

## EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS



SH'MA! CHAZAK! BIBLE STUDIES

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*B'ezrat HaShem*

**The Epistle to the Galatians**

***Grafted In***

***A Bible Study***

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***Sh'ma! Chazak! Bible Studies***

# The Epistle to the Galatians

## *Grafted In*

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# Galatians

## *Grafted In*

### Introduction

The Epistle to the Galatians is settled theology to the vast majority of Christianity; particularly to those groups that came out of the Protestant Reformation. It is quite clear to most: It is a book written to answer the question: “Are we saved by the Law or by Grace?” Because of the way the question is framed, the resultant answer is quite expected. Unfortunately, the wrong answer was brought about because the wrong question was asked. The question does not fit the historical and cultural setting of First Century. Paul did not write the book of Galatians in order to answer that question, “Saved by the Law or Grace?” That is a rhetorical question from the Protestant Reformation. Galatians, read anachronistically through the prism of the conflict between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is understandable, but quite wrong.

Rather, the questions that frame the Epistle to the Galatians revolve around issues of which most Christians are completely unaware. If you ask the wrong question, you will get the wrong answer.

*“All Israel has a part in the World to Come.”*  
Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 90a

There are questions that are raised by this quote from Talmud. Questions that maybe you have never asked, or even considered. It may be easy to dismiss this extra-biblical statement, but to do so would be to ignore a similar statement from Romans:

*And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”*

Romans 11:26-27

Both *Sanhedrin 90a* and Romans 11:26 draw upon prophecies from Isaiah that portend the future salvation of Israel.

Go ahead and ask the questions:

- *All Israel will be saved?*
- *Past, present, future Israel?*
- *All Israel at the time?*
- *Saved in what way?*
- *What about only one way to the Father? Does that mean they will all recognize and turn to Messiah?*

- *What about the inverse? Is only Israel going to be saved?*
- *Who is Israel?*

Now you are asking good questions. You see, the Epistle to the Galatians was written about this issue. Not about “Law versus Grace” – it is about the question, “Who is Israel?”

As we dig into this study, the answer to that question may surprise you. If you have not immersed yourself in the context of First Century Judaism, then you may be completely unaware of the burning questions of that era. If you ask the wrong question, you will get the wrong answer. This study is about asking the correct questions. It is about discovering the right answers. With God’s help, we will discover together.

### ***A Biased Study?***

Most inductive Bible studies attempt to reduce bias so that Bible students can more easily discover biblical truths for themselves. Surely, this is a noble goal. On many issues, it is simply impossible. Although we will attempt to minimize preconceived notions, we will state up front our bias. If you do not agree, we challenge you to *study to show yourself approved*, and as a fellow disciple, show us our error.

This study is written from a Messiah-centered perspective. Yeshua [Jesus] was and is a Jew. He is the soon-returning King of Israel. He was born of the virgin Miriam [Mary], of the Kingly line of David. His coming was planned before time began, foretold when the Almighty promised to send a Seed to crush the head of the Serpent’s seed. He was further promised to Abraham, our father. The Seed, Messiah Himself, was the reason for all the covenants of Israel. They reveal Him in every detail. All Scripture speaks of Him.

In the fullness of time, the Seed was manifested in human form, *Im’manu’el* [God with us]. He revealed Himself as the Son of David, the very Son of God. He lived a perfect and Torah-observant life. He died a cruel death for no guilt of His own. As the Righteous Suffering Servant, He redeems those who trust Him by His own suffering, and guarantees their inheritance by His resurrection from the dead.

Messiah Yeshua did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to reveal Himself within the Scriptures and in the righteousness defined by God’s holy instructions. The Torah [Law] reveals the eternal righteous standard of God, and as such, when practiced as a consistent lifestyle, reveals the very mark of those who trust in Messiah - Who is Himself our righteousness. Faith, without commensurate deeds is shown to be nothing.

- Regarding the Oneness of God, we are Chassidic
- Regarding Messiah, we are Messianic
- Regarding the Holy Spirit, we are mystic
- Regarding Grace, we are Calvinist

- Regarding the written Torah, we are as Orthodox Judaism
- Regarding our need for Messiah's atoning work, we are Christian
- Regarding the Chosen People of God, Israel, we are Zionist
- Regarding the life of Torah for Gentiles, we are "One People, One Law"

Above all, and indescribable in its entirety, we are simply disciples of our Master Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel, the King.

### ***Lesson Outline***

- Introduction
- Lesson One: Israel's Calling
- Lesson Two: The Gentile Problem
- Lesson Three: The Rabbinic Solution Part One
- Lesson Four: The Rabbinic Solution Part Two
- Lesson Five: Romans 14; 1Corinthians 8, 10
- Lesson Six: Acts 2, 10; 15; 21
- Lesson Seven - Galatians Chapter 1: the Good News
- Lesson Eight - Galatians Chapter 2: Righteousness and the Law
- Lesson Nine - Galatians Chapter 3: Works of the Law
- Lesson Ten- Galatians Chapter 4: Two Covenants?
- Lesson Eleven - Galatians Chapter 5: Walk by the Spirit
- Lesson Twelve - Galatians Chapter 6: Do Not Grow Weary

### ***Format***

The format of this study will be inductive. We will read historical background material for each lesson to provide the context for the Scripture passages that we will be studying. To support the historical background, extant historical and religious texts will be used. The use of these texts does not imply agreement or endorsement; they are simply used to set the context. In our discovery, we uphold the truth that it is Scripture and the conviction of the Holy Spirit that determines God's will for our lives. The final authority is Scripture.

## Lesson One: Israel's Calling

*But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."*

Ruth 1:16-17

*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Messiah Yeshua and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Messiah Yeshua, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Messiah, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Messiah.*

Galatians 1:1-7

### As You Begin

- Sit down in a quiet place and ask God to speak through His Word, and that the Holy Spirit will be your Teacher.
- Read the first chapter of Ruth, then meditate on the following passages:

*But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"*

Ruth 1:20-21

*And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, "We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman." So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who*



*loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.” Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “There is a son born to Naomi.” And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

Ruth 4:11-17

What does the story of Ruth tell us about Galatians? Quite a lot, it turns out. It is the beginning of a journey of discovery into things that are forgotten by the vast majority of people who claim to follow the Messiah of Israel. The vast majority of believers are of Gentile heritage, and only consider that a matter of history. After all, history shows that after the nation of Israel turned away from recognizing Yeshua as Messiah, it was Gentiles that accepted the truth in massive numbers. It is only natural that most of us would be Gentile, right? Wrong. It is supernatural.

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Why did God choose Israel as His “chosen people”?
- Did God’s plan always include Israel? Did it always include Gentiles?
- Is there a distinction between Jew and Gentile?
- Why is Christianity the “Gentile Religion” and why is biblical Judaism the “Jewish Religion”?

### ***Historical Context***

In the First Century, there were an enormous number of Gentiles who worshipped the God of Israel. Josephus, the Jewish historian said:

*Nay, further, the multitude of mankind itself have had a great inclination of a long time to follow our religious observances; for there is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come, and by which our fasts and lighting up lamps, and many of our prohibitions as to our food, are not observed; they also endeavor to imitate our mutual concord with one another, and the charitable distribution of our goods, and our diligence in our trades, and our fortitude in undergoing the distresses we are in, on account of our laws; and, what is here matter of the greatest admiration, our law hath no bait of pleasure to allure men to it, but it prevails by its own force; and as God himself pervades all the world, so hath our law passed through all the world also.<sup>1</sup>*

Yet, at the same time throughout the Roman Empire, there was revulsion of Jewish practices as the philosopher Seneca mentions. Society in the Roman Empire saw the religion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2:40

Jews as a “strange cult.” So what drew so many to worship the God of Israel, in spite of society’s disdain? How was it that many Gentiles were drawn to this despised religion?

The draw that Judaism had is illustrated in the account of the ritual conversion of the nobility of Adiabene.

In the First Century, about the time of Yeshua’s ministry, there was a young prince named Izates II from the Parthian kingdom of Adiabene (in modern-day Iraq) who was sent by his father the king to live in the port of Charan Spasinu. Charan Spasinu is an important Persian Gulf city in modern-day Iran. While there, Izates II met a Jewish merchant named Ananias, and he became enamored with Judaism. After the death of his father he returned to his kingdom of Adiabene where he ascended to the throne. He then learned that while he had been away his mother, Helena, had also become very interested in Judaism. Eventually, he and his mother underwent ritual conversion to Judaism.

Helena and her son Izates II lived devout lives as converts to Judaism. When Izates II went to war, Helena made a Nazarite vow for his safe return.

*If a man vows a Naziriteship of long duration and completes it and then arrives in the land [of Israel], the School of Shammai say that he is a Nazirite for thirty days, but the School of Hillel say that his Naziriteship commences again as at first. It is related that Queen Helena, when her son went to war, said: ‘If my son returns in peace from the war, I shall be a Nazirite for seven years. Her son returned from the war, and she observed a Naziriteship for seven years. At the end of the seven years, she went up to the land of Israel and School of Hillel ruled that she must be a Nazirite for a further seven years. Towards the end of this seven years, she contracted ritual defilement, and so altogether she was a Nazirite for twenty-one years.*

Tamud Bavli Nazir 19b

Izates II and his mother, both Gentiles, are buried in Jerusalem.

### ***What Scripture Says***

Is it just a coincidence that Gentiles were drawn to Judaism in the similar way that they were drawn to the Apostles’ teaching? Are they related?

What was the redemptive plan of God? When did it start and how was it to be realized? Did it start in Luke 2 with the birth of Yeshua?

Read and comment on the following passages, and then answer the questions that follow:

John 4:19-22:

Genesis 3:14-15:

Genesis 12:1-3:

Genesis 15:1-6:

Genesis 17:1-21:

Genesis 26:1-5:

Genesis 27:26-30:

Genesis 49:8-12:

Numbers 24:3-9 (compare to Genesis 9:26-27):

2Samuel 7:5-16 (David was the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth, of the Tribe of Judah):

Progressing from Adam and Eve, write out the progression of the promised "Seed" and the blessings that are hinted of in these passages. Write the line of Messiah from Genesis 3 to 2Samuel 7. It has been started for you:

*Adam > Noah > Abraham >*

Were there any reasons given for choosing any of the men listed? If so, list them:

Now read and comment on Luke 3:23-38:

So, was Yeshua simply speaking of Himself when He told the Samaritan woman that “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). To some, it is just incidental that Yeshua had to have a genealogy, so why shouldn’t it be a “Jewish” one? That misses some very important teaching of the purpose of Israel, and why God chose her as His Chosen People. Read and comment on the following passages:

Deuteronomy 7:6-9:

Isaiah 41:8:

Isaiah 42:1; 6:

Isaiah 49:6:

Who is the “Servant” – is it Israel, or is it Messiah? Or is it both?

What method did God give so that Israel could be the testimony to draw the nations? Read and comment on the following passages:

Deuteronomy 4:1-8:

Isaiah 2:2-5:

Isaiah 55:1-5:

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas spend a Sabbath at the synagogue in Antioch Pisidia. After being invited to stand and speak after the reading of the Torah, they are asked to return the following Sabbath. Read Acts 13:42-50. Comment on why so many Gentiles (called “God fearers” earlier in the passage) were present in the synagogue, and why they found the message from Paul and Barnabas so encouraging.

### **Conclusion**

What was Israel's calling? What were they called to do?

Did God abandon His plan for redemption of all peoples? Did He decide that Israel was unfit for the calling that He gave her? From the history of the past 2,000 years, one might be tempted to say that God's plan did not work out. It seems that His plan switched from Israel to a new people – in order to bring the nations to Him. It is nominal Christianity that has brought the plan to all the ends of the earth. Or is it?

Spend some time in prayer before finishing this lesson. If you are of Jewish heritage, thank God that He chose you and your people to bring the truth of God to the ends of the world. If you are of Gentile heritage, thank the Almighty that He gave you and the nations the gift of the Jewish people.

Meditate on these verses:

*What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.*

Romans 3:1-2

*You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.*

John 4:22

## **Prayer Focus**

### **Aleinu**

*It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to ascribe greatness to the Molder of primeval creation, for He has not made us like the nations of the lands and has not emplaced us like the families of the earth; for He has not assigned our portion like theirs nor our lot like all their multitudes (for they bow to vanity and emptiness and pray to a god which helps not). But we bend our knees, bow, and acknowledge our thanks before the King Who reigns over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He. He stretches out heaven and establishes earth's foundation, the seat of His homage is in the heavens above and His powerful Presence is in the loftiest heights He is our God and there is none other. True is our King, there is nothing beside Him, as it is written in His Torah: "You are to know this day and take to your heart that HaShem is the only God – in heaven above and on the earth below – there is none other."*

*Therefore we put our hope in You, HaShem our God, that we may soon see Your mighty splendor, to remove detestable idolatry from the earth, and false gods will be utterly cut off, to perfect the universe through the Almighty's sovereignty. Then all humanity will call upon Your Name, to turn all the earth's wicked toward You. All the world's inhabitants will recognize and know that to You every knee should bend, every tongue should swear. Before You, HaShem, our God, they will bend every knee and cast themselves down and to the glory of Your Name they will render homage, and they will all accept upon themselves the yoke of Your Kingship that You may reign over them soon and eternally. For the Kingdom is Yours and You will reign over all eternity in glory as it is written in Your Torah: HaShem shall reign for all eternity. And it is said: HaShem will be King over all the world – on that day HaShem will be One and His Name will be One.*

ArtScroll Complete Siddur page 159-160

## Lesson Two: The Gentile Problem

*"Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you."*

Leviticus 18:24

*Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you.*

Isaiah 52:1

### ***As You Begin***

- Sit down in a quiet place and ask God to speak through His Word, and that the Holy Spirit will be your Teacher. Ask Him to bring clarity in the midst of the clouds of confusion that surround the issue of Gentile-inclusion. Ask Him to guard you from offense as you study the danger of Gentile-inclusion – whether you are of Jewish or Gentile heritage, there is opportunity to be offended when reading how Gentiles and Jews have related to each other in times past.
- Meditate on the following verse:

*"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations."*

Deuteronomy 18:9

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Why did Jews feel the need to defend themselves from Gentile ways?
- Did God exclude Gentiles in the "Old Testament"? If so, why? Why did He include them later?
- What is "being Jewish" – is it ethnic, cultural, or religion?

### ***Historical Context***

In the previous lesson, we learned the role of how the Gentile nations were to learn of God from Israel. We saw that by the First Century, Gentiles were flocking to First Century Judaism. Of course, this presented some problems. Some of these problems are evident from even a cursory reading of the TaNaKh<sup>2</sup> – and yet some of the implications are completely unknown to most modern believers.

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<sup>2</sup> TaNaKh = *Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim* [Law, Prophets, Writings, or what some call the "Old Testament"]

Within the Torah, we read of non-Jews participating in the worship of the One True God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We also read of the danger of living surrounded by those nations that did not worship God. Their idolatry, and their pagan ways were an allure to the descendants of Jacob. How did the *“do not defile yourselves”* instructions speak about Caleb, Rahab, Ruth and other non-Jews?

### Active Defense of Judaism

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.

What was the problem with people from different ethnicities becoming a member of the “Jewish Religion”? Idolatry. It was pervasive in Gentiles, and they seemed to invariably fall back into it – taking Jews with them. Idolatry had led to the scattering of the Northern Tribes, absorbed into the Assyrian Empire. Idolatry and learning the ways of Gentiles led to the destruction of Jerusalem, and had cost the lives of countless Israelites in the Southern Kingdom. It led to the seventy-year Babylonian captivity. After returning to the Land in the Fifth Century BCE, the Southern Tribes under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra renewed their vows to the Almighty and began to act once again like the uniquely Chosen People that they are.

