

משיח MASHIACH

Apostolic
Writings
Messiah
Hebrew Bible
Second Temple
Judaism

“So welcome each other, just as the Messiah has welcomed you into God’s glory” (Rom 15:7 CJB). In the context of Romans 15, Paul is speaking of Jews and Gentiles in the same congregation welcoming one another (see vv. 8–12). Significantly, Paul points to the Messiah’s example as the reason why we should do this—because the Messiah has welcomed us, we should welcome each other.

There are various ways this wording can be understood, but I would like to offer one possibility. The words “just as the Messiah has welcomed you” may be a reminder that



the sinless one welcomed sinners. In Romans 5:8, Paul writes, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in that the Messiah died on our behalf while we were still sinners.”

As the wholly righteous one, Yeshua had reason to keep his distance from us. He could have spent time only with the pious like Yochanan (John) the Immerser and avoided sinners. But instead, Yeshua regularly ate with sinners. He welcomed them. He defended them. He gave everything—including his life—to them. We are them. We are the sinners he died for.

The differentiation between Yeshua, “the fullness of God in bodily form” (Col 2:9),

and sinners is much greater than the differentiation between Jew and Gentile (bilateral ecclesiology). The principle Paul espouses in Romans 15:7 (“So welcome each other, just as the Messiah has welcomed you”) is that since “Messiah did not please himself” (Rom 15:3) but humbled himself and welcomed sinners, *kal vachomer* (how much more) should we—the Jewish and Gentile recipients of his condescension—humble ourselves and welcome each other.

But how do Jews and Gentiles welcome each other? In his book *New Testament Hospitality*, John Koenig proposes:

In context, this welcoming is surely to be understood as something that takes place first of all at table . . . Paul’s argument functions to convince his Roman readers that their meal practices, displayed before the world in the imperial capital, should serve as windows into God’s cosmic plan. Everyday welcomings of the “other,” especially at table, are really acts of worship “for the glory of God.”¹

Stated another way, welcome was expressed through table fellowship—Jews and Gentiles eating together and sharing life together.

In the 21st-century Messianic synagogue context, it is easy to think of the *oneg Shabbat* (light meal after the Shabbat service) as a time to satisfy our hunger or an occasion to catch up with good friends. But I suggest it is much more. From the standpoint of bilateral (Jew-Gentile) ethics, *oneg Shabbat* is a holy moment for Jews and Gentiles to welcome each other through eating together and sharing life together. A similar holy moment exists when Jews and Gentiles gather around the *shulchan Adonai* (table of the Lord) and when we invite each other to our homes. These are powerful ways that Jews and Gentiles in our communities communicate life-giving welcome and acceptance in imitation of our Messiah.

1 John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 56-57. Cf. Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 888.

David Rudolph, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Bible and Theology at Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, and Chair of the Theology Committee of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations.