



Shalom

Let us introduce ourselves . . .

Ami Yisrael Hebraic Fellowship

Welcome to the Ami Yisrael Hebraic Fellowship!

Ami Yisrael ("My people Israel") is a Torah¹ pursuant Hebraic fellowship, firmly grounded on the teachings and example of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ). Our fellowship began on the second Sabbath of February 2005 as a 2-hour Bible Study that included a short period of praise & worship. At that time, our vision was simply to continue the job given to Yeshua's disciples and to become part of a people prepared for the Lord. This continues to be our vision, and though our fellowship grows slowly, growth has continued over the years, but not without a few hiccups along the way.

This brochure is designed to help familiarize you with our fellowship and answer some of the many questions you might have about what we do. Even though some of the things we do are somewhat out of the box – we do not believe you will find anything “weird”.

Though this is an introduction, a more in-depth discussion of many of the topics can be found on our web site at the referenced links.



www.amiyisrael.org

¹ Torah is the Hebrew term for law or instructions, specifically the instructions found in the five books of Moses.

WHAT IS HALACHA? From time to time you will hear us use this term and wonder what it means. Halacha is the Hebrew term for “the walk”, or “the way one walks”. God’s way of life is often likened to a walk on a path (Ps. 86:11; Prov. 8:20; Matt. 7:14), and though the path may be straight and narrow, it is not a hiking trail. Thus God’s people are not walking single file. Halacha is simply how you walk that walk, and could be taken as which side of the same path you choose to walk.

Though the Torah is said to contain 613 commandments, some of those commandments are somewhat vague. For instance, how are we to keep the Sabbath holy (Ex. 20:8)? Some keep it holy one way while others do it another way. In both cases, they are attempting to observe the commandment, and thus their observance is their “halacha”.

We teach that God allows each family to establish its own halacha based on His written word, but when the individual families come together as a congregation, we observe the fellowship’s halacha. One example of our fellowship’s halacha is that as part of our attempt to observe Leviticus 19:32 (rise up before the hoary head) we expect the teens and older children to wait till the adults go through the oneg line before they go through.

You will find that many of the things discussed in this brochure are based on our halacha, and are not necessarily considered to be explicit Torah instructions.

DO YOU STUDY ALL THE BIBLE? Yes, our fellowship studies the entire Bible, but we teach that most everything taught or referenced by the prophets, the New Testament apostles, and Yeshua himself are based on God’s instructions spoken directly to Moses and recorded in the five books of Moses called the “Torah”. Thus, in order to properly understand the prophets and the New Testament, one must first have a good understanding of God’s law.

When we began the fellowship, we focused on learning the Torah and tying New Testament scriptures back to it. As our fellowship has matured, we’ve come to see that the Torah is referenced throughout the entire Bible.

At around 2010, we added a second “traditional” service to our Sabbath fellowship. In this service we deliver teachings that are oftentimes based primarily on New Testament scriptures. Then in 2015, we added a 3rd Sabbath of each month reading and discussion of the New Testament.

DO YOU HAVE AN ORDAINED RABBI, MINISTER, OR PASTOR? Not necessarily. The scriptures seem to indicate that there are certain roles that should be filled in each congregation, and that no one person should fulfill all the roles. In our fellowship there are various people who are recognized as filling certain roles, not because they were named or appointed to the role, but because they simply fulfill the role as evidenced by their actions.

WHY DO PEOPLE ASK QUESTIONS AFTER THE MESSAGE? We teach that if a person is going to teach the congregation, he (or she) must be willing to support what he taught. If a speaker makes a blatantly incorrect statement, it should be clarified before the entire audience, otherwise one person might question him about his statement and get clarification, but others may go away thinking that what was taught was correct. Therefore, we encourage questions at the conclusion of each speaking session.

WHY LITURGY? Many believe that repetitious prayer is frowned on by our Messiah, but a close look at the scripture (Matt. 6:7) shows that Yeshua was against “vain” repetitions. If the prayer you are saying is heart-felt, it is not a “vain repetition”. Much of our liturgical worship comes directly from the scriptures, and serves to remind us of God’s greatness and power. We teach that there is no greater prayer than to repeat to God the words He gave to us.