Fierce defending of the purity of Israel was needed. The covenant community of Israel needed to be defended from the onslaught of the cultures around them. From the time of the Maccabees in the Second Century BCE, they became militant against assimilation, particularly the Greek and later Roman cultures. When they conquered nations around the Land, they even forced them to “convert” to Judaism. The entire Idumaeon kingdom which was to the southeast of Judea was forcibly circumcised after the Maccabean wars. This was during the reign of John Hyrcanus in 125 BCE. John Hyrcanus was the Hasmonean king of Israel at the time.

The Hasmonean Dynasty began after the Maccabean revolt. After successfully driving the Greek Selucids from the land, the throne of Israel moved from the line of David to the Tribe of Levi. It was Hyrcanus' grandson Alexander that appointed Antipas the Idumaeon as general over Judea. When Pompey invaded Israel in 63 BCE, Antipas was made chief minister of the Roman client state of Palestine. Herod the Great was the son of Antipas. Herod,



because he was Idumaeon, was a “proselyte” to Judaism. He was despised by the observant Jews because they saw once again that Gentiles, even when they are called “Jews” are still corrupt and corrupting. Even through proselytes were accepted by many, it was only to a degree. Being a proselyte to Judaism bore responsibilities, but it did not remove suspicion. They reasoned that even “former Gentiles” retain their loyalty to Gentiles and Gentile ways.

*Thus people say, “Before a proselyte, even unto the tenth generation, insult not an Aramean.”*

b. *Sanhedrin* 94a

*R. Eliezer says, “None of the Gentiles has a portion in the world to come,” as it is said, “The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the Gentiles who forget God (Psalms 9:17).”*

t. *Sanhedrin* 13:2

As the Tosefta records, Rabbi Eliezer has quite an extreme view of Gentiles. We will see later that Eliezer represents the Bet Shammai opinion within Pharisaic Judaism. In the years leading up to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, it was the Shammai position regarding Gentiles that prevailed. The bottom line: Jews were at best suspicious of Gentiles even if those Gentiles had formally converted to Judaism. As we will see, the majority opinion among Pharisees was that there was no place for Gentiles within the covenant community of Israel.

### **You Never Know Where Those Gentiles Have Been**

The strict rules regarding interaction with Gentiles came from real problems in Israel’s past. In addition to the corrupting influence of idolatry, another issue was very important to the Judaisms of the First Century and prior – ritual purity. When described in English as “clean” and “unclean” it often masks the biblical mandates regarding ritual purity in the context of the Temple and in the daily lives of the obedient.

The Hebrew word for “unclean,” is the word *tamei*. There is a lot about the Levitical Law that is misunderstood by many, but the issue of *tamei* [un-whole, unclean] is likely one of the most misunderstood concepts. We read in Leviticus 10:10-11 and Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23, a primary purpose for the Levitical priesthood was to teach the people the difference between holy [*k’desh*] and profane [*chol*]; and the difference between clean [*t’hor*] and unclean [*tamei*]. What is often misunderstood is that *chol* [common, or profane] and *tamei* [unclean] are not sin, in and of themselves. Better understanding can be gained by using these definitions of *k’desh*, *chol*, *t’hor*, and *tamei*.

- *K’desh* = set apart for God – God-centered. Usually rendered “holy” or “sanctified” in English.
- *Chol* = What is not set apart for God – Man-centered. Usually rendered “profane” or “common” in English.

- *T'hor* = whole, unfragmented, having access and fellowship to God. Usually rendered “clean” or “ritually clean” in English.
- *Tamei* = cautious state, temporarily fragmented, distracted, limited from access to God through the Temple system. Usually rendered “unclean” in English.

There are a number of conditions that places someone in the biblical status of *tamei*. They are listed here in descending order of degree of *tamei*:

- Contact with a dead body
- Leprosy
- Persistent bleeding (women), other persistent fluid discharges (men and women)
- After childbirth for women
- Normal menstruation for women
- Seminal discharge

From the list, you can see that being in a biblical state of *tamei* for healthy adults is something of normal consequence. The varying degrees of *tamei* have ever escalating separations prescribed, the most severe being contact with a dead body.

Extrapolated from the biblical injunctions regarding ritual purity there were new rabbinic ordinances created. Wanting to “put a fence” around the biblical commandments, protocols regarding interaction with Gentiles were formulated in the First Century BCE. Some of those instructions are revealed in tractate *Avodah Zarah* [lit “idol worship”] and the tractates *Sanhedrin* and *Shabbat* of the Babylonian Talmud. These protocols did not permit Jews to interact with Gentiles in any way that may render them *tamei* [ritually impure] which depending upon the severity could result in the Temple itself becoming corrupted by the “contagious” state of *tamei*. In our modern sensibilities, this may seem silly, but as we will see from a biblical perspective it is a real problem.

### ***What Scripture Says***

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus said that Gentiles had no part in the World to Come.<sup>3</sup> According to him, there is no hope for Gentiles. Tractate *Sanhedrin* of the Babylonian Talmud quotes a maxim that questions a proselyte’s loyalty to Judaism even after ten generations.<sup>4</sup> So, is there any Scriptural basis for such extreme positions, or is this just another case of xenophobia and discrimination?

How was Israel to treat the inhabitants of the Land as they entered it? What concerns about the inhabitants should Israel have had upon entering the Land?

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<sup>3</sup> t. *Sanhedrin* 13:2

<sup>4</sup> b. *Sanhedrin* 94a

Comment on the follow passages:

Exodus 23:27-33:

Exodus 34:10-17:

Deuteronomy 12:30:

Joshua 23:11-13:

Psalms 106:33-40:

What about “clean and unclean” [*tahor* and *tamei*]? Are Gentiles included in these concerns? Is it our duty to distinguish between *tahor* and *tamei*?

Comment on the following passages:

Leviticus 22:25 (foreigner = *nekar*):

Ezekiel 22:26:

Exodus 12:43 (foreigner = *nekar*):

Deuteronomy 31:16 (foreigner = *nekar*):

Ezekiel 44:7-9 (foreigner = *nekar*):

One could read those passages and arrive at the conclusion that Gentiles (in general) were to be held at arm's length. We will deal with this fallacy later, but for now take to heart the following passage from Numbers:

*All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. And if a stranger [ger] dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger [ger] who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger [ger] be before the LORD. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger [ger] who dwells with you.*

Numbers 15:13-16

### **Conclusion**

It is quite clear that there was a real problem with the people of God assimilating into pagan people that surrounded them. God gave very specific instructions in that regard. There was also a real problem that if Gentiles were living among the Israelites that there was opportunity of ritual contamination – which could have resulted in the Temple being defiled. While some might think that this is simply antiquated, it should be noted that it was God that warned Israel of these things in regard to Gentiles.

With those real problems in mind, you may be starting to understand the problem that existed in the First Century and earlier – what to do about the Gentiles that were swarming to the God of Jacob. Should they be shunned and turned away? Clearly not – but something still had to be done...

*“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien [ger] — Because they do not fear Me,” Says the LORD of hosts.*

Malachi 3:4-5

### ***Prayer Focus***

The *Shemoneh Esrei* (aka the *Amidah*), is prayed three times daily. The final words of the *Shemoneh Esrei* come from Malachi 3:4:

*May it be Your will, HaShem our God and the God of our forefathers, that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days. Grant us our share in your Torah, and may we serve you there with reverence, as in days of old and in former years. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to HaShem, as in days of old and in former years.*

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## Lesson Three: The Rabbinic Solution Part One

*For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob.*

Isaiah 14:1

*Rabbi Helbo said: Proselytes are as hard for Israel [to endure] as a sore, because it is written in Scripture. And the proselyte shall join himself with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.*

b.Yevamot 47b

*...an idolater who becomes a proselyte and studies the Torah is like a High Priest.*

Numbers Rabbah XIII:16

### ***As You Begin***

- As you sit down in a quiet place pause for a moment and spend some time in prayer. Ask God to open your ears to the language and history of the Scriptures that we are studying. Thank him for wise men that went before us (even if you do not agree with them).
- Meditate on the following verse:

*And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be “The LORD is one,” and His Name One.*

Zechariah 14:9

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Were former pagans ever included in the covenant community in the accounts in the Torah?
- How can a former pagan become a part of the covenant community, how can they be trusted?
- When was a formal “conversion” process that made Gentiles into “Jews” formulated? Was it an ancient tradition, or one that comes from Scripture?
- Is it there a Scriptural basis for Gentiles to become “Jews” – is that is what is needed to become a part of the covenant community?

### ***Historical Context***

Gentiles, because they come from pagan societies and families, were a real problem. At the same time, the God of the Bible always intended that all peoples should serve Him.

“Judaism” (that is, the religion of the Bible), was intended by God to be a universal religion. In the end, the whole world was to worship Him.

### **Distinguishing between “Good Gentiles” and “Bad Gentiles”**

While the people of Israel were the inhabitants of the Land of Israel, it was fairly easy to distinguish between “bad Gentiles” and the “good Gentiles.” There had always been the “mixed multitude” that was a part of greater Israel. The Torah has many references to the sojourner that attached himself to Israel. There were those Gentiles like Caleb, Rahab, and Ruth, who attached themselves to the God of Israel and dwelt with Israel. But then there were the nations that surrounded them. It was fairly easy to distinguish between a worshipper of the Almighty and the pagans in the nations.

### **The Stranger Among You**

In the Torah, Gentiles who were a part of the covenant community of Israel, are most often called “sojourners,” “strangers,” or *gerim* (singular *ger*). Although this word is not used exclusively, by context it becomes very clear that these Gentiles are considered full members in the covenant community of Israel. A few examples:

*And when a stranger [ger] dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger [ger] who dwells among you.*

Exodus 12:48-49

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger [ger] who is within your gates.*

Exodus 20:8-10

*And every person who eats what died naturally or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger [ger], he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean.*

Leviticus 17:15

*All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. And if a stranger [ger] dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so*

*shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger [ger] who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger [ger] be before the LORD. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger [ger] who dwells with you.*

Numbers 15:13-16

In only these few examples, it becomes clear that the holy days, the Sabbath, ritual purity, and Tabernacle/Temple worship were to be the same for the native-born Israelite and the Gentile who dwelt with Israel. As long as Israel dwelt in one place, it was not difficult to distinguish between such covenant-member Gentiles and the pagans. The covenant members lived and worshipped along with Israel.

### **How “Ger” Became “Proselyte”**

The difficulty of distinguishing between righteous and pagan Gentiles came after the dispersions in the Seventh and Sixth Centuries BCE. Even after the Southern Tribes returned from the Babylonian captivity, there were still a large number of Jews living in communities around the known world. In every place that there were faithful Jews, Gentiles were attracted to the worship of the God of Israel. The problem was, how could you distinguish between the genuine worshipper of the Almighty (who happened to be born Gentile) and merely the “curious” who retained their pagan ways? This problem becomes especially evident in the Fourth Century BCE. During that time there was a thriving Jewish community in Alexandrian Egypt.

During the reign of the King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (of Selucid Egypt), around 270 BCE the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. Traditionally, this translation was made by seventy [LXX] Jewish scholars. Hence, it is called the Septuagint or LXX. This Greek version was undertaken because the large number of Greek speaking Jews and Gentiles.

The translators of the Septuagint carefully considered the context of each usage of the word *ger* [stranger, sojourner] to consider if it was referring to a covenant member or a pagan. When the context dictated that the reference was to a Gentile covenant member, they translated *ger* into the Greek word *proselutos* (pronounced *pros-ay-loot-os*). It is from this word that we get the English word “proselyte.” Much confusion has arisen because of the character that this word acquired after the translating of the Septuagint. The fact is, this Greek word is found nowhere outside Jewish texts. The word seems to have come into existence solely for the purposes of the Septuagint translators.

The Greek adjective *proselutos* comes from *pros* [toward] and *erxomai* [to come or go]. In other words, “to come over toward.” This usage started as a way to describe those covenant members who were not by birth members of the covenant community of Israel. This usage eventually redefined the word. It started off as a way to identify those Gentiles who “crossed over” to side with the God of Israel and to live with Israel in the covenant community (to “come near” is Temple language); and eventually came to mean “those who formally



converted” to another religion. The important distinction is that the word was not used in the Septuagint because it implied formal conversion, but rather because it described the actual way that such people could be distinguished: namely, that they had drawn near to Israel to participate in the worship of the One True God. It is anachronistic to read the Septuagint usage of the word *proselutos* and the present meaning of “proselyte” back into the usage at the time of the translating of the Septuagint.

Only about ninety years later, the word was well on its way as a description of a formal process whereby former Gentiles became “Jews.” During the Maccabean revolt, pious Jews living in the Land rose up against the wicked decrees of Antiochus Epiphanes IV of Selucid Syria. Antiochus sought to establish the Greek language, culture, and religion in all of his empire. This social and religious makeover is called, “Hellenization.” To Hellenize the Jewish people Antiochus outlawed studying the Torah, and keeping the Commandments. Circumcision of Jewish baby boys on the eighth day became illegal.

When the Maccabees led a successful revolt against Antiochus, one mark of distinction was to reinstitute circumcision not only as faithfulness to the commandments, but as a mark of loyalty to the reborn Jewish nation. Within a generation of establishing an independent Jewish state the Hasmonean dynasty instituted forced circumcision on conquered nations – “converting” them into “Jews.”

The Talmud records the formal process that began in about the Second Century BCE and by the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE had changed very little:

*Our Rabbis taught: If at the present time a man desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: ‘What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte; do you not know that Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions’? If he replies, ‘I know and yet am unworthy’, he is accepted forthwith, and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments. He is informed of the sin [of the neglect of the commandments of] Gleanings, the Forgotten Sheaf, the Corner and the Poor Man's Tithe. He is also told of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments. Furthermore, he is addressed thus: ‘Be it known to you that before you came to this condition, if you had eaten suet you would not have been punishable with kareth [to be cut off from the covenant], if you had profaned the Sabbath you would not have been punishable with stoning; but now were you to eat suet you would be punished with kareth; were you to profane the Sabbath you would be punished with stoning’. And as he is informed of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments, so is he informed of the reward granted for their fulfilment. He is told, ‘Be it known to you that the world to come was made only for the righteous, and that Israel at the present time are unable to bear either too much prosperity or too much suffering’. He is not, however, to be persuaded or dissuaded too much. If he accepted, he is circumcised forthwith. Should any shreds which render the circumcision invalid*

*remain, he is to be circumcised a second time. As soon as he is healed arrangements are made for his immediate ablution [immersion], when two learned men must stand by his side and acquaint him with some of the minor commandments and with some of the major ones. When he comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects.*

b. Yevamot 47a-b

After warning the candidate, the steps to make a proselyte as outlined in the Talmud are:

- An injunction to accept the whole Torah, both Written and Oral
- Circumcision
- Immersion

*Sifre* on Numbers 15 indicates that the original list of Circumcision, Immersion, and Offering; and that these were derived from the process whereby Israel itself entered into the covenant with God. The fact that this text from *Yevamot* does not include the Temple offering indicates a tradition that post-dates the destruction of the Temple.

The circle is now complete: what started out as an informal way to identify Gentiles who dwelt and worshipped with Israel had now become a way to turn “Gentiles into Jews.” No longer was *proselutos* [proselyte] a sociological adjective, it was now an ethnic title. To undergo ritual conversion, known by the shorthand “circumcision,” meant that one went from being a Gentile, to “an Israelite in all respects.” Through the natural evolution of the word, to be a “proselyte” meant that a Gentile had become “a Jew.”

The fact that to be a proselyte to Judaism meant that a Gentile became “a Jew” in an ethnic sense is seen in the fact that all previous family relations were annulled and new family relations were established. A proselyte was considered a literal descendant of Abraham. As we have seen, this was often simply the theory – because proselytes were still treated with great suspicion.

### ***What Scripture Says***

Is it unreasonable to assume that a formal “conversion” process was necessary to determine the sincerity of Gentiles that wanted to join Israel in worship of the God of Israel? When we consider how Galatians has been traditionally interpreted, even in light of the history that we have studied so far, it does not seem unreasonable. We need to allow Scripture to speak for itself however. Even with our understanding of history, we need to carefully weigh Scripture.

