



COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

Shalom

Welcome to the Shevet Achim community. We are followers of Jesus who have, since 1994, joined our lives together to bring children from neighboring countries into Israel for life-saving medical care.

Application

Those interested in serving alongside us are encouraged to visit our website or visit in person, and then fill out our online application. We'll talk with your references and arrange a video interview with you, to discern together if this is a work the Father has prepared for you. We accept those who are excited and motivated specifically to be part of what God is doing with Shevet Achim; they often say that as soon as they heard of our community, they knew it was for them. Those who have only a general desire to be in Israel, or are simply in need of a home or visa, will not be accepted.

Visas

Once accepted to serve in the community, we will prepare for your entrance to Israel. Those serving with us for less than one month may enter on a normal tourist visa. For those serving from 1-3 months, we will ask you for supporting documents in order to request an invitation letter from the government. And for those intending to serve long-term, we will work with you to request a government recommendation for a year-long work visa before your arrival.

What to Pack

Winters can be cold and rainy, summers hot and sunny. Out of consideration for our neighbors and for each other, please choose clothing that is loose-fitting and modest, which in the Middle East means that upper arms, chest and knees are covered for both sexes. For women an upper garment should cover the hips, a one-piece swimsuit with shorts or skirt is appropriate for the beach, and shorts and t-shirt for athletics.

How God Provides

New community members pay for their own round-trip air ticket to reach Israel. From the moment we collect you from the airport, we'll then be trusting our Father together to provide through the community for all our basic needs as we seek first his kingdom. This includes housing, meals, phone and data, and urgent medical care. Those serving longer than three months may receive a monthly personal stipend of \$175 if needed. Those with outstanding financial commitments, such as student loans, may also request community help with necessary payments. And those serving a year, and intending to continue, may receive a round-trip air ticket for a month-long visit to their home country.

Since this support comes through general contributions to our community, we are not authorized to receive personal support while serving. The rule of thumb is that we can only accept a financial gift if it would come to us regardless of our service with Shevet Achim, for example a birthday gift from a family member.

Work and time off

We can compare service with Shevet Achim to the work of a doctor or first responder: at any hour the urgent call to service may come, and personal time cannot be guaranteed. But within that understanding, we do seek to be flexible and support one another. Our working days are Sunday-Thursday, starting at 8:00 am with two hours of community worship, scripture and prayer, and concluding about 8:00 pm with blogging or cleaning up after our evening meal. We try to rotate cooking, cleaning and blogging responsibilities, and there are often, but not always, pockets of free time during the day.

Because eating together is foundational to community life, we are asked to be present for at least five evening meals each week. Members are encouraged to attend a local congregation and develop friendships outside the community; when leaving the community we're asked to let the schedule administrator know where we are going, with whom, and when we will return. We ask our short-term members to refrain from dating relationships and displays of affection, and all members are asked not to be alone in a non-public setting with a member of the opposite sex, other than their spouse.

Friday and the Sabbath are free days, although we do take turns to ensure that someone is always present on our bases where visiting families are housed. We only work or drive our vehicles on the Sabbath or Torah holidays in emergency

cases. In addition, each community member can ask for an extra free day each month.

Our community welcomes visitors, as space allows, and we follow the Middle Eastern custom of allowing them three days before putting them to work. Our extended family are encouraged to visit while we are in Israel, and community members are allowed up to a week off to travel with them.

New and short-term members will be asked to rotate through our various community tasks, such as housekeeping, family care, hospital visits, and driving. And all members, regardless of length of service, may be asked to fill in when and where needed. But our goal for longer-term members is to identify their unique gifts and calling, and to equip and release them to thrive in their own area of stewardship. To this end we will support community members in the pursuit of further education, training and language acquisition.

Spiritual Life

To understand our community one must know that it was born out of response to a dying child. We're helping our neighbors because no child should be left to die without medical care, and no follower of Jesus should pass by on the other side of the road. Our help is real and unconditional, and was not conceived as a pretext for sharing our faith. When our Muslim and Jewish partners understand this is our heart, we find we have perfect liberty to be who we are and speak openly of our Lord.

We are a community under the authority of the word of God, given us through the people of Israel—Moses, the Hebrew prophets and writings, Jesus (the living word) and finally his apostles. We gather around the word daily, as we know it has the power, through God's spirit, to change us. Our community exists not only to unconditionally serve the families we host, but equally for the members to help each other become disciples of Jesus.

We see the word as once for all delivered to the saints, and make no effort to go beyond what is written by teaching the post-apostolic traditions of men. We read together and ask the spirit of God to teach us through the words shared by each member of the community. Likewise when we share the word with our neighbors, we ask first what they understand it to mean, rather than telling them our understanding. One who feels compelled to conform others to his or her own interpretation of scripture will not do well long-term in our community.

While we seek the humility to only speak when scripture speaks, we are bold to insist that when it does speak the disciple of Jesus must obey. What the scriptures call sin is indeed sin, and open to no other interpretation. We hold, with the scriptures and against emerging Western culture, that since the beginning sexual activity is intended only within a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman. We understand that divorce and remarriage, except on the grounds allowed by Jesus and Paul, is adultery.

We also affirm Paul's teaching about the distinctive roles of men and women in the church, and seek as a community to follow his direction that during prayer and worship, men will uncover and women cover their heads.

When We Fall Short

Which of us though is not convicted by the Sermon on the Mount that we have fallen short of God's standards? We are not a community that feigns perfection; we are a community of broken sinners who commit to live honestly before God and before each other. With repentance and confession we have grace to press on; without it we may not continue in this community.

No one will be removed from the community without two prior warnings. If a community member sins, we will go to that brother or sister first alone and seek to win them to repentance, then if necessary go together with others.

We seek to make decisions by consensus, and every involved member has a voice. When necessary Jonathan, as the founding member of the community, or those whom he designates, can exercise final decision-making authority. Any concerns about the leadership may be directed to Jim Schutz, who is on the Shevet Achim board in Israel, which oversees financial, legal and ethical issues.

Now to him who is able to keep us from falling, be glory in our gathering together through Messiah Jesus, both now and forever.