



Faith practice for the non-Jew
Part 2 – Acts and The Epistles

by

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MEN OF TORAH

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Introduction

Those of us who have grown up in the Bible-belt or were raised in believing homes have been introduced to an anomaly in our lifetime. The faith of our fathers is being questioned from nearly every angle because of the Torah movement. This changing perspective is affecting both Protestant and Catholics. Families are being disrupted, fellowships are being fractured and questions that are never asked – are being asked – to Pastors and Sunday School teachers around the globe.

Today Israel is experiencing the eroding of its alliance with the United States under its second term liberal President and the threat of Iran's nuclear capabilities are raising questions regarding Israel's continued existence. Yet Jews are cautiously finding friendships with non-Jews throughout the world. Orthodox rabbis are heralding this resurgence of Torah-obedience in non-Jews as a harbinger of Messiah's coming.

If we accept that *Yeshua ben Yosef* (Jesus son of Joseph) is the promised Jewish *Mashiach* (Messiah) then several questions must be answered for the non-Jew who has put his faith in this Messiah, as I have.

1. Jews are clearly commanded and exhorted throughout the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible) to keep the commandments of G-d. *But what about me?*
2. Jews are taught they are bound by the *halachah* (laws of faith practice) laid down by the Sages of Israel, and codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law). *But what about me?*
3. Christians have taught that Jesus abolished the law of Moses and those of attempt to keep the law trample the blood of Messiah. *But what about me?*
4. Karite Jews have found common ground with "Messianic" (Christians observing or acknowledging some or all of the Torah as applicable or binding) teachers wary of the teachings handed down by the Church, agreeing that Rabbinic Judaism is burdensome and silly, so Jews and Messianics together should reject the *halachah*. *But what about me?*
5. Similar to the varying perspectives found in Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism, Messianics have varying views on kosher eating, Sabbath observance and other *halachah*. *But what about me?*
6. Well-known Messianic groups have defined certain Torah commands as "sign commands" which are only to be kept by Jews. *But what about me?*
7. Orthodox Judaism teaches that non-Jews should formally convert to Judaism or keep the Noachide laws described in the Talmud. *But what about me?*

In this study we will probably not answer all these questions definitively, but each man should be able to come to a Biblically-sound conclusion on which to base his life's walk and the raising of his children. We will review the political climate leading up to the days of *Yeshua*; examine what He said and did; study the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles; review Church history to

conclude how *Yeshua's* immediate followers understood their role within Judaism and taught others. Finally, we will study the eventual schism that brought Christianity and Judaism to the place they are today, and see if there are conclusions which can be drawn.

Our texts for this study include the *Tanakh*; the Apostolic Writings; the Babylonian Talmud; the works of Josephus; texts of the Pre-Ecumenical Councils and the Catholic Encyclopedia.

In most cases we will be using the English Standard Version of the Bible, but I will be referring to The Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels as well. Every effort will be made to provide the reading texts for you.

Manly Time of Study

We study in a men-only group so that men can bring their sons and learn together. Our desire is to be an adjunct and assistance to men teaching their wives, sons and daughters. This is not meant to be derogatory or chauvinistic. We practice a patriarchal faith. Men need to be held to a high standard or they flounder. Men need accountability or they stray. Our ministry focus is on men, because strong men make strong families and strong families make a strong nation.

Much has been given us, and much will rightfully be expected from us. We have duties to others and duties to ourselves; and we can shirk neither. We have become a great nation, forced by the fact of its greatness into relations with the other nations of the earth, and we must behave as beseems a people with such responsibilities. Toward all other nations, large and small, our attitude must be one of cordial and sincere friendship. We must show not only in our words, but in our deeds, that we are earnestly desirous of securing their good will by acting toward them in a spirit of just and generous recognition of all their rights. But justice and generosity in a nation, as in an individual, count most when shown not by the weak but by the strong. While ever careful to refrain from wrongdoing others, we must be no less insistent that we are not wronged ourselves. We wish peace, but we wish the peace of justice, the peace of righteousness. We wish it because we think it is right and not because we are afraid. No weak nation that acts manfully and justly should ever have cause to fear us, and no strong power should ever be able to single us out as a subject for insolent aggression.

Theodore Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933

How important these words have become, in the United States of America, in these last days. May we live up to the high calling of Messiah *Yeshua*.

Class Time

Our class time will allow for discussion and review of the reading material. Our primary source will be the Apostolic Writings. We shall not refer to these Scriptures as the “New Testament” because this invites the false belief that the Hebrew Scriptures are in some way passé or old. This is not the case. We shall not refer to these Scriptures as the “New Covenant” (*Brit Chadasha*) implying that they contain, describe or define the New Covenant, as referenced by the prophet Jeremiah.

Our expectation is that you will attend if at all possible. You will enrich the time of others by being punctual and prepared, having read the homework assignment before class begins. If you cannot attend, please let me know ahead of time and review the audio at your earliest convenience.

I understand what it is to be a man under authority, and a man with too many responsibilities. If you will invest in your spiritual growth for the next four months, I promise to provide the venue for which that growth can be nurtured and developed, so that you can be a better husband, father and employee/owner.

This is Part 2 – The Epistles. I strongly urge you to review Part 1 – The Gospels before continuing in this guide.

*Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of your Torah.
Psalm 119:18*

Lesson Thirteen

The Acts of the Apostles is Luke's second part of the orderly account for Theophilus,

"... concerning Yeshua of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before G-d and all the people"

(Luke 24:19 ESV)

Read Acts 1 – 3. Luke picks up his narrative with what was given in the close of Mark's Gospel account. By many proofs, *Yeshua* demonstrated that He had been raised from the dead. This is a singular event. Never before had a man been raised by G-d Himself. There had always been a causative agent, such as a prophet, to raise the dead. In *Yeshua's* case, the Holy One, blessed is He, raised Him as demonstration that His atonement was accepted. No other time had a man predicted the timing and manner of his death – and subsequent resurrection.

The Master blessed His apostles before He was lifted up into the clouds of heaven before their eyes.

"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them."

(Luke 24:50 ESV)

"Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings."

(Leviticus 9:22 ESV)

Believing that the very *shekinah* (visible presence of *HaShem*) would be on the priest's fingertips during the Aaronic Benediction, it was customary to look down at the priest's feet during the blessing. How astonishing it must have been to watch *Yeshua's* feet lift from the ground!

We have a halachic reference in Acts 1:12. Luke comments that the Mount of Olives was near Jerusalem – a Sabbath day's journey away. We know there was/is a *halachic* limit to traveling on the Sabbath. Tim Hegg's excellent response to *Nehemiah Gordon's Rejoinder* is worth quoting here.

"But the fact that both groups (Pharisees and the Qumran society) appear to have specific halachah regarding the distance one may travel on the Sabbath is the point: the Written Torah does not give a specific distance, so in any case, this was a matter of halachah based upon traditions of the various sects. Nor was it the case that all towns and villages were laid out in a uniform fashion, so that city limits, pasture lands, and beyond would have had uniform

distances. A Sabbath day's journey was therefore not a matter of common sense, but of specific halachah derived from received interpretations of the biblical text (Exodus 16:29; Numbers 35:5). My point was that Yeshua appears to conform to such halachah in spite of the fact that it is not specifically detailed in the Written Torah, and that He presumes this when He teaches in Matthew 24:20 "pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath." And the fact that His disciples, immediately following the ascension, adhered to the restrictions of a Sabbath day's journey (Acts 1:12) would strongly indicate that this was the practice while Yeshua was with them."

