

Two by Two Revisited
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Most of us have been taught that “outreach” is some kind of organized congregational activity, but the biblical examples don't show that. On the contrary, the biblical example is of Yeshua's disciples being sent out with a concise mission that we read about in Mark 16:14-18:

"Later, Yeshua appeared to the Eleven as they were eating, and he reproached them for their lack of trust and their spiritual insensitivity in not having believed those who had seen him after he had risen. Then he said to them, "As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to all creation. Whoever trusts and is immersed will be saved; whoever does not trust will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who do trust: in my name they will drive out demons, speak with new tongues, not be injured if they handle snakes or drink poison, and heal the sick by laying hands on them."

According to Mark 6:7, Yeshua sent his disciples out in pairs:

"And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits."

And similarly, we read in Luke 10:1:

"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go."

This is not accidental, for there is power and authority wherever there are more than one:

Matthew 18:20: *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."*

Most of us have also been taught that outreach is evangelism, and that evangelism is telling people about Yeshua. I suppose it is, but in many cases, through relationships formed, and by serving others, there is a powerful witness that exceeds words. The *shaliach* Paul said something similar in 1 Corinthians 9:19:

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;"

It can generally be said that any activity that serves the needs of persons beyond our families or congregations qualifies as outreach. The service performed can be to unbelievers, but to believers as well, because everyone has need.

Since I announced Ohev's "Two by Two" outreach program, eleven Ohev members comprising six outreach teams have volunteered to join the program. The idea was not that the team

members would necessarily function together, but that they would hold each other accountable for each person's outreach activities, in the hope and expectation that venturing outside of our families and the Messianic Jewish community would stimulate us to a lifestyle of proclaiming God's Word and serving our fellow man in whatever way God leads us.

Eleven people and six teams are wonderful, but evangelistic outreach and serving others is so foundational to the Gospel, that I am sure God wants more of us to step up to the plate. In order to help raise consciousness for outreach and also to find out how our teams have been doing, I invited members of the Two-by-Two teams to share some of their experiences with you in lieu of the usual message.

Every Shabbat we stand and pray the *Sh'ma* which reminds us that when Yeshua was asked:

"Rabbi, which of the mitzvot in the Torah is the most important?" He told him, 'You are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength'. This is the greatest and most important mitzvah. And a second is similar to it, 'You are to love your neighbor as yourself.' All of the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two mitzvot." (Matthew 22:36-40)

When Yeshua said *"All of the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two mitzvot,"* He was also saying *"All of what I teach and stand for is dependent on these two mitzvot."* I am reminded of the way we point and shake our lulavs on *Sukkot*. This is just my way of looking at it, but we point up to God symbolizing our relationship with God, we point down to the earth, symbolizing His provisions for us, and we point East, West, North and South, symbolizing our relationships with our neighbors. All of what we read in the *Tanakh* and the *B'rit Chadasha* instruct us to look upward and outward, and only inward insofar as it helps us to look upward and outward.

Loving our neighbor as ourself does not endorse loving ourselves as is sometimes taught. Rather, God is saying: "Reflect on how you were and, to some degree how, in the natural, you still are. All your affections were turned to fulfilling yourself – your own needs and desires. Well, the kind of attention you are prone to give yourself – that is the kind of love I want you to now give to others."

Interestingly, some of us find it easier to love God than our neighbors, but in Matthew 25:37-40 Yeshua says this:

Then the people who have done what God wants will reply, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you our guest, or needing clothes and provide them? When did we see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' The King will say to them, 'Yes! I tell you that whenever you did these things for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did them for me!'

Well, that is the essence of why God sent His disciples out to serve and preach, and why we at Ohev should all consider teaming up two-by-two to do it. I hope and pray that the next time we call on our two-by-two teams to tell us how they have sought to fulfill that second most important commandment (perhaps in the Spring), there will be many more of us up here with things to share. As God convicts you of the importance of reaching out to others, find someone you would like to entrust to hold you accountable, and let Marinell know so we can know who you are and pray for your ministry.