

We Were Made to Serve

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Have you ever considered why we do many of the things that we do? We go to work in order to receive a salary. We go to school in order to learn so that we can go to work and receive a salary. We play sports for fun and for a sense of achievement. We marry for companionship, status, love, and perhaps to have children. These are all activities that serve our personal desires and needs, and for some, almost everything they do is about serving their personal desires and needs. I know what that is like because before the Lord changed me, that was exactly the way I was. More normally though, there is a mixture of motives in the things we do. We give of ourselves and our money cautiously but charitably. Once we are married, we care for our wife or husband and, if we have children, we care for them as well – even sacrificially at our own expense. But for most people, the circle of those to whom they give is rather small, often only within their own families.

But then, as most of us here, we met the Lord and sacrificial service immediately became our way of life, right? Not right! For most of us, even our reason for inviting Yeshua into our hearts was initially self-serving. We heard from evangelists that giving ourselves to Yeshua was the only way to eternal life, and we wanted to be on good terms with the “Man” who was going to be our eternal landlord. We gradually became disciples in a church or a Messianic congregation, gave up part of our Sundays or Sabbaths, began to tithe, and “little by slowly,” expanded our sphere of service from our nuclear family to our congregational family and, in some cases, even wider than that.

Now I am going to say something that some of us will not like to hear, which is that too many of us still are not where we need to be in regard to serving each other and serving God.

Let’s go back in time and reflect on why God created man in the first place. Scripture does not reveal why so we turn to our infallible source of information Google, and still we do not fully know why. King David wanted to know the answer when he asked God in Psalms 8:4(3)-5(4):

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place- what are mere mortals, that you concern yourself with them; humans, that you watch over them with such care?”

As we search for answers to the question of why God made us, we also come across Acts 17:24-27, which says:

“The God who made the universe and everything in it, and who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in man-made temples; nor is he served by human hands as if he lacked something; since it is he himself who gives life and breath and everything to everyone. From one man he made every nation living on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the limits of their territories and the periods when they would flourish. God did this so that people

would look for him and perhaps reach out and find him although in fact, he is not far from each one of us, ..”

So God did not make us because he lacked something or because He needed us, so why? He was not short of company, for we read in Genesis 1:26:

“Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, in the likeness of ourselves;”

We assume that God was referring to His son and the *Ru’ach HaKodesh*, and there were angels and other creatures in heaven as well, so companionship is not the answer. I will speculate (and remember that this is just speculation), that God created us in order to love us, because creativity and love are part of his very nature. We read in Jeremiah 31:2(3):

“From a distance ADONAI appeared to me, [saying,] "I love you with an everlasting love; this is why in my grace I draw you to me.”

And we read in 1 John 4:8b that:

“..God is love.”

So, I am suggesting that God created us because it is his very nature to create, and God loves us because it is his very nature to love. Had He not created and loved us, perhaps He would have created and loved some other creature. Remember that this is just speculation on my part.

But God did not just create us and set us out there and love us from a distance. He knows each one of us and cares for us. He provided quail and manna for the Israelites in the desert, and Philippians 4:19 assures us that today as well, that:

“.. my God will fill every need of yours according to his glorious wealth, in union with the Messiah Yeshua.”

But don’t we call a person who is at our beck and call – providing for our needs – a servant? Do we dare think of God as a servant? Well, let’s see what Yeshua says about that; in Matthew 20:28 he says:

“For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve- and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

And in John 13:3-8 we read:

“Yeshua was aware that the Father had put everything in his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he rose from the table, removed his outer garments and wrapped a towel around his waist. Then he poured some water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the talmidim and wipe them off with the towel wrapped around him. He came to Shim'on Kefa, who said to him, "Lord! You are washing my feet?" Yeshua answered him, "You don't understand yet what I am doing, but in time you will understand." "No!"

said Kefa, "You will never wash my feet!" Yeshua answered him, "If I don't wash you, you have no share with me."

We are like Kefa. If we do not allow Yeshua who is God to serve us, then we have no share with him. Yes, God is the servant of us all; in John 3:16 we read:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life, instead of being utterly destroyed."

And also in John 15:13:

"No one has greater love than a person who lays down his life for his friends."

Now in my referring to God as our servant, please understand that He is like no other servant. We do not command him – He commands us. Furthermore, by creating us in his image, he imparted his attribute of servanthood to us as well; we were therefore made to serve – to serve God, and also our fellow man; we read in Psalms 2:11:

"Serve ADONAI with fear; rejoice, but with trembling."

And as for serving man, we read in 1 Peter 4:10:

"As each one has received some spiritual gift, he should use it to serve others, like good managers of God's many-sided grace-"

Let me repeat what I have already said. "We were made to serve – to serve God, and also our fellow man." I know I am speaking mainly to believers here, but even to believers these words are sometimes a hard pill to swallow because none of us is as yet perfected, and devoting our lives to serving others is quite the opposite of the way that the world and our natural flesh draws us. It is much easier to think (and many of us have been taught) that selfless servanthood is for the very few whom we call "martyrs" – men and women of exceptional spiritual strength that we read about in the Bible, and that give us a glimpse into what the Kingdom of God will be like in the afterlife. But as for the here and now, we think, God cannot possibly expect such exemplary behavior from us.

