bring thoughts and accusations, the last enemy of this age, into subjection.

You all can imagine how these words are piercing our hearts and causing us to see our need more for our Master. We have been coming to our meetings seeing our need to be in communion with Yahshua. Yoneq has shared how the first thing we must do in our meetings is to acknowledge our Master. We must come together in His name and speak freely about Him. Then the second thing is we must guard one another and then talk about the sheep, and last of all, business affairs.

Concerning the guarding of each other, a lot has been spoken. It is vital that there would be nothing in any of us against one another, so that we could lift up holy hands without wrath and dissension before beginning our meeting. Lifting up holy hands is a guard. We must confess everything beforehand. If we have a disagreement with our wife, a brother or sister, this must be made clear and confessed before the meeting. We cannot lift up holy hands unless they are clean, or else we are pretenders. He desires to answer our prayers. That's why everything must be cleared up before we lift up holy hands. He wants to show that He is in our midst. We should not be the one who will keep the wisdom from coming into our meeting, or hinder our prayers. We could be the one who prevents grace from being dispensed.

This morning there was much cleansing that came to all of us. We all cleared up things that were in our hearts towards one another. Ephraim confessed and brought out things he had in his heart concerning John Abraham because of a coat. It had been several years since it happened but it still affected him having complete communion with Yochanan. Ahimelech also confessed and repented about things he had harbored in his heart against Yochanan. Jonathan Elazar confessed how he wanted to be happy in being a servant and be honest that he was not an elder but a deacon. Caleb David was very open concerning things about his wife and his need for wisdom concerning her. Then Haggai brought up something that was in his heart which he had against Yochanan and me. We talked about it and realized that we had seriously hurt him by our actions. We had offended him. An offended brother is harder to win than a walled city. Yochanan and I repented because we had not been honest with Haggai and clearly spoken our heart to him concerning certain matters but what we did was to invite him to a meeting with our wives, without telling him what it was about. He took it as if we were going to have tea together and enjoy special fellowship. He was honored to come and be with us, but we brought out all these things in his life and he

felt so betrayed and hurt that we hadn't spoken these things to him apart from this setting. We really saw our sin and our lack in not truly being a friend to Haggai. Yoneq shared how one time there was a dictator who, when there was someone he didn't like, would invite him to a marvelous feast and then he would kill him. We cannot be men who would slay our brother because of our lack of grace and wisdom. Yochanan and I also repented of our lack of wisdom and grace in leading the Edah here because we led the Edah into a lot of unnecessary judgments and Body meetings concerning people. Yoneq shared how we should be careful about bringing people before the Body. This should be a last resort. People living in this environment of constant Body meetings could shape up their act because of fear. Also, it could hurt certain younger members of the Body. That is why we must make a difference between the *Edah* (the whole community together) and the *Qahal* (certain representatives of the Church meeting together to take care of certain matters). We fell into having Body meetings about a whole lot of people and judged them as not having the Holy Spirit. Chanowk was one of those, for example. It is difficult once you have made that judgment on a person for that person to recover and think any other way. We realized we did that in Chanowk's case as well as in the case of Manasseh and Tsitsah. Both of these people are members as it speaks in 1 Cor 12:23-24. These are the type of people who need more abundant honor. They are less seemly members who we disregarded and didn't bear with. These people are in our midst to test us and we need to be inexhaustible. Yoneq also said that if we can be cleansed from these things and make up for it as much as possible, more people will come in who need more abundant honor. We are going to get in contact with them, repent to them, and ask them to come back. I am also writing a letter to Chanowk about all this.

We saw through all of this that there are people in the flock who need our special attention. Single brothers and sisters need comforting, special attention. Sometimes we look at people's lacks or feeble-mindedness and misjudge them and bring harsh treatment to them. We become overbearing and merciless. So we judge them to not have the Holy Spirit and we send them away. We don't realize that we are in reality throwing them out to death, to the torturers. Yoneq said that if it was him being sent away, he would grab a pole or anything with all his might and cry and scream at the top of his lungs, "*Please don't make me leave!*"

In the light of all these things it is becoming evident what a great responsibility it is to be an elder and lead the flock. Yoneq shared with us when he came that he truly desires to establish the eldership here so he has been bringing many things concerning elders. One thing that has become evident is that an elder must have wisdom and grace. That is the reason why he is chosen as an elder. He has wisdom and grace above the other brothers. So an elder will be one who will seek for wisdom. Yoneq said that if he ceases to pray for wisdom, he can't express any wisdom. Our wisdom comes from our Father. Our own wisdom doesn't amount to anything. The only thing that can accomplish something is wisdom. Our own discernment, indignation, rashness, anger, can't accomplish anything. We will destroy the Edah if we do not seek him. If you seek him, he will let you find him, but if you forsake him, He will reject you forever (1 Chr 28:9).