We will remember this *halachah* as we read, to see how non-Jews are treated in this regard.

Upon their return to Jerusalem, the apostles went up to the upper room. Many Bible students overlook the timing marker in Acts 1:15. "In those days..." Peter stood up in the company of 120 folks. They drew lots and chose Matthias to take Judas Iscariot's place. He was qualified specifically because he had been with *Yeshua* "from the baptism of John to the day He was taken up." It was important that Matthias be a witness, as we'll see shortly.

Yet another timing marker is given as Acts chapter 2 begins. "When the day of Pentecost arrived..." they were all together in one place. The Master appearing to His followers over a period of 40 days and commanded them to stay in Jerusalem until they received power from above. 10 days after He gave the command was *Shavuot* (the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost), where they were "all together in one place." Please note that we are nearly two weeks after the reference to the "upper room." There is only "one place" where obedient Jews would be on this holy day. They would be in *The Place*, which is exactly how the Greek text reads.

"Καὶ ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς πεντηκοστῆς ἦσαν πάντες ὁμοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό."

(Acts 2:1 UBS5-T emphasis mine)

And what was The Place? It was The Temple, The House. And devout men from everywhere were right there to see and hear the empowering of the Spirit. And Peter stood up and gave one of the greatest sermons of all time. In the first three chapters of Acts, being a witness to the resurrection is mentioned five times.

Luke describes Peter's audience four different ways. List them below.

The response to Peter's sermon was compelling. Examine for whom Peter says "the promise" is.

"For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the L-rd our G-d calls to himself."

(Acts 2:39 ESV)

Review

1. I read three distinct groups in Acts 2:39, who are they? Are non-Jews included? Write your answer below.
2. About 3,000 souls were added that day. To what does Luke say they were added?
3. Those who received Peter's words devoted themselves to four things. List them below.
4. They were attending the Temple together. How does this sit with the teachings you've received in the past? If those who received Peter's word were Christians, why would they attend the Temple? Acts 3 opens with Peter and John going up to the Temple at the ninth hour for what purpose?
5. Peter alludes to G-d having sent *Yeshua* to the Jews first, to bless them. What does this imply?

Lesson Fourteen

Christendom teaches that you just read about the birth of the Church. This has some problems when examined *outside* the lens of Christianity. For example, if the Church was born during Acts 2, then who is a member of the Church? All those added on the Day of Pentecost were Orthodox, observant Jews. That's awkward. Was Abraham a member of the Church? How about the other patriarchs of our faith, Isaac and Jacob? What about the priest, Simeon? He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, which was *Yeshua*. Is he a member of the Church? Before Acts 2? Is that possible? Zachariah? Elizabeth?

This may seem divisive to you, but I'm just trying to examine the text and ask questions. Perhaps you've never thought about this before. Share your thoughts below.

In your last reading from Acts, Peter was closing his short sermon standing in Solomon's portico, in the Temple. **Read Acts 4 – 6**. We have a couple of things to note at the outset. First, the Sadducees were upset that Peter was teaching about the resurrection in *Yeshua*. They didn't believe in the resurrection, and they didn't like *Yeshua*. Double bad news for Peter and John – even though G-d had used them to heal a man lame from birth. Since they had gone up to the Temple for prayer about 3pm, the day was mostly gone by the time of their arrest, so they were kept overnight. Peter's response is extraordinary, and astonishing to the leaders of Israel. Write down a summary of his short but powerful message.

What happened in Acts 4:31? Is this different from Acts 2? Is it different from the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai? Explain.

At the end of Acts 4 we are introduced to a man named Joseph. He is a Jew living in the Diaspora (scattering, dispersion). He does something extraordinary for the group of believers in Jerusalem. What did he do? Learn more about this man by **reading Acts 11:21-24**. Describe his character.

Acts 5 opens with an action like Joseph's, but ends very badly. Explain what happened, what the problem was, and the result. Does this still occur in our world? Why or why not?

Acts 5:14 uses a phrase that you just saw in Acts 11. Believers or people were "added to the L-rd." How do you relate this concept to the question with which we opened this lesson,

regarding the birth of the Church? These were not added to the Church, but to the L-rd.
Comment below.

Acts 5:17 begins a narrative about Peter and John that is almost comical, as G-d uses His servants in mighty ways, both to teach the people about *This Life* and to confound and witness to the corrupt Jewish leadership. According to Peter and the Apostles, *Yeshua* was exalted,

“...to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

(Acts 5:31 ESV)

Would this verse have been different if they had said, “to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel?” Describe the difference.

The incident was about to get out of hand when a godly, well respected Pharisee stood. That’s the Greek word ἀνίστημι (*anistēmi*). It means to arise, resist or restore. We see it several times in this chapter.

1. The young men **rose** to bury Ananias, and great fear was upon all who heard of it.
2. The High Priest **rose up** with the Sadducees with great jealousy, arresting the Apostles.
3. A Pharisee named Gamaliel, held in honor by the people, **stood up** for the Apostles.
4. Gamaliel reminded the Council that Theudas **rose up** claiming to be somebody.
5. Gamaliel also reminded them that Judas the Galilean **rose up** in the days of the census.
6. He warns them to let the Apostles alone, lest they find themselves **standing** against G-d.

This man was the Apostle Paul’s teacher – and perhaps Barnabas’ too. This is the *third* Pharisee known by name to **stand** with Messiah *Yeshua* or the Apostles.

Acts 6 provides us some insight into the lack of monolithic structure to the early disciple’s lives. There was a group of Hebrew believers, speaking Hebrew and Aramaic, and another group of believers who spoke Greek, the Hellenists.

As they were living communally, there was concern on one side that some widows were being neglected. Good for them to speak up! In this discussion, we are introduced to seven men. We don’t know much about most of them other than their Greek names. Stephen is the focus of the next chapter, which we will discuss in the next lesson.

Notice that Nicolaus is a *proselyte* from Antioch. Review the following verses, where the LXX translates the Hebrew גֵר (*ger*) as προσήλυτος (*prosēlutos*).

*“There shall be one law for the native and for the **stranger** who sojourns among you.”*

(Exodus 12:49 ESV)

*“but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the L-RD your G-d. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the **sojourner** who is within your gates.”*

(Exodus 20:10 ESV)

*“One law and one rule shall be for you and for the **stranger** who sojourns with you.””*

(Numbers 15:16 ESV)

*“You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the **stranger** who sojourns among them.”*

(Numbers 15:29 ESV)

Eerdman’s Dictionary, like most others, define *prosēlutos* as a convert from one faith or community to another, do you consider yourself a proselyte? That may be an odd question if you were raised in a Christian home. Be prepared to discuss this in great detail during class.

