

AHC Havurah

Newsletter

Volume 27, Jan 2023

Dear Mishpochah (family),

We are writing this letter on Christmas Eve Day, the 7th day of Hanukkah. We hope your Hanukkah and Christmas celebration was a blessing. It has been some time since our last newsletter back in March of 2022. It's been a very busy year and one that is bringing new life and energy to the AHC. Flora is working with David and Katheen to get a better working understanding of how the AHC operates, and Flora and I are busy redesigning the St. Louis Zoom Havurah which we do monthly. We are praying about how to expand this concept to include another Friday night per month and build a more close-knit online community.

We want to thank all the faithful members who continue to meet with us every month. We are hoping that more havurot will begin to form, both in-person and online. If you are feeling called to start a havurah group, then please contact us and we are happy to help. We will announce any changes and additions as we develop our new strategy, but for now we will continue to meet once a month, usually on the 2nd Friday with some exceptions.

We are very excited about the new ideas coming together at the AHC. We have new volunteers to work with and new programs that are being developed. We also want to expand our offerings on Youtube. We still need more committed volunteers to make all this happen, and we hope you can join in and help us.

If you are receiving this newsletter on your email and are not yet a member of the AHC, we ask that you go to <https://www.hebrewcatholic.net/ahc-affiliation-form/> Here you can learn more about how to join our mission and support us with prayer and shekels -- we need both.

If you would like to join us for our St. Louis Zoom Havurah, then you can join us on January 13. Here is the link:

<https://www.hebrewcatholic.net/events/ahc-rosh-hashanah-342-645-495-963-461-342/> You can also find this link on the AHC site under the Events tab each month.

Please see below the reflection I shared on the Zoom Service for the Jewish New Year, as we continue to celebrate the secular New Year. We hope that you will enjoy reading it, and we hope it inspires you to join a havurah and/or start one in your area. Remember, we are here to help, and we look forward to hearing from you in 2023.

Also be on the lookout for the next issue of The Hebrew Catholic for more important updates and announcements. When you become an AHC member or affiliate, you will begin to receive this publication (donations for it are appreciated), or you can subscribe separately without affiliating. You will see more about this in the link above.

Our New Year's resolution is to bring you more Havurah Newsletters in 2023. We hope to publish at least 4 newsletters, and we would love to get

some updates on the existing havurah groups that are still meeting. You can email updates to ahc.havurah@yahoo.com

May the Lord bless you and your families in this new year, and please keep all of us at the AHC in your prayers as we embark on the next phase of our journey.

Shalom in Yeshua, Miriam, and Yosef,

Ken and Flora Wilsker

AHC Havurah Coordinators

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Reflection from Rosh Hashanah 2022 (with minor changes here)

From the beginning of the 1st century we see that small communities or congregations formed that were an offshoot of families and neighborhoods. Remember that the first believers in Yeshua were Jewish and lived in close quarters to be close to their synagogues. In fact, the first congregations of believers worshiped in homes.

Why do I mention this to start this reflection? The havurah groups are a hearkening back to this early reality. These small communities grew and expanded their influence beyond the neighborhood and small community to include every kind of people. We call this in today's terminology, organic growth. And all along, let's remember that communities did not grow to mega congregations but that each small community had a Parish Church that was based in different

neighborhoods. In other words, they spread the faith and planted small communities or Churches.

Today, with the availability to move longer distances with ease, we have witnessed that our parish Churches have grown large, along with the fact that we have fewer priests to serve these communities. Today we see that some larger Churches have a much harder time helping people connect in meaningful ways, so they have started a movement to form smaller cells within the parish so that the People of God can build close-knit communities.

As humans we desperately need to get reconnected with each other. We are more isolated now than ever before. It is too easy for us to be anonymous in our neighborhoods and parishes. Even our workplaces have become so impersonal that large corporations are trying to find different strategies to connect their employees by forming small communities with shared interests that go beyond our work commonalities. I have witnessed this phenomenon in my own work place.

In the AHC, we can certainly relate to this reality. We are such a small subset of the human race and an even smaller one within the Catholic Church. We are all connected in some way to our particular neighborhoods and parishes wherever we live. But something is still amiss for most Jewish Catholics. We yearn to connect with our Jewish people, but in many cases our families have distanced themselves from us, and it is more difficult for us to live in both a Jewish community and a Catholic community.

Those of us who are Jewish Catholics tend to be very involved in our parishes, and we are often the only Jewish Catholics in our parish, and if you are a family, how does that family pass on their Jewish Catholic

heritage in a way that is meaningful for our children and generations thereafter? Do not fear -- I believe there is a solution.

In the AHC, we believe strongly that the Holy Spirit is directing us to build these small communities which we call "a havurah." A havurah is a fellowship based on our common faith, common ancestry, and deep friendship. A place where we can pray, study, and support each other as we grow in holiness and work with fear and trembling to reach Heaven and bring others with us. In our world today, this would attract so many to our Lord and our way of life.