Because the formal process of “joining Israel” as a worshipper of the true God was given the shorthand of “circumcision,” let’s consider that word.

Genesis 17:10 is the first usage of the Hebrew word מול *mul* [circumcise]. It is a root verb, and simply means “to cut.” Read Genesis 17:1-16 and list the details that point to the significance of circumcision. The list is started for you.

| Significance of Circumcision – Genesis 17:1-16 |   |
|--|---|
| Reference                                      | Detail or Significance                      |
| 17:1   | When Abram was 99 years old.                |
| 17:10  | The covenant: every male child circumcised. |

Read and comment on the following verses regarding circumcision:

### Genesis 17:24-26:

Genesis 21:4:

Although Scripture does not explicitly say that the sons of Jacob were circumcised, from the account of Genesis 34, it is clear that they were. The first reference to circumcision as a way to show “acceptability” and inclusion in the extended family of Israel is found in Genesis 34:15-16.

Read Genesis 34:1-31 and comment on what the sons of Jacob implied (although they lied) in 34:15-16. Did “circumcision” gain entrance to the family – to be “one people”?

The next reference to the word “circumcision” is found in Exodus 12, and is associated with the instructions regarding the Passover and the exodus from Egypt. Read and comment on the following verses (note: the words used for “foreigner, stranger” etc: v 43: *ben*; v 45: *toshav*; v 48: *ger*; v 49: *ger*. The Septuagint, in verses 48 and 49 translates “*ger*” as “*proselutos*”)

Exodus 12:43-51:

The next reference is found as the direct command of the Torah for all male children to be circumcised on the eighth day. Comment on Leviticus 12:2-3:

An odd thing happens in Deuteronomy, with regard to the commandment of circumcision. It is something the prophets pick up on later. While not discounting the physical act of circumcision, which for most occurs as an infant, a commandment concerning the application of the principle to the “heart” is given. Comment on the following passages:

Deuteronomy 10:15-11:1:

Deuteronomy 30:4-8:

Is there a relationship between “circumcision” of the heart and love? How about obeying the commandments of God?

In spite of this new understanding of “circumcision” – God still expected them to go through the actual act as well. Read and comment on the following passage in regard to circumcision, Passover, and deliverance from Egypt:

Joshua 5:1-10:

Comment on the connection between “circumcised” and “uncircumcised” in the following passages:

Jeremiah 4:4:

Jeremiah 9:25-10:2:

Ezekiel 44:9:

Lastly, lest we still think that somehow these instructions from the Hebrew Scriptures are somehow antiquated, let’s read what Paul did with Timothy. Understand that in the First Century, “Jewishness” was passed on by the father alone. Timothy was in no way considered a “Jew” – and further proof of it is found in the fact that he was not circumcised as an infant. In the Apostolic Scriptures, there is rarely a distinction between the physical act of circumcision, and the ritual act of “becoming a Jew” [aka: circumcision]. What did Paul do to Timothy, the Gentile?

Acts 16:1-3:

## **Conclusion**

Considering the significance of circumcision as it relates to the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17); how it relates to the Passover; and the admonitions that even a Gentile living among them (*ger*) must be circumcised; what are your conclusions on the matter of circumcision? Is it important only “in the flesh” – only “in the heart” – or both?

Understandably, this is a difficult area of study. While some cultures regularly practice infant “circumcision” for medical reasons; others do not. Read the following verse, and based on what you have studied in this lesson; try to decipher what Paul is really saying:

1Corinthians 7:19:

## **Prayer Focus**

It is a precious privilege for a father to circumcise a son. Usually preformed by a *mohel* at the direction of the father, it is done on the eighth day as commanded. The following prayer is a part of the ceremony.

*Blessed are You, HaShem our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified the beloved one from the womb and placed the mark of decree in his flesh, and sealed his offspring with the sign of the holy covenant. Therefore, as reward for this, O Living God, our Portion, our Rock, may You issue the command to rescue the beloved soul within our flesh from destruction, for the sake of His covenant that He has placed in our flesh. Blessed are You HaShem, Who establishes the covenant.*

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## Lesson Four: The Rabbinic Solution Part Two

*When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to defile it – My house – and when you offered My food, the fat and the blood, then they broke My covenant because of all your abominations. And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but you have set others to keep charge of My sanctuary for you.” Thus says the Lord GOD: “No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who is among the children of Israel.”*

Ezekiel 44:7-9

*“Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall be that in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give him his inheritance,” says the Lord GOD.*

Ezekiel 47:21-23

*When he [the proselyte] comes up after his ablution [immersion] he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects.*

b. Yevamot 47b

### As You Begin

- Sit down in a quiet place and spend some time in private prayer. Ask God to remove the veil of two thousand years of hatred between Jew and Gentile – a veil that clouds our vision of the biblical issues.
- Meditate on the following verses:

*Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.” Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD Speak, saying, “The LORD has utterly separated me from His people”...*

*“Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, And to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants – everyone who keeps from*

*defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant – even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.”*

Isaiah 56:1-3a, 6-8

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Was Judaism’s approach to Gentiles monolithic in the time before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE?
- Knowing that multiple sects of Judaism existed in the First Century and before; was the issue of Gentile-inclusion ever something that defined any of the sects of Judaism?
- Is there any documentation of the protocols of dealing with Gentiles in the First Century and before?
- Is there some event that that can give me greater insight into the First Century issue of Gentile-inclusion?

### ***Historical Context***

Many scholars and Bible students read Acts 15, and the Epistle to the Galatians, and assume that Scripture is all we need to understand the issues of those passages. This *sola scriptura* approach seems laudable at first. However, the Bible speaks in the language of men. God intends for us to be able to understand what we read. This means that the basic concepts of language must be used in order for Him to communicate to us through Scripture. Understanding the words themselves is clearly important. The problem we face with passages like Acts 15 and the Epistle to the Galatians, which deal directly with the issue of Gentile-inclusion, is the fact that we don’t understand the language being used if our only source is Scripture. It is impossible to understand Scripture if we refuse to learn the history, culture, and language of the people of the Scriptures: the Jews.

Imagine the modern usage of idioms. In some circles, the word “bad” is meant as an emphatic reference to something very good and desirable. The word “cool” does not always refer to the temperature of something. Example: “That car is so *cool*. That is one *bad* looking car!” While we may not personally prefer or use such language, it is spoken by some. Knowing the use of these idioms, we are able understand the sentence. Separate the reader from the culture that speaks this way, and the sentence becomes unintelligible. Knowing the language and culture of the time in which something is written is imperative. The culture of the early Twentieth Century, when it spoke of someone who was “gay” it meant that they were carefree and happy. Within a mere seventy years, the word gained a whole new meaning. Context and historical background make all the difference. Thus it is with Acts 15,



and parts of the Epistle to the Galatians. Unless you learn the history, culture, and language of the Jewish people, you will have no clue as to what the discussion is really about.

You might be a Greek scholar. You might be seminary trained, and extremely well-read. Unless you know about a dispute that took place around 20 BCE, you do not know the language or the significance of Acts 15 or the Epistle to the Galatians. You have no idea what the dispute of Acts 15 and Galatians is really about. We can find multiple references to the dispute in 20 BCE, but none of them are found in Scripture.

### **Proselytes and God-fearers**

In the decades immediately preceding Yeshua's birth, Gentiles were placed into three general categories:

- Pagans. These Gentiles were obvious idolaters, which was evidenced not only by their idolatrous practices, but also by the fact that they did not worship the God of Israel.
- Proselytes. These Gentiles had gone through the formal conversion process and were considered "Jews" both religiously *and* ethnically.
- God-fearers. These are also called "*Ger Tzadik*" [Righteous Sojourners]. By the time of the Talmud (300-600 CE), the term "God-fearer" had been expunged. These Gentiles were considered "on their way" toward being "righteous." They were not proselytes, so they were still considered Gentiles. In some venues, they were tolerated at the "doors" of the synagogue. They were more tolerated in the synagogues in Gentile lands, but synagogues in Gentile cities in the Land of Israel also tolerated them to a degree. Especially, if the Gentiles were wealthy.

Note: in the era of the Talmud, "*Ger Tzadik*" was a term reserved for ritual proselytes, and instead the term "*Ger Toshav*" (stranger who dwelled [within the gates]) applied to Gentiles who kept the so-called Noachide Laws. This view is anachronistic for the First Century, as we shall see.

Did Gentiles have a part in the World to Come? That is the question that was becoming more difficult to answer. These "God-fearers" made the question more difficult. Prior to having this category, it was easy to answer, "*No, only Israel has a part in the World to Come – if you want to share in the promises of Abraham, you must be a descendant of Abraham, and if you were not born a descendant, you could become one by becoming a proselyte – by ritual conversion.*" (paraphrase)

God-fearers, by their numbers, and by the very fact that they were not formal proselytes were causing a big problem for nominal Judaism. Were these Gentiles members of the covenant community? Did they share a part in the World to Come? What was to be done with these Gentiles? It was this question that erupted into an all out war in dominant sect of Judaism, the Pharisees.

In the decades before and after the birth of Yeshua, the Pharisees were divided into two factions; following two dominate figures in Judaism. Both “houses” of disciples identified themselves with their respective leader. Bet Shammai followed the teaching and traditions Shammai, and Bet Hillel likewise followed Hillel.

Normally, Bet Shammai took a more strict view of any issue, as is seen regarding divorce in Matthew 19. Bet Hillel, was more tolerant and pragmatic in their approach to how the Commandments of God were to be fulfilled. Although both houses were fastidiously Torah-observant, on the issues of “how to walk out observance” the Hillelites were the more moderate of the Pharisees. This moderation was true with regard to the problem of the God-fearing Gentiles.

Hillel felt that “Righteous Gentiles” – that is God-fearers – had a part in the World to Come. Shammai was adamant that Gentiles had no part in the World to Come. Shammai argued that only those Gentiles that “became Jews” through ritual conversion (i.e. Proselytes in the modern sense) had any hope. Shammai set a standard among his disciples that did not permit contact with any Gentiles. The only way that a Shammaite could interact with a Gentile was if that Gentile was “no longer Gentile, but Jewish” through ritual conversion.

### **Standards for God-fearers**

It is not that Hillel had no standards for Gentiles who were to be interacted with. Gentiles who were to be interacted with, and tolerated in some synagogue settings had to prove themselves by righteous behavior. There were some rules that they had to follow. What those rules were is less defined.

Although the Talmud and post-Temple texts indicate a standard of “Noachide Laws,” for Gentiles to be considered “righteous” this is entirely anachronistic. These so-called “Seven Universal Laws” supposedly given to Noah did not exist in that form in the days of Hillel. That fact is proven by the complete lack of reference to “Noachides” in the Mishna which was compiled around 200 CE. The references to the “Noachide Laws” do not appear until the Tosefta [commentary on the Mishna] and later the Talmud. During the previous several hundred years, the standard for God-fearers was represented by various lists of biblical commandments and oral traditions. As late as 300 CE there is still no consensus in the Talmud regarding the minimum standards for God-fearers. Because of the unwelcome implications of God-fearers, the Talmud goes to great lengths to explain away earlier positive statements regarding righteous Gentiles.

Rabbi Meir, one of the compilers of the Mishna (200 CE) is quoted in the commentary on the Mishna as lauding Gentiles who study the Torah as being “as a high priest.” The commentary then tries to find a way to negate this earlier statement.

*R. Meir used to say. Whence do we know that even a heathen who studies the Torah is as a High Priest? From the verse, [Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments:] which, if man do, he shall live in them. Priests, Levites, and Israelites are not mentioned, but men: hence thou mayest learn that even a heathen who studies the Torah is as a High Priest...*

b.Sanhedrin 59a

There certainly must have been some standards for God-fearers by Bet Hillel, but all of that was for naught because the effective rulings that took place around 20 BCE.

### **The Precursor to the Acts 15 Council**

Around 20 BCE, the Pharisees, the most influential sect of Judaism, decided to meet to resolve their sharp disagreement regarding “unclean things” and interacting with Gentiles. The meeting was arranged by Hananiah ben Hezekiah ben Garon. Hananiah was the son of the founder of the Zealots, a group that advocated armed revolution against Rome. It was because of Bet Shammai’s rejection of Gentiles (except for ritual conversion, and then only grudgingly) that the Zealots sided with Bet Shammai.

The Pharisaic council was called by Hananiah ben Hezekiah who was likely a Shammaite. Three groups attended the meeting; Bet Shammai, Bet Hillel, and members of the Zealots. The Talmud tells that the events of that day were, “*as grievous to Israel as the day when the [golden] calf was made.*”<sup>5</sup> Sicarii guards from the Zealots were stationed at the door, and they let all members of Bet Hillel enter, but they forbade them from leaving. During this infamous meeting, a number of the disciples of Hillel were murdered by the Zealots. The vote on issues associated with Gentiles was taken and with the reduced number of Bet Hillel, the vote went the way of Bet Shammai. This vote enacted the “Eighteen Measures” that traditionally defined “unclean things” and prohibited interaction with Gentiles. Bet Shammai’s rules regarding Gentiles would be the rules of Pharisees for over ninety years until after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

*And these are of the halachot which they stated in the upper chamber of Hananiah b. Hezekiah b. Garon, when they went up to visit him. They took a count, and Bet Shammai outnumbered Bet Hillel; and on that day they enacted Eighteen Measures.*

b.Shabbat 13b

The Eighteen Measures and the murder of many of Bet Hillel would shape Judaism during the years of Bet Shammai’s prominence, and are even felt today. It is likely that this meeting was what Yeshua was referring to in his scathing rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23.

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<sup>5</sup> b.Shabbat 17a

*"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets."*

Matthew 23:31

Many of Hillel's disciples were considered prophets.

*Hillel the Elder had eighty disciples, thirty of whom were worthy of the Divine Spirit resting upon them, as it did upon Moses our Master, thirty of whom were worthy that the sun should stand still for them as it did for Joshua the son of Nun...*

b.Sukkah 28a

*A sword was planted in the Bet Hamidrash and it was proclaimed, "He who would enter, let him enter, but he who would depart, let him not depart!" And on that day Hillel sat submissive before Shammai, like one of the disciples, and it was as grievous to Israel as the day when the [golden] calf was made.*

b.Shabbat 17a

## **The Eighteen Measures**

A careful reading of the Apostolic Scriptures will reveal many puzzling passages are resolved by understanding the impact of the Eighteen Measures. Even though Yeshua denounces the Shammaite approach to Gentiles (*"For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."* Matthew 23:15), it seems that Yeshua's disciples still find difficulty rejecting the Eighteen Measures – that is until Peter's vision in Acts 10, and the Council of Acts 15. It is in Acts 15 that the sect of Judaism known as "The Way," met to decide for themselves what they were going to do about Gentile-inclusion. That meeting would have a completely different outcome from the meeting where the Eighteen Measures were enacted.

What are the Eighteen Measures? They are highly technical, and there are different interpretations as to what comprised the full eighteen laws; but the focus of the Eighteen Measures is ritual impurity. Many expansions upon those laws led to every further interpretations and applications which separated Jew and Gentile in every way.

The Eighteen Measures were not universally accepted and applied outside of Pharisaic Judaism. Even within the Pharisees, there was still disagreement. Over the years, the Pharisees used their influence with the common people to expand upon these eighteen in order to force other parties to acquiesce to their views.

After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, Bet Hillel gained supremacy and formally annulled the Eighteen Measures – but the influence of the Eighteen Measures was still felt, and some of them were simply repackaged and adopted. Among those that were readopted were the ones that dealt with interaction with Gentiles. In approximately 80 CE the

reconvened Sanhedrin claimed a “heavenly voice” [*bat kol*] had repealed Bet Shammai’s ruling [*halakah*]. It is clear by studying other rulings in the Talmud that many rules that developed out of the Eighteen Measures remained in effect, if not the specific Eighteen Measures themselves.

