



## Who is the Shammash?



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**S**hammash is a Hebrew word that means servant. In the Jewish community, shammash (also spelled “shammas”) commonly refers to the sexton—the person who manages the synagogue facilities and keeps things running smoothly. In the Middle Ages the term referenced a more prestigious position. The shammash helped to conduct prayer, lead the worship services and even carry out and enforce the judgments of the Jewish community leadership.

Shammash also refers to the ninth candle on the hanukkiah; that is the candelabrum that is used to commemorate and celebrate the eight nights of Hanukkah (this year, 8th to 16th December). The shammash is the first candle to be lit each of the eight nights of the festival, and it is used to light all the other candles.

So the shammash is more than just a candle, it is the servant light by which all the other candles of Hanukkah receive their light. Because of this, its meaning is transcendent, provoking reflection on the beauty of its light and the meaning of its purpose. That meaning points beyond the ‘simple candle’ to a ‘special person’.

The shammash usually holds a special position on the candelabrum. On some hannukiot (plural of hannukiah), it is raised slightly above the other candles. On others, it is placed below the row of eight, which is the look I prefer. After all, the position of a servant ought to be subservient. And that is where things can get interesting.

Just as the shammash in the synagogue was understood at one

time to occupy a more prominent role, so the shammash of Hanukkah can be seen to have greater spiritual significance, made even more profound as we consider the relationship between Hanukkah and Christmas.

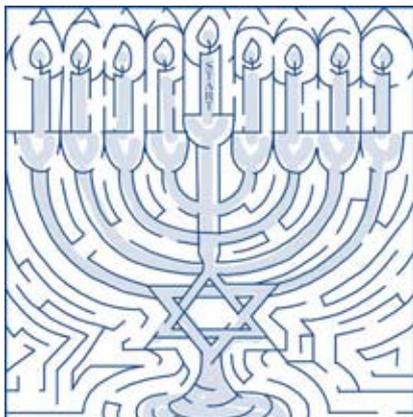
Contrary to the lowly or demeaning place servants occupy in many cultures, God elevated the role of servant, and one servant in particular. Scriptures reveal the surpassing significance and prominence of the “servant of the Lord.” The image of the shammash points directly to this biblical concept. Who is this shammash; who is this “servant of the Lord?”

First, the “servant of the Lord” is a special designation that confirms a unique relationship with God. God



refers to people like Job, Abraham, Moses, Joshua and David as “My servant.” This title indicates a certain intimacy God had with these people, as well as a special calling He had placed on their lives. In today’s culture we don’t often think of the role of servant as a position to aspire to, but to be “the servant of the Lord” in Bible times was a great honor and a high calling.

Second, God uses the term “the servant of the Lord” to refer to the nation of Israel, making numerous references to them as “Jacob my servant,” or “Israel my servant.” This doesn’t mean that every Jewish person had the same intimate relationship with God that Abraham and Moses and David enjoyed. It does mean that Israel was an elect nation; God had chosen Israel as a people through whom He would accomplish His purposes, regardless of how the individual members of the nation were disposed towards the Lord.



That Israel was and is an elect people and God’s servant was no guarantee that all the people of Israel, would serve Him. Nor, that they would all be in a personal relationship with Him. This is especially important for Christians to understand as we think about the Jewish people today, and each individual’s continuing need for God and for His salvation.

Third, the term servant is used in the Scriptures prophetically to refer to the coming Messiah. For example, the

psalmist refers to “My servant David” in Psalm 89, not speaking of David himself, since the Psalm was written after his death, but of David’s greater Son whom God had promised would sit on the throne of Israel forever. This mention of David is none other than a direct reference to the Messiah who was to come. In the same way, Isaiah speaks not only of God’s servant Israel, but also of Israel’s greater son, the Messiah.

It was through this “servant” that God promised to “raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones [some translations say ‘elect’] of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). That is a tall order indeed. But the shammash of our hanukkiyah reminds us of this promise concerning the Messiah. He would be a light to the nations and God’s salvation for all people.

