

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SERVE GOD?

Several themes show up as the Israelites continue their journey to the Promised Land. These themes give us an inside view of what is truly important to the God they are now serving. This “new” God wants them to follow His commandments because in doing so, they will be blessed. He instructs them to destroy all that is evil, not mixing their lives with anything that is pagan, and to not serve other gods as they did in the past. It is on this last point that I would like to spend some time

Read Deuteronomy 7:3-4

Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

Read Deuteronomy 7:16

Also you shall destroy all the peoples whom the Lord your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

Read Exodus 8:1

And the Lord spoke to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.”’

QUESTION: What does it mean to "serve God"? What does that look like in real-time?

All throughout the scriptures, the Lord tells us to serve only Him. But what does the word *serve* actually mean? Since most of us live in a western society with a western mindset, we are unable to read the original Hebrew of the scriptures. It is often very difficult for us to grasp the full understanding of what He is trying to convey to us when we read from the English translations. Until we truly begin to saturate ourselves in ancient Hebrew thought, we will never truly pull from the scriptures all that He wants us to receive.

The Hebrews were mainly an agricultural society. So when you read the bible, read from the perspective of a farmer 3,000 years ago and the scriptures will come to life and you will see a bit more clearly. Let's take a look at the original Hebrew for the word *serve* and you will see what I mean.

SERVE

The Hebrew word for serve is "Abad," Strong's number 5647. The first time it is used is in Genesis 2:5:

Read Genesis 2:5

before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;

The very first time the word "abad" is used in the bible it is in connection with **tilling**. This is called the Law of First Precedence. The first time a word is used gives us the original intended meaning. So to serve means to till. It's an action word...a verb. When we serve God, we are tilling for Him, helping Him farm, and assisting Him in planting His fields. In Hebrew, to serve means to "till, cultivate, enslave, work and even worship." Think of a large commercial farm where there are hundreds of workers planting, watering, and sowing the fields. This is the picture of serving. If we are truly serving God, then we are out in His fields doing whatever we can to assist the Owner in having a successful harvest. Even a child who is just carrying a few pieces of fruit in a basket is serving his Master well.

This word is also where we get the word **"servant."** Do you remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego? Have you ever wondered why "Abed-Nego" is hyphenated into two words? Because it IS two words! Abed-Nego simply means "Servant of Nego"! Poor guy wasn't even given a proper Babylonian name. He was just called a *servant of Nego*.

So now that you understand what *serve* means, you can see that a good servant is one who helps his Master till the ground and is focused on the harvest. This is exactly what it means to be a worshipper! The Hebrew word for worship means to "bend the knee" or to lay prostrate. When you are planting and working the ground, you bend the knee to plant or prune. It all revolves around this concept of working the land.

Let's take a look at the original Paleo pictograph meaning for the Hebrew understanding of the word **"abad."** It is spelled *Ayin, beit, dalet*. *Ayin* (pronounced *eye-in*) was originally a picture of an eye and meant "to see, look into, eye, insight." *Beit* was a house, and *dalet* was a door or an open door. When you put it all together, 4000 years ago, "serve" meant *"To see and look into the house by opening the door."* In other words, to serve Yahweh was to physically open the door to His house and look intently inside. In order to serve God and come into His house, you must first come through Yeshua, as it was Yeshua who proclaimed to be the door (John 10:7). The next logical question is what are we looking for when we go inside the house? To find the answer to that, we have to look at the word *love*.

Greek thought is mainly philosophical and abstract. In English, the word "heart" is connected to love but we really don't know why. It's the organ that pumps the blood throughout the body; it has no real connection to love. But when you look into the Paleo Hebrew of what the word "heart" is and how it was originally interpreted, you can easily see how it is connected to love.

In the ancient pictograph, the Hebrew word for **heart** is **leb**, spelled lamed, beit. In the original hieroglyph, the letter lamed was a shepherd's staff that was used to lead the sheep. Its main purpose was to give instructions. It became the main symbolic letter for the entire Torah, which is the Hebrew word for **"instructions."** Beit was a blueprint of a house or tent as well as actually beginning the Hebrew word for "house." When you put the two together, "heart" meant "keeping the instructions of the House." When we discover that 1 John 5:3 says that those who love God keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome, it's easy to see how the heart became connected to the definition of love. It's also easy to see how King David became a man after God's own heart, as he loved His law and meditated on it both day and night.