*R. Abba stated in the name of Samuel: For three years there was a dispute between Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel, the former asserting, “The halakah is in agreement with our views” and the latter contending, “The halakah is in agreement with our views.” Then a bat kol [heavenly voice] issued announcing, “[The utterances of] both are the words of the living God, but the halakah is in agreement with the rulings of Bet Hillel.” Since, however, both are the words of the living God” what was it that entitled Bet Hillel to have the halakah fixed in agreement with their rulings? Because they were kindly and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of Bet Shammai, and were even so [humble] as to mention the actions.*

b.Eiruvim 13b

In the Second Century CE, the prominent Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus was excommunicated in part because he held onto the Bet Shammai position regarding the Eighteen Measures. Ironically, in the Talmudic account, Eliezer uses the excuse of a “heavenly voice” for maintaining his Shammaite position. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus is one of the dominate voices of the Talmud. His opinions represent the Bet Shammai position. The incredible strife over the Eighteen Measures and their associated rulings can be seen in the way the Talmud records Eliezer’s excommunication. In the end, it is Rabbi Akiva, Eliezer’s own disciple that brings him the news that he is cut off. It is an amazing fact that Rabbi Eliezer, one of the dominate Sages of the Talmud, was cut off because of a dispute that stemmed from the Eighteen Measures which had been enacted almost a hundred years earlier.

*It has been taught: On that day Rabbi Eliezer brought forward every imaginable argument, but they did not accept them. Said he to them: “If the halakah agrees with me, let this carob-tree prove it!” Thereupon the carob-tree was torn a hundred cubits out of its place — others affirm, four hundred cubits. “No proof can be brought from a carob-tree,” they retorted. Again he said to them: “If the halakah agrees with me, let the stream of water prove it!” Whereupon the stream of water flowed backwards — “No proof can be brought from a stream of water,” they rejoined. Again he urged: “If the halakah agrees with me, let the walls of the schoolhouse prove it,” whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But R. Joshua rebuked them, saying: “When scholars are engaged in a halachic dispute, what have ye to interfere?” Hence they did not fall, in honour of Rabbi Joshua, nor did they resume the upright, in honour of Rabbi Eliezer; and they are still standing thus inclined. Again he said to them: “If the halakah agrees with me, let it be proved from Heaven!” Whereupon a Heavenly Voice cried out: “Why do ye dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the halakah agrees with him!” But Rabbi Joshua arose and exclaimed: “It is not in heaven.” What did he*

*mean by this? — Said Rabbi Jeremiah: That the Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai; we pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice, because Thou hast long since written in the Torah at Mount Sinai, after the majority must one incline.*

*Rabbi Nathan met Elijah and asked him: “What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do in that hour?” — He laughed [with joy], he replied, saying, “My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me.” It was said: On that day all objects which Rabbi Eliezer had declared clean were brought and burnt in fire. Then they took a vote and excommunicated him.*

*Said they, “Who shall go and inform him?” “I will go,” answered Rabbi Akiva, “lest an unsuitable person go and inform him, and thus destroy the whole world.” What did Rabbi Akiva do? He donned black garments and wrapped himself in black, and sat at a distance of four cubits from him. “Akiva,” said Rabbi Eliezer to him, “what has particularly happened today?” “Master,” he replied, “it appears to me that thy companions hold aloof from thee.” Thereupon he too rent his garments, put off his shoes, removed [his seat] and sat on the earth, whilst tears streamed from his eyes. The world was then smitten: a third of the olive crop, a third of the wheat, and a third of the barley crop. Some say, the dough in women's hands swelled up.*

*A Tanna taught: Great was the calamity that befell that day, for everything at which Rabbi Eliezer cast his eyes was burned up.*

*b.Baba Metzia 59b*

The Talmud tells us that the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE because of “hatred without a cause.” What exactly is this “hatred without a cause”? Talmudic scholars are confident that this relates to the conflicts and even murder that existed in the Land of Israel in the First Century and prior. This hatred is contrasted in the Tosefta with a quote from Isaiah 2 and Jeremiah 31, indicating a possibility that the “hatred without a cause” is a reference to Gentile-exclusion. This is the position of Rabbi Harvey Falk in his book, *Jesus the Pharisee*. Regardless, it certainly relates to the infighting and murder that occurred because of the enactment of the Eighteen Measures and the rules that emanated from them.

### ***What Scripture Says***

Were Gentiles included in the worship of the God of Jacob prior to the formalized ritual of “becoming a Jew” (aka “circumcision”)? Were all Gentiles to be treated as “unclean” as the Eighteen Measures required? Was it God’s intention to exclude Gentiles from worshipping Him?

Remember what the sons of Jacob said to the men of Shechem in Genesis 34? There was no reference to worshipping the God of Jacob. Instead, the “circumcision” that was suggested for those Canaanites was in order for them to be considered “one people.” Even though this was a ruse, it draws a clear distinction from those Gentiles who truly joined Israel in order to worship the God of Israel.

Remember the purpose of Israel, to draw the nations to God? Read and comment on the following Scripture passages:

Deuteronomy 4:5-8:

1Kings 8:41-43:

Isaiah 2:1-5:

Isaiah 56:1-8:

Zechariah 8:20-23:

From the times of the Second Temple, Judaism has excluded Gentiles from participating in certain activities. In addition to excluding them from the Temple environs and the activities therein, they were forbidden from keeping the commandments given by God. In that view, the commandments were given to Israel, and only Israel. Is that what Scripture says? In the following chart, note the commandments that incumbent upon the Gentiles who had attached themselves to Israel and the God of Israel. Make special note when these “strangers” are included in the “Congregation” or the “Children of Israel.” The first are entered for you.

| Commandments Incumbent On Gentile Worshippers of God |   |
|--|---|
| Reference  | Detail or Significance  |
| Ex 12:19   | Seven days of Unleavened Bread (“stranger” is included in “Congregation of Israel”) |
| Ex 12:48   | Eat the Passover if circumcised   |
| Ex 12:49   | One (indivisible) Law for native-born and the “stranger” that joins                 |
| Ex 20:10   |   |
| Lev 16:29-31   |   |
| Lev 17:8-9   |   |
| Lev 17:10  |   |
| Lev 17:13  |   |
| Lev 17:15  |   |
| Lev 18:26  |   |
| Lev 20:1-2   |   |
| Lev 22:19-21   |   |
| Lev 24:16  |   |



| Commandments Incumbent On Gentile Worshippers of God |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Reference  | Detail or Significance |
| Lev 24:22  |                        |
| Num 9:14   |                        |
| Num 15:13-15   |                        |
| Num 15:16  |                        |
| Num 15:25-26   |                        |
| Num 15:29-30   |                        |
| Num 19:10  |                        |
| Num 35:10  |                        |
| Deut 5:14  |                        |
| Deut 16:13-16  |                        |
| Deut 31:12   |                        |
| Josh 8:33-35   |                        |

If you were to look up every usage of the word *ger* ["sojourner" or "stranger"] in the Torah, you would discover that there are many injunctions to be kind to those Gentiles who have attached themselves to Israel and the God of Israel. One thing you would notice was the many times that Levites and "strangers who dwell among you" are listed together. That is because the Levites and the "strangers who dwell among you" shared an important status: they were landless. *Gerim* [strangers that attached themselves to Israel] received no inheritance (Caleb is a possible exception, but by deed rather than inheritance). Read the following passage and comment on this end-times prophecy:

Ezekiel 47:21-23:

### **Conclusion**

Clearly, a great misunderstanding regarding Gentiles occurred in the centuries before the birth of Messiah. The repercussions are still being felt today. From that time, a majority of Jews kept Gentiles out, and once the Gentiles had the superior numbers in the congregations of believers, they distanced themselves from Jews. No wonder the principle conflict of the Apostolic Scriptures revolves around this issue. No wonder the "mystery of Messiah" (Ephesians 3:3-11) is that Gentiles are included in the Congregation of Israel.

How sad that the simple injunction of Leviticus 19:34 was lost when the Eighteen Measures were adopted.

*The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

Leviticus 19:34

### **Prayer Focus**

*Tzadikim* from the *Shemoneh Esrei* (aka Amidah)

*On the righteous, on the devout, on the elders of Your people the Family of Israel, on the remnant of their scholars, on the **gerei ha- tzadik** [righteous "stranger"] and on ourselves – may Your compassion be aroused, LORD, our God, and give goodly reward to all who sincerely believe in Your Name. Put our lot with them forever, and we will not feel ashamed, for we trust in You. Blessed are You, LORD, Mainstay and Assurance of the righteous.*

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## Lesson Five: Romans 14, 1Corinthians 8, 10

*For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.*

Romans 14:2

*...another, who is weak, is dissatisfied in this point, is not clear in his Christian liberty, but rather inclines to think that the meats forbidden by the law remain still unclean; and therefore, to keep at a distance from them, he will eat no flesh at all, but eateth herbs, contenting himself with only the fruits of the earth.*

Matthew Henry, on Romans 14:1-23

### ***As You Begin***

- Our minds need to be renewed daily. By immersion in the Word we can remove the biases from our thinking; but only if we are willing to accept the whole council of God.
- Find a quiet place and spend some time in prayer. Ask God to help you set aside theological bias – and instead to see His word as a revelation: the revelation of Himself, and His plan of redemption.
- Meditate on the following verses:

*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:17-19

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Why do some passages of the Apostolic Scriptures seem to negate the commandments of God? Is everything “clean,” or is there something I am missing in these passages?
- What is the big deal, eating meat offered to idols? How does that apply to me today?
- Is every day the same? Why do some people think that the Sabbath and the Feasts of Leviticus 23 have no place today – and yet still think that Sunday and Easter are important?
- Did Yeshua do away with the “food” and “purity” laws? What do they have to do with Gentile-inclusion?
- If the “ritual” aspects of the “Law” have been done away with, why did Yeshua and His first disciples not act like it – or at least tell us conclusively?

## ***Historical Context***

When you read commentaries on passages like Romans 14:1-6, 1Corinthians 8 and 10, Acts 10, and Colossians 2:16-17, you are struck with the finality of opinion regarding the applicability of what some call the “ritual law” of the Torah. However, when you read the accounts in the Gospels and Acts, there is a decided lack of instruction regarding what “scholars” consider a foregone conclusion, namely that the Law has been done away with. Why didn’t Yeshua tell His disciples that the days of the Law were numbered? Isn’t it odd, that only Paul seems to say such things? No wonder scholars claim that the Christian religion was started by Paul. Even the Talmud, which is not friendly to Christians, recognizes that Yeshua did not come to do away with the Law.

Interestingly, the most conclusive reference to Yeshua in the Talmud is a quote from Him. In the Talmudic account, there is an attempt to discredit a Gentile Christian by showing that his teaching was not in line with Yeshua’s own teaching regarding the Torah:

*Imma Shalom, Rabbi Eliezer's wife, was Rabbi Gamaliel's sister. Now, a certain philosopher [Gentile Christian] lived in his vicinity, and he bore a reputation that he did not accept bribes. They wished to expose him, so she brought him a golden lamp, went before him, [and] said to him, “I desire that a share be given me in my [deceased] father's estate.” “Divide,” ordered he. Said he [Rabbi Gamaliel] to him, “It is decreed for us, Where there is a son, a daughter does not inherit.” [He replied], “Since the day that you were exiled from your land the Law of Moses has been superseded and another book given [“New Testament”], wherein it is written, “A son and a daughter inherit equally.” The next day, he [Rabbi Gamaliel] brought him a Lybian ass. Said he to them, “Look at the end of the book, wherein it is written, “I came not to destroy the Law of Moses nor to add to the Law of Moses,” and it is written therein, “A daughter does not inherit where there is a son.” Said she to him, “Let thy light shine forth like a lamp.” Said Rabbi Gamaliel to him, “An ass came and knocked the lamp over!”*

b.Shabbat 116a-b

In this account, the supposed follower of Yeshua states his opinion that the Law of Moses has been superseded by the “New Testament” and then states his opinion based on something that is not even in the Apostolic Scriptures. Rabbi Gamliel then points out that Yeshua’s words trumped the “philosopher’s” words. His bias was exposed. From the earliest days of the conflict between Judaism and “Christianity” – even Jews have recognized that Yeshua did not overturn the Law. So why is everyone else so sure He did?

## **The Bias Against Truth**

Matthew Henry’s important commentary on the Bible states the accepted theological position of the vast majority of Christians regarding how the “Law of Moses” was done away with.

His commentary on Romans 14 is unbowed in its unwillingness to consider the words of Yeshua in Matthew 5:17-18: *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

Instead, Matthew Henry bases his view of the validity of the Law solely upon the things that Henry thinks Paul says. So, what does Paul say? Read Paul's words in Romans 14, and then Matthew Henry's commentary on those words.

*Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.*

Romans 14:1-6

*There was a difference among them about the distinction of meats and days; these are the two things specified. There might be other similar occasions of difference, while these made the most noise, and were most taken notice of. The case was this: The members of the Christian church at Rome were some of them originally Gentiles, and others of them Jews. Now those that had been Jews were trained up in the observance of the ceremonial appointments touching meats and days. This, which had been bred in the bone with them, could hardly be got out of the flesh, even after they turned Christians; especially with some of them, who were not easily weaned from what they had long been wedded to. They were not well instructed touching the cancelling of the ceremonial law by the death of Christ, and therefore retained the ceremonial institutions, and practiced accordingly; while other Christians that understood themselves better, and knew their Christian liberty, made no such difference. Concerning meats: One believeth that he may eat all things - he is well satisfied that the ceremonial distinction of meats into clean and unclean is no longer in force, but that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused; nothing unclean of itself. ...**another, who is weak, is dissatisfied in this point, is not clear in his Christian liberty, but rather inclines to think that the meats forbidden by the law remain still unclean; and therefore, to keep at a distance from them, he will eat no flesh at all, but eateth herbs, contenting himself with only the fruits of the earth.** See to what degrees of mortification and self-denial a tender conscience will submit. None*

*know but those that experience it how great both the restraining and the constraining power of conscience is.*

*Concerning days: Those who thought themselves still under some kind of obligation to the ceremonial law esteemed one day above another - kept up a respect to the times of the passover, pentecost, new moons, and feasts of tabernacles; thought those days better than other days, and solemnized them accordingly with particular observances, binding themselves to some religious rest and exercise on those days. Those who knew that all these things were abolished and done away by Christ's coming esteemed every day alike. **We must understand it with an exception of the Lord's day**, which all Christians unanimously observed; **but they made no account, took no notice, of those antiquated festivals of the Jews.** Here the apostle speaks of the distinction of meats and days as a thing indifferent, when it went no further than the opinion and practice of some particular persons, who had been trained up all their days to such observances, and therefore were the more excusable if they with difficulty parted with them. **But in the epistle to the Galatians, where he deals with those that were originally Gentiles, but were influenced by some judaizing teachers**, not only to believe such a distinction and to practice accordingly, but to lay a stress upon it as necessary to salvation, and to make the observance of the Jewish festivals public and congregational, here the case was altered, and it is charged upon them as the frustrating of the design of the gospel, falling from grace. The Romans did it out of weakness, the Galatians did it out of wilfulness and wickedness; and therefore the apostle handles them thus differently. This epistle is supposed to have been written some time before that to the Galatians. The apostle seems willing to let the ceremonial law wither by degrees, and to let it have an honorable burial; now these weak Romans seem to be only following it weeping to its grave, but those Galatians were raking it out of its ashes.*

Matthew Henry, on Romans 14:1-23

Matthew Henry shows his theological bias. His use of the slur "judaizing" says much, as does his unequivocal statement that although the biblical days were abolished, the "Lord's day" (Sunday in his mind) has not been abolished. If Matthew Henry had assumed one thing before his study it would have made a big difference: God's Word is eternal. All of it. Instead of assuming that Paul was agreeing with the church's ancient bias against all things "Jewish" he should have assumed that maybe Paul was speaking of something else when he spoke about "disputes over doubtful things." If he had, he might have explored the language and culture of the First Century CE and discovered something completely beyond his own religious experience.

