

At around 1997, the church my wife and I had been attending for the past 20 some years left us. That's right – the church up and left us. It left us in that it began to abandon many long-standing beliefs about God, Jesus, and the Torah-based lifestyle that I had been brought up in. Thankfully before it left us, we had become well-grounded in a number of areas, especially in structure. Our church was very structured and it taught me a number of things about how to organize meetings and make preparations for large groups of people. But one of the most important things it taught in regards to structure, was how to structure a speech or message so as to make an impact on the audience.

Though I never thought I would ever use that training, I later found myself organizing a number of Sabbath meetings and events - some of which included guest speakers. At one of those events, one of the guest speakers gave a message entitled "By This Time, You Ought to Be Teachers!" taken from Hebrews 5. Though the title caught my ear, I knew his message did not apply to me because – even though I had had a small amount of speech training, I was a cabinet maker – not a minister. Why would I ever want to teach the Bible?

But as time went on, and my excitement about this 'Hebraic' view of the Bible grew, my wife Angie and I did find ourselves hosting home fellowships and small meetings for a number of years - and from time to time actually teaching the Bible at those meetings.

Then in 2003, we started the Ami Yisrael fellowship. At first it was just Angie and I meeting in a rented community center. After a couple of Sabbaths being by ourselves, people began to trickle in and eventually we had to move to a bigger facility. In the beginning we found ourselves leading dance and teaching the Bible just about every Sabbath. Because I was in many ways 'biblically ignorant', it was a struggle for me to find topic I felt I could effectively teach. So instead of spending my evenings studying for a message, I focused on leading a Torah discussion using the traditional Jewish weekly Torah Portions. These studies became the foundation of our fellowship meetings.

Because the Torah Study has been so useful for us in building our fellowship, we wanted to share it with you with the hope that you could use it as a tool to begin a Sabbath fellowship in your area. Then, once you have built confidence in leading a fellowship, you will hopefully move to actually teaching the rest of the Bible as well..

In this message I want to show –

- Why you might want to be a teacher, then address a few questions about teaching, specifically -
  - Who Can Teach?
  - Who To Teach?
  - What To Teach?

So let's get going ---

## **Why Be a Teacher?**

*A great way to learn God's word -*

When you prepare a message or speech for any type of meeting, you will learn more from the preparation than you will be able to convey to your audience. I know that to be true because as I'm studying a specific topic, I find myself going down rabbit trails all the time. Before I know it, I've spent an hour studying a word or phrase that will probably not make it into my message. In fact, in most cases I use only about half of the information or scriptures that I've dug up pertaining to the topic I intend to present.



Along that same vein, Paul admonishes us to –

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Tim. 4:2** - ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Or as Peter said –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Pet. 3:15** - ... sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you,

How many times has someone asked you a question about your belief, and you try to explain it, but you don't have the scriptures in mind to help you do so? Teaching will help you with that.

*It is Our Calling –*

I believe that God is beginning to call his Hebrew people out of darkness and bring them to the light – not just for their own salvation, but to glorify the God of Israel. In a portion of Deuteronomy it says -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 4:5-9** See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>6</sup> Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' <sup>7</sup> For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? <sup>8</sup> And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? <sup>9</sup> Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—

We all understand that we should be teaching God's way to our children, and to the best of our ability – to our grandchildren. But this passage implies we are to make them known to the nations as well. As a result, those same nations will want to know more. Then when they ask – as mentioned earlier – we will be able to give them an answer.

Along that same line, we have been called to be priests of YHVH. Peter, in his letter to the non-Jewish Hebrews<sup>1</sup> who were turning to YHVH, said -

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen **race**, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may **proclaim the excellences** of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And as priests we should be able to explain God's ways -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Malachi 2:7** - "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and *people* should **seek the law (torah) from his mouth**; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

So yes – teaching is our calling. Not necessarily in front of a group, but by teaching others, we learn God's word more clearly so that we can explain it more clearly.

*Bear Fruit (so as to have a reward) -*

This next reason may sound somewhat selfish, but as I explain it I believe you will agree that it is something we should work toward.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the salutations in the letters of James and Peter, as well as other statements made by Peter, it is clear to this author that those letters were written to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel', people who were Hebrews, but not Jews.



In Yeshua's words to His disciples on the night He was betrayed, He admonished His disciples to fulfill the job for which they had been called, which was "to bear fruit for the kingdom." He said to them –

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:1-2, 8, 16** - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not **bear fruit** he takes away, and every branch that does **bear fruit** he prunes, that it may **bear more fruit** ... <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples ... <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and **bear fruit** and that your fruit should abide ...