Since we are non-Jews, what should our *halachah* be considering the above verses? Write your thoughts below.

Review

1. How have you or do you stand for *Yeshua* and His Apostles?
2. I believe Acts 5:31 is critical to our understanding of Messiah’s first advent to earth. The text illuminates *Yeshua*’s primary mission during His days in Solomon’s Temple. Explain.
3. Do you believe the Holy Spirit acts today with the same power described in Acts 5?

Lesson Fifteen

Our reading from the last lesson, at the close of Acts 6, found Stephen in a dispute with several groups of people. This dispute will be the focus of our lesson this week. **Read Acts 6:8-15** to refresh your memory of the context. List the five groups of people that had a dispute with Stephen.

The Synagogue of the Freedmen, or better, Libertine, is mentioned. The Greek λιβερτινός (*libertinos*) is from the Latin *libertini*, who were freed slaves. There are limited historical references regarding this synagogue, so there is some disagreement about its composition. Despite the disagreements among scholars, there is general consensus that the Synagogue of the Freedmen was a Greek-speaking synagogue of the first century Hellenized diaspora Jews and/or converts to Judaism. Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia are all well-known Greek speaking Jewish diaspora communities. This is consistent with Stephen's background and one of the reasons he was chosen as a deacon – he spoke and worshipped in Greek. He may have been a member of this same synagogue.

Stephen is described by Luke as, *full of grace and power, doing great wonders and signs, speaking with wisdom and the Spirit.* (Acts 6:8, 10)

The phrase “mighty works and wonders and signs” is how Peter described the work of *Yeshua*. (Acts 2:22) Before Stephen was chosen, the Apostles work is described the same way. (Acts 2:43) In fact, when Peter and John were released from prison, their prayer was that G-d would continue to heal, and to perform signs and wonders through them, in *Yeshua's* name. (Acts 4:30).

We can only speculate as to what the disagreement was about, but I have only two possibilities on my list, since the question of how non-Jews obtain a place in the world to come had not become an issue. The first is the identity of *Yeshua*, and the other is the resurrection from the dead. Both points are consistent teachings of the Apostles prior to the dispute. Consider that the dispute was such a big deal that Stephen lost his life because of his position.

Stephen, like his Master, was too tough to argue against without fighting dirty. What did Stephen's detractors do to cheat?

Let us make note that the witnesses who said Stephen, “spoke against the holy place and the Torah” and “that *Yeshua* would destroy the Temple and change the customs of Moses” were false witnesses. In fact, we should read the opposite of these two statements as Stephen's position. Don't these charges sound familiar?? Write your thoughts.

The High Priest asks Stephen if the charges are true and he launches into one of the greatest summaries of the entire Tanakh you will find in Scripture. Read Acts 7:1-50 and write a brief outline of Stephen's speech.

Reread the passage and list how Moses is described. I'll start you off with Acts 7:22, Moses was mighty in his words and deeds. This should remind you of Stephen, the one giving the speech.

After establishing Moses' credentials as both ruler and redeemer, Stephen goes on to describe what Moses had to say about *Yeshua*. What were Stephen's points?

Everything Stephen has declared up to this point would have been heartily agreed to by the High Priest and council, as Moses was highly regarded. However, Stephen makes it very clear that "our fathers refused to obey him." Many of the Sages of Israel claim that only the non-Jews of the mixed multitude that left Egypt worshipped the golden calf in the wilderness. Stephen's not allowing for that. He doubles down on the reference to "our fathers" with a strong rebuke to his audience. Read Acts 7:51-60 and note Stephen's final reference to "the fathers."

Read the High Priest's response to *Yeshua* when asked if He was the Messiah, the Son of G-d.

Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death."

(Matthew 26:64-66 ESV)

Was the same group's response different with Stephen? Write your thoughts below, and include what you now believe the topic of dispute was between Stephen and the others.

Your last reading for the week introduces us to a new player, *Sha'ul* of Tarsus. Read Acts 8:1-3. Devout men buried Stephen. There are not many in the Apostolic Writings described this way. Read Luke 2:25, Acts 10:2 and 22:12. List all the other devout men below.

Review

1. There are some who would say the Jews of the first century were justified in their killing Yeshua and Stephen. Read the passage below and see if you can defend their position.

I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to G-d. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

(John 16:1–4 ESV)

2. After reading the account of Stephen's martyrdom, read the passage below and write down your thoughts.

"Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

(Matthew 10:17–20 ESV)

3. Stephen's character was demonstrated most clearly in his very last words. How so? Is there some Scripture that comes to mind?

Lesson Sixteen

At the end of our last lesson we finally met the infamous *Sha'ul* (Saul) the Jew. It may surprise you to know that many people, both Christians and Jews, believe that Saul started a new religion. We are introduced to him as a great persecution begins against the believers in *Yeshua* living in Jerusalem. According to the beginning of Acts 8, a significant player in this persecution is Saul.

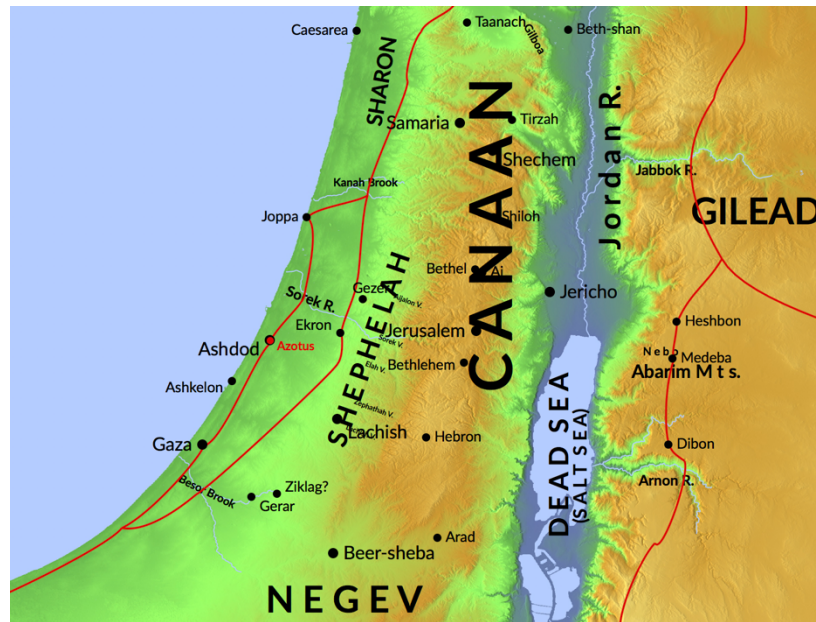
Saul's persecution scattered the new believers in *Yeshua* to Judea and Samaria, the areas in Israel around Jerusalem. **Read Acts 8:4-25.** We have a delightful contrast between Philip and Simon. As you read, list the times that the people "paid attention" or "gave attention" or "gave heed," depending on your translation, and the word "amazed," "bewitched" or "wondered," again depending on your translation.

We see that the people *paid attention* to Philip when he spoke because of the signs he did. Simon *amazed* the people of Samaria with his magic. But when Simon encountered Philip, and heard the proclamation of the *Mashiach* (Messiah), he himself was *amazed* at the great miracles performed.