Our assumption is that Romans 14:1-6 and other passages are not talking about the annulment of other parts of Scripture. That is a safe assumption. After all, to do otherwise would be to go the way of the false prophet.

*If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods" - which you have not known - "and let us serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for **the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.***

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

So, if Paul was saying what Matthew Henry and others are so sure of, then he was a false prophet, worthy of being stoned. Instead, there is another explanation, and it has a direct bearing on our study of the Epistle to the Galatians.

### **Pagan Feast Days, and Buying Food**

Jews that lived outside the Land of Israel lived among pagans. Even in the Land of Israel, there were cities populated mainly by Gentiles. It was nearly impossible to not interact with Gentiles at some level. Certainly, for Jews living in predominately Gentile areas, it was nearly impossible to adhere to the Eighteen Measures and their associated laws of purity. What was especially difficult was purchasing food. Much of the idolatry of that day was tied to food, particularly meat. This was especially true during certain times of the year. It was during the time leading up to the pagan feast days that it was virtually impossible to purchase meat in the market that was not first offered to pagan deities. Additionally, there is a real possibility that selling an animal to a pagan, or the proceeds from a sale from a pagan, would result in that animal or coinage being used in idolatry.

*MISHNA. ON THE THREE DAYS PRECEDING THE FESTIVITIES OF IDOLATERS, IT IS FORBIDDEN TO TRANSACT BUSINESS WITH THEM, TO LEND ARTICLES TO THEM OR BORROW ANY FROM THEM, TO ADVANCE, OR RECEIVE ANY MONEY FROM THEM, TO REPAY A DEBT, OR RECEIVE REPAYMENT FROM THEM.*

*MISHNA. THESE ARE THE FESTIVITIES OF THE IDOLATERS: KALENDA, SATURNALIA, KRATESIS, THE ANNIVERSARY OF ACCESSION TO THE THRONE AS WELL AS [ROYAL] BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATHS. THIS IS R. MEIR'S OPINION. BUT THE SAGES SAY, A DEATH AT WHICH BURNING [OF ARTICLES OF THE DEAD] TAKES PLACE IS ATTENDED BY IDOLATRY, BUT WHERE THERE IS NOT SUCH BURNING THERE IS NO IDOLATRY. HOWEVER, THE DAY OF SHAVING ONES BEARD OR LOCK OF HAIR, OR THE DAY OF LANDING AFTER A SEA VOYAGE, OR*

*THE DAY OF RELEASE FROM PRISON, OR IF AN IDOLATER HOLDS A BANQUET FOR HIS SON — THE PROHIBITION ONLY APPLIES TO THAT DAY AND THAT PARTICULAR PERSON.*

b.Avodah Zarah 2a, 8a

That a pious Jew could not eat in the presence of a Gentile is well-documented in the Talmud. Drawn from the Eighteen Measures, strict adherence to separation from Gentiles is evident in many of the Talmud's rulings. As we have seen previously, there is a biblical motivation for these rules, whether we agree with them or not. Even eating in the presence of a proselyte to Judaism was not safe if the meal was eaten in a Gentile city. By "safe" it is meant that the Gentile did not have an opportunity to make the food or wine "unclean" or by secretly evoking the name of a false deity over it. In some modern minds it might seem somewhat paranoid, but such are the Eighteen Measures. When there was a doubt, assume the worse when it came to Gentiles. Because of the Eighteen Measure's enactment of a strict understanding of "contagious" contamination, by interacting with a Gentile (particularly in a home), an Israelite might unknowingly contract ritual uncleanness. If that Gentile then were to go into the Temple environs in what he thought was a personal "clean" state, he could render the Temple unclean. Again, there is a biblical basis for maintaining the sanctity of the Tabernacle and by extension the Temple. The Eighteen Measures simply defined the degree of contagion of "unclean."

For most Pharisees, when it came to food and the market, it was best just to stay away from Gentiles.

### **Jews in the Congregation in Rome**

Based upon the Jewish names cited in the Epistle to the Romans, as well as the historical data, it is safe to assume that the congregation in Rome was at much as half ethnically Jewish. In a congregation with a significant number of Jews, the issues raised by the Eighteen Measures were bound to play a role. Setting this backdrop explains much of the passage in a historical context. What is interesting is Paul's contention that the Shammaite view was something that he considers "doubtful things." As interesting are his views of the believers who might still be influenced by the Eighteen Measures. We can see his opinion of those believers expressed in Romans 14, 1Corinthians 8, and 10.

### ***What Scripture Says***

In Romans 14:1, Paul says, *"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables."* Doubtful things? May eat all things? Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Leviticus 11:1-14:



Acts 21:21-24:

Acts 28:17-20:

2Timothy 3:14-17:

James considered Paul to be obedient to the Torah [the Law]. Considering Paul's own testimony to the same effect, do you think that Paul would have considered Leviticus 11 included in ***doubtful things***?

What do "vegetables" have to do with it? There is no prohibition to eating meat in the Torah. It is only meat that is not food (Leviticus 11), and is not killed and bled in the correct manner (Leviticus 17:11-14). Is Paul equating those who are Torah-observant with "eats only vegetables" as Matthew Henry implies in his commentary? Or is there something else going on here?

In Romans 14:5, Paul says, *"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind."* Remembering what you saw about "doubtful things" read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Genesis 2:3:

Exodus 12:1-17:

Exodus 16:20-30 (note: this was prior to the giving of the “Law” at Sinai):

Leviticus 23:1-44:

Is it possible, that Paul was actually saying that no day was different from another? That it was up to each one to simply decide in **his own mind**? Doesn't that sound an awful lot like Judges 17:6: *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*?

Did Paul have one standard for others, and a different standard for himself? Did he consider himself to be “weak in the faith” – does Acts 18:21 indicated that Paul himself considered some days above others?

Read 1Corinthians 8:4-7 and compare it to 1Corinthians 10:14-23. Is Paul contradicting himself? On the one hand he makes it seem as if idols are nothing but a part of the imagination. On the other hand, he clearly says that they are demonic and all contact should be avoided. How do you justify the two passages?

Read 1Corinthians 10:23-33 and with the historical background of the Eighteen Measures, answer the following questions:

Does Paul agree with the Eighteen Measures, and specifically what is written in the Talmud (b.*Avodah Zarah* 2a, 8a) regarding where and when to buy meat?

Does he abandon the Torah instructions regarding meat (ie “clean” vs “unclean”) in this passage?

In the presence of any Jewish person, do you think that Paul would consider eating “clean” meat that was “common” according to the Eighteen Measures?

## ***Conclusion***

There is a whole lot more to this issue of “what you can eat” than meets the eye, if you come from a traditional Christian background that is unfamiliar with the concept that the Torah was not done away with. This may settle all sorts of questions in your mind about eating pork, shellfish, reptiles, etc. Even though Paul’s words in Romans and 1Corinthians gain new meaning for us, they present us with new challenges. How are we to respond to one another with regard to “doubtful things” (things not expressly forbidden in the Torah, but by Rabbinic decree). On the one hand, some might be tempted to simply throw out all Rabbinic tradition. That would be a grave error, according to Paul. To do so would be to discount not only the traditions of men like Paul himself, but would undoubtedly offend others.

There is real application for these passages in Messianic Judaism. There are real “rubber meets the road” truths here for us if we are willing to accept them. What a sense of community and love is expressed in Paul’s words:

*Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

1Corinthians 8:13

## ***Prayer Focus***

Deuteronomy 8:10 commands us to bless God after we have eaten and are satisfied. The traditional prayer, called “HaMazon,” is prayed after eating. It is divided into four blessings.

### **First Blessing of HaMazon**

*We bless You, HaShem our God, King of the whole world,  
Who feeds the entire world in His goodness - with love, kindness, and mercy.  
He gives food to all people, because His kindness lasts forever.  
Because of His great goodness, we have never lacked food;  
May He never let us lack food.  
Why do we ask for this? – so that we can praise His Great Name,  
Because He is the merciful God,  
Who feeds and supports everyone, and does good to everyone,  
And Who prepares food for all His creatures that He has created.  
We bless You, HaShem, Who feeds everyone.*

ArtScroll Birchon

## Lesson Six: Acts 2, 10, 15, and 21

*And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.*

Acts 10:13-16

*As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

Acts 10:25-28

*Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*

Acts 15:6-10

*Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."*

Acts 21:26-28

### **As You Begin**

- Have you ever read these passages within the context of the Eighteen Measures? If not, then now maybe you can see the tremendous danger of reading Scripture with a preconceived bias.
- Ask the Almighty to guard your thoughts against bias. Ask Him to reveal His purposes to you in the study of His Word. Ask Him to set your feet on the right path.

- Meditate on the following verse:

*“And they [Priests and Levites in the “Millennial Temple] shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.*

Ezekiel 44:23-24

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Is the purpose of Acts 10 to deliver the definitive “voice from heaven” abolishment of the “food laws” from Leviticus 11?
- In Acts 10, why does the whole “speaking in tongues” thing occur again as it did in Acts 2? What is God trying to tell us?
- Are Acts 2 and Acts 10 related because of the beginning of a new body (eg the “church”) or is there something else going on here?
- What was the significance of “Pentecost,” and more importantly, what is the overall theme of Acts?
- Are the rules laid out for Gentiles in Acts 15 and Acts 21 a variation of the Noachide Laws spoken of in the Talmud?

### ***Historical Context***

The average seminarian approach to Acts 2, 10, 15, and 21 is to discuss the interesting use of “tongues”; to catalog the importance of dreams and visions in the revelation of God; to point to importance of the annulment of the Law; or to show how early Jewish believers had a difficulty abandoning their reliance on the Law. Certainly, there is little interest in how and why the Eighteen Measures were still in effect for the disciples of Yeshua ten years after His resurrection. It should make us pause to consider it. Why was the idea that Gentiles were to be included in the Kingdom so difficult to grasp? Certainly after studying the history of the Eighteen Measures we have a better grasp of the issue.

### ***The Contest of Acts***

Most theologians want to assign Acts with the status of being a transitional book. There is great concern among conservative theologians that a careful following of the Acts model invites all manner of heresy. After all, the disciples were attending Temple services well after the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua. In fact, we see that as late as 58 CE, they (specifically Paul) were still giving animal sacrifices in the Temple. We see the early believers following what some theologians call the “Jewish Feasts” and were zealous for the Law. Should we model ourselves and our congregations after the first believers? They roundly

reject such a thought. Thus, in these theologians' minds, the book must not be taken as a model.

Because Acts is seen as a transitional book, many of its controversial subjects are simply explained away. The general theme of Acts by such a perspective is that it shows the gradual shift away from Jerusalem and toward the Gentile Rome. From this bias, the book becomes a treatise of moving from the "old" to the "new." It is easy to misread Acts 10 and 15 from that perspective.

It is critical for us not to fall into the "transitional" book idea. If we miss the message of Acts 10 and 15, we will read Galatians with a decided bias.

Instead, we need to explore more deeply what the contest is in the book of Acts. Where does it begin? Where does it conclude? Why is Paul the dominate character? Is there a singular theme? The answer to the last question, answers all the rest. The theme is Gentile-inclusion, and it is seen in the opening chapters, even though there are no Gentiles there. It all goes back to an ancient tradition about Mount Sinai and the giving of the Torah.

### **The Divine Message and the Shavuot Experience**

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Acts 1:8

Both the Talmud and Exodus Rabbah tell of a tradition that occurred at Sinai when the Torah was given.

As Exodus 19 and 20 tell us, the Voice of the Almighty was somehow visible. Traditionally, that Voice was visible as fire – tongues of fire.

*Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.*

Exodus 19:16-19

*Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.*

Exodus 20:18

The tradition says that the tongues of fire coming from the Almighty were split into the seventy languages of the earth. Then the sparks went throughout the camp and rested on the head of each Israelite as crowns.

*The Israelites were inquiring: 'Whence cometh the Lord, from the east or south?' as it is said: The Lord came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them (Deut. XXXIII, 2), and it is written God cometh from Teman (Hab. III, 3). It says: And all the people perceived the thunderings (Ex. XX, 15). Note that it does not say 'the thunder,' but 'the thunderings;' wherefore R. Johanan said that God's voice, as it was uttered, split up into seventy voices, in seventy languages, so that all the nations should understand. When each nation heard the Voice in their own vernacular their souls departed, save Israel who heard but who were not hurt. How did the Voice go forth? R. Tanhuma said: The word of the Lord went forth in two aspects, slaying the heathen who would not accept it but giving life to Israel who accepted the Torah. This is what Moses said to them at the end of forty years: For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? (Deut. V, 23). Only you have heard His voice and lived, but the heathen heard it and died.*

Exodus Rabbah V:9

*Every single word that went forth from the Omnipotent was split up into seventy languages. The School of R. Ishmael taught: And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces., just as a hammer is divided into many sparks, so every single word that went forth from the Holy One, blessed be He, split up into seventy languages.*

*R. Hananel b. Papa said: What is meant by, 'Hear, for I will speak princely things': why are the words of the Torah compared to a prince? To tell you: just as a prince has power of life and death, so have the words of the Torah [potentialities] of life and death. Thus Raba said; To those who go to the right hand thereof it is a medicine of life; to those who go to the left hand thereof it is a deadly poison. Another interpretation: princely' [denotes] that on every word which went forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, two crowns were set.*

B.Shabbat 88b



Philo, the Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, in the decades before the birth of Yeshua also references this tradition.<sup>6</sup> Of course, the chronology of Exodus places the events of Exodus 19 and 20 on the date of the feast of Shavuot [Pentecost].

Because of the biblical date, the celebration of the giving of the Torah has traditionally always been a part of the feast of Shavuot. The parallels of this traditional tale make the Acts 2 account all the more important. The first believers were gathered together in the Temple for prayers at the “third hour” – as all Jewish worshippers would have in the First Century on Shavuot.<sup>7</sup> Whether the Sinai tradition of the “seventy languages” and the “tongues of fire” resting on the head of each Israelite is true or not, the events that occurred on that day in Acts 2 would have carried a powerful message to all who saw or heard about it. It was this message: These followers of Yeshua were chosen to bring the Words of the Living God to Israel, and to all the “seventy nations” (i.e. the whole world).

The question was, would they follow through with the “seventy nations” part? It seems that the first believers had little difficulty stretching their minds to accept the half-Jews of Samaria (Acts 8:25), or the Ethiopian proselyte to Judaism (Acts 8:27). Because of the Eighteen Measures, it was far different to accept Gentiles who had not undergone ritual conversion to Judaism. It took a “voice from heaven” and a vision to get past that difficulty. It is Peter’s vision, and his own interpretation of that vision that starts to undo the effects of the Eighteen Measures in the minds of the leaders of the Jewish sect “The Way.”

### **Peter Enters a Gentile’s Home**

After the Acts 10 vision, Peter was convinced that God was telling him not to consider “common” what God has made “clean.” Some English translations do not deal well with the underlying Greek of Acts 10. Sometimes it seems quite intentional. The fact is, “common” and “unclean” are not the same thing and either some of the translators do not grasp that fact, or there is intentional obscuration of the message of Acts 10. The New King James version translates Acts 10:15 this way:

*And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.”*

Acts 10:15

Notice the difference in the following translations:

*The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”*

Acts 10:15 New International Version

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<sup>6</sup> Philo, *The Decalogue*, 46-48

<sup>7</sup> The “house” they in which they were meeting in Acts 2 is the Hebrew word for “Temple” [*Beit*]. No place other than the Temple mount could contain 3,000+, so the idea of this being an “upper room” experience seems to be more like a church tradition to minimize the fact that Acts tells us that the first believers were a Temple sect of Judaism.