In fact, Jewish people are instructed to place our hanukkiot prominently in the windows of our homes, visible to all as sign of our continued faith in the coming of the Messiah. That is why it is so significant in the Gospel accounts that the angel of the Lord instructed Joseph to name the child Jesus or Y’shua, which means “God’s salvation” (Matthew 1:21). That is why Simeon exclaimed, when he first saw the baby Jesus, that he was indeed, “A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

Jesus is the servant who was brought low in order that He might become lifted up for all to see. He is the one through whom God’s light would be kindled in the hearts of so many people all around the world. Jesus is God’s shammash, and because He is, so are we. Y’shua told his disciples, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). What do you think that means for us who would follow Him?

The apostle Paul understood this great truth. He explained his calling as apostle to the Gentiles as a direct fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, quoting, “For so the Lord has

commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth’” (Acts 13:47).

How stunning that Paul would identify his entire ministry as part of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 49—but that is exactly his meaning here. Paul is saying, “I am the shammash, too!” Might we be so bold?

I gain incredible inspiration from the apostle’s application of this Scripture. I see in it a direct reference to our ministry in Jews for Jesus. We too are the shammash of God.

This month our missionaries are out and about sharing the good news of the Messiah with Jews and Gentiles all around the world. We are handing out tracts in places like Macy’s in New York, Harrod’s of London, at the Hamashbir in downtown Jerusalem, and the busy Westfield shopping centers in Sydney!

We are inviting people to become reconciled to God through faith in His servant Jesus. Is there a higher calling in life? I think not. But the wonder of it all is that if you know Jesus, He invites you to become His shammash, too. I don’t know what your season of life will entail; where you will travel, with whom you will speak and how you will spend this last month of the year 2012. It seems to me that if we understand the meaning of this special season, we will without a doubt understand a special role for ourselves this holy season. We are the light of the world. We too are called to be God’s shammash.

For more about Hanukkah, go to: <http://www.jewsforjesus.org/judaica/Hanukkah>

From our archives, you might also like [www.jewsforjesus.org.au](http://www.jewsforjesus.org.au)

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# BITS from BRANCHES

## LOS ANGELES

Cyril Gordon reports



“A Jewish believer called to ask us to visit Sandy, a Jewish woman who was gravely ill and needed to make peace with God. The woman that called has been Sandy’s caretaker for several years. She’d been trying her best to minister to her, but was afraid she might lose her job if she went too far. “I made an appointment right away to visit with Sandy. Thankfully, the Lord gave us a window of opportunity. She heard the Gospel of salvation and prayed with me to receive Jesus. The whole time her caretaker was next to me, silently praying her heart out, hardly able to believe what she was seeing. Sandy smiled and thanked me for driving two hours just to see her. The next day, I found that the caretaker had not lost her job, and that night, Sandy had the most peaceful sleep she’d had in a long time. Praise God!

Ofer Levy reports



“Rami moved to L.A. from Israel about four years ago. I met him while at the auto mechanic,

and briefly shared the gospel. When we met several weeks later, I learned that Rami is a musician about my age, and since I used to play music in Israel, we were truly able to relate. I described to him the change that occurred in my life upon coming to faith in Y’shua. “We opened the Scriptures together, beginning with the fall of Adam and the promise of a Redeemer who would come through the seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15). As we studied Isaiah 53, Rami interacted with each verse of the prophecy. He then shared his conviction that Y’shua is indeed Israel’s Messiah. He recognized that Y’shua died for him personally, rose from the dead, and is coming again in glory. It was a long and exciting meeting, and I thank God for Rami’s salvation. The next day I gave him a copy of the Scriptures and shared more with him from the Word of God. Please pray for Rami’s growth in the Lord as we continue to meet.”

## GERMANY

Dina Markova reports



“I met Alexandra back in Odesa, when she attended our Jews for Jesus services. There, she confessed Y’shua as her Lord and Messiah. However, she moved to Germany a long time ago. We recently met once again and I was able to talk with her daughter, Rosanna, who is now an adult. Rosanna has

heard that Y’shua is Messiah since she was a girl, but had not yet taken the opportunity to reconcile with the Lord personally. She and I talked in detail and she willingly took that step of faith to receive Y’shua as her Lord and Savior. Then it became clear that Alexandra had not yet joined a congregation of believers. I encouraged her to do so; please pray for God to bring Alexandra and Rosanna to a good congregation where they will be able to grow in faith.”