When Simon observes the new believers receiving the Spirit by the laying on of hands, he wants to do that "trick" too. Describe Peter's rebuke in your own words and if you think it was justified.

Read Acts 8:26-40. List everything you can about the Ethiopian eunuch.

Philip had the first transportation we are aware of. When the Ethiopian eunuch came up out of the *mikvah* (baptism) waters, Philip just disappeared. He found himself in Ashdod (called Azotus by the Greeks), on the Via Maris (Way of the Sea) highway. Samaria to Ashdod is about 6 miles, as the crow flies.



The traditional site where the prophet *Yonah* (Jonah) was expelled from the fish on dry land is Ashdod. (I think I prefer Philip's method of travel.) Philip continued up the coast, on the Via Maris, to Caesarea. Locate Samaria, Ashdod (Azotus) and Caesarea on the map above.

Read Acts 9:1-31. There are chapters in the book of Acts that you should know. Chapter 7 is Stephen's great sermon before being martyred. Chapter 9 is Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus.



Find Damascus in the nation of modern-day Syria, and Jerusalem, on the map above. From whom did Saul ask for letters to the synagogues at Damascus? Why is that curious?

Up to this point, those who have believed in Messiah *Yeshua* have been “added to the L-rd.” Now, for the first time, the believers are said to belong to “the Way.” Seems like an odd name. Explain why you think it is appropriate.

Without going back to read the text, see how well you recall these facts.

1. What caused Saul to stop on his way to Damascus?
2. Who heard the voice of *Yeshua*?
3. Did Saul see *Yeshua*?

Would you describe what happened to Saul as punishment or divine direction? Explain.

This is a good time to dispel a myth that I’ve heard many times in the church. It goes like this. Saul was ardently against the idea that *Yeshua* was the Messiah. He persecuted the church, going so far as entering people’s homes and literally dragging them to prison. Then Saul had a vision on the road to Damascus and was struck blind (So far, this is correct.) Then *Yeshua* changed his name to Paul.

Yeshua did not change Saul’s name. Even to this day, Orthodox Jews are given both a Hebrew and Greek name when they are named by their fathers during their *brit milah* (circumcision ceremony) on the eighth day of their lives, according to the commandment. Saul simply began using his Greek name when he started sharing the Messiah to the non-Jews.

Since there had been persecution and a dispersion of the believers, finding Ananias in Damascus isn’t surprising. In Hebrew, Ananias’ name is *Hananiah*. This is the second Ananias we have encountered. How different they are! He has a vision, just like the many Joseph, *Yeshua*’s father, had. (Mat 1:20, 2:13, 2:19) How was this one different?

Saul “confounded” the Jews who lived in Damascus. This is the same word used in Acts 2:6, when the multitude heard the disciples speak in their own languages. This reaction is common to Saul. Read Acts 9:22, 19:32, 21:27 and 21:31. In fact, this Greek word, συγχέω (*sugcheō*) is not used anywhere else in the Apostolic Scriptures. What do you make of this?¹

Read Acts 9:32-43 and note that Peter was in Joppa. Is this another *remez* (hint) to Jonah??

¹ References in the LXX include Gen 11:7,9 (Babel), 1Sam 7:10 (Samuel and the Philistine battle), 1Kin 20:43 (Ahab), Mic 7:17, Joel 2:1, 2:10, Nah 2:4 (Messiah’s return), and Jonah 4:1.

Review

1. When the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of G-d, they sent Peter and John to pray for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, as it had not yet fallen on any of them. Does this seem odd to you? Explain.
2. What led the Ethiopian eunuch to want to be baptized?
3. When the Master was asked for a sign by the scribes and Pharisees, He said no sign would be given to it except one to this adulterous generation. Considering this is the same generation to whom He spoke, list how many times we have seen references or allusions to Jonah in these two chapters of Acts.

Lesson Seventeen

We open this week's lesson with a new Greek word, ἐλεημοσύνη (*eleēmosunē*). Matthew uses it in Matthew 6:2-4, three times. The remaining 10 appearances are all Dr. Luke. The word is translated variously as alms, needy, or charity. We closed our last lesson with the miracle of Tabitha being raised from the dead. She is described as full of works of *charity*. The very next person we learn of is Cornelius. His *alms* to the people are significant in his story.

Read Acts 10:1-8 and write what you learn about Cornelius. What brought his attention to the Holy One, blessed is He?

What was Peter's given name? With whom is he lodging? How many people did Cornelius send to Joppa? How are these messengers described?

Read Acts 10:9-16. Read it again. Seriously. Read it slowly. We're going to tear this apart together. The Roman means of calculating time was to count the hours from 6am through the day, and from 6pm through the night. What time did Peter go up to the roof to pray? Is it any surprise he got hungry?

Peter is commanded to "kill and eat." His response is nearly a direct quote from Ezekiel. In fact, the phrase "I have never eaten" only appears these two times in the entire Bible. **Read Ezekiel 4** and learn about what dieters have come to call "Ezekiel Bread" and the signs G-d gave to Jerusalem. Answer the following questions comparing Ezekiel 4:12-15 with Acts 10:12-15.

1. What was Ezekiel's concern, specifically? How was it resolved?
2. Peter's concern seems to be the same as Ezekiel's. Read Leviticus 10:10 (which uses the same Greek word for unclean in the LXX) and write whether you believe Peter was justified in objecting.
3. Two godly men are told by G-d to do something inconsistent with His Torah. They both politely refuse. G-d adjusted the circumstances for Ezekiel to make it kosher. What happened in Peter's event?
4. The text says that "this happened three times." What exactly happened three times? Can you think of another time something was said three times in Peter's life?

In all three cases to which Ezekiel refers, the animals are no longer living. Ezekiel knows that animals torn by beasts or dying of themselves are unfit for food (Leviticus 7:24), and tainted meat has been lying around too long to be fit for food (Leviticus 7:18, 19:7).

In Peter's situation, the four-footed animals, reptiles and birds he sees are all *alive*. He must kill before he can eat. He raises the issue of eating meat that is common. This is a term normally used for people. The common people were known as the *am ha-aretz*, the people of the land. They were juxtaposed to those who had been set apart – holy – and worked or lived in the Temple.

Peter's second concern is for meat that is unclean. This term also has two sides, for animals that are unclean can also make a person unclean (*tamē*).

Consider the terms common/holy and unclean/clean now considering G-d's response to Peter. Write your thoughts below.

Read Acts 10:17-23. Did Peter understand the vision he had?

Review the above passage once more and find the one word that is surprising. Explain why you chose this word.

Read Acts 10:24-29. Peter says it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation. Where is this taught in the Torah?

Did Peter determine what the vision was about? Does it make sense now, that the terms used by the heavenly voice were not those normally used for food? Explain.

Read Acts 10:30-48 and summarize below what happened.

This is one of the most controversial passages in the Apostolic Writings. Peter had to explain to the council when he returned to Jerusalem. **Read Acts 11:1-18.** Record any differences you see in Peter's recounting of the events when compared to Acts 10.

