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To: Rabbi David Schiller  
The Eitz Chaim Dallas Board  
From: Matey Yanakiev

## On An Oftener Lord's Supper

One topic discussed at the 2025 Rabbis' Conference was the place of the Lord's Supper in Messianic Jewish communities, with the speaker encouraging congregations to practice the Supper more frequently. Finding myself in agreement with the sentiment expressed, I want to lay out a brief case why Eitz Chaim Dallas should consider making the Lord's Supper a regular aspect of our Sabbath worship.

(For a respected Messianic Jewish exegete who shares many aspects of my position, please see David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary*.)

### The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians

First Corinthians is our clearest New Testament witness to how the early Messianic communities integrated Yeshua's words over the bread and cup at His final Passover into community life.

We can confidently know the traditions regarding the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians were the universal apostolic practice. In introducing the section of the letter which deals extensively with the Supper, Paul begins with,

"you remember me in everything and **maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you**" (1 Cor 11:2).

Traditions—whether head covering etiquette (11:16), the Lord's Supper (11:23), or the early creed of the witnesses to the Gospel (15:3)—were universal elements of the messianic faith which Paul himself received, practices and beliefs shared between all the apostles and the congregations they founded.<sup>1</sup>

### First Corinthians 11:17–20 Describes Regular Practice

When Paul opens his discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34, he makes explicit the timing of the Supper's celebration: "the following instructions," he says, concern "when you come together" [Greek: *synerchomai*] (11:17)—a present indicative verb that communicates regular, recurring action.

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<sup>1</sup> The Corinthian congregation was swamped with influence from some of the most significant missionaries of the early messianic movement: Apollos and Cephas (1 Cor 1:12); Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1–3, 1 Cor 16:9). In other words, the Corinthian correspondence gives us a critical and representative picture of early messianic faith, not merely a picture of one isolated messianic community.

Three times in rapid succession, Paul repeats the language of

“when you come together” (11:17),

“when you come together as a congregation” (11:18),

“when you come together” (11:20).

“Coming together” then appears two more times at the end of the section on the Lord’s Supper (11:33, 34) and twice more in the instructions on how to use Spiritual gifts in corporate worship (14:23, 26).

Simply put, the Greek *synerchomai* (in all its conjugations) throughout 1 Corinthians always refers to the regular assembly of the Corinthians for corporate worship. Therefore, the context Paul establishes for his instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 how to properly partake of the Lord’s Supper is the **regular gathering of the Corinthians, not an annual Passover celebration**.

## Annual Supper Celebration Infeasible

There are two additional pieces of information from 1 Corinthians that require this reading.

First, throughout 1 Corinthians Paul restricts himself to only writing about **ongoing issues in need of urgent resolution**. The list speaks for itself:

- Sharp factionalism (1:10–13; 3:3–4, 22)
- Incest and other forms of continuous immorality (5:1–13)
- Ongoing lawsuits among the believers (6:1–11)
- Gluttony and visiting of prostitutes (6:12–20)
- Active confusion about marriage and celibacy (7:1–40)
- Unapologetic eating at idol temples, stumbling out of the faith (8:1–10:33)
- Gender confusion (11:2–16, 14:33–38)
- Abuse of the Lord’s Supper, leading to factions, sickness, and death (11:17–34)
- Abuse of Spiritual gifts in corporate worship (12:1–14:40)
- Departure from the resurrection hope of the Gospel (15:1–58)

Second, **the epistle itself was written in the weeks leading up to Pentecost** (16:8).

We know the abuse of the Lord’s Supper was a pressing, active issue in the community, with some still sick due to God’s resulting judgment (11:29–30).

Under the hypothesis that the Corinthians celebrated the Lord’s Supper only once a year, it is plausible First Corinthians is specifically written shortly after Passover but before Pentecost, in the spring.

**But if the Lord’s Supper will not be celebrated again for another year, it is completely incomprehensible why Paul would include his reproof against the Supper’s abuse among his urgent instructions that cannot wait.**

**Timothy is slated to make a visit to the Corinthians very soon (4:17) and Paul himself plans to come in the winter (16:6).** Both Paul and Timothy would then have plenty of time to instruct the Corinthians before the next Passover.

Instead, Paul sharply distinguishes the instructions which can wait until his arrival and the urgent necessity to resolve the abuse of the Lord's Table:

"So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat [the Lord's Supper], wait for one another—if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.

**About the other things I will give directions when I come."** (1 Corinthians 11:33–34)

**It is clear that Paul expected the Corinthians would celebrate the Supper regularly, long before he could be with them in-person to instruct them again,** so any delay in resolving the Supper's misuse would mean a continual heaping of divine judgment.

## **Yeshua is More than the Passover**

Beyond the regular celebration described in 1 Corinthians, let us consider the implications of tying the Lord's Supper *exclusively* to Passover.

Yeshua initiated the celebration of the bread and wine as elements representative of His New Covenant self-sacrifice at Passover. Paul (1 Cor 5:7), John the Baptist (John 1:29), and the Beloved Disciple (John 19:36) explicitly interpret Yeshua as the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb.

But Yeshua's self-sacrifice fulfills aspects of the *entire* sacrificial system, not only the Passover. **To restrict the celebration of the Lord's Supper only to Passover is to implicitly overlook Yeshua as the fulfillment of other sacrifices.**

For instance, Hebrews 9:7, 11–12 presents Yeshua as the ultimate Yom Kippur offering, cleansing the conscience of sinners and consecrating the true Heavenly Tabernacle.

Another example is the *zeḇaḥ šəlāmīm*, the peace / fellowship offering described in Leviticus 3. Deuteronomy 27:7 summarizes the *šəlāmīm* offering as a sacrifice that the worshippers eat in joy before the Lord's presence. Notably these sacrifices could be offered at any time. **God invited His people to feast with Him year-round through a sacrifice of peace.**

This is *precisely* the essence of the Lord's Supper, which commemorates the sacrificial death of Messiah by which we have peace with God (Rom 5:1, 8, 10; 1 Cor 11:26). We are invited to eat of the sacrifice itself, the bread and wine which stand for Messiah's body and blood (1 Cor 11:24–25), and which actually produce true fellowship with the Risen Lord (1 Cor 10:16)—as an exact analogy to how the various sacrifices of the Torah produce fellowship with the altar (1 Cor 10:18).

To isolate the Lord's Supper to Passover alone is to deny Yeshua's self-sacrifice the ability to fulfill the table fellowship God has always intended His people to have with Him through sacrifice. This ancient purpose of God predates even the Mosaic Tabernacle. In

Abraham's day, Melchizedek, priest of El Elyon and precursor of the coming Messianic Priest,<sup>2</sup> brought out consecrated bread and wine, to which he joined a blessing (Genesis 14:18–19). And again, after Moses had sanctified Israel by the blood of the covenant (Exodus 24:8, echoed at the Lord's Supper—Mark 14:24), he and the elders ascended Mount Sinai, “and they beheld God and ate and drank” (Exodus 24:11).

The tabernacle, given starting in Exodus 25, then universalizes accessibility to all Israel to come, sacrifice, and feast before the presence of the Lord. *This* is what Yeshua accomplishes and elevates in His own death and resurrection. The bread and the wine, regularly commemorated, are “the Table of the Lord” (1 Cor 10:21), and the invitation is no less open than at the Tabernacle of Moses.<sup>3</sup>

## Is Such An Understanding Un-Jewish?

One objection occasionally raised to a regular celebration of the Lord's Supper is that it seems fundamentally un-Jewish. But if the universal practice of Yeshua's Jewish apostles was to institute regular commemorations of the Lord's Supper among the early congregations, then whatever we may think of the practice, we cannot call it *un-Jewish*.

Additionally, Jewish *halakhah* has always developed through the ages in response to new circumstances in history. Daniel did not celebrate the Passover in exile but mourned and fasted (Dan 10:2–4). Only when the people returned and the Temple was rededicated (Ezra 6:16–18) did Passover celebration resume (Ezra 6:19–22). Indeed, in the Torah, Passover may *only* be kept at the place God chose, Jerusalem (Deut 16:5–6, 15–16). But in the face of a second exile, rabbinic tradition found a way to maintain the commemoration of the festival, without sacrifice, even in the dispersion. We sometimes overlook the fact that this development is itself a considerable innovation. But who would say it is thereby *un-Jewish*?

If the rabbis have the authority to institute a tradition of Passover commemoration even for the Diaspora, how much more would the Jewish Resurrected Son of God have the right to institute a regular commemoration of His death until He returns?

The frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper is as Jewish as the Lord behind it.

## Summary on Frequency

In brief, 1 Corinthians 11 offers us a precious window into the practice of early messianic believers of celebrating the Lord's Supper regularly at their corporate gatherings.