What was the fruit Yeshua was expecting from them? He was expecting them to –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Matt. 28:19-20** - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> **"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age."

We then should want to bear fruit, and by bearing fruit, we are building up for ourselves and our family a reward. The proverbs say -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Proverbs 11:18** The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness **gets a sure reward.**

The Hebrew word for 'reward' is 'seker' (שֶׂכֶר – 07938) which means 'wages', and yes, God is implying that He intends to reward us – pay us wages – when we spread His word to those in whom we come in contact. Though most Christians focus on salvation, YHVH shows that you are saved by grace, but you earn a reward by how you fulfill your role as a disciple.

How will YHVH pay me my wages in the kingdom? I don't really know. Maybe I'll be a gate keeper. But what I would like to do is be one who is sent out to a nation when it begins to turn to the God of Israel and His ways. I would like to work with that king who refuses to come up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. I want those from the nations to learn to really LOVE YHVH our god so they can enjoy the blessings that many of us have received.

Yeshua said –

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:35-36** Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is **receiving wages** and **gathering fruit for eternal life**, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

As YHVH continues to open the eyes of the spiritually blind, there are those who are working to help them understand what they are seeing. Whereas just a few decades back, it would have been very difficult for a person to find help understanding the scriptures, now – thanks to the internet, people are able to find help. But the Internet is not a replacement for having a person listen to your questions and provide you with the understanding that God intends.

Nothing can replace a person who knows the scriptures and is available to you so that you can just give them a call or chat with them on the Sabbath to answer questions. Unfortunately, those people are few and far between. Yeshua spoke of that in his day as He was beginning His ministry. He said –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matt. 9:37-38** - "... The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

It is clear to me that as a result of the disciple's work, the exiles of Israel were showing up in synagogues all over Asia Minor, but there were not enough teachers available to help nurture them in the walk. Thus many fell prey to rabbinic Judaism. This seems to be what the book of Romans, Galatians, and most of



Paul's epistles was about. This could also become a problem today. Without teachers, the people YHVH is calling have nowhere to go for answers. And in a culture like we have here in America where people are accustomed to having a church on every corner, a person's zeal could fade quickly if they cannot find a group to fellowship with and go to for answers. With that point, let's talk about community.

## Hebraic Communities

A strong Hebraic Community provides a place where everyone can learn. It's a place where "iron sharpens iron". It's a place where children can learn that they are not the only ones walking this walk. For them, it provides a strong community of peers who are battling the same challenges – specifically challenges relating to the Sabbath.

So why are Hebraic Communities and Fellowships few and scattered? I believe the primary reason is that there is a lack of men who are willing to lead them; and the reason they are unwilling to lead is because they do not believe they are qualified to teach God's word. There are a number of reasons one could think that. They could have been told they should attend a particular seminary in order to teach the Bible. Maybe they feel they must be ordained in order to teach outside their own home.

One of the passages I remember being stated over and over again is this from James' epistle where he said –

ESV **James 3:1** - Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

This could certainly become an issue for a person who felt he was not properly qualified to teach, but the reason James gave for making that statement is because everyone makes mistakes from time to time, and as a teacher there are going to be times when you interpret a scripture or concept incorrectly and could possibly sway the congregation in the wrong direction. But is that a reason to not be a disciple and follow Yeshua's instruction to -

NKJ **Matt. 28:19-20** - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> **"teaching them** to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Clearly not! We all err in our understanding of the scripture, especially when we are new to it or have had past teachers who only taught what they had been told to teach. The remedy for discovering that you taught something incorrectly is to simply correct the teaching.

Paul shows that it is important that we aspire to become a teacher -

NKJ **1 Cor. 12:27-31** - Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. <sup>28</sup> **And God has appointed these in the church:** first apostles, second prophets, third **teachers** (didaskalos), after that miracle, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. <sup>29</sup> *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?* <sup>30</sup> *Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?* <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire (*burn with zeal*) the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

Though some think Paul was creating a hierarchy, a little understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism will show that this order was how new congregations (synagogues) were established in foreign lands – especially in Asia Minor.

## Common Questions about Teaching

So with what I've shown, I think a good case can be made that not only are we allowed to be teachers of the Word, we are even encouraged to do so. Nevertheless, we still have questions ... and so did I when I



was first approached to become a teacher. So, let's address some of the most obvious questions – and we'll start with the question –

### ***Who Can Teach?***

Like I said in the introduction, many of us have been discouraged from teaching simply because we believed we did not have the correct credentials.