*But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean."*

Acts 10:15 New Living Translation

*And again the second time the voice was made to him, "That thing that God hath cleansed, say thou not unclean."*

Acts 10:15 Wycliffe New Testament

The word "common" is the Greek word "*koinos*." The word "unclean" is the word "*akathartos*" which is the negative participle of the word "*katharos*." *Akathartos* is the same word used in the Septuagint in Leviticus 11. It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "*tamei*" [טָמֵא - "unclean"]

*And the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean [LXX: akathartos] to you.*

Leviticus 11:7

The way that some translations intentionally obscure the underlying text can easily distract the reader from the real message of Acts 10. While countless theologians use Acts 10 to justify the notion that the "dietary laws" of Leviticus 11 were annulled by Peter's vision, Peter himself tells us the meaning of the vision relates to people, not food! It is a matter of the Eighteen Measures, not the Torah.

*Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common [koinos] or unclean [akathartos]."*

Acts 10:28

The Greek word "*koinos*" relates to that which is otherwise accessible (or edible) by strict definition, but because of some complication is not accessible (or edible). The Eighteen Measures used the *terumah* [those offering meals which were reserved for the Levites and their families] as an expansion of "*tamei*" vs "*tahor*" in the lives of even common Israelites. It was not the Torah that made it "unlawful" for a Jewish man to keep company with Gentiles, it was the Eighteen Measures. If we follow the word "*koinos*" in the Apostolic Scriptures, we can learn much about how the Eighteen Measures affected the early believers.

In Mark 7:2-9, traditional theologians also attempt to annul Leviticus 11 through Yeshua Himself (although Yeshua spoke directly against that accusation in Matthew 5:17-18).

*Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled [koinos], that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.*

Mark 7:2-3

Again, the Eighteen Measures are in play. Washing hands before eating bread was something that came out of the Eighteen Measures. It is interesting that Yeshua does not hold explicitly to the Eighteen Measures, as evidenced here and other issues involving the Sabbath. His disciples quickly reverted to adherence to the Eighteen Measures when He was no longer present.

Having previously looked at the context of Romans 14, it seems especially grievous and intentional the way some translations treat Romans 14:14:

*I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean [koinos] of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean [koinos], to him it is unclean [koinos, **not** akathartos!].*

Romans 14:14

As we saw in Paul's Romans 14 discussion of "doubtful things," it is a discussion over the Eighteen Measures, wherein he gives permission for Jewish believers to adhere to the Eighteen Measures, as long as it does not affect their fellowship for Gentile believers.

When we read of the reaction of Jerusalem congregation's leadership to Peter's interaction with the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius, we can see again how the Eighteen Measures had permeated the lives of the believers.

*Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"*

Acts 11:1-3

From the way that Luke identifies them, we now can better understand what "those of the circumcision" means. Clearly, everyone in the meeting was "circumcised" – otherwise, what was their protest over? The phrase can now be seen for what it was meant to be to those who read the text: "those of the circumcision" means "those who held to the Eighteen Measures regarding Gentiles." Likewise "uncircumcised men" means "non-proselyte Gentiles." It is as if the following was said,

*"So Peter, we heard that God's word was received by Gentiles. I suppose that is good if they went through ritual conversion and became Jews; but instead, we hear that you actually entered the home and actually ate with pagan Gentiles who have not gone through ritual conversion to Judaism!" (Paraphrase)*

One would think that the issue was then settled from what we see in Acts 11:18:

*When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying,  
“Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”*

Acts 11:18

It is as if they were saying, “OK, clearly where the Eighteen Measures exclude Gentiles, they are not biblical.” The matter appears settled. Gentiles are not to be excluded on the basis of the Eighteen Measures and their substrata of rules. It is this moment that “The Way” as a sect of Judaism clearly establishes a course that will put it on collision course with the Bet Shammai-controlled Sanhedrin. Sixty years earlier, a similar position by Bet Hillel had led to the murder of Hillelites. The fact that the issue comes up again in Acts 15, further indicates how difficult it was for the first believers to extract themselves from the culture of the Eighteen Measures where they related to Gentiles.

### **Entering the Covenant of Faith**

The language of Acts 15 can quickly confuse if not understood in the context of the First Century. How did one enter the Covenant of faith? How was one “saved?” Although the answer seems quite easy from a modern perspective, it was not so easy in the First Century. The Covenants of promise were given to Israel, and only to Israel. Even Paul says that.

*Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh — who are called “Uncircumcision” by what is called “the Circumcision” made in the flesh by hands — that at that time you were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

Ephesians 2:11-12

Clearly, when Paul uses the “circumcision” language, he is referring to the traditional means for a Gentile to enter the Covenant Community of Israel. After the murder of the Hillelites in 20 BCE, the Eighteen Measures officially enforced the concept that the only ritual conversion to Judaism gained one access to the World to Come – to be “saved.” The only way into the Covenants of promise, into the family of Abraham, was to become “Jewish” – spiritually and ethnically, by undergoing ritual conversion, i.e. “circumcision.” When the Temple still stood in Jerusalem, this ritual conversion included:

- An injunction to accept the whole Torah, both Written and Oral
- Circumcision
- Immersion
- An offering made in the Temple

Acts 15 uses forms of shorthand for what we might refer simply to “ritual conversion to Judaism.”

*And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are **circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**” Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had **no small dissension and dispute** with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the congregation, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing **the conversion of the Gentiles**; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the congregation and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. **But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”** Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.”*

Acts 15:1-7 (emphasis added)

The “dispute” is quite similar to the dispute that arose between Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel sixty years earlier. More specifically, how do Gentiles enter the covenant community of Israel? Those believing Pharisees who were in the Bet Shammai camp argued that at least part of the Eighteen Measures was still in effect. Certainly, Gentiles were being drawn to the God of Israel and His Messiah... but they should finish the process and officially become a part of Israel. The argument is not about “keeping the Law of Moses” nor about the actual act of circumcision as is so often misconstrued.

Peter then relates the Acts 10 account and his vision. It is Peter’s vision that had convinced many that the Eighteen Measures, with regard to Gentiles, had no standing. In the final decision the Apostolic Council appears to establish a new set of rules, which seem to establish a new set of righteous conduct rules. These so-called “four laws” are listed twice in Acts 15 and in Acts 21. These “four laws” have been used by some to annul the Torah, and by others to establish new and differing separations between the Torah responsibilities of Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Messiah. We will look at these “four laws” in depth when we look in depth at these passages.

### **Prove It Paul!**

In Acts 21, the issue of Gentile-inclusion seems to come up again. This time, it comes up because of misunderstanding of what Paul had apparently written. In fact, it may be the Epistle to the Galatians that has caused confusion to some in Jerusalem, as to Paul’s teaching with regard to Gentile-inclusion.

*On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had*

*done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs."*

Acts 21:18-21

Then James goes on to describe a "test" of Paul's loyalty. He should prepare to join four others in fulfilling a Nazarite vow. Paul agrees to do this. Why would this prove Paul's loyalty? Was it because the Nazarite vow required an animal offering to complete? Although that seems to be the threshold of loyalty, the normality of Temple offerings was no surprise to those that James described as "zealous for the Law." In fact, Paul's continued worship in the Temple throughout Acts always included animal offerings.

A good understanding of Tabernacle and Temple worship indicates that animal offerings were always a part of such visits. Instead, the threshold for loyalty relates to biblical laws of *tamei* and *tahor* ["unclean" and "clean"]. Would Paul participate in the required biblical ritual cleansing needed to participate in Temple worship? If so, then he had not abandoned the Torah. Paul answers the critics by showing his loyalty to the Torah. He does this at great expense, paying for the necessary animal offerings for five (four others and himself). Paul had entered his Nazarite vow while out of the Land. The measurement of the Nazarite vow required shaving the head at the beginning of the vow, so that the hair, when shaved and offered in the Temple at the completion, it was all "hair of the vow."

*So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.*

Acts 18:18

*Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. 'All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.*

*'Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And he shall present his offering to the Lord: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt*

*offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings. 'Then the priest shall bring them before the Lord and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.*

Numbers 6:1-5; 13-18

When Paul was arrested in the Temple grounds, it was before he has passed the balustrade (*soreg*) that separated the area where Gentiles were permitted and the Holy environs of the Temple itself. The false accusations are that Paul taught against the people of Israel, against the Torah, and against the Temple. These were false accusations, and in fact, Paul's agreement to James' "test" was to disprove these allegations. How ironic that so many that claim to follow the Messiah of Israel also accuse Paul of these same things. The deal breaker for these "Jews from Asia" was the thought of Gentiles in the Temple. The Eighteen Measures plays a role again.

*Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the Temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and **furthermore he also brought Greeks into the Temple and has defiled this holy place.**" For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the Temple.*

Acts 21:26-29 (emphasis added)

## ***What Scripture Says***

The experience of Acts 2 draws greatly upon the traditions regarding the “seventy tongues.” There is something being said here that is not lost on those who understood the relationship to the Torah and the day of *Shavuot* [Pentecost]. Finally, Israel was about to fulfill her destiny, to draw all nations to the God of Israel. The significance of tongues cannot be underestimated.

The connection of the tongues of Acts 2 to the tongues of Acts 10:44-46 is significant. They validated the vision that Peter saw in Acts 10. They validated the truth: Gentiles could be a part of the covenant community – without ritual conversion [aka “circumcision”].

Read Acts 10:1-11:18 and answer the following questions:

In verses 10:1-4, was Cornelius a “proselyte” – or a “God-fearer”?

In verses 10:13-17, did Peter eat “unclean” meat? (compare Peter’s response to Ezekiel’s in Ezekiel 4:12-15)

When did Peter understand the meaning of the vision? Be specific, what triggered his understanding? How did that event relate to the Eighteen Measures?

Compare 11:1 with 11:18. What convinced them that the Eighteen Measures did not apply with regard to Gentiles?

Much has been made about Acts 15 and how it adds up to a decided break with Judaism and the Torah. Because you know the history, you know that this is not true. But does Acts 15:20 represent a “lesser law” for Gentiles? Does this list comprise four necessary things that replace the obligations found in the Torah? Is this list a prototype of the “Noachide Laws” found in the Talmud, and promoted by some brands of Messianic Judaism as the “torah for Gentiles”? Let’s explore that, but first answer this question: Of what party do the “sect of Pharisees” on Acts 15:1 and 15:5 belong?



Read Acts 15:20; 28-29; 21:25; and Ezekiel 33:23-26. Then complete the chart that follows (find matches for each of the prohibitions). The first is completed for you.

| Comparing Prohibitions of Acts to Ezekiel |                          |               |            |                  |
|---|--------------------------|---------------|------------|------------------|
| Prohibited                                | Acts 15:20               | Acts 15:28-29 | Acts 21:25 | Ezekiel 33:25-26 |
| #1  | Things polluted by idols |               |            |                  |
| #2  | Sexual immorality        |               |            |                  |
| #3  | Things strangled         |               |            |                  |
| #4  | Blood                    |               |            |                  |

Who was being addressed in Ezekiel 33:23, Gentiles or Israelites?

What will be the outcome of the sins listed in Ezekiel 33:25-26?

What does this list of Ezekiel 33:25-26 consist? Is it an all-inclusive list of Israel's sins, or is it a summation?

Read Leviticus 19:1-37 and complete the chart that follows as best you can. Find as many connections to the commandments in Leviticus 19 to those of Acts 15 (note: "things strangled" relates to food, whereas "blood" relates to "bloodshed"):

| Categories in Leviticus 19 |                          |  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Prohibited                 | Acts 15:20               | Leviticus 19:1-37                                  |
| #1                         | Things polluted by idols | 19:2: Be holy, for I am holy                       |
| #2                         | Sexual immorality        | 19:20: don't fornicate                             |
| #3                         | Things strangled         | 19:26: don't eat meat with blood still in it       |
| #4                         | Blood                    | 19:17: don't allow the innocent to be put to death |

If you were to go through the entire Torah, you would find that all of the commandments could fit into these categories. The commands of Acts 15 and Acts 21 are summation commands. They are the place to start, because they are the same obligation that the native Israelite has. More importantly, the fine points and the details of the commandments themselves would still be taught. Read and comment on the following Scriptures:

Acts 15:21:

Zechariah 8:23:

Romans 3:1-2:

## **Conclusion**

It is unfortunate that even those within Messianic Judaism can sometimes find excuses for not accepting Gentiles as full members of Israel. With the talk of “maintaining distinctions” and “Noachide” requirements, there can be resentment and eventually there will be yet another division. While all Gentiles in the covenant community are not genetically “Jews” (as ritual conversion maintains), they certainly are members of Israel. That is the point: One people. God did not intend to have two people, but one. There is One King, One People, One Torah. This is the true test of unity: recognizing an original identity, while maintaining a unified identity, all to the glory of Messiah.

*That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

John 17:21

*Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.*

Ephesians 2:11-14

## **Prayer Focus**

### **Opening verse of Kedushat HaYom of for Sabbath Minchah**

*You are One, and Your Name is One; and who is like your people Israel, one nation on earth...*

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## Lesson Seven: Galatians Chapter One – the Good News

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Messiah, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Messiah. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

Galatians 1:6-7 NKJV

### ***As You Begin***

- We are finally ready to look at the text of Galatians. This epistle was written for a very specific reason. It has a bearing on us today. So far in our study, we have played the “Messianic apologetics” angle. Has our bias been removed? Do we have new biases? We want to read this book as the Holy Spirit revealed it to Paul – as it relates to us.
- Sit down in a quiet place and ask God to speak through His Word, and that the Holy Spirit will be your Teacher.
- Tell God that you will not let it be merely an academic exercise, but that you will follow through and do what He reveals to you to do.
- Read Galatians chapter one in the Hebrew Names Version found in the Appendix at the end of this workbook.
- Meditate on David’s proclamation to God:

*I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly.*

Psalms 40:9-10

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- What is the “gospel” that Paul speaks of in Galatians?
- What is “another gospel?”
- Who were these people who appear to bring another gospel?
- Do the Eighteen Measures provide context about what the “gospel” is?

## ***Historical Context***

What is the Gospel? How does our understanding of the biblical word “gospel” shape our reading of Galatians? Most traditional commentaries of Galatians treat the word “gospel” as this: *the antithesis of the “Jewish religion.”* After all, they often argue, the “Jewish religion” was a religion of salvation by works; whereas the “gospel of Jesus Christ” is salvation through faith. So “another gospel” mentioned by Paul in Galatians 1 is a reference to salvation by works, specifically, the “keeping of the Law.”

Is there validity to that position? Have you asked the necessary questions? For those that think that the context of Galatians can be understood by the modern usage of the word “gospel” – they will completely miss the point of the Epistle to the Galatians.

### **Gospel = Euaggelion = Basorah**

The word for “gospel” in Galatians 1:6-7 is the Greek word, “*euaggelion*.” It is made of two words, *eu* [good] *aggelion* [message, tidings]. Both noun and verb forms of this word are found in Galatians 1:7-8. There is even is a play on words in verse 8, where the word “*aggelos*” [angel] is used. This is a word that shares the same origin of the word for “gospel.” The verb form of the word is used throughout the Apostolic Scriptures. It is usually translated as “preach.” It is simply the verb form of “good message” – as in “good-messaging.” An example is in Luke 2:10, where it is found in verb form [*euaggelizo*].

*Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I **bring you good tidings** [euaggelizo] of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord.*

Luke 2:10-11 (emphasis added)

This word is found in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the TaNaKh. It is found in Psalms 40:10 (Psalms 40:9 in English), where it uses the words, *euaggelizo dikaiosune* [preach good message of righteousness]. What is this “good news” – this “gospel?” The word that Paul would have thought of in Hebrew is the word, **בְּשֹׂרָה** [*basorah*]. The verb form is **בָּשַׂר** [*basar*]. It literally means, “to proclaim good news.” It is a word used several times in Isaiah, specifically in relationship to the restoration of Israel.