The bottom line to Peter's recounting the events to the believers in Jerusalem was, "Then to the Gentiles also G-d has granted repentance that leads to life." Why do you think the Jews were surprised at this?

Review

1. In Lesson Fifteen we listed all the devout men in the Apostolic Writings. We missed one, since Cornelius sent a devout soldier with two of his servants to Joppa. Why did HaShem need to tell Peter not to hesitate to go with these men?
2. When Herod heard the L-rd's disciples were healing people all over Judea, he thought it might be John, whom he had beheaded. He was perplexed. When the disciples spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, all the people were perplexed, hearing the Gospel in their own language. When the Captain of the temple and chief priests heard that Peter and John were no longer in the prison, they were perplexed. These are all the occurrences of διαπορέω (*diaporeō*) in the Apostolic Writings other than Peter's reaction to the vision. It took a while, but he figured out what G-d meant by this. It really is a perfect way to teach, using something with which the student is familiar. Explain what G-d used and how He taught His servant, Simon Peter.
3. In our last class, the believers were amazed that Saul was proclaiming *Yeshua* in the synagogues. At the close of Acts 10, once again, the believers were amazed. What amazed them this time?

Lesson Eighteen

Read Acts 11:19-26. Use the map in Lesson Sixteen and find Antioch and Cyprus. Phoenicia is the coastal region in Lebanon. To whom were the disciples witnessing about *Yeshua*? The disciples from Cyprus did not follow this pattern. Explain.

Why do you think the men from Cyprus would preach Messiah to the non-Jews? Consider Barnabas in your answer.

Barnabas was sent to minister to the new believers in Antioch. He went to Tarsus and brought Saul to Antioch where they met with the church for a year. Let's research this term "church."

This is only the sixth time we've seen "church" thus far in the Apostolic Writings. The etymology of "church" is from the Old English and German "kirche," which in Scotland was "kirk." These words derive from the Greek *kuriakos*, something which pertains to a *kurios* (lord.) In Greek, the "lord's house" is *kuriakon doma*. The Greek *kuriakos* eventually came to be used in Old English as "kirche" and ultimately, the current pronunciation of "church."

Based on the short history above, you would think that our Bible has "church" is translating the Greek word *kuriakos*, but that is *not* the case! In fact, *kuriakos* only appears twice in the Apostolic Scriptures. **Read 1Corinthians 11:20** and **Revelation 1:10**. The Greek is rightly translated as "L-rd's supper" and "L-rd's day," respectively.

The Greek word behind every reference to "church" in your Bible is *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklēsia*). It is a group of people or an assembly. *Ekklēsia* is used in the LXX as a replacement for the Hebrew word *kahal* (assembly), e.g. "the assembly of Israel." To be consistent with the *Tanakh*, a more correct translation in the Apostolic Scriptures would be "assembly" or "congregation," since we are not translating *kuriakos*, but *ekklēsia*.

The Hebrew *kahal* appears 115 times in the *Tanakh*, and *ekklēsia* appears 111 times in the Apostolic Writings. I think the story of the long awaited Jewish Messiah would have much better continuity with the previous text had *ekklēsia* been translated consistently from cover to cover as "assembly." I will purpose to see "church" and read "assembly" from now on. I encourage you to do the same.

"For a whole year they met with the assembly and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians."

(Acts 11:26 ESV edited)

Read Acts 11:27-30. Barnabas and Saul were sent from Antioch to Jerusalem. Now we have a short interlude about what's been going on in Jerusalem while Barnabas and Saul had been in

Antioch. You'll see that the end of the interlude mentions Barnabas and Saul returning to Antioch, this time with John Mark.

Read Acts 12:1-25 and comment on Peter's adventure. Why would Peter have thought he was seeing a vision?

Review

1. Why do you think the major translators of the Bible into English chose to mistranslate *ekklēsia* as "church" instead of "assembly?" Justify your answer.
2. Read the following verse and explain why you believe we are given this insert about Barnabas' character.

"When he (Barnabas) came and saw the grace of G-d, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the L-rd with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the L-rd."

(Acts 11:23–24 ESV)

3. In our reading, we have seen the Gospel presented to Jews as well as non-Jews. Up to this point, do you recall any specific changes to the resulting life of the believer, depending on if they are Jews or non-Jews?

Lesson Nineteen

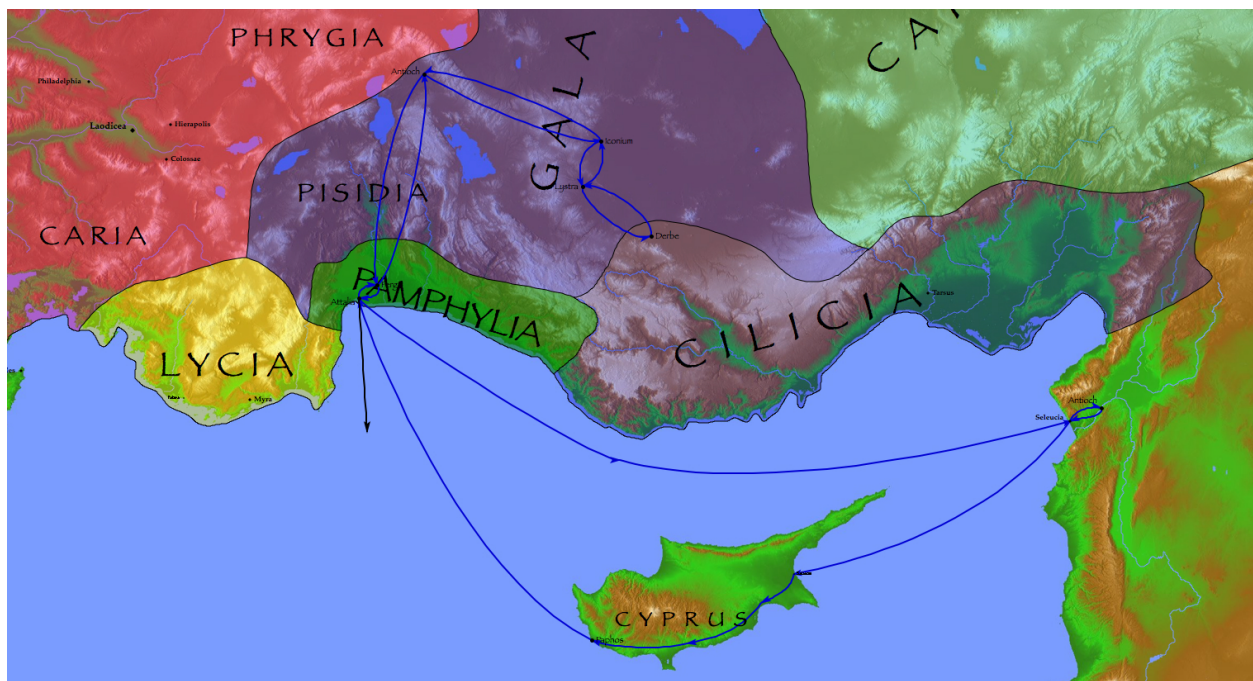
In our last reading, we learned that Barnabas had gone to Tarsus looking for Saul (Acts 11:25-26), and took him to Antioch, where they ministered together for a year. When Agabus foretold of the coming famine, Barnabas and Saul were sent to Jerusalem with relief funds for the believers living there. After reading about Peter's imprisonment and miraculous release, we learn that Barnabas and Saul finished their mission and headed back to Antioch with John Mark.