Well, if that is the way any of here has been thinking, let's stop right now because it is not at all what the Bible teaches. First, regarding our neighbor [i.e. anyone other than ourself], Yeshua taught his disciples in Matthew 23:11-12 that:

The greatest among you must be your servant, for whoever promotes himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be promoted.

And in Mark 9:35 we read:

He [Yeshua] sat down, summoned the Twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

That is in regard to serving men. In regard to serving God, Deuteronomy 10:20 says:

“You are to fear ADONAI your God, serve him, cling to him and swear by his name.”

And Yeshua said to Satan in Luke 4:8:

“The Tanakh says, ‘Worship ADONAI your God and serve him only.’”

And Yeshua also said in John 12:26:

“If someone is serving me, let him follow me; wherever I am, my servant will be there too. My Father will honor anyone who serves me.”

And in Romans 12:1 we read in the New King James:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

You may recall President John Kennedy’s plea in behalf of our nation when he cried out:

“Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.”

His exhortation was not, at the time, touted as a biblical plea but it was, because he was calling for a spirit of servanthood on the part of our nation’s citizens. I now exhort all of you, my fellow Ohev Yisrael’s citizens, member and non-member, young and old:

“Ask not what your congregation can do for you. Ask what you can do for your congregation.”

This is not just about Ohev Yisrael congregation, it is about the Kingdom of God. Speaking of himself, these words of Yeshua are recorded in Matthew 25:31-40; he 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. The ‘sheep’ he will place at his right hand and the ‘goats’ at his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you made me your guest, I needed clothes and you provided them, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 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!"

The Scripture's relevance for each of us is that, to the extent to which we successfully serve each other, we serve King Yeshua himself. Similarly, and inescapably, when we fail to serve our fellow man and each other, we fail Yeshua as well.

So, let's not fail our Lord, and let each of us consider how we can serve him or, if we are already serving him, how we can serve him more, and more effectively. First, there is our immediate family. What are we doing to serve each other there? If we are single adults and living separately from our parents, are we communicating with them and our siblings regularly? Inquiring about their needs? Praying for them and seeking to help them both spiritually and tangibly when we are able? If we are single adults living at home, are we sharing the burdens of the household, studying diligently if we are in school, and working diligently to bring in support if we are not? If we are children, are we obeying our parents and doing our part to help with the household's chores? Obedience is a very high kind of service. If we are a husband or wife, are we caring for and supporting each other? If we are a husband, are we the spiritual leader of our wife? If we are a wife, are we the kind of helper to our husband for which we were made? If we are either and have children, are we bringing our children up in godliness in the way that they should go? All of these are ways of serving God.

Now that is just within our immediate families. Walk out of our front doors and we are in the community. Our communities are of two kinds, which are the secular community, and the community of believers, and we are called to serve both as the Lord leads us. Everywhere we look, there are opportunities to serve. At our job, do we do just what is required to justify our salaries, or do we seek to make the jobs of our supervisors and co-workers easier? Are we involved in community affairs? Do we volunteer to serve our community's needs? Are we volunteer police, fire, or crossing guards? Do we serve in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, assisted living homes, prisons or hospitals? Do we run for office or accept community leadership when it is offered?

That is just our secular community. Everyone here is also part of Ohev Yisrael which is a faith community. Are we here to serve in our faith community, or are we here mainly for what we get from it? Now there no question that we should be receiving from our faith community but, unless we are new believers, still wet behind the ears, that should not be our primary reason for being here. It should not be because we enjoy the times of worship or the teaching messages, although I hope that we do. It should not be primarily to fulfill our need for fellowship and friendship among believers, although I hope that we do. It should not primarily be to receive prayer for ourselves and our families, although I hope that we do. No, if we are receiving in these ways it is because others are serving us, but our main reason for being here should be to serve others in the community, and to utilize the community's resources to reach those who are outside, and we cannot reach without our brothers' and sisters' help and the community's tangible resources.

What is adequate service within the Ohev community will vary from person to person, but here are some questions to ask ourselves. Do we attend services regularly and arrive on time? It is a

fact that when Ohev's *Shabbat* service begins, the sanctuary is usually sparsely populated. If you are among those who regularly come late, you should know that those who are here need you, and if you are not here, you are not serving their need.

Tithing is also a way of serving. Do we tithe ten percent of our income? If we are a member of Ohev it is a requirement, but no one checks to ensure that we do. As with all congregations, Ohev has significant expenses, and our way of meeting our financial needs is through the tithes and offering of our members. Do we attend an Ohev mid-week *chavurah*? Our *chavurot* are the vehicles through which we give and receive personal ministry. If we are not a *chavurah* leader, we may think that we are not serving by being there, but we are. Our prayers, fellowship, and contributions to the Bible studies are a significant service to others, and if we do not attend, it is another lost opportunity for giving service.

Attending prayer meetings and serving on one of the *ozrim* teams are things that every member should do. If we are not serving in those ways, the burden of fulfilling these important ministries shifts to others who must carry the full load. And of course, there are Ohev's outreach ministries such as the prison ministry, and our counseling ministry and hospital chaplaincy that we are trying to get off the ground. If you participate in one of these, you are serving others. If you are not, this opportunity to serve is still available to you.

Finally, consider whether the Lord wants you to serve using your special gifts. It could be on the praise and worship team, in audio-visual recording and projection, or in general leadership roles such as serving as a *shamash* or elder.

It is time to end now and let us do so with prayer. Remember, we were made to serve.