*O Zion, You who **bring good tidings** [basar, LXX= euaggelizo], get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who **bring good tidings**, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” Behold, the LORD God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.*

Isaiah 40:9-10 (emphasis added)

It is this context in which Paul uses the word that our English Bible's translates as "gospel." The First Century Jew would have considered the Messianic Kingdom implications when they read the word "*euaggelizo*" [preach the gospel, the good news]. This Messianic Kingdom idea is well portrayed in the Psalms of Solomon, a pseudepigraphical work from the First Century BCE. The Psalms of Solomon were included in some versions of the Septuagint.

*Blow ye in Zion on the trumpet to summon the saints, cause ye to be heard in Jerusalem the voice of him that **bringeth good tidings**; for God hath had pity on Israel in visiting them. Stand on the height, O Jerusalem, and behold thy children, from the East and the West, gathered together by the Lord; from the North they come in the gladness of their God, from the isles afar off God hath gathered them. High mountains hath He abased into a plain for them; the hills fled at their entrance. The woods gave them shelter as they passed by; every sweet-smelling tree God caused to spring up for them, that Israel might pass by in the visitation of the glory of their God. Put on, O Jerusalem, thy glorious garments; make ready thy holy robe; for God hath spoken good concerning Israel, for ever and ever. Let the Lord do what He hath spoken concerning Israel and Jerusalem; let the Lord raise up Israel by His glorious name. The mercy of the Lord be upon Israel for ever and ever.*<sup>8</sup>

Psalms of Solomon 11:1-9

The "good tidings" message of the coming of the Kingdom of Messiah, and the need to prepare for it, is seen in Matthew's use of the word *euaggelion* [gospel, good news].

*And Yeshua went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel [euaggelion] of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*

Matthew 4:23

The very words of that "gospel" message are found earlier in Matthew, and repeated throughout the book:

*From that time Yeshua began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Matthew 4:17

Paul, in his own description of the "gospel" and the message that he preached, quotes from Isaiah 52:7, another place where the Septuagint uses the word "*euaggelizo*" [preach the good news].

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<sup>8</sup> Gray, B., Charles, R. H., ed., (1913). *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who **preach the gospel** of peace, who **bring glad tidings** of good things!”*

Romans 10:14-15 (emphasis added)

Mark Nanos, in his book *“The Irony of Galatians”* makes note of Paul’s use of the word “gospel.”

*The prophetic development of the heralding of the good news is most important for understanding the usage in Jewish literature of the period and in the New Testament. Quintessential is Isaiah’s dramatic announcement of the return of Israel from exile to the long-awaited reign of God witnessed by all of creation (Isaiah 52:7-10)...*

*The explicit development of this citation from Isaiah in Romans 10:15 and the surrounding context provides Paul with an argument for the mission to the Gentiles based on the faithfulness of Israel’s God to Israel first, and then also through her to the nations, for “the same Lord is Lord of all (10:12). In this way, Paul’s usage is explicitly linked with his assertion of the Gentile mission in the context of the One God of Israel now reconciling all the nations also in Christ; it is an affirmation of his faith in the One God of Israel as the One God of all creation, for God is One, in concert with his application of the confession of the Shema.<sup>9</sup>*

## **What Scripture Says**

In Galatians chapter one, we read how Paul contrasts the “gospel” or “good news” that he taught the Galatians, with the one which the “some who trouble” were teaching. He calls this a “different good news” and yet says that it isn’t “another good news.” To what was Paul referring when he spoke of the “good news”? As we’ve seen, the Hebrew Scriptures, as Paul’s primary source for all truth, are where we should go to determine what this “good news” is.

There is an interesting account in 2Samuel about a “different” good news. The Hebrew word **בְּשֹׂרָה** [*basorah*] is used for “good news.”

Read the account in 2Samuel 1:1-17, and then read and comment how David relates this account later in 2Samuel 4:9-10:

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<sup>9</sup> Nanos, M. (2002). *The Irony of Galatians*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress. pp 290-291

Does the Amalekite think he is bringing “good news” to David? Is it logical to assume that David would have been relieved that King Saul was dead, and would no longer be hunting him down?

Does David think it is “good news” – what was his reaction?

It is never “good news” when Amalek triumphs over Israel.

Hebrews 10:7-10 tell us that Psalms 40:6-7 is prophetic of the Messiah’s actions. Read Psalms 40:7-10 and then list what Messiah has done in declaring the “good news” the “great assembly.” The first few are entered for you.

**Messiah’s Mission – Psalms 40:7-10**

*He comes*  
*It is written of Him*  
*He delights to do God’s will*

In Psalms 40:9 and again in verse 10, there is a reference to “the great assembly.”

*I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly...*  
Psalms 40:9

*I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth From the great assembly.*  
Psalms 40:10



What is the great assembly? The word is קָהָל [kahal] – it is sometimes translated “congregation.” Who is this *kahal rav*? To whom did Yeshua proclaim the “good news” – what people?

There is a clear message in the Prophets: In the later days, God will restore Israel’s lofty position, and establish His Kingdom on earth in her midst. This clear teaching is matched in the Apostolic Scriptures, and as noted, it is how Paul fits his role as the emissary to the Gentiles into his view of the last days. Read and comment on how Gentiles fit into the restoration of Israel:

Isaiah 2:2-5:

Isaiah 60:1-22 (note: verse 6, the phrase “And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.” “proclaim” is the verb form of “give good news.”):

Isaiah 66:15-23:

Can you see how Paul might have seen his role with the Gentiles as an important part of ushering in the Kingdom Age?

Why do you think that Paul is so angry with those who were troubling the Galatians. What could their “good news” (which isn’t another “good news”) be? Please consider Acts 15:1-2 in your answer.

In your own words, what is the “good news” – and how does it relate to Israel and to Gentiles?

### ***Conclusion***

Paul’s passion is evident in his opening words to the Galatians. He speaks as one whose idealism has been shocked by reality. So much of what he had worked for, in bringing the “good news” to the Gentiles seemed to be at risk. He goes to great lengths to explain how he did not need to “approval of men.” This seems to relate very well back to what we have learned regarding ritual conversion and the Eighteen Measures. Paul wasn’t basing his ministry on the opinions of men. He was spreading the “good news” on the authority of God’s Word alone.

### ***Prayer Focus***

The *Birkat HaMazon* (Grace after Meals) prayer has different insert whether for Sabbath or Feast days etc. This is the insert during Sukkot [Feast of Tabernacles]

*The Compassionate One! May He erect for us David’s fallen booth.*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Acts 15:13-17

## Lesson Eight: Galatians Chapter Two – Righteousness and the Law

*Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your Torah is truth.*

Psalms 119:142

### ***As You Begin***

- Set aside some time to pray.
- Ask God to open your eyes to His righteousness. Tell Him that you want His righteousness to be evident in your life.
- Read Galatians chapter two in the Hebrew Names Version found at the end of this workbook.
- Meditate on this passage:

*Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man [Yeshua] is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:*

*“Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you.”*

*So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.*

Acts 13:38-42

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Why did Peter separate from the Gentiles to eat?
- Is it possible to be “righteous” and still refuse to obey the commandments of God?
- Is a believer’s righteousness only what is imputed to him from Messiah’s perfect righteousness?
- Does every usage of “law” refer to the Torah?
- Is “justified” an eternal salvation term? Or can it refer to something else?

## ***Historical Context***

Words like “justify,” “works of the law,” and “righteousness” made the Epistle to the Galatians a treasure trove for the Protestant Reformers in their efforts to reform the theology and practice of Christianity. In their thoughts regarding salvation and the role of “the church” – they hit upon these key words for proof texts in their attempt to reorient Christian theology from “church centered” to “individual centered.” Of course, their pretext was that since Messiah’s atoning work was focused on “whosoever” and Messiah’s work to redeem the individual – this reorientation was ultimately Messiah centered as well. Putting their motivation aside, we can say with certainty that their anachronistic reading of Galatians (where in their view the Roman Catholic Church is seen as those prescribing man-made ritual, and the reformers as Paul), is quite off the mark.

Within the unraveling of the theological tangles in our understanding of Galatians we find these key “salvific” words: “justify,” “righteousness” and “works.” That is the focus of our study in this lesson.

In the traditional Christian theological world there has been work done by some notable scholars that suggest that Paul’s usage of some of these words is not the stuff of soterology, but rather identification within covenant status, particularly in relation to being “part of Israel.” Following important work that was initiated with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is now a better understanding of First Century Judaism. This better understanding has given notable scholars a motive to reassess Paul’s epistles. One of these scholars includes the so-called “New Perspective” theologian Dr. James Dunn.

Dr. James Dunn declares the obvious when he says that Galatians 2:16 is the key point in Paul’s argument in Galatians, and all the verses that follow are simply commentary on this point.

*...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Yeshua the Messiah, even we believed in Messiah Yeshua, that we might be justified by faith in Messiah, and not by the works of the law, because no flesh will be justified by the works of the law.*

Galatians 2:16

It is the words “justify” and “righteous” that Dr. Dunn then goes on to deal with directly.

*It [justify] is a metaphor drawn from the law court to describe the judge’s responsibility to give a fair verdict and to “justify,” that is, acquit the innocent, as in typically Jewish usage (Ex 23:7; Deut 25:1-2; 2Sam 15:4; Micah 6:11). As used here, therefore it reflects the axiomatic assumption among Jews that God exercised and would exercise the role of end-time judge in relation to the world, both Jew and Gentile. The one thus “justified” or acquitted was found to be*

*“righteous;” the ground of a favorable judgment was the “righteousness” of the one judged (all three words come from the same root in both Hebrew and Greek); to be “justified” was to be formally recognized as “righteous.” At this point, however, Hebrew and Greek concepts diverged. For whereas in Greek thought “righteousness” or “justice” was an ideal norm by which a particular claims or duties could be measured, in Hebrew thought “righteousness” was more a concept of relation. People were “righteous” when they met the claims which others had on them by virtue of their relationship. For Israel, that meant pre-eminently the relationship with [HaShem], that is the covenant that He made with Israel when He chose Israel to be His people; to be righteous was to live within the covenant and within the terms it laid down (the Law); to be acquitted, **recognized as righteous was to be counted as one of God’s own people** who had proved faithful to the covenant. (Emphasis added)<sup>11</sup>*

Dr. Dunn is asserting that the Hebrew concepts of “justification” and “righteousness” were tied to the covenant relationship with God as a function of being considered a part of the covenant community – the “people of God.” Unlike the Protestant Reformers view, this adds a decidedly collective twist to Galatians. It focuses on the individual only within the concept of the individual’s relationship to Israel, and thereby to God. This is a very important point, and we will see this played out in Paul’s argument.

Further proof of this view is found within the very basis for Judaism’s soterology: *“All Israel has a part in the World to Come.”* As we have already seen, Judaism never assumed that “works” or “works of the law” brought eternal “salvation.” That was always assumed to come from being part of the covenant community, that is, Israel. Both individually and collectively, God’s choice of Israel was always seen to be a matter of God’s sovereign and gracious choice, not Israel’s worthiness. Dr. Dunn makes this same point:

*... the typical and traditional Jewish view of the time was not that anyone could earn God’s favor. On the contrary, the whole of Israel’s religion was founded on the axiom that God had chosen Israel as an act wholly undeserved. Membership in the covenant people already presupposed God’s gracious election and sustaining favor; it not have to be earned...<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Dunn, James, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993, p. 134

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 135

## ***What Scripture Says***

Galatians 2:21 says, *“For if righteousness is through the law, then Messiah died for nothing!”*

Many people have no problem at all with that statement, written in English as it is. But then how do we deal with these verses?

*And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.’*

Deuteronomy 6:24-25

Which is it? On the one hand, Paul says that it can’t be *“righteousness through the Law”* and yet Moses says, *“...it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all these commandments...”*

In addition to the word “righteousness” Paul also uses the word “justified” in Galatians chapter two, to describe our spiritual state. Is he describing the methods of salvation, or the results? Do we really know what these words mean? Is Paul speaking in theological terms when he uses such words, or is there something else at work? Of course most modern theologians have no difficulty at all with saying that Paul contradicts Moses. They create elaborate theological nuances to make it look like that is not what they are saying – but it is. Is that right? In the space below, write out what you think about whether Galatians can contradict the Torah.

If there can be no contradiction in Scripture, then we must discover what Paul means regarding “the Law” and “righteousness.” Let’s begin by Paul’s own view of the Torah [the Law]. Read and comment on Paul’s view of the Torah in the following Scriptures:

Romans 2:12-15:

Romans 2:25-27 (remember the phrase “circumcision” most often means “ritual conversion”):

Romans 3:31:

Romans 7:7-13:

Romans 7:20-23:

Romans 7:25:

1Timothy 1:8:

Describe, in no more than two sentences, Paul's view of "the Law" in these passages:

Paul was not only an intellectual; he was a tremendous student of Scripture. The concepts that Paul lays out for us are sometimes difficult to understand. He was hard to understand even in the First Century, where the limits of language, culture, and idiom were not as pronounced as they are today. How much more is this true today when we often fail to understand the idioms being used. Peter encourages us to be diligent in our study of Paul's epistles:

*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

2Peter 3:14-16

Instead of simply assuming that Paul's words of Galatians 2 are meant to speak negatively of the Torah, let us redouble our efforts to discover God's instructions for us through His servant Paul.

So let's dig deeper. Read Galatians chapter two again from the Hebrew Names Version located in the Appendix. Make note of each time the word "law" [*nomos*] is used. It is used six times, and three times it is part of a phrase: "works of the law." That phrase is repeated again in chapter three; and we will be dealing with it specifically in the next lesson. For now, can you state with certainty that each usage of "law" [*nomos*] in Galatians chapter two is referring to the Torah?

Could that phrase possibly refer to some other set of laws similar to the "Oral Torah" as we have previous seen with regard to the requirements for ritual conversion to Judaism (also known as "circumcision")?

Let's look at two other words important in Galatians chapter two: "righteousness" and "justified." With regard to "righteousness" most theologians would agree that Scripture uses the word in at least two ways: *demonstrable righteousness* (i.e. right deeds that are visible to all) and *imputed* or *forensic righteousness* (i.e. Yeshua's perfect deeds and His perfect status imputed to those who follow Him).

Read and comment on these usages for "righteousness" [*dikaioisune*]. Make note of whether you think the usage is referring to *demonstrable righteousness* or *imputed righteousness*:

Matthew 5:6:

Acts 10:34-35:

Romans 1:16-18 (follow the contrast between "righteousness" and "unrighteousness"):

Romans 6:16-18:



2Corinthians 9:10:

1Timothy 6:11:

1John 2:29:

1John 3:7:

1John 3:10:

There are far more references to “righteousness” in the Apostolic Scriptures, but as you can see, the majority of the ones you looked up speak about demonstrable righteousness, that is, “right deeds.” Is that the kind of “righteousness” that Galatians 2:21 is speaking of? Is it possible that when Galatians 2:21 says, *“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Messiah died in vain,”* it is another usage for the term “righteousness?”

The exact Hebrew equivalent to “righteousness” [*dikaioisune*] is צְדִיקָה [*tz’dakah*]. It is used extensively in the Hebrew Scriptures. We have seen before the technical term used in the Talmud for a proselyte: *“ger tzadik”* [righteous sojourner]. This idiomatic usage of the word “righteous” comes from Temple-language. Only the righteous are permitted in the Presence of God in His Holy Temple. Read the following passage and note the usage of the word *tz’dakah* [righteousness] in verse 32. You will also find the other word that we are focusing on in Galatians 2:21 – “justified.” Also note the presence of the “foreigner” נָכְרִי [*nakri*] in verse 43.

1Kings 8:22-54:

With our study on the “law” and “righteousness” as the backdrop, do you think it is possible that Galatians chapter two is speaking idiomatically about the law and righteousness? In other words, is it possible that “law” means something other than Torah, and “righteousness” is a technical term for proselytes to Judaism?