When we love someone, we need to love them the way they want to be loved and not the way we want to love them. Love is a verb, an action word. But it's not just any action. **The "heart" is defined as "keeping the instructions (Torah) of the House,"** specifically the House of God. Hebrew is a concrete language with real, tangible ideas. So when all is said and done, to serve God is to physically open the door (Yeshua), look intently into the instructions of His House (His Word), and do them. To love our spouses we are to love them by keeping their "Torah," (their instructions) and loving them the way they desire to be loved. To love God is to keep the instructions of His House from our hearts through faith in Yeshua.



QUESTION: Can you think of ways that we love others or love God that is more from how *we* want to love than from the way *they* want to be loved? How far do we go out of our way to love others in a way that makes them feel loved? When was the last time you purposely planted a seed of love in your spouse's, sibling's, or friend's field that made them feel loved? I encourage you to take one person each day for the next week and go out of your way to plant seeds of love in their field. Serve them in a way that they will feel your love for them.

THE DARK CLOUD

Before moving on, I would like to add another layer to the word "serve" that one can only glean from the Hebrew. "Abad" is a three-letter child root that comes from the two-letter parent root "Ab" (pronounced awb), spelled *ayin, beit*. *Ab* is a very thick dark cloud and can also mean "cover." Putting all this information together from the original Hebrew mindset is truly incredible!

QUESTION: When you were out planting, hoeing, and tilling the fields 3,000 years ago, where did you go to collect water? Did you just turn on the sprinkler system? What did you rely on?

Rain! And where did the rain come from? The dark clouds! Yahweh promised that if the Israelites would serve Him faithfully and be about the Father's business of preparing for the harvest, He would provide the rain and "cover" them with His presence. Check this out. Once you read this next verse, I believe you will see the way it was always meant to be read.

Read Exodus 19:9

And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

In this verse, the word "thick" is actually the Hebrew word *Ab*! Yahweh comes in the thick, dark, rain-saturated cloud! The western mindset doesn't want Yahweh to come in dark, black clouds. We want to see Him come in wispy, white, fluffy clouds. But a servant working in the fields wants to see dark, thick clouds coming with rain! These clouds don't mean trouble is coming; they mean **YAHWEH** is coming!

It may be in the form of a trial or tribulation, but **THAT**'s where He can be found! **THIS** is why we consider it pure joy to face trials of many kinds! Because it's the rain that brings the increase!

"Coincidentally," the Hebrew word for water is

"mayim" and the word for "heavens" is "Shemayim." Shem literally means "name." So

"heavens" literally means "name water" or, more appropriately, "the water that comes from the name"! Let's take a look at a few scriptures that will expand this idea.

Read Exodus 16:10

Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

Read Exodus 24:16

Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

Read Leviticus 16:13

And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die.

A cloud led the Israelites along their journey and Yahweh showed himself in a cloud above the mercy seat. To put further emphasis on this point, look at the way He showed His promise not to flood the earth again. He set a rainbow in the clouds! Have you figured out why He chose to use the cloud to lead His people through the desert? It was because there's hardly ever any **rain**! His cloud – or Presence – was their covering and their promise of sustenance. As long as they followed Him and stayed underneath the cloud of His glory, they would experience no need! He is, in a very practical way, telling them every day that HE is the one in the clouds. HE is the one that brings the rain. HE is the one they should rely on! When the Glory filled the temple, the cloud was so thick they couldn't even see! Have you ever been in a place where you could hardly see because of how dark your circumstances were? Take heart! Yahweh is about to rain down His healing if you stay under the cloud! In the natural realm we don't like being out in the rain.

But in the spiritual realm, being in the middle of His will and under His covering is everything!

HOW DO I SERVE?

Finally, before we finish our short study on the word "serve," let's take a stroll through the scriptures and see if we can discover some of the things that are attached to the concept of serving – or tilling for – God.

Read 1 Samuel 12:20

Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.

Here we see that we are to "till" – or work – the ground before us with all of our hearts. We are not to serve Him haphazardly. We are to give it our all. He only brings rain for those who drop their nets and follow Him. If you're still holding your nets, you will see no rain.

Read Psalm 2:11

Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

We are not only to serve Him with all our heart; we are to serve Him with reverent fear. We know that the Master is good but we also know that He is coming to judge us in how well we worked the fields. What did we do with the talents He gave us?