WHY ARE SOME OF THE WORDS OF THE SHEMA DIMMER THAN OTHERS? The Jewish people consider the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9) to be the quintessential prayer. When Yeshua was asked which was the great commandment in the Torah, He answered by referencing the Torah as well as “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18).

The beginning of the Shema (vs. 4) is often sung followed by the phrase “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever”. That phrase is not found in the Bible and was at some point added by the rabbis to the singing of the Shema. To acknowledge the fact that it is not a part of the scripture, it is sung in a quiet voice. We indicate such on our slide by making the words dim.

WHAT IS A TORAH STUDY? If you were to attend a typical Messianic synagogue, you would likely witness a cantor remove the Torah Scroll from the “ark”, set it on the “bimah”, and then read that weeks designated “parsha” or portion. Oftentimes, it would be read in Hebrew. That would be followed by another person, probably the rabbi, who would give a short teaching on what had been read.

That’s fine for them, but our fellowship wants a more in-depth understanding of the scriptures. Thus our Torah Study consists of reading the entire portion followed by an interactive discussion of what we read. Some people will refer to various commentaries, while others bring computers in order to search out the Hebrew meaning of the words - all in an effort to find the message God was giving to His servant Moses.

TORAH STUDY GUIDELINES - At AYF we strive to do things decently and in order. Therefore, our Torah Study is a moderated discussion. Here are some of the guidelines:

- Stand while reciting the opening and closing blessings
- Standing while reading the portion is optional
- Try to judge how much of the portion you read so that everyone gets a chance to read
- Raise your hand and wait to be called on before making a comment
- Unless the moderator indicates otherwise, limit comments to about two minutes

It’s OK to openly disagree with another’s comment, but be nice and respectful in how you disagree.

DRESS - If you were to look at the meaning of the words, you would find that God calls the Sabbath an “appointment” and a “sacred called-to meeting” (Lev. 23:2-3). It is a time when God has called us to meet with Him at the time He has designated. Since on the Sabbath we are attending that meeting, we teach that our dress should reflect the opportunity we’ve been given and the respect for the one with whom we are meeting, i.e. - the Creator of the universe. Men generally dress in nice casual shirts and pants, while others may wear a tie and jacket. Women typically wear knee-length or greater

skirts or dresses, though pants are acceptable as well. Head coverings and prayer shawls are optional.

Women who intend to participate in congregational dance should avoid blouses that are sleeveless or fit loosely around the neck since they tend to expose women's undergarments.

HEBREW DANCING - One of the Hebrew words for "dancing" is "chagag" (see 1 Samuel 30:16), and "chagag" is also the word translated "feast" in Exodus 23:14. Thus dancing and God's feasts are related, and of course - the Sabbath is a feast! Hebrew is an action language, and one of the ways we praise God is through our actions, and thus dance can be a form of praise. King David is a great example as he "danced before the LORD" when bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem.

Many in our fellowship participate in Hebraic circle dance during the Praise and Worship part of our traditional service. All of the dances are choreographed using mostly traditional Hebraic dance steps. If you wish to be a part of the dance circle, we ask that you:

- Avail yourself of the dance instruction booklets and videos we have available
- Concentrate on moving with the group more so than getting the steps correct.
- Have your younger and inexperienced children dance in the center circle with the other children
- Dress appropriately

COURTESY IN WORSHIP - Praising God in song and dance is one of the highlights of our Sabbath fellowship. We generally sing to the accompaniment of recorded music and project the words on a screen. During this portion of the service, it is appropriate to stand and refrain from carrying on a conversation. After the music is complete, the worship portion continues with the Shema and liturgy. It is appropriate to remain standing for this portion as well.

