



Hebraic Roots Teaching Institute
division of the

Hebraic Teaching Group

The 'one-stop' Torah - Observant Messianic site,

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Beit Din Judgment

Question: What does the Torah say about use of alcoholic wine at the festivals of Leviticus 23's or functions? Believers at my table at the feast enjoy red wine, but there are ex-alcoholics at other tables, must our table now restrain from consuming wine, or can we do what the Scriptures command and enjoy the feast with wine? (Example: must I not carry my gun around for my own good intentions because there is another ex-murderer attending the same function as me?) Am I accountable for the ex-alcoholic's actions?

Ruling of the Beit Din

Rosh Semicha Rabbi Mordecai, Rabbi Daniel Klutstein, Rabbi Philip Hammond, Professor (Dr) Liebenberg, the CEO of HTG/HRTI and Moreh Paul responded. Moreh Paul was given the honour to write up the decision.

Professor Liebenberg gave eight solid Biblical reasons as to why it is ok for believers to drink alcohol. Wine is in fact used by YHWH (Judges 9:13), Wine is a gift of the goodness of YHWH (Jer 31:12-14), Wine produces joy—it "gladdens the heart" (Eccl 10:19), Wine is used in rejoicing before YHWH (Deut 14:22-26), Abundance of wine was a particular blessing from YHWH (Joel 2:24-26), Having no wine was a hardship or a judgment of YHWH (Amos 5:11), The absence of wine results in the absence of joy (Isaiah 24:7-11), and wine will be part of the future feasting in Messiah Y'shua's Kingdom (Isaiah 25:6-9).

We also showed that our Meshiach, Y'shua, turned water into wine and HE Himself drank wine until the meal before His death (John 2:1-10 & Matt 26:29). If drinking wine was a sin, then Y'shua would have done neither of these. Y'shua is our Master and our example on how we are to walk out Torah. We are called to be disciples, following His examples.

Furthermore, YHVH *commanded* us to bring alcohol with the sacrifices. The Temple sacrifices/offerings are of course no longer brought (they will be again), yet we are still able to perform such offerings in our life styles today. For YHVH is all about personal relationships. First between us and Him and at the same time, our relationships between one another.

We have found it to be a Biblical truth that believers in Y'shua are allowed and in some cases almost *commanded* to drink alcohol. Therefore, this is not the issue at hand. The issue arises when a brother/sister cannot partake in alcohol because of being an alcoholic, has diabetes or another reason which causes a person not to drink.



Not many people are aware of this, however alcoholism is a disease in which the medical field says a person never “recovers”. It is understood by the medical field that alcoholism is an inherited disease and is not based on actions. Some which have the disease may never know because they never drank a drop of alcohol. Some may have the strength to have one drink every now and then. Some may fall and drink, yet never drink again. However, the disease will never be gone. Some people have the ability to be around alcohol, some may even be able to have a drink now and then, and others cannot do either. This depends on the person or even the ‘day’ in question. Alcoholism is not something a believer can ever “mature” in. Only Y’shua can take the urge to drink away.

Here is where great care must be taken. Communication is the first and most important part of this dynamic question. It must also never be a one-time discussion. For if a person could be around alcohol this time, maybe next time they could not. Openness and compassion is a must. This is also done without bringing shame onto the individual for their “fault”. For this is a genetic disease, not a personal one from poor choices as most people think.

We as believers live in a ‘fallen world’. Disease is all around us. We all have our short comings and some of them are truly from ‘bad choices’. Others we received as they were passed down from generation to generation. Yet we require mercy/grace from others. Scripture tells us, *“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.*” (1 Cor 10:23 ESV). So if drinking is lawful for a believer, is it helpful or does it build up? These are the question which must be answered in this question to the Beit Din.