## DNEPROPETROVSK

Volunteer Larissa K. reports



“As I did visits with Jews for Jesus, I became zealous about preaching the gospel to my Jewish school teacher, Rosa. But I could not find out her address—neither from the information bureau, nor from classmates. I began to pray and ask God for an encounter with her. God didn’t delay with His answer! As we were doing drop-in visits, we sat to rest in a street café. Then my teacher Rosa sat down at our table; isn’t it a miracle? She listened to the gospel from us and agreed to receive free literature; also, she invited us to visit her. Please pray for Rosa also to open her heart to God and receive salvation of her soul. “While I was handing out broadsides, a man stopped near me and scrutinized our tract closely. His name was Yefim. He was Jewish and he said

that he’d heard about Y’shua, but thought He was the god of Gentiles. I shared the gospel with him and Yefim agreed to receive our literature. He gave me his contact, but still stood looking at our tract. Finally, I offered him to receive Jesus and be reconciled with God, and he agreed to that right away. After the prayer, Yefim’s face became glad, he thanked me, and left. Praise the Lord!”

## BUDAPEST

Kata Tar reports



“We went out in our ‘Jews for Jesus’ T-shirts—printed in Hungarian—for the first time. On the way home via the metro, a young woman saw our shirts and approached us from the other end of the carriage. Her eyes were lit with excitement: ‘Where do you have your meetings?’ she asked in Hungarian. “A” is a Jewish believer in Y’shua attending the Rabbi Training Institute. She was happy to give me her details so that we could meet again. When I asked why she was studying at the Rabbi Training Institute, [where faith in Jesus would be frowned upon to say the least] she said very naturally: ‘Because I am Jewish.’ She was obviously excited to see Jewish believers, as she must feel a bit lonely among both Jews and Christians. Please pray that she can find her God-given call as a Jewish believer in the Messiah.”

## ISRAEL

### Oded Cohen reports



"Recently I called Dan\* to let him know the book he'd asked us to send him (about Jesus) had been returned, marked 'bad address.' Dan was afraid we'd forgotten to mail him the book. He asked if we might meet in person so that I could give him the book, and begin to guide him through it. "Dan had rejected his ultra-Orthodox Jewish upbringing, and went through a season of not believing in God. He became self-destructive and one day, after hitting rock bottom, he told God, "That's it, either you kill me or show me that you exist!" He then received a revelation that God is real and does indeed love him. He began reading about Jesus on the Internet and found our website. We set another

appointment to talk but Dan never showed up. He later told me that he had gone to our meeting place and saw some friends there, so he was afraid to meet with me. He asked if we might meet at a place less public, which we did. Dan's now reading God's Word and exploring the Scriptures for himself. He is drawn and is seriously in pursuit of the truth. Please pray for Dan to find his Messiah!"

**Update:** "We recently requested prayer for Dan,\* who grew up in an ultra-Orthodox home. He was seeking to know and experience God's love. About a week after we requested prayer for him, he prayed with me to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior. However, throughout the next couple of weeks, I wasn't able to reach him. He didn't respond to my phone calls. "Eventually, I spoke with him and he said, 'I just want to read by myself and communicate with God, mostly through the Psalms.' He doesn't want to get together again for now, and I was careful not to pressure him. I believe that he knows the truth, but perhaps he is

now counting the cost. Please remember Dan in your prayers and ask the Lord to relentlessly pursue him, like He relentlessly pursued me about fourteen years ago.

"I am so thankful that Eli's\* faith is still intact, even though he remains a secret believer in his ultra-Orthodox community. We still hope to arrange for him to be baptized some time this year."

*\*Not their real name.*

## SYDNEY

### Rahel Landrum reports



I went to visit Judy, a Jewish lady in her 90's. She was recovering in the hospital from an injury. Judy seemed to respond well as we talked about Jesus and I'm looking forward to continue sharing the Gospel with her. Recently her elderly brother \*Daniel came to faith

in Y'shua! Please pray that God would give me more time to share Scripture with Judy, that she would recognise her need for her Messiah, and for her brother to grow in God's love.