ONEG - the Hebrew word "oneg" means "delight", and one of the delightful aspects of the Sabbath is eating . . . after all, it is a feast! Our fellowship typically has a 30 minute "mini-oneg" between the Torah Study and the traditional service. This oneg is intended to be a snack break, not a meal. In regards to the mini-oneg, we ask that:

- You bring snack foods, including fruits, raw vegetables, crackers, cookies, etc.
- Refrain from bringing soups or other items that would create a mess if spilled
- teens and older children wait till the adults go through the oneg line before they go through
- begin to clean up after yourself about 5 minutes before the beginning of the traditional service

In addition, on the 1st Sabbath of each month, we have another oneg after the traditional service. This oneg IS intended to be a meal, and thus soups and other foods are acceptable.

Note - it is our "halacha" to avoid cooking on the Sabbath. Thus we ask that all food is cooked before you arrive, needing only to be heated if necessary.

And speaking of halacha . . . it's our halacha that if you intend to bring a pecan pie to the oneg, you should really bring two! Just call it "loving your neighbor as yourself"!

CHILDREN'S CLASS – We currently have no children's class.

NEW MOON CELEBRATIONS - Our fellowship observes the New Month based on the traditional Jewish calendar. Though celebrating the New Month is not instructed in Leviticus 23 (where all the other festivals are listed), other passages in the Torah as well as many references in the prophets indicate that this monthly cycle should be observed.

It is our tradition to observe the beginning of each month at one of the congregant's home. It is a casual get-together where we generally share a meal of some sort and follow it with a topic of discussion.

SHALOM CHAVARIM - It's our tradition to close our service with this traditional Jewish chant. "Shalom" means "have peace" or "be at peace" and "chaverim" means "friends". The chant basically means "have peace my friends till we meet again". After the last prayer, we gather into a circle, hold hands, and swing our hands back and forth while chanting the songs. The children have fun with it as they attempt to get their neighbor out of sync by swinging one hand one way, and the other the other way.

HEBRAIC TERMS - though it is certainly not required, many in the fellowship tend to use a number of Hebraic terms, especially during the Torah study. In fact, the word "torah" is itself a Hebraic term that, even though it's often translated "law", actually means "teaching" and "instruction".

Those who use the Hebraic terms often do so to help keep the true meaning of the words in the forefront of their mind.

A listing of many commonly used Hebraic terms can be found on the web site.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE - there are many ways to contribute to the fellowship. The primary way is to volunteer for a specific task on occasion. Each week we pass around a "Responsibility Schedule" where you can sign your name to help set up, clean up, offer a prayer, moderate the Torah Study, or even present a message. Signing your name of the Responsibility Schedule means that we don't have to ask for volunteers to perform those tasks each week.

Secondly, you can volunteer to host one of the many events including a New Moon celebration or other events that normally take place at a home.

If you would like contribute monetarily, we have a donation box back by the coffee maker.

DO YOU HAVE A STATEMENT OF BELIEFS? - Not necessarily. When a church, synagogue, or other type of religious organization publishes a "statement of beliefs", they in fact "paint themselves into a corner" in regards to what a person is allowed to teach and to what those in the fellowship are comfortable with. Instead of a SoB (hmmm), we have what we call "Foundations" - a broad list of truths that the Bible clearly supports. They are:

- Yeshua (Jesus) is The Son of God and that He died to redeem His people back to Himself, His Father, the Land of Israel, and the Covenant.

- God's people are redeemed by the grace of God thru the spilled blood of the Lamb of God, Yeshua the Messiah.
- God's people express their redemption and salvation through obedience to the Law of God, the Torah
- It is God's intent to draw His people, Israel and Judah, back to Him and unite them into 'one stick' which will ultimately be called "Israel".

WHAT IS THE THOUGHT BEHIND YOUR LOGO? - When Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, instead of a curse God put blessings in Balaam's mouth. In a prophetic vision looking out over the neatly arraigned sea of Hebrew tents, he said -

^{NKJ} Numbers 24:5 "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel!"

We pray that when God gathers His people again, we will be among those dwelling in those tents.



Ami Yisrael Hebraic Fellowship

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Sabbath Service Times:

Torah Study - 12:00 PM

Traditional Service - 2:00 PM