"And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark."

(Acts 12:25 ESV)

You are about to read of Paul's *first* missionary journey. As you read, refer to the map below. Read quickly, as if you're reading a novel. Don't get lost in the details. Make mental note of interesting facts. **Read Acts 13:1 – 14:28.**

Did you notice that in Acts 13:9, Saul is referred to for the first time as Paul (just like the man to whom he is witnessing?) In fact, it's been Barnabas and Saul up to this point, but from here on Paul is the leader. In Acts 13:13, it is Paul and his companions who set sail.



OK, go back now and read through the journey once more. This time try to answer the questions below *as you read*. This will cause you to read with a purpose. Take your time. Learn the history of your faith and how it spread from Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea and the rest of the world outside the Land of Promise.

1. We read in Acts 13:2 that the believers were worshiping and fasting. The Greek for worship is λειτούργεω (*leitourgeō*), from which we get our English *liturgy*. Since they are in Antioch, not Jerusalem and the Temple, how do you understand this?
2. Why is it ironic that Paul's first rebuke of a sinner causes the man temporary blindness?
3. What was it that astonished the proconsul to believe in *Yeshua*? Was it the miracle Paul had just performed?
4. In Acts 13:16 – 41 Paul gives a sermon that is not unlike Stephen's in Acts 7. How do they differ?
5. Many Jews and "devout converts to Judaism" followed Paul and Barnabas, according to Acts 13:43. This Greek word, προσήλυτος (*prosēlutos*) is used to translate *ger* in the LXX, which in English is stranger or sojourner. In the context of the Torah, it does not seem likely that any of these sojourners had formerly converted to Judaism. This term is used five times in the Apostolic Scriptures (three times in Acts and once in Matthew) and it is translated as *proselyte* every time but here. How would you describe these non-Jews and their *halachah* in today's terminology?
6. Gentiles are mentioned in Acts 13:46 – 48. The Greek is ἔθνος (*ethnos*), perhaps best translated as "nations" to avoid confusion with *goyim*, literally non-Jews, as in Isaiah 9:1. One of the occurrences rendered as "Gentile" in Mark is the Greek Ἑλληνις (*Hellenis*). Do you think it's important to distinguish between Gentiles, non-Jews, Hellenists and Greeks in the Apostolic Scriptures? Which one do you think is the focus of these texts?
7. If you chose "Gentile" in the previous question, how do you reconcile that with these verses from Paul's letter to the Romans?

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of G-d for salvation to everyone who believes, to **the Jew first and also to the Greek.**"*

(Romans 1:16 ESV, emphasis mine)

*“There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil,
the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone
who does good, **the Jew first and also the Greek.**”*

(Romans 2:9–10 ESV, emphasis mine)

8. Final question regarding Gentiles vs. Greeks, promise! Read Acts 14:1-2. Are the Greeks who believed the same group as the Gentiles who were stirred up by the unbelieving Jews? I think this question is of vital importance to us as we continue our study. Consider Acts 14:16 in your answer.
9. Paul was stoned by Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium (Acts 14:19) and left for dead outside the city of Lystra. He left the next day and went to Derbe to preach the gospel, then returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch! How do you suppose he was received by the Jews of those towns upon his return (from the dead)!

Review

Last week we looked at the apparent translation bias with the insertion of the term “church” in the Apostolic Scriptures. This week we looked at Paul’s first missionary journey and his attempt to give the good news of salvation to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles... or Greeks... or non-Jews. It’s important for you to be settled on these matters.

If you have questions, write them below so we can review them in class.

Lesson Twenty

Surprise! We're not finishing the book of Acts yet. **Read James 1 - 5.** Read it through in one sitting. It will take you no more than 10 minutes. Now reflect on what you read. This letter is very different from anything we've read together thus far. This *epistle* from *Ya'acov* (Jacob/James) is full of wonderful guidance which is highly practical. Let's see what gems we can learn from James. (Consistent with the translator's biases we've already seen, even though Jacob was a very common name in and before the days of the Master, the Apostolic Scriptures have James instead of Jacob, missing the hat-tip to one of the patriarchs of our faith.)

There are two James' in the list of apostles. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and James the Lesser. A third James, *Yeshua's* brother, was known as *James the Just* or *James the Righteous*. He was a devout man, known for prayer. His nickname was "old camel knees."

Paul proves that James was not one of the apostles. *Yeshua* appeared to James *after* the twelve.

*"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. **Then he appeared to James**, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."*

(1 Corinthians 15:3–8 ESV, emphasis mine)

Paul mentions spending some time with James a few years after his conversion on the road to Damascus, being an important leader of the assembly in Jerusalem.

*"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles **except James the L-rd's brother**."*

(Galatians 1:18–19 ESV, emphasis mine)

Peter indicates that James was a mouthpiece for the assembly in Jerusalem after the miraculous release from prison we read about a few lessons ago.

*"But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the L-rd had brought him out of the prison. And he said, **"Tell these things to James and to the brothers."** Then he departed and went to another place."*

(Acts 12:17 ESV)

Finally, Paul describes the three main men in charge of the assembly in Jerusalem, and the one who sent men to them, when writing to the assembly in Galatia.

*“And when **James and Cephas and John**, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”*

(Galatians 2:9 ESV, emphasis mine)

*“For before certain men **came from James**...”*

(Galatians 2:12 ESV, emphasis mine)

So, this man James is a player, an important fixture in the believing community that was firmly established in Jerusalem.

Now let's dig in. Read each of the five chapters as a separate piece of literature and see if you can boil down James' message for that section to a single sentence of verse.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Take another 10 minutes and read through the whole letter one more time, but this time mark every occurrence of the word “law” or “lawgiver.” (If you're one who doesn't write or highlight in his Bible, you'll find a copy of this epistle in the Appendix.) After you've done so, write your thoughts about James' regard for the law.

Does James reference more than one law? Would you translate law in James' epistle as “Torah?” Why or why not?

Review

I believe that James' letter can be boiled down to the following code of conduct.

*Watch what you do; watch how you act; watch what you say;
watch what you want; watch how you spend.*

1. What do you think of this code?
2. To whom did James write his letter? Does this change your understanding?
3. James argues that faith without works is dead. But which one comes first? Give examples from his text.

Lesson Twenty-One

Now that you have a sense of James' mindset toward life and the Torah, we come to the meeting of the Jerusalem Council, lead by James. **Read Acts 15:1-5.**

There are different points being made in this passage.

*"But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers,
"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses,
you cannot be saved.""*

(Acts 15:1 ESV, emphasis mine)

*"But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and
said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to
order them to keep the law of Moses.""*

(Acts 15:5 ESV, emphasis mine)

Are these points being made by the same group? Are they making the same points? Explain your answers.

It appears the first group was speaking of *how* to be saved, while the second group was speaking of what to do *after* you have been saved.