If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God (Jms 1:5). An elder is an older person, an older man chosen because he has a greater degree of wisdom, faith and talents. He asks for wisdom. Without wisdom, grace and faith (which are the talents he has) that have been given by the Holy Spirit, then an elder will destroy the Edah with his natural abilities. An elder must use every bit of faith given. If he comes short of this wisdom, he should ask God and it will be given to him. This is where the difference lies in *asking*. A man could use his natural abilities as a politician, teacher, doctor, lawyer, coach, but these don't have the wisdom that comes from asking our Father, but it is wrongly their own strength (Jms 1:16-18).

Many times, we as leaders need to be careful what kind of spirit we are projecting to the flock. We are going to face trials, we are going to get it first, so it's a very serious thing how we handle this. We need fortitude. We must be complete, not falling short in anything (Jms 1:4). We must let endurance have its perfect result, a complete and balanced character. To fall short of fortitude and wisdom will be the ultimate reason why we are not able to rule. If we don't have fortitude and wisdom, then this is a disaster among the elders. There is a certain balance we need to maintain in being an elder. The only way we can maintain it is by asking for wisdom. We need to be wise. There is only one thing an elder or leader

should never do, and that is to go one day without asking for wisdom. What if Hakam (*wise man*) went one day without asking for wisdom? He, of all people, should ask for wisdom every day. We should never go through our day knowing that we have not asked for wisdom, or not sensing our need for wisdom.

If we do not ask for wisdom then we will go on in our own wisdom or even speak rashly. We must make sure we don't speak rashly with our lips. Elders must especially guard against this (Ps 106:32-33). Moses spoke rashly. He cowed the people. We can also cow the people with our harsh words. A cowed dog is one who approaches you nervously and shyly with its tail between its legs, always afraid, thinking that you will hit it at any time. We can build or tear down with our tongue (Jms 5:5-6). No one can subdue the tongue (verse 80). With wisdom we can subdue the tongue (verse 13). There is also something else we can be certain of: our Father wants everyone to be quick to listen and *slow to speak*. Some of us are *quick to listen* and *quick to speak*, but it doesn't say this. Some other things Yoneq said concerning elders are these: An elder will be a reader of the word. If we don't know how to shepherd and we don't have wisdom, it's because we don't read the Word, especially Proverbs. If you are a shepherd, you are in the Word. He said we shouldn't come to the meeting unless we are readers of the Word. An elder comes to the meeting to speak his heart. He has no fear of man. He is not a yes man. He is not intimidated. He does not hold back. Elders are those who are in communication with the flock. They know the heart and mind of the people and bring the wisdom of the Body to the meeting. Elders are people who are able to lead, who watch over people's souls. They make sure no one misses the grace of our Father, so no bitter root will arise. The way of the spiritual man is hard. He must go through the door first to be the shepherd of the sheep (Jn 10:1-2). An elder checks his discernment with his fellow elders. There is safety in many counselors.

There is also one other thing we spoke about in one of our meetings that I would like to share with you all, and I would like you to make sure that Ben Nabiy hears this or reads this. One of our goats here died. At our meeting, Yoneq shared that when a goat dies, our Father wants to tell us something. Our animals should be blessed above all other animals. So when one dies, it really means something. It should be a great suffering for us. We should shed tears over that death. The Holy Nation should be better than the nations. The nations didn't shed tears over their animals. They just take it for granted. Sometimes it's a discipline when something like this happens. Especially if we have neglected something. Like when the boathouse chimney burned down. We didn't repair it, we put it off.

Therefore, we must examine everything that happened and the cause of the death. The Holy City must be a standard for the nations. The nations will not enter the Holy City because of the breaking of the natural laws established by our Creator. We must raise our animals in order to obey our Father even at our own cost — milk loss (feed the babies), financial loss (not sell milk).

We must acquire knowledge of how to raise up our animals. Make sure that we are not doing things in ignorance. The lives of our animals are important. The life of that goat went back to our Father. It's not just floating around. It went back to Him that night. That's why it says He knows every sparrow when the life goes out of it. We must know the conditions of the flock — the spiritual flock as well as the physical flock (Pr 27:23). We must know that everyone is in communion with our Master. We must know the condition of the shepherds. We must judge ourselves, then we can judge others (Acts 20:28,17). We also received much encouragement about goats in what it said in Pr 27:23-27; Dt 32:14; and Isa 7:21-22.

I'm really thankful that I was able to write all of these things to you because they have been, and are being, words of life to us here at our meetings. My desire is that they will encourage and strengthen all of you to be able to shepherd the flock of God among you, that you will be able to exercise oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily, with sheer devotion, not as lording it (being tyrannical) over those allotted to your charge, but growing to be examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:1-4), so that when the Chief Shepherd Yahshua our Master appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. It is in His name, our Shepherd of Love, who sought and found us, that I write to you.

Yoceph

The wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, considerate, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, straight-forward, sincere, rich in mercy. True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers. (Jms 3:17-18)