So what qualifies, or on the other hand, disqualifies a person from being a teacher? If you were to read the Bible starting in Genesis, went through the Gospels, and stopped after the book of Romans, you will not find any qualifiers for who can or cannot be a teacher. It's only when Paul writes his epistles that we see statements that SEEM to disqualify a person from becoming a teacher. So let's look at some of them. We'll start by looking at Paul's instruction to Timothy concerning women.

### ***Women –***

The scripture gives us examples of women who – for whatever reason – rose to positions of authority in Israel, and because they had authority, they obviously spoke to the congregation of Israel. Though not listed as leaders necessarily, we have the examples of women who took it upon themselves to move the men in their lives to do the right thing. Women like Rebecca who caused Isaac to put the blessing on Jacob rather than Esau; Tamar who caused Judah to provide the heritage for the Messiah, and Bathsheba who reminded King David to turn the Kingdom over to Solomon, to name a few. These women changed the course of history by their words.

The most prominent example of a woman who lead Israel is that of Deborah. We don't know why Deborah became a judge over Israel, but she did. I would assume it was because Israel was probably filled with WEAK men at that time in Israel's history. As judge, she had the responsibility to govern the people, judge the people, and apparently even command the army of Israel (Judges 4:14). As the judge of Israel, it would be foolish to think that she never spoke in front of an audience that included men, or that she did not have authority of men – especially those in the army.

So on what basis did Paul tell Timothy-

NKJ **1 Tim.** 2:12 - And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

When you consider the context (1 Tim. 2:1-15) Paul is imploring Timothy to 'live peaceably with all men' – which would include the Jews as well as governmental officials. Thus, because Timothy's job was to raise up congregations - mostly amongst the Jews, and probably in the pattern of the synagogue, it would not be culturally prudent for women to be teaching. But if Paul was making an edict that applied to all women down through the ages, it would be (according to vs. 9) prudent for them to fix their hair so as to not draw attention to themselves. It would also be forbidden for women to wear expensive clothing, or wear expensive jewelry.

So, what was Paul doing? Better yet, "what COULD Paul do"? As his student, he could instruct Timothy to do things a certain way, but what he could not do is make an edict that would be binding on anyone other than those he was personally responsible for. Why? Because Paul – as a Torah scholar - knew that he, nor could anyone else, add or take away from the Torah.

ESV **Deut.** 4:2 - You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.



That's a very clear instruction, and it is stated twice in the book of Deuteronomy. What Paul was actually doing was giving instructions to Timothy, and to Timothy alone. His instruction here, as well as to the Corinthians<sup>2</sup>, were just that – HIS instructions, not God's.

### *Young People?*

Paul said to Timothy –

<sup>CJB</sup> **1 Tim. 4:12** - Don't let anyone look down on you because of your youth; on the contrary, set the believers an example in your speech, behavior, love, trust and purity.

When you take into account the example of Samuel, David, Josiah, and Yeshua - who at 12 years old was challenging<sup>3</sup> the Jewish leadership of His day – there is apparently no problem with young people teaching. Obviously, all these were well versed in the ways of God. Of course, an unmarried teenager should not be instructing older people about childrearing, but when a young person has studied a certain Biblical topic, I see no reason why he or she should be restricted from teaching about it.. On the other hand - what about those new to the walk?

### *Novices?*

Here again, Paul gives instruction –

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Tim. 3:6** - He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

In this case, Paul's instructions pertain to the one who would be the overseer of the congregation – the 'episkope', not a teacher. Paul's concern was that being "newly planted" (as the Greek word implies<sup>4</sup>) in the congregation, the person would become prideful and soon fall away. As for being a teacher - I believe that the sooner a new person shows the understanding and desire to teach, the quicker he will learn.

### **Who to Teach?**

When YHVH reveals understanding that is new to us, we oftentimes want to share that understanding with our friends. But that's not necessarily what we are supposed to be doing.

One of the most puzzling stories in the scripture is that of Yeshua – after His resurrection - approaching some of His disciples as they are out fishing. The story is found in John 21. As the story goes, the disciples had been fishing all night, but had caught nothing. Yeshua called out to them from the shore and recommended that they cast their net on the other side of the boat. After doing so, they caught exactly 153 fish, which was so much they were hardly able to bring them in.

Though we often focus on the number of fish, I believe the story behind the story is simply that they were fishing on the wrong side of the boat.

