This Course will focus on proving two main points:

1. The New Testament scriptures that speak of breaking bread among early Messianic Jews did not mean the supposed Communion ritual, as many commentators have believed since Rome.

2. The idiom of breaking bread has a long Jewish history, originating with the twelve breads that were broken and shared each Sabbath in the Temple. We will then see how Messianic Jews understood that the Messiah and his teaching fulfilled this idiom as the true bread, the bread of life. This is what the New Covenant scriptures on breaking bread refer to, and this was the idiom where the phrase “breaking bread” originated.

Since these scriptures were originally written from a first-century Jewish perspective but later misunderstood by Rome to indicate a ritual, we’ll focus first on how breaking bread developed in the Jewish tradition. Then we’ll turn to how New Covenant Jewish believers—using their natural-to-spiritual idiom—built on the existing Jewish idiom of breaking bread in the Temple and in Jewish homes, and went forth “breaking bread” spiritually.

The twelve breads that were broken each Sabbath in the Tabernacle were first mentioned in the scripture when God gave the law to Moses. This service continued in the Temple under David and Solomon, with the priests “breaking bread” there as well. They were broken rather than cut with a knife, for this occurred on the Sabbath when the use of such instruments was forbidden. Here are two English translations with two different names for the bread:

**NAS** Exodus 25:30 And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.

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80 Except when absolutely necessary, such as for the animal sacrifices in the Temple.
KJV Exodus 25:30 And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.

Calling them “bread of the Presence” indicates that the breads were to continually be in God’s presence in the Temple. Although translating them as “Showbread” is common in our day, it can actually be quite misleading since these twelve breads were never called that by Moses, David, Jesus, or Paul, or any other Jews—either before or during the time of Christ. In the original Greek and Hebrew scriptures, they are simply called “bread.” It was not until around 1530 AD that Protestant reformer and translator William Tyndale coined the word “Shewbread” (see KJV above) while translating the Greek New Testament into English. Later it became “Showbread.”

This change of names from “bread” to “Showbread” may not seem significant, but it is in fact important. In certain scriptures, the words “bread” or “breaking bread” are historically connected to the twelve breads broken in the Temple each Sabbath, but because the English translation does not show Jesus or his disciples using the term “Showbread,” this connection may be obscured or lost.

To illustrate this, consider the example of Jews breaking bread in their homes on the Sabbath. There is seemingly no spiritual connection between this and Showbread, since Jews do not use the expression “breaking Showbread,” and since the Talmud and other Jewish writings never spoke of breaking Showbread—because the word “Showbread” itself did not yet exist. However, if it’s phrased that the priests “break bread” in the Temple on the Sabbath and the Jewish families “break bread” in their homes, then it’s easier to draw a spiritual connection between these two events that otherwise may seem unrelated.

Similarly, when the Messiah miraculously broke and multiplied the twelve breads to feed the multitudes (five then seven), there is seemingly no connection since it does not say he broke Showbread (a nonexistent word in his day). Yet if we consider that God commanded Moses to bring forth twelve breads in this Temple service, and the Messiah brought forth twelve breads for the Israelites in these miracles, then one is more likely to see a possible historical, spiritual, or typological connection. Additionally, when we see the Jewish disciples speaking of breaking bread in the scriptures and consider their natural-to-spiritual idiom, it becomes clear that they are applying this phrase spiritually. Throughout this Course, we will often refer to the Showbread as the “twelve breads” to maintain this historical connection.

Talmudic writers often spoke of breaking bread as well, and certainly not in the context of a “Blessed Eucharist” ritual. So first we will set the stage for understanding how breaking bread originated within the Jewish idiom.