

Serve the Lord  
with  
Gladness



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**AT THE END OF OUR DEVOTIONAL TIME** in the morning at the Bridges for Peace office in Israel, someone will say, “Serve the Lord with gladness.” This is a direct quote from Psalm 100, which is a beautiful psalm of thanksgiving. In this teaching letter, I want to take a deeper look at Psalm 100 and discuss the idea of being a servant of the Lord.

## *Background*

The book of Psalms is divided into five books. Book four is only 11 chapters long: Psalms 90–100. According to the Jewish sage Rashi, these 11 psalms were written by Moses. Each psalm relates to the blessings Moses gave to the tribes in Deuteronomy 33 (*Midrash Shocheh Tov*). One tribe, Simeon, is omitted from Moses’s blessing. Psalms 90–100 relate to the 11 other tribes.

## *The Tribe of Asher*

Psalm 100 is said to correspond to the tribe of Asher. On a personal note, on May 18, 2022, my sister’s great grandson was born, and his name is Asher, so I dedicate this teaching letter to him. I hope that someday he will come to love God and this psalm, which, according to Jewish tradition, was written by Moses for the tribe of Asher. Asher means blessed or happy.

When Jacob blessed his son, Asher, he said, “*Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties*” (Gen. 49:20).

In Deuteronomy 33:24, we read Moses’s blessing of Asher, which says,



*“Asher is a most blessed of sons; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil.”*

So perhaps it is no surprise that Psalm 100 is associated with Asher. The Jewish people recite Psalm 100 daily (except on the Sabbath and holidays) as an act of thanksgiving to God. The Chabad website says, “The psalm also refers to the thanksgiving sacrifice—the only sacrifice to be offered in the Messianic era.”

## *Make a Joyful Noise*

This psalm of thanksgiving begins with the idea of making a loud noise, a shout or a joyful noise.

The Hebrew word is רוע (roo-ah). Strong’s Concordance says it figuratively means to split the ears (with sound), that is, to shout (for alarm or joy), blow an alarm, cry (alarm, aloud, out), destroy, make a joyful noise, smart, shout (for joy), sound an alarm or triumph.

Some of us might be a little uncomfortable with shouting as a form of praise, but it is certainly part of the biblical instruction. Why is it that we feel perfectly at ease cheering and shouting at a sports event but not so much when worshiping in the congregation?

It is the kind of joyful sound that you might use to greet the king. If an earthly king is worthy of such action, then surely our heavenly King is as well.

## *All the Earth (All Lands)*

Psalm 100 is one of the most loved psalms by both Christians and Jews. This psalm is known from one end of the earth to the other. Over the centuries, it has been put to music multiple times, in vastly divergent styles. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon said of it: “It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favorite with the people of God ever since it was written...Nothing can be more sublime this side of heaven than the singing of this noble psalm by a vast congregation.” I had fun searching on YouTube for these songs. There are quite a few! Go to YouTube and search ‘Psalm 100 (Enter In) feat Joshua Sherman, Charity Gayle, Steven Musso’ and ‘ZEVI KAUFMAN - IVDU (Official Video).’ I think you will enjoy both.

## Serve the Lord

*Ivdu* (עִבּוּד) is the word translated “serve” and is from the same root as “slave” or “servant.” It conveys the idea of work or labor for another, sometimes under bondage, like a slave; other times as a servant. Neither of these ideas is very attractive to our modern-day mentality. Doesn’t everyone want to be a leader or an entrepreneur, charting their own destiny? Yet the Bible often portrays the idea of serving the Lord. Many well-loved biblical characters are referred to as a servant of the Lord, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David and Isaiah. In the Writings of the Apostles (NT), Paul, Peter, Jude, James and even Jesus (Yeshua) are referred to as bond servants. Biblical passages recognized as messianic by both Christians and Jews refer to the Messiah as a servant. Interestingly, the Bible also refers to King Nebuchadnezzar as a servant of the Lord.

The nation of Israel is also referred to as a servant. *“For the children of Israel are servants to Me; they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God”* (Lev. 25:55).

Jesus also told His disciples, *“But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant”* (Matt. 23:11). In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, the phrase *“Well done, good and faithful servant”* (v. 23) seems to be the highest praise.



## With the Heart—With Gladness

Moses told the Children of Israel, *“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul”* (Deut. 10:12).