Yeshua's disciples were called to be fishers of men<sup>5</sup>, but they were fishing on the Jewish side of the boat. They were hoping to convince their Jewish brothers that Yeshua was the promised Messiah, and that He

<sup>2</sup> Also 1 Cor. 14:13.– in that day, it was shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly. It was part of doing things "decently and in order".

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:46 - Yeshua was interrogating the Jewish teachers. Gr. 'eprotao' (1905) has more to do with testing or interrogating rather than simply asking. The normal word for simply asking is 'apokrinomai' (611) – literally 'from judging' or 'separating judgement'

<sup>4</sup> neophutos – 3504 – newly planted, just springing up

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17



was going to usher in the Kingdom of God. But the Jewish people were not the ones Yeshua wanted them to 'fish for'. Their purpose was to go to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel'. As He had previously told them -

NKJ **Matt.** 10:6-7 - "... go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Paul found himself fishing on the wrong side of the boat as well. He thought his Jewish friends would be interested in his new understanding of the Messiah, but instead of showing an interest, they went to battle against him to the point that he finally he said<sup>6</sup> –

ESV **Acts** 18:6 - " ... From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Who then should you reach out to? I propose that you go to those YHVH has already called. Yeshua said -

NKJ **John** 6:44 - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

So what do we do? We simply make ourselves available, and one of the easiest ways to do that is to put your name on the 119 Ministries 'Fellowship Finder'<sup>7</sup>. We did that at the beginning and many of those who found their way to our fellowship did so as a result of that website. People who get to you from there are looking for truth, and oftentimes ends up with that person asking you questions.

Other ways would include putting up a website, opening a Facebook page, or putting an ad in the newspaper.

The point is, if God is calling them, He will see to it that they find you, or someone like you, who can answer why that are having such a change in their understanding of the Bible.

## What to Teach?

Like I mentioned at the beginning, trying to figure out what to teach was the hardest part of starting a fellowship, but because we began by using the structured system of studying the Torah, we had a plan and content for a number of years. Some years later I felt that we needed to learn more – especially for the benefit of those who were new to the walk, so we started having a second service each Sabbath which provided an hour for a message, including Q&A. That again presented the problem of 'what to teach', but thankfully, by then I had a number of topics at my disposal, as well as other teachers who did so as well.

One thing I found helpful was to do a series of messages on the same topic. Many topics are too big to fit into a 1-hour message and really should be broken down so as to be able to include the background behind the message.

Another idea is to do an in-depth study of a book in the Bible. This format eliminates the need to figure out what you're going to teach – you just teach whatever is next in the book. So far, we've gone from the book of Joshua down through the book of Ezra in the Tnakh. A few years back, we started in James and went through 3<sup>rd</sup> John, then dropped back to Romans.

In regards to the Torah Study, we read the entire Torah Portion as well as the Haftara, then discuss it. We found it best to have a moderator, whose job is to draw comments out of the rest of the group. It's a great learning experience for the moderator, because in our fellowship, the moderator has to be prepared

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<sup>6</sup> See also Acts 13:46-47

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.119ministries.com/resources/fellowship-finder/>





to teach the portion if no-one makes comments. Following the example of Yeshua, the moderator sits at a table instead of standing.

### Deuteronomy Reading?

So why are we focusing on Deuteronomy this year? For those who have been to SOOJ in years past, you will remember that from the first SOOJ in 1999, we have always had a Deuteronomy Reading. The idea was based on this passage –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Deut. 31:10-11** - And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, <sup>11</sup> "when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

In all the previous years that I had observed Sukkot, I had never witnessed a group doing that, so instead of reading the entire Torah each seven years at the festival, we decided to read the book of Deuteronomy each year at Sukkot.

In the past we always did it in the morning before the Main Session. This year we decided to do it during many of the Main Sessions as a teaching tool and as an example of how we do the Torah Study each week in our fellowship.

Our hope is that by using this tool, you would use it as a way to begin a Hebraic Fellowship in your area as well.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews was writing to a people who were coming out of paganism and turning back to the ways of the God of Israel. He was explaining to them what they were witnessing in their day, and why. I believe that some of those people answered their calling by writing and becoming teachers of righteousness. We are here today as a result of their efforts.

We are those same people – only some 2000 years later.

I'm going to close with the words that inspired this year's festival – but with a twist to show that I believe we are going to answer our call.

For though there was a time when you were not teachers, you answered the call – you have become teachers - and have begun to teach the basic principles and the oracles of God.

**Hebrews 5:12** TLK Updated Version

Shalom Aleichem