### Julia reports



Please pray for Jacob, a young Jewish student who came to our book store. He said he'd walked past many times and finally plucked up the courage to come in. He asked me to tell him about Jesus! We looked at the Messiah according to the Jewish prophets in the Tenach, particularly Isaiah 53. Jacob had some genuine questions. He said he was seeking truth, and gladly accepted a free Bible. Please pray for God to reveal Himself to this young man.

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# JEWS FOR JESUS™

**A**cts of true thankfulness transform us. No matter where we are in our walk with God, they dramatically change us. How?

Thankfulness brings us face-to-face with grace.

To be truly thankful, we have to acknowledge the source of every good thing. Each gift, whether it is a new house or a new friend, shows that the Giver knows who we are and what has meaning and value to us. When we are truly thankful, we can't help knowing and declaring that God is so much better to us than we deserve. And that leads to the second change.

Thankfulness humbles us.

Pride is closely tied to a spirit of independence. It fades when we sincerely believe that everything good comes from God. Thankful people realize that our real strength is in the fact that the Almighty invites us to depend upon Him. And pride pretty much disintegrates when we realize that God has given us much more than we deserve.

There is a strong link between grace and humility. Perhaps God gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:34, 1 Peter 5:5) because they are thankful for it. Why give people something they can't understand or appreciate?

Thankfulness motivates us

People who are not spiritually motivated usually lack one thing: the ability to sense God's reality. That's right, the one thing that can spiritually motivate, mobilize and empower us to feats of faith is sensing of the reality of God. The best possible path to that reality is the path of praise and thanksgiving.

In order to know that God is, and that He rewards those who seek Him, we need to see the many acts of God in our lives. We need to number, mark and be aware of the benefits He has bestowed upon us. Without such acts of thanksgiving, the attitude of thankfulness eventually dries up and disappears.

Intensifying our thanks

If a person wanted to intensify the act of thanksgiving, what could she or he do? What could you do? Many of us shop for bargain basement spirituality—something that looks good enough to be acceptable and can be gained at a cheap price. But God has provided a more authentic way to intensify our thanks to Him. The best way to exercise thanksgiving is through SACRIFICE. If God seems remote and you want to draw close, maybe you need to make a sacrifice.

Sacrifice is a tangible gift, work or deed that springs from a thankful heart. Sacrifice brings us into fellowship with the Almighty. It realigns our hearts, it reassigns our priorities,



**Moishe's**

**musings**

**on Thanksgiving**

**Jews for Jesus Founder**

Moishe Rosen  
(1932-2010)

and it helps us realize a deeper plane of existence. Sacrifice gives us a sense of the reality of God.

When I was executive director I sometimes felt bad to see people depriving themselves of things I felt were essential—things my family and I had not given up—in order to give sacrificially to Jews for Jesus.

Once I was so touched, I felt compelled to send back a sizable donation from a pensioner because I feared that he was doing without food and heat to give it. In a letter I told him that we were far from desperate, and that he needed the money more than we did.

I received back a correctly indignant letter reminding me that the gift was not to Jews for Jesus but to God. The fact that I was in comfort was irrelevant to this man. He had given such sacrifices to God on many occasions throughout his life, and suggested that if I was uncomfortable with that, maybe I should examine what I could sacrifice.

That man taught me something: One must look to God and ask what He would allow us to sacrifice. God does not receive great sacrifices from just anyone. But what a sweet, stirring thanksgiving event is possible when you approach God with your all, your everything, your life—and with a smile, say: "What will you allow me to present to you as my token of appreciation and love?" And the Almighty smiles back and says, "If you really mean it, this (and He indicates something to you) would be nice."

TRY IT; YOU'LL LIKE IT!

**Online extra:** This article was edited down from the original but you can see the full visiting: [http://www.jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/1997\\_11/thanksgivingisanevent](http://www.jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/1997_11/thanksgivingisanevent)