Later in Deuteronomy, we find the consequence of not serving the Lord with gladness:

*“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you”* (28:47–48). Verses 49–57 describe in vivid detail the ways of destruction.

We read repeatedly that we should serve the Lord out of deep gratitude for all He has done for His people. It is not enough to serve Him out of duty. He is looking for people who serve Him from thankful hearts with joy and gladness. We may be able to fool people with a happy façade, but God is not fooled. The Lord reminded Solomon of the fact that He knows what is in the heart: *“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever”* (1 Chron. 28:9, NASB 1995).

I grew up in church, and sadly, there were times when I attended because I was supposed to be there. I was serving the Lord out of duty. To be honest, I didn't get much out of those services.

In my early 20s, that changed, and I discovered the joy of my salvation. When I came to Him with a heart of praise and thanksgiving, there was a joy and gladness that sprang forth from my being.

## *Servant of the LORD*

Moses is given the title of servant of the Lord more than any other biblical character.



Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, one of the great Jewish leaders of modern times, was eulogized in the *Times of Israel* for his insightful teaching. Regarding Moses, he taught: “The achievements of Moses were vast and transformational, and he received many titles throughout the ages, from the greatest prophet to the teacher par excellence. Yet Rabbi Sacks highlights only one label as his ‘highest accolade,’ namely: ‘a servant of the Lord.’ Here Rabbi Sacks reveals the value he sees as most important, ‘a leader does not stand above the people. He serves the people and serves God.’”

Rabbi Sacks also said, “Moses’ highest honour is that he is called *eved Hashem*, ‘the servant of God.’ He is called this once on his death (Deut. 34:5), and no less than eighteen times in *Tanakh* [OT] as a whole.”

Servant leadership is a concept that is often talked about. According to Rabbi Sacks, it is a biblical (Jewish) concept. He says, “Nor is a true leader eager for the job. Almost without exception the great leaders of *Tanakh* were reluctant to assume the mantle of leadership. Rabban Gamliel summed it up when he said to two Sages he wanted to appoint to office: ‘Do you imagine I am offering you rulership? I am offering you *avdut*, the chance to serve’ (Horayot 10a–b).”

Moses is referred to as very humble. It seems God loves the humble of heart. He wants His people to serve Him and serve others, and He wants us to do it with gladness.

## *Come Before Him with Joyful Singing*

When we observe people being joyous, it is contagious. I immediately smile when I observe joyful, happy children. In the same way, our Father in heaven loves to hear our voices raised joyfully. Many of the songs we sing in church are prayers set to music, and communicate to God out of our pain and longing. Surely that is also appropriate, but it can be heavy. In Psalm 100, we are told to serve the Lord with gladness and to come to him with joyful singing. How can we do that when life feels tenuous, difficult and painful? The next verse tells us how.

## *Know God*

Verse 3 introduces the importance of recognizing and knowing God. He is our Creator; He made us. That means He knows

us inside and out! He is our Shepherd. That means He is serious about the role of taking care of us. A shepherd provides pasture (food), water, health care, shelter, protection and companionship. In this one short verse, we are given compelling reasons for serving the Lord with gladness and singing. He loves us—His creation—and is looking out for all our needs.



### *Thanksgiving, Praise, Blessing*

The first phrase of verse 4 is “*enter into His gates with thanksgiving.*” I am challenging myself to look at each situation in life and find the positive. I ask, “What can I thank God for in this situation?” The second phrase is “*and into His courts with praise.*” How can we praise God today? The next phrase emphasizes the first phrase when it says, “*Be thankful to Him.*” The verse closes with the phrase, “*Bless His name.*” In Hebraic thought, “name” refers to character. We need to constantly bless God for every aspect of His character. How would life change if we made this verse a theme for life; if we were consistently thankful, praising God and blessing His name?

### *God's Characteristics*

Just in case we have forgotten how to “*Bless His Name,*” the psalm ends with a description of the nature of God. “*For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations*” (Ps. 100:5, NASB 1995). There are some wonderful Hebrew words in this description: “*tov*—good; *chesed*—lovingkindness, and *emunah*—faithfulness.” Each of these

words has a depth of meaning in Hebrew that feels almost flat in comparison in the English. It is because God is good, because He is absolutely faithful and His love is extravagant, filled with kindness, mercy and grace, that we can and should “serve the LORD with gladness” (Ps. 100:2a).

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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

## TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God’s chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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