The bread and the cup organically emerged from the Passover seder, but they transcended the timing of the holiday. While Paul still recognized the literal feasts of the Torah (1 Cor 16:8), which continued in full force at the Jerusalem Temple, he could also speak of a perpetual state of “Passover” (5:7–8) that must reign in the scattered new covenant

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 7:17

<sup>3</sup> Another striking text of dining with the Lord is Luke 24:30, where only in the breaking of bread is the Lord recognized. Luke's association between the Emmaus dinner, the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19), and the daily practice of the early messianic believers (Acts 2:46) is suggestive. Jude 12 gives us insight that early messianic worship included communal meals called agapes / love feasts (Greek: *agapais*).

communities (11:25), which had become the Temple of God (3:16):<sup>4</sup>

not with a lamb sacrificed but with the Lord (5:7),  
not ever-cleansed of literal leaven but of sin (5:8),  
not made up of circumcised Jews only but uncircumcised Gentiles also (7:18, 12:2).

As the community perpetually celebrated such a “Passover” (5:7–8), they also perpetually broke the bread and drank the cup. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (11:26).

## Note on the Nature of the Lord’s Supper

Some trepidation with celebrating the Lord’s Supper may arise because many of us are familiar with the Roman Catholic Church’s claim that the bread and wine cease to be such and transubstantiate into body and blood. In response, even many Protestant churches have scaled back the frequency of commemorating the Supper, as well as conceptualized it as solely a symbolic and intellectual reminder of past events.

But historically, a number of other views have existed. Many of the Early Reformers believed in a *spiritual presence* view, where the elements were truly bread and wine, and yet the Risen Lord actually manifested His presence in a special way among the faithful through the elements.

Without going into too much detail, I find this view to be the most faithful to the Scriptures. The bread and wine are absolutely a memorial of the Lord’s death (1 Cor 11:24–26). But partaking in them is also an inherent, supernatural participation in the body and blood of Messiah (10:16–17). The Corinthians, who did not understand this participation, were not thereby immune to the numinous aspect of the concentrated elements. The blessed bread and wine were *not* like any other blessed article. The Lord was, invisibly but truly, seated at the Table where the Corinthians ate His bread and wine, and He burned with jealousy in the face of any infidelity (10:20–22). Many who abused the Lord’s Supper were struck with sickness, and some even died (11:29–30). God judges all those who approach His Table wickedly (11:32, 34)—but those who approach the cup rightly will find it to be a “cup of blessing” (10:16).

The only other object in the Scripture that so powerfully manifests the Power and Presence of God, regardless of the understanding of the people that approach, is the Ark of the Covenant. It too startles with disease (1 Sam 5:6, 9) and death (1 Sam 5:11–12, 6:19; 2 Sam

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<sup>4</sup> When Paul says, “Let us celebrate the feast,” in 1 Cor 5:8, he uses the term *heortazōmen*, which only appears here in the NT, and in the Tanakh LXX is the technical term for celebrating the Torah’s holidays (Ex 12:14, 23:14; Lev 23:39, 41; Num 29:12; Deut 16:15). Some messianic interpreters therefore take 1 Cor 5:8 as a command to celebrate the literal, annual Mosaic Passover. But not only is this at odds with the spiritual interpretation Paul applies to every element of the Passover in 1 Cor 5:7–9, it would also be a direct violation of the Torah, which, as I mention previously, only allows Passover celebration in Jerusalem (Deut 16:15–16). In the Dispersion, away from Jerusalem and the Temple, the Mosaic Passover may be *commemorated* (Mishnah Pesachim 10), but not celebrated. Yet Paul here speaks of a celebration in the full sense—precisely because it is *not* the traditional Mosaic Passover proper, but the Passover with a new once-for-all sacrifice, Messiah. (See David Stern’s commentary for an additional defense of this view. Again, this does not mean Paul was disinterested in the traditional Mosaic holidays; on the contrary, as stated previously, he is cognizant of the timing of Pentecost in 1 Cor 16:8—as well as Acts 20:16.)

6:7). And it too, when treated reverentially, brings great blessing (2 Sam 6:11)—because the Lord Himself is present.

## **Conclusion**

In the end, I hope to have made a case that the early messianic communities regularly celebrated the Lord's Supper—not in a way divorced from its Passover roots, but in a way that transcended the immediate annual context of the festival.

Eitz Chaim would be richly blessed by imitating our ancestors' regular approach to the Lord's Table, one which embraces the meal's Jewish context and comes reverentially to the bread and wine as a mysterious participation in the body and blood of the Risen Lord, who is truly and specially present among His people at the Table.

Respectfully yours,

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