*"The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider **this matter**."*

(Acts 15:6 ESV, emphasis mine)

Notice in verse 6, above, that the elders (while "apostles" is in the earlier verses, it is not in the Greek text in verse 6) gathered to consider a *single* matter. The Greek is in the singular voice. **Read Acts 15:6-11** and determine with which issue the elders wrestled. Write your answer below.

Read Acts 15:12-18 and write down James' conclusion in your own words.

Now **read Acts 15:19-21** and see the wisdom James brought in his judgment. It should be clear why he did not find it necessary to trouble the non-Jews that had turned to G-d. Why was it not necessary?

James declares his judgment is that, “we should not **trouble** those of the Gentiles who turn to G-d.” (Acts 15:19 ESV, emphasis mine) This is an interesting word in the Greek. It is only used here throughout the Scriptures. The Greek is παρενοχλέω (*parenochleō*). It means *to cause trouble in a matter*. It is a derivative of *enochleō*, which is a compound formed from *ochlos*, (crowd or annoyance) + *en* (in a person). Both the LXX and the GNT use this Greek word in the following verses. I think it gives you a very good idea from where James was coming.

“Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the L-RD our G-d to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit,”

(Deuteronomy 29:18 ESV)

“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of G-d; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.”

(Hebrews 12:15 ESV)

Read Acts 15:22-29. James did not want to cause the new Gentile believers to become bitter, and possibly affect the entire community. His wisdom is to present a short-list of things from which to abstain. When the letter is written, these things are described as *requirements*, literally *on compulsion*; things necessarily imposed.

James is dealing with new Gentile believers who probably do not know the ins and outs of the Torah, the commandments or how life is in Jewish community. His solace is that they will hear Moses each Sabbath, read out loud in the synagogues. Paul, who is delivering the letter, will later admonish Timothy of this all-important habit.

*“Until I come, devote yourself to **the public reading of Scripture**, to exhortation, to teaching.”*

(1 Timothy 4:13 ESV)

James’ concern that the new believers not be troubled, but encouraged, was realized. **Read Acts 15:30-35** and write your thoughts about the entire episode.

Take a break and experience the first part of Paul’s second missionary journey. **Read Acts 15:36-16:40.** It’s a good story! In his first journey, Paul was nearly stoned to death. Examine the picture below as you read.

What happens to Paul in this journey?



To give you an idea of where Paul traveled, the map below is overlaid with today's countries.



Review

1. In the opening of Acts 16, Paul is said to be spreading the decisions, literally *dogma* or *doctrine*, that had been determined by the Jerusalem council. What were they?
2. The Spirit prohibited Paul and Silas from speaking the word in Asia (modern day Turkey) or visiting Bithynia. How do you suppose the men knew that?
3. An earthquake opened the doors to the prison in Phillipi, but that did not unfasten their bonds. This is the second time we've seen this miracle from the Holy One, blessed is He. The first time was with Peter. What was the result?
4. Lydia is described as a "worshiper of G-d." This is the same word we've seen a few times earlier, translated as *devout*. Read Acts 13:43, 50. Describe Lydia's faith practice in your own words.

Lesson Twenty-Two

In the past few lessons we have seen Peter corrected by G-d on his view of Gentiles, and their place in the world to come. We've also seen Paul miraculously saved and humbled by the Almighty. His humility turns into boldness as he is used by the Holy One, blessed is He, to strike a man blind (as he had been). Paul recognizes his call to bring the word of salvation (good news) to the non-Jews. We read of a controversy from those who were brought up in Judaism, adhering to its traditions. They claimed that non-Jews *must* be circumcised to have a place in the world to come. This is a question of *salvation*, not sanctification. Those who taught that conversion to Judaism was required to have a place in the world to come were called Judaizers.

Halachah by this time (60 CE?) had resolved that non-Jews had to adhere to four stipulations, to convert to Judaism, and thus have a place in the world to come.

1. The convert must be circumcised.
2. The convert must have a *mikvah*.
3. The convert must make sacrifice.
4. The convert must commit to keep both the Written and Oral Torah.

Our Rabbis taught: A certain Gentile once came before Shammai and asked him, 'How many Torahs do you have?' 'Two,' he replied: 'the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.' 'I believe you with respect to the Written Torah being revealed by G-d, but not with respect to the Oral Torah; make me a convert to Judaism on condition that you teach me the Written Torah only. But he scolded and repulsed him in anger. When he went before Hillel with the same request, Hillel converted him. On the first day, he taught him, Alef, Beit, Gimmel, Dalet, and so on. The following day he reversed the names of the letters for him. 'But yesterday you did not recite it to me this way,' he protested. Hillel replied to him, 'Must you then not rely upon me? Then rely upon me with respect to the veracity of the Oral Torah too.'

On another occasion it happened that a certain Gentile came before Shammai and said to him, 'Make me a convert to Judaism, on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot.' Thereupon he repulsed him with the builder's cubit which was in his hand. The Gentile went before Hillel and Hillel converted him. Hillel said to him, 'What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary; go and learn it.'

On another occasion it happened that a certain Gentile was passing behind a Beit Hamidrash, when he heard the voice of a teacher reciting, 'And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod.' The Gentile stopped and asked, 'For whom are these?' 'For the Kohen Gadol,' he was told. Then the Gentile said to himself, 'I will go and convert to Judaism, so

that they will appoint me as Kohen Gadol.' So he went before Shammai and said to him, 'Convert me on condition that you have me appointed as Kohen Gadol.' But he repulsed him with the builder's cubit which was in his hand. He then went before Hillel, who converted him. Hillel said to him, 'Can we appoint anyone as king unless he is familiar with the ceremonies of royalty? Go and study the ceremonies of royalty!' The convert went and learned Scripture. When he reached, 'And the stranger who approaches shall die,' he asked Hillel, 'To whom does this verse apply?' 'Even to David, King of Israel,' was Hillel's answer. That convert made a kal v'chomer argument concerning himself: If Israel, who are called children of the Almighty and Who in His love for them He called them: My firstborn son, Israel; yet it is written concerning them, 'the stranger who approaches shall die': How much more so a mere convert, who comes with his staff and wallet! Then he went before Shammai and said to him, 'Am I then eligible to be Kohen Gadol; is it not written in the Torah, 'And the stranger who approaches shall be put to death?' He went before Hillel and said to him, 'O gentle Hillel; blessings rest on thy head for bringing me under the wings of the Shechinah!'

Sometime later the three met in one place; they declared, 'The sternness of Shammai sought to banish us from the world, but the humble manner of Hillel brought us under the wings of the Shechinah.'

Talmud Bavli Shabbos 31a

The Judaizers are the main actors in Acts 15.

*"But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, **you cannot be saved.**'"*

(Acts 15:1 ESV, emphasis mine)

This soteriological point had been decided by the Jerusalem Council, described in Acts 15.

*"But we believe that **we will be saved through the grace** of the L-rd Yeshua, **just as they will.**"*

(Acts 15:11 ESV, emphasis mine)

Further, there was no requirement for the non-Jews converting to Judaism, other than the four tenants laid out by James.

"Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to G-d, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood."