Read Psalm 100:2

Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

Here we see that we need to whistle while we work. We are not to be complaining servants like the Israelites who were left wandering in the desert were. We are to be full of joy and gladness, tilling the ground and waiting for Him by faith to show up and bring the healing rain.

Read Isaiah 43:23

You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings. Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense.

The Father says that part of the definition of serving Him is bringing Him an offering. When we don't bring offerings as in the above verse, we are showing that we are the root of our own sustenance. When we give back to Yahweh the first fruits of our provision, we are literally thanking Him for the rain. Not only is He asking you to till the fields, but He's allowing you to share in the produce of your labor. The only thing He asks is that we acknowledge Him through our tithes and offerings!

In this same line of thought, take a look at Mathew 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

The concept of serving brings a whole new meaning to this scripture. You can't till the ground for Yahweh and for money. We either work exclusively in the field devoted to our real Master and King, fully trusting in His provision, or we work for ourselves, trusting in our own provision and the almighty dollar. Either we stay "covered" underneath His dark cloud, tilling the ground for Him, or we are uncovered and exposed as we till our own garden outside of His provision. Oftentimes, the Father gives us a certain provision that is from Him. Unfortunately, we sometimes don't think it's enough and we seek another garden outside His will and end up serving two gods without even realizing it! "Keeping up with the Joneses" who all serve Mammon will only cause you to end up serving Mammon, as well. Whether Yahweh has blessed you with much wealth or only a little, if we are doing exactly what He wants us to do, it will always be enough.

Read Romans 1:9

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,

This is a very interesting scripture.

QUESTION: What do you think it means to "serve in the spirit"?

If we go back to the agricultural meaning of *serve*, we can easily see what Paul is saying. To "serve in the spirit" is to "till, cultivate, work, labor, and worship" in the spirit. It's not all about doing things physically to serve God; we must also labor in the spirit. How do we do that? In the last part of this verse, Paul tells us one of the ways is through prayer. Prayer stirs up the ground in the spirit and gets things moving. It is from the spirit, through faith, that we bring those things that are not into the earth realm as if they already are. The mountains are moved by the spirit. Those who labor much in the spirit, receive much in the spirit and the natural. Those who labor only in the natural receive only in the natural.

Read Romans 7:25

I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

This passage ends a chapter-long struggle as Paul says he really wants to keep the Torah, the law of God, but he finds another law pulling him toward sin. As it relates to our subject, Paul says that his desire is to "till, work, and labor" inside the law of God because it will manifest in his life as righteousness. But while his intent is to work in the fields for God, he finds himself working in the fields of sin. Can you relate to Paul's struggle?

The Hebrew word "Torah" comes from the root word *yarah* which means to "throw, shoot (as in arrows), and even to throw water." It can represent a heavy downpour of rain that breaks up the fallow ground. That's what the law of God does. When we labor in it and learn it by turning it over and over again to uncover more nuggets of gold, it breaks up the fallow ground of our lives, reveals our sin, and brings supernatural growth!

Read John 12:26

If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, he My Father will honor.

Lastly, we have Yeshua saying that if a person can follow Him if he takes the time to help Him tend His fields His way. Again, following Yeshua can sometimes seem like an abstract thought. But when we put it back into its original Hebraic context, there are real concrete actions that follow. Following Yeshua does not simply mean believing in Him. Following Him means that we choose to be busy working in the fields He has for us to work in. There is no lip service in farming; it's very hard work and takes a lot of people to bring about a successful harvest.

In the end, "serving" God entails working in His fields with all our hearts, in reverence and fear, with gladness and thanksgiving. It means bringing offerings, prayers, and supplications, and laboring in His word. When we fully till the Lord's field with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, then we are finally worshiping Him in Spirit and Truth. We must seek to grow our spirit man by laboring in the spirit while at the same time laboring to advance His Kingdom any way we can. This Hebrew concept of serving brings a whole new meaning to the idiom "digging into the word of God." When you "dig," you're "serving." You dig?

When all is said and done, I'm hanging my hat on Joshua 22:5 which says "*...as for me and my house? We will till, cultivate, work, labor, and spend our time in the fields of the Lord.*" Or just simply, "*As for me and my house, we will dig the Lord.*"

Shalom!
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