The answer has been lived out by Rosh Semicha Rabbi Mordecai and Moreh Paul who have both had family members who were/are “Alcoholics”. Moreh Paul has learned in this situation no to drink around his step-dad when he goes to his step-dad’s house or out to dinner with him. Moreh Paul will also speak to his step-dad when he invites his step-dad to any function with alcohol. Rosh Semicha Rabbi Mordecai had a paternal grandparent who died because of his alcoholism and his dad would rarely drink because of it.

Diabetes is another disease in which alcohol has an intolerable effect. When a person has diabetes, their blood sugar levels must be controlled well, or they will have massive problems. Even when it is controlled well, there may be problems. Alcohol is pure sugar which increases the blood sugar in a person very quickly. People with this disease may want to drink a glass of wine or beer, however, this would be very dangerous situation for them.



Like the alcoholic, there are life threatening possibilities if they take a drink. They did not ask for this, nor was it most likely their life choices which placed them into this situation. Yet alcohol is just a bad for them.

We have just shown two diseases in which there are consequences for taking even one glass of wine or beer. There are other reasons alcohol can be bad for people to drink, but those will not be addressed here. Instead they will be incorporated into these two.

One story from the Bible that always comes to mind when this topic comes up is the story of Noah and how he planted a vineyard after he left the Ark. Then he made wine and got drunk and his son Ham sinned against him. So, first Noah sinned and in turn this caused Ham to sin who then tried to get Shem and Japheth to sin but they did not. They covered up their father, in effect covering his sin as Messiah does ours. We must always be aware of the impact we might have on others.

The question now comes before us if it is righteous behaviour for us to drink alcohol in front of others who should not drink it. If we who are able to drink alcohol decide to serve alcohol at a group gathering for the Biblical Festivals, are we placing the person who should not drink into a situation in which they must choose whether to attend the festival or not? Will they be forced to either take a chance and try to be part of the community or not go and be excluded from the community?

As mature believers in Meshiach, can we force this type of decision onto another believer by justifying the use of alcohol at the festival by saying YHWH has commanded us to drink? Or that Y'shua drank it, so I can as well? Is this the intent YHWH was creating by issuing these instructions?

YHWH is all about interpersonal relationships. He holds right relationships much closer to His heart than us using his Word to justify our actions which hurt others. We must not only be right with YHWH through Y'shua, but we must also be 'right' with our brothers and sisters. If anyone of these suffer, then so does the other.

If we use Torah to justify our drinking at Biblical Festivals in front of others who should not drink, then alcohol has just become an idol in our hearts. Furthermore, when we do such a thing, we place our own desires above the well-being of others which then pollutes the offering we are giving to YHWH. YHWH will then not accept such an offering.



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"I hate, I utterly loathe your festivals; I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies. If you offer me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; nor will I consider the peace offerings of your stall-fed cattle. Spare me the noise of your songs! I don't want to hear the strumming of your lutes! Instead, let justice well up like water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:21-24 CJB)

So are we accountable for the ex-alcoholic's "actions"? Are we responsible for the diabetics "situation"? Are we responsible for the multitude of other reasons a person should not drink? If they are part of our family, either by blood or belief, YES!

With this understanding, we believe it best to not serve alcohol at any Biblical Feast gathering. Use grape juice instead. It is also the "Fruit of the Vine", so the Biblical Commandment is still being followed. If you wish to drink alcohol during a Festival time, then do it outside the gathering of the believers.

If the desire is still there to serve alcohol, then communication with everyone in attendance is necessary. For some people not drinking may find it offensive that alcohol is being served in the presence of "ex-alcoholics", and thus this decision affects them as well. If anyone present would be offended, or placed into an uncomfortable situation in which they may "fall" to the temptation, then in no way should alcohol be served. If none of these things are present, then the decision should be up to that specific assembly and not set as a general ruling for other assemblies.

However, one question an assembly like this should ask is, What if an "ex-alcoholic" walks into the assembly's festival for the first time as a new believer in Meshiach?

Is it better to be "safe than sorry"?