G-d needs you for such a time as this! We have many ways we can form these communities. We can meet in our homes. We can meet in our parish facilities, and we can form communities on the web using video conferencing programs. It is time for us to step out with the boldness of the Ruach HaKodesh to do something purely for the sake of "O Beauty, ever ancient, ever new..." (St. Augustine of Hippo)

Flora and I are praying for guidance in our own lives to see how to serve G-d and His people. I know we are all busy with so many good things out there in the Church, and yet I can't help but think that this is most crucial at this time. It is time for you to consider the same. We need to ensure that our fellow Jewish Catholics and Catholics who love the Jewish people are encouraged and supported because we are to be a light to Israel, to the Church, and all the nations. "And it shall be said, 'Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way.'" (Isaiah 57:14)

The AHC is here to support your efforts, and may Yeshua lead and guide us through the Ruach HaKodesh to build communities of love, faith, and SHALOM in this New Year, 5783.

To this end, we have noticed that many who receive this newsletter and who are on the Facebook group are not yet members of the AHC. We hope you are inspired to join us. David and Kathleen are preparing to pass on the torch to others, and we pray in this New Year for an outpouring of new members and leaders.

May G-d lead you closer to Him to serve His people in a new way this coming year, and may He bless you with good health, courage, strength, wisdom, and shalom.

If you would like to see the recordings of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayer services, you can go to Youtube.com and search for the AHC. You can also find them under the Events tab on www.hebrewcatholic.net

Below is another article that was written several years ago on the circumcision of Yeshua which is now celebrated as the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of G-d. We thought at this time of year it would be appropriate to re-publish.

Mazel Tov! It's a Boy!

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God is celebrated on January 1st, exactly 8 days after the Nativity of our Lord. In Jewish tradition, the 8th day is the Brit Milah (circumcision) for every baby boy. This was and is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. So this would have been the day that our Lord would have been circumcised. In fact, this Feast of the Circumcision was celebrated for centuries by our Church before 1974.

In the early centuries of the Church, January 1st was used as a celebration of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but by the 13th and 14th centuries the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ had come to replace the Marian feast in many areas. By 1570, Pope Pius V expanded the Feast to the entire Roman Catholic Church. Then in 1914, the feast of the "Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary" was established in Portugal, occurring on October 11. In 1931 this feast was expanded to

the entire Roman Catholic Church and stayed on October 11. Then after the Second Vatican Council in 1974, Pope Paul VI removed the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ from the liturgical calendar and replaced it with the Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

We who are of Hebrew origin understand very clearly that this day is still a celebration of both Motherhood and her baby boy. We love our Jewish Blessed Mother, Miriam and love to celebrate her as "Theotokos", the Mother of G-d. She is the quintessential Jewish Mother. And even though we no longer officially celebrate the Circumcision, we are free to acknowledge that our Lord was circumcised on the 8th day after his birth. This 8th day for every Jewish family then, and even today, is a celebration of the birth of a son. It is also the day when the Jewish baby boy is given his name, formally. It is a family celebration of the birth of a baby and is also a celebration of Motherhood and Parenthood.

In Catholic Christian tradition this Feast has deep theological significance too. This is important because it is the first of seven times that our Messiah spilled his blood for all mankind. They are:

1. The Circumcision
2. The Agony in the Garden
3. The Scourging at the Pillar
4. The Crowning with Thorns
5. The Via Crucis
6. The Crucifixion
7. The Piercing of His Side

It is also the time when our Lord received his name, Yeshua. I always wondered why more English-speaking people do not question the name, Jesus. Our Lord's Hebrew name has so much significance but is often lost in English translation. Yeshua, in Hebrew means Savior or Yahweh our Savior. An Angel told Miriam that she will conceive and have a son, and she will name him Yeshua. Our Blessed Mother would have known instinctively what the Angel was really telling her. (Matt 2: 18-23). Similarly, Christ is not his last name but the Greek translation of His title, in Hebrew Mashiah, or Messiah. Messiah simply means the Anointed One. So in Hebrew, Yeshua haMashiah, Jesus the Messiah or Jesus the Christ!

Circumcision in Hebrew is "Brit Milah," or in most Jewish families it is called a "Bris". So the Bris of our Lord occurred on the 8th day following his birth, on January 1st. Even though the Church does not formally celebrate this Feast any longer, it is still important to all Catholics and Christians. This day in a Jewish family is full of joy and also some anxiety, for it is the day that the Mohel, or the Rabbi who is trained to do the ritual circumcision, comes to the home with a house full of people to perform the circumcision. This is a day that families, extended families, friends, and neighbors celebrate the birth of a baby boy and honor the new parents. In fact, the first thing all the visitors say to the new Mother and Father is "Mazel Tov"!

Of course, we are obedient to the Holy Father and celebrate the Feast of Miriam's Motherhood, and Miriam always leads us to her son, in this case hers and "our" baby boy. Along with the shedding of blood, our Lord also gets his name and lives among us. This is G-d becoming one of us.

So on January 1st we shout Mazel Tov, it's a boy and his name is Yeshua and he is our Messiah! Let us celebrate this Feast with renewed love and appreciation for Yeshua and Miriam and the Jewish roots of our Faith.

St. Edith Stein and Miriam Mystical Rose, pray for us!

Shalom in Yeshua,
Ken Wilsker