

Abwoon Circles: A Short Guide for Creating Local Groups

I encourage people from all backgrounds who are inspired by this work to use the body prayers and readings in these books in small informal study groups to help explore and deepen in their own spiritual process. There is no prerequisite to begin working in this way.

Neil Douglas-Klotz, Ph.D.

You are reading this because something has stirred in your heart. A depth encounter with Aramaic translations of Jesus' words can have a transformative impact upon one's life. This possibility is affirmed in the preface to *Prayers of the Cosmos*: *Reader beware: though this book is brief, it contains the seeds of a revolution (Matthew Fox).*

Our prayer is that we may be open for such transformation in our personal lives, as well as in the communities in which we live and in those beyond. We ask that the way be open for us to participate in God's shem reality (light, sound, vibration, atmosphere) throughout the entire cosmos.

To Begin

Begin with yourself. Read, study, and pray. You have experienced a connection to the Aramaic material and now comes the opportunity to deepen in it. Set aside daily time for personal devotional practice and/or include this work in your established practice.

Connection/Community

Ultimately we hunger for deeper connection with the Divine and discover connection with others in the human family shows us the way towards the Holy One. Become aware of one or two others you know hold the longing to connect to the Source of All. Share your experience with this material. Invite them to participate with you in a group practice. Most groups meet in members' homes.

There is no need to focus on numbers: Two people comprise a group. Be cautious about aligning with the dominant culture's standard that larger numbers mean greater "success."

Evening Plans

Your group, meeting weekly, biweekly, or monthly, can follow any number of designs. One basic plan is to follow *Prayers of the Cosmos* by focusing on one phrase of the Aramaic Lord's Prayer per session. This may include reading the study material aloud and practicing one or more of the body prayers. Many groups include time for personal "check-ins" with some spending significant group time relating the material to their life experiences. Other groups have trained dance leaders who lead the group in dancing the sacred phrase. Other groups listen to the pronunciation tape, the sung tape or CD (see *Resources*) as a way to enter the sacred sound.

Long standing groups can move from the Aramaic Prayer, to the Beatitudes, or the Sayings of Jesus. Some may repeat the cycle, continuing to deepen in the prayer, the study, the sound, and its integration with daily life. Other groups choose to move to a focus upon the material in *Desert Wisdom* or *Hidden Gospel*. Still others interweave material from both books with other complementary resources from session to session.

For individuals or groups who prefer a peer facilitation model, or one that does not require a lot of skill or experience in this work, a recommended resource is the six-part tape series *Original Prayer: Meditations and Teachings of the Aramaic Jesus*. Needing only a space to meet and a cassette player, a study group can be guided through the entire prayer by Neil Douglas-Klotz.

Leadership

The early Christian church movement had no "official" leaders, leadership was offered from the local community based on individual gifts. Likewise, in your Abwoon Study Circle, some may be readers, some may lead body prayers, others may have the gift for pronunciation or for facilitating group discussion, while others may have the gift of leadership for song and/or dance.

You have obviously chosen (rather, "been chosen") to be an organizer for this group. Know your own gifts, offer them to the service of the group. Bring forth the gifts of others who may join with you. Honor all.

ABWOON STUDY CIRCLE RESOURCES

Many resources are available to assist you in your spiritual journeying with this material. Others are continually being created from the crucible of personal encounters with these translations in flow with Hokhmah (Holy Wisdom, Sacred Sense).

Abwoon Web Site

www.abwoon.com is the web site for obtaining updated schedules of Abwoon Study Circle events, electronic book and tape ordering, new articles on Aramaic themes and more. This is the primary site for the most current and comprehensive overview of what Abwoon Study Circle offers. Secure on-line ordering of resources is available from this site.

Newsletter

Abwoon Study Circle Newsletter is produced at least once annually, and includes a schedule of events offered by Neil Douglas-Klotz and Kamae A. Miller (lectures, workshops, retreats). Each edition contains a catalogue of resources with detailed descriptions, costs, and ordering information. It is free in either printed or webpage format to anyone upon request.

Desert Flowers Listserv

This is a periodic listserv discussion group that provides a group focus with the body prayers and spiritual practices in *Prayers of the Cosmos* and *Desert Wisdom* (directed by Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz). To join, all that is needed is the ability to send and receive email. Contact Richard McMurtry at:

Audiovisual and Printed Resources Books, Tapes, CDs, and More

As new resources are constantly inspired and produced each year, we refer you to the website: www.abwoon.com to view the most up to date listing of resources.

To purchase resources, contact:

Abwoon Resource Center

881 High Street, Suite 206

Worthington, OH 43085

Phone: 614-429-4009

Email: resourcecenter@abwoon.com

Abwoon Circles: Starting a Local Group

There is a comprehensive book that has been compiled, edited and written by Munira Elizabeth Reed to help you start a local study or spiritual sharing group using the resources of Neil Douglas-Klotz,

Ph.D. This book contains sessions that you can follow specifically (if you do not have much group leadership experience) or can use as resource in creating your own sessions. There are multiple session plans for each of the books and resources by Douglas-Klotz as of 2008. Order this resource via the Abwoon Resource Center at www.abwoon.com or by calling or emailing directly to 614-429-4009 or resourcecenter@abwoon.com.

Companions and Guides

On a spiritual path, nothing can replace the power of a personal relationship with a guide or companion. Most spiritual traditions hold that sacred transmission through a personal relationship is vital.

There is an ever-growing number of persons who have worked deeply with this material in on-going study groups. Some are available for consultation and support as you begin. Upon request, you can be linked to one or more of these resource guides.

Dances of Universal Peace

The Dances of Universal Peace are simple, meditative, and joyous multi-cultural circle dances that use sacred phrases, chants, music, and movements from many traditions of the world. Some of the Aramaic translations are danced in these circles. To find a local dance circle near you, contact: **Peaceworks: The International Network for the Dances of Universal Peace**, (206) 522-4353. The website address: www.dancesofuniversalpeace.org.

Support and Outreach through Tax-Deductible Donations

This Aramaic and Middle Eastern language research is not funded by any outside group. Those who do public presentations of the Aramaic translations and dances are requested to donate a tithe of the proceeds to help further this work.

Contributions are welcomed to help fund this outreach which includes research, presentations, and the support of workshops, resourcing and study groups in non-hard currency countries where the interest is great. Currently, these include parts of Russia, Eastern Europe, and South America. Outreach also includes support to the annual newsletter publication and distribution, supporting a part-time bookstore fulfillment manager to disseminate resources, and other special projects. Currently we support outreach through free resources to prisons upon request. Additionally, a donor has made it possible to distribute a designated amount of free resources to public libraries in southern states within the USA. Another donor has funded a Video and Archival Project to support archiving this work. From these recordings we hope to produce training videos for potential leaders of the work who cannot afford to attend workshops. Another funder has created a scholarship fund for those involved in the Abwoon Interspiritual Leadership Training. Please let us know if there is a particular form of outreach you wish to support with your donation.

Please send your contribution payable to **The Shalem Center** (marked: *Abwoon Study Circle*). All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

To send donations, contact:

Abwoon Resource Center
c/o The Shalem Center
881 High Street, Suite 206
Worthington, OH 43085

Phone: (614) 429-4009
Email: info@abwoon.com

*Thank you for your interest and dedication in this work,
Eth-phatah! May the way be open for it to spread and deepen.*

Neil Douglas-Klotz, Ph.D.