(Acts 15:19–20 ESV)

And James' hope appears to be that the non-Jews would learn and keep the commands of Moses by hearing him each week in the synagogues.

*"And after Paul and Barnabas had **no small dissension and debate** with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question."*

(Acts 15:2 ESV)

These men from Judea did not give up with Paul and Barnabas in Antioch. They were in the region of Galatia, and evidently their message spread. With this background, let's examine Paul's letter to the assemblies in Galatia, most of which he founded with Barnabas. Read **Galatians 1 – 3**. Read it quickly. This is the first half of his letter. After reading it once through, read it again a little slower.

Write down what you perceive is Paul's major theme; his reason for writing.

Peter was a little squeamish around *the circumcision party*. He had a run in with them when he returned to Jerusalem after preaching to Cornelius.

"So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.""

(Acts 11:2–3 ESV)

Peter, Barnabas and the rest of the Jews in Antioch drew back from eating with the non-Jews when the men from James (in Jerusalem) came to visit. They feared the circumcision party.

"But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?""

(Galatians 2:14 ESV)

Review

The phrase "their conduct was not in step" is the translation of ὀρθοποδεῶ (*orthopodeō*). This Greek word means to "walk uprightly." Since Peter had already experienced the Cornelius episode and Barnabas had been witnessing with Paul for years by this time, why do you think they both caved and chose to sit away from the non-Jews?

Lesson Twenty-Three

As we saw in the first half of Paul's letter to the assemblies in Galatia, he is adamantly opposed to this "alternate" gospel of becoming a Jew (circumcised) *for salvation*. Those non-Jews whom had professed faith in *Yeshua* as the promised *Mashiach* had received the Spirit by faith, and that is sufficient.

Rick Spurlock describes the tension between devout Jews, being protective from idolatry, and non-Jews desiring a place to serve the living G-d.

In the generation before the birth of Yeshua, there was much zeal for the Judaisms of the time, as well as for the Temple, the center of Judaism. Despite the multiple sects of Judaism that vied for position, there was near universal opinion that there was a serious problem in Judaism: Gentiles wanted a play a part.

Gentiles weren't Jews – and yet they flocked to the synagogues scattered throughout the world, and even to the Temple in Jerusalem. Not being Jews was a problem. Before about 200 BCE, being a "Jew" was not a religious identity, it was purely genetic. The only hope for man was to be a member of the covenant community, and many Gentiles recognized their need for right standing with God, and desired entrance into the covenant community with Israel.

Rick Spurlock, Galatians – Grafted In, The Gentile Problem

Paul is arguing that these Galatian converts to The Way are covenant members who are *not* members of the covenant community of Israel *by birth*. And to get circumcised at this point demonstrates that Messiah's sacrifice was without merit.

Where is Paul getting his perspective? He seems to be arguing against influential and well-taught men from Jerusalem. Through his conversion experience and subsequent study of the Torah, this scholar may have seen past the traditional view of non-Jewish involvement in the worship of the one true G-d.

Read Deuteronomy 10:15-11:1 and Deuteronomy 30:4-8. Who is it that is being circumcised? Who is doing the circumcision? What is being circumcised? Explain your answer fully.

Read Galatians 4:1-11. Paul is talking about *relationship* with G-d and the usefulness of the Torah both before and after *becoming known by G-d*. As you read the last two verses you may get the impression that the non-Jews to whom he was writing should not be concerned about the Torah's laws regarding festivals or new months. This is not the case, as we will see later, that Paul uses different phrases when referencing Biblical mandates (Colossians 2:16.)

Read Galatians 4:12-31. Paul is encouraging the new believers to cast out the idea that putting themselves under the law, by undergoing circumcision to be have a place in the world to come, has any value.

Read Galatians 5:1-15. What freedom does the non-Jew have that these Judaizers would steal?

Does Paul still preach circumcision?

Read Galatians 5:16-6:10. Paul appears to now be exhorting the new believers to good works and proper life in Messiah, caring for one another and loving, as unto Messiah.

Read Galatians 6:11-18. How is that circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for nothing?

Review

1. Now that you've been through the whole letter, how would you summarize Paul's letter to the Galatians?
2. Why does Paul remark that he is writing with large letters?
3. What are the marks of *Yeshua* to which Paul refers?

Appendix

Remaining Chronological Readings

[Acts 17; Acts 18:1-18](#)

[1 Thessalonians 1-5; 2 Thessalonians 1-3](#)

[Acts 18:19-28; Acts 19:1-41](#)

[1 Corinthians 1-4](#)

[1 Corinthians 5-8](#)

[1 Corinthians 9-11](#)

[1 Corinthians 12-14](#)

[1 Corinthians 15-16](#)

[2 Corinthians 1-4](#)

[2 Corinthians 5-9](#)

[2 Corinthians 10-13](#)

[Acts 20:1-3; Romans 1-3](#)

[Romans 4-7](#)

[Romans 8-10](#)

[Romans 11-13](#)

[Romans 14-16](#)

[Acts 20:4-38; Acts 21; Acts 22; Acts 23:1-35](#)

[Acts 24-26](#)

[Acts 27-28](#)

[Colossians 1-4; Philemon](#)

[Ephesians 1-6](#)

[Philippians 1-4](#)

[1 Timothy 1-6](#)

[Titus 1-3](#)

[1 Peter 1-5](#)

[Hebrews 1-6](#)

[Hebrews 7-10](#)

[Hebrews 11-13](#)

[2 Timothy 1-4](#)

[2 Peter 1-3; Jude](#)

[1 John 1-5](#)

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[Revelation 1-5](#)

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Some Responses to Nehemia Gordon's Rejoinder

Tim Hegg

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Lesson Summaries

Each week the previous lesson is reviewed in class. The audio files are in the iTunes podcast for *Men of Torah*. The handouts for each review session are in this section.

Note that some classes do not require a handout.

Lesson Seventeen

It is extraordinary that a man can give life to the dead. This is extremely rare. Consider the following short list.

1. Elijah
2. Elisha
3. *Yeshua*
4. Peter
5. Paul

I find it interesting that Peter knelt in prayer. While *kneeling* is the formal position for those in the church today, Judaism has upheld *standing* instead. There are only five references to a man kneeling in prayer in all the Scriptures.

1. Solomon (1Kings 8:54, 2Chr 6:13)
2. Daniel (Daniel 6:10)
3. *Yeshua* (Luke 22:41)
4. Peter (Acts 9:40)
5. Paul (Acts 20:36)

When we compare this with the first list, I'm surprised to find three of five in common!

Lesson Twenty

The Epistle of James

James, a servant of G-d and of the L-rd Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask G-d, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the L-rd; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which G-d has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by G-d," for G-d cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of G-d. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before G-d the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our L-rd Jesus Christ, the L-rd of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not G-d chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that G-d is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed G-d, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of G-d. You see that a person is justified by works

and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of G-d. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with G-d? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of G-d. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "G-d opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to G-d. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to G-d, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the

prophets who spoke in the name of the L-rd. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the L-rd, how the L-rd is compassionate and merciful.

But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the L-rd. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the L-rd will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”
(James 1:1–5:20 ESV)