In your own words, explain what you think Galatians 2:21 is saying.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding Galatians chapter two is not only important because it has been misunderstood and misapplied. It is important because it is teaching something very important that applies to all believers even today. Although it may not be teaching that salvation is not by works (although that is a good teaching); it is most certainly teaching the relationship to covenant community and to God. It also provides for us the Pauline model of Gentile-inclusion. Paul put himself at great risk outside of the believing community, and also within the believing community on this issue. Paul risked much, because he understood the absolutes of Gentile-inclusion. If the Kingdom was coming... all nations would have to be a part.

### **Prayer Focus**

At the close of *Minchah* [afternoon] prayers for Shabbat, we find this declaration:

*Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your Torah is truth. And Your righteousness, O God, is unto the high heavens, You Who have done great things, O God, Who is like You? Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains – Your judgment is like the vast deep waters. Man and beast You save, HaShem.*

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## Lesson Nine: Galatians Chapter Three – Works of the Law

*For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Messiah Yeshua, according to my gospel.*

Romans 2:12-16

*If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.*

Psalms 130:3-4

### ***As You Begin***

- Find a quiet place and start your study with prayer.
- Ask God reveal Himself to you as you study. Tell Him that you want to depend on nothing from yourself to gain His favor – and that You will depend on nothing except His grace.
- Read Galatians chapter three in the Hebrew Names Version found at the end of this workbook.
- Meditate on this passage:

*I have been crucified with Messiah, and it is no longer I that live, but Messiah living in me. That life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.*

Galatians 2:20

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- If I am not “saved” (or joined to Israel) by the “works of the law” – isn’t the law annulled then?
- Why does Paul tell us in Romans 3:31 that we establish the law through faith, and yet in Galatians he seems to contrast the “works of the law” with faith?
- What does he mean by the “works of the law”?
- What law is Paul talking about in Galatians 3?

## ***Historical Context***

As we saw in the previous lesson, there are some very difficult places in Romans and Galatians where Paul seems to contradict himself with regard to the “law.” For instance, in Galatians Paul says,

*The law is not of faith, but, “The man who does them will live by them.”*

Galatians 3:12

And yet, in Romans Paul says,

*Do we make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.*

Romans 3:31

Such apparent contradictions are normally cast aside by the antinomian<sup>13</sup> theologian, but we must examine this if we are to understand what Paul means by the oft repeated phrase, “works of the law.” As we saw in the previous lesson, this phrase is used in Paul’s key point in Galatians:

*Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Yeshua the Messiah...*

Galatians 2:16a

The phrase “works of the law” is found eight times in the Apostolic Scriptures, and is a phrase that is unique to Paul. He uses it twice in Romans and six times in Galatians. Galatians 2:16 has it three times. It is not found in the Septuagint. The phrase is *ἔργων νόμου* [*ergon nomou*].

It is assumed that all usages of *nomos* [law] in the Apostolic Scriptures, mean “Torah,” or the divine instructions found in the Hebrew Scriptures. While this is a safe assumption for the most part, it bears some investigation. Note how the word “law” is used in this passage from the Mishnah:

*... in the Chamber of Hewn Stone [where the Sanhedrin met for most of the Second Temple period], whence the Law goes forth to all Israel, as it is written, “From that place where the Lord shall choose.”*

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<sup>13</sup> Antinomianism is “against Law” – it refers to the classical Christian theological approach to the Torah. Antinomianism is expressed in different ways: by dividing the Law into ritual, moral, and civil – in order to do away with what is interpreted as ritual (i.e. Jewish); or by replacing it with a “new Law” the “Law of Christ” (which by the way is still a “law” so, are we at risk of legalism in keeping that law?).

*... Greater stringency applies to [the observance of] the words of the Scribes than to the [observance of] the [written] Law...*

*m.Sanhedrin 11.2, 3*

This is consistent with the Talmud's view of the Torah and the importance of the Oral Torah (also known as the "Traditions of the Elders").

We can start our analysis of this phrase from the traditional perspective, that is, that "works of the law" is a phrase that most naturally means, "deeds or actions which the Law requires." But this does not fit with the Judaism's view of the Torah in the First Century. Paul's argument would have found universal acceptance, so it would have been a wasted point. Paul must be arguing against something else. Dr. James Dunn frames the argument this way:

*This [the phrase "works of the law"] has traditionally been understood as a denial that human beings even the most religious of individuals, can achieve salvation by their own "works;" they cannot "work" their passage to heaven; they cannot earn salvation by their own efforts. Valid as that as a theological insight of tremendous importance, it is doubtful whether it quite catches Paul's meaning here Paul was evidently objecting to a current Jewish conviction But so far as we can tell, the typical and traditional Jewish view of the time was not that anyone could earn God's favor. **On the contrary, the whole of Israel's religion was founded on the axiom that God had chosen Israel as an act wholly undeserved. Membership of the covenant people already presupposed God's gracious election and sustaining favor; it did not have to be earned. Nor does the phrase itself denote human deeds of meritorious quality. What then was Paul denying?** What did he mean by saying that "works of the law" provide no ground for justification? The point is obviously of central importance to Paul's argument, since he states it no less than three times in this one verse (2:16); it is equally central to the summary statement in Romans 3:20. The phrase itself ("works of the law") means most naturally "deeds or actions which the law requires." It has no immediate parallel in the OT but in typical Jewish understanding the law had been given as part of God's covenant, to show covenant members how to live within the covenant and to enable them to do so (we need mention only Deuteronomy). So most Jews would, again most naturally, understand the phrase to mean, "the obligations laid upon Israelites by virtue of their membership of Israel."*

*...However as we have already noted, second-Temple Judaism was split into various factions, each claiming to have a proper understanding of the law and of its obligations. **"Works of the law," then, would probably reflect this factionalism and the common concern within second-Temple Judaism to draw the lines of demarcation round covenant righteousness as clearly as possible.** This is confirmed by what is a close parallel to the phrase within one of the most*

*prominent of these factions – the Essene community at Qumran. In the DSS it was precisely the covenanter's "deeds of the law" which had to be tested in order to check whether his membership of the community could be sustained (1QS v.21, 23; vi;18); the implication of 4QFlor. i.7 is that only at Qumran were "the works of the law" able to properly be performed; the Qumran document known as "Some of the Deeds of the Law." (emphasis added) <sup>14</sup>*

Dr. Dunn makes the case that "works of the law" as used in Dead Sea Scroll documents is not a reference to the particulars of the written Torah, but rather a reference to the unique application of those laws that further defined the sect against other sects of Judaism. In other words, the Qumran community had a different set of "works of the law" than did the Pharisees. These works of the law are the man-made methods of "working out" the Torah's requirements. Dr. Dunn adds,

*...In other words, at Qumran "works of the law" denoted a sectarian understanding of the law, denoted, indeed, the sect's distinctive understanding and practice of the law – that understanding the practice of the law which marked it out from others, including other Jews.*

*"Works of the law" there was probably used initially in a polemical context... to denote particularly those obligations of the law which were reckoned especially crucial in the maintenance of covenant righteousness, in the maintenance of an individual Jew's status within the covenant.<sup>15</sup>*

Paul's usage of the words "justify" and "righteousness" fit quite well into this usage of the phrase "works of the law" – which if used this way dramatically supports Paul's main concern with the Galatians: that they might be persuaded by others to attempt to gain covenant status by joining Israel through ritual conversion. It is this man-made attempt to do what Messiah has already accomplished (i.e. joining them to the covenant community by faith in Messiah's finished work) that is the impetus for Paul's letter.

### ***What Scripture Says***

The epistles of Paul are not the only Scriptural source that tells us that we are joined to the God of Israel not by the works of man, but by the grace of God alone. Scripture is replete with this teaching. It has always been by God's unmerited favor...

What merit does man have with God? Read and comment on the following:

Exodus 34:7:

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<sup>14</sup> Dunn, James, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993, p. 135-136

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

Job 9:2:

Job 25:4:

Psalms 130:3-4:

Psalms 143:2:

Ecclesiastes 7:20:

Romans 3:21-26:

Romans 5:1:

2Corinthians 5:21:

Some might say that the key verse of all Scripture is Habakkuk 2:4. It is quoted three times in the Apostolic Scriptures. Read and comment on these passages. Be sure to read the context of each one.

Habakkuk 2:4:

Romans 1:17:

Galatians 3:11:

Hebrews 10:38:

Beloved, can you see that Paul was not denigrating the perfect Torah of God when he declares that no one is justified by the “works of the law”? We have seen that this phrase points to the man-made process of formally joining Israel (i.e. “becoming a Jew” through ritual conversion). On the other hand, neither Paul nor ancient Judaism would have ever said that one is joined to Israel by the “keeping of the Torah.” For that, Scripture is clear – it is by the mercy of God and on the basis of His grace alone that we have any hope.

What purpose does the Torah serve? How does it operate in the life of the believer? As God’s revealed righteousness, it serves many functions, not the least of which is revealing Messiah.

Read and comment on this passage, in light of what you have learned today:

Hosea 14:9:

## ***Conclusion***

When we consider the righteousness of our Master, Yeshua, we are in awe. When we recognize that we cannot stand before the Righteous Judge of the Universe without His mercy, we are truly humbled and grateful. As true as those statements are, we must also recognize that was not the main point of Paul’s argument with those who were leading the Galatians astray. His issue was not a matter of “works” versus “faith.” Instead, we see that Paul is concerned that the Galatians will be fooled into thinking that ethnic status is enough to find God’s favor. Having gone through “ritual conversion” and “become Jews” they would think that was enough. If that were true, then the whole purpose for Messiah’s redemptive acts were for nothing. No man-made ritual could do what only Messiah could do.

Praise the Righteous King! We have a hope – not dependent on man’s opinion, or man’s ceremonies... but upon “the LORD God, the merciful...”

*And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,*



*keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."*

Exodus 34:6-7

### ***Prayer Focus***

Within the daily prayers for weekdays, is a prayer called, "Vidu" – it is a prayer of confession. At the conclusion of the prayer, is a section from Exodus 34, and it lists the Thirteen Attributes of the Holy One, blessed is He:

*And HaShem passed before him [Moses] and proclaimed:*

*HaShem, HaShem, God, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth. Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations, Forgiver of iniquity, willful sin, and error, and Who cleanses. May You forgive our iniquities and our errors and make us Your heritage. Forgive us, our Father, for we have erred; pardon us, our King, for we have willfully sinned; for You, my Lord, are good and forgiving and abundantly kind to all who call upon You.*

ArtScroll Complete Siddur page 119b

## Lesson Ten: Galatians Chapter Four – Two Covenants?

*So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental principles of the world.*

*But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, why do you turn back again to the weak and miserable elemental principles, to which you desire to be in bondage all over again? You observe days, months, seasons, and years. I am afraid for you, that I might have wasted my labor for you.*

Galatians 4:3; 9-11

### ***As You Begin***

- Find a quiet place and start your study with prayer. Tell God that you want to grow in faith, and that you are complete dependent on Him for that growth.
- Read Galatians chapter four in the Hebrew Names Version found at the end of this workbook.
- Meditate on this passage, remembering that when Paul sent this to Timothy, the only Scripture they had was the TaNaKh<sup>16</sup>:

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

1Timothy 3:16-17

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Is the “Old Testament” the “kindergarten of faith” – symbolizing where we start, but what we must leave behind in order to grow in faith?
- What does Paul mean when he criticizes some for being “under the law” – does he mean that God’s Words contained in the Torah no longer have any guidance for the believer?
- Are there two covenants of salvation in Scripture – the Sinai Covenant (the “old way”) and the New Covenant (the “new way”)?

### ***Historical Context***

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<sup>16</sup> TaNaKh = *Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim* [Law, Prophets, Writings, or what some call the “Old Testament”]

## Elementary Principles of the World

It is often assumed (incorrectly), that Galatians 4:3; 9 refers to “the law” when it speaks of “elementary principles.” Classical Christianity’s bias against all things Jewish can blind us to the historical use of language and idiom. This is one of those cases.

The Greek word used for “elementary things” in these verses is the word “*stoicheia*.” We know quite a bit about this word even though it is used only a few times in the Apostolic Scriptures. We know about *stoicheia* because it was a word used often in the idolatrous myths and pagan philosophies of the First Century. The word is never used in the Septuagint.<sup>17</sup>

On its own, the word simply means “things side by side.” It is used of letters in the alphabet or numbers in sequence. When linked to “of this world” [*tou kosmos*] it is speaking of something specific.

In the world of Greek myths, the world was made of four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. These elements were placed in the Greek pantheon.<sup>18</sup> So ingrained in the culture and science of the day even Jewish philosopher Philo used the *stoicheia* to explain the basic elements of the universe. Paul sees *stoicheia* as a pagan idea, and uses the word here to warn the Galatians against returning to this idolatrous concept.

## Under the Law

Paul uses the phrase “under the law” several times in his other epistles. He uses it four times in Galatians. Classical Christian theology uses this phrase to determine that the Torah (or the “Old Law” as it is referred to) is no longer governing in the life of a believer. Viewed in this way, Paul not only annuls the eternal words of God, he seems to say that it is a sin to obey the Torah – and a return to bondage to obey the commandments of God. This is not possible. So what does Paul mean when he uses the phrase?

In First Century Judaism, “under the Torah” [in Greek, “*hupo nomon*”] refers to Jewish identity.

*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law...*

Galatians 4:4a

*...and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.*

1Corinthians 9:20

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<sup>17</sup> Septuagint (or “LXX”), the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures.

<sup>18</sup> earth as “Demeter”, water as “Poseidon”, air as “Hera”, fire as “Hephaestus”

In these instances, “under the law” is denoting Jewish identity. Paul uses the phrase in similar fashion in Galatians, where the context is how Gentiles were being told by some that they could attain covenant membership, by “becoming a Jew” through ritual conversion (aka “circumcision”). This context reminds us that one of the steps of ritual conversion: accepting of the “whole Torah,” both written and oral (i.e. the traditions of the Sages).

The steps to for ritual conversion to Judaism as outlined in the Talmud are:

- An injunction to accept the whole Torah, both Written and Oral
- Circumcision
- Immersion

In Galatians, “under the Torah” indicates a means of obtaining covenant membership by “becoming Jewish.” In almost every instance where Paul uses this phrase, it is somehow tied to Jewish identity.

### **The Allegory, the Idiom “Mountain”**

A mountain is something that towers over the land around it. It is established and unshakable. It has served as an idiom throughout the ages. In the modern vernacular it is similar to the phrase, “He was like a *rock* - immovable!” Among the Rabbis and Sages, “an uprooter of mountains” was an idiom to describe one who could with biblical logic argue well.

*This we can illustrate from the case of Rabbah [Rabbah bar Nachmani] and Rabbi Yosef. For Rabbi Yosef was “Sinai” and Rabbah was “an uprooter of mountains.” The time came when they were required [to be head of the Academy]. They sent there [to Palestine] to ask, as between “Sinai” and an “uprooter of mountains,” which should have the preference?*

b.Berachot 64a

The Third Century Sages, Rabbah bar Nachmani and Rabbi Yosef were contemporaries. Rabbi Yosef was known for having an encyclopedic knowledge of tradition, where as Rabbah bar Nachmani was known for his ability to argue a case extremely well. It brings to light several interesting usages for the word “mountain” in the Apostolic Scriptures:

*So Yeshua answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.*

Matthew 21:21

Here, Yeshua expresses a desire that His disciples be faithful “uprooters of mountains.”

*For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children — but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

Galatians 4:22-26

In this second instance the idiom fits quite well, where “Sinai” represents the traditional covenantal understanding of First Century Judaism. The Sages considered that all Israel stood at Sinai and accepted the covenant there – on the basis of *their ethnicity alone*. Being Jewish, and having the mark of that “Jewishness” (i.e. circumcision) *is what made them the covenant people of God*. Naturally, they assumed that ritual conversion to Judaism (or “circumcision” – to “become Jewish”) was the only avenue for Gentiles to join the covenant relationship. This is the bondage of “Mount Sinai” – and not the Torah itself that was given at Sinai. It refers to the traditions, not God’s instructions (the Torah).

In this passage, Paul shows himself to be quite an “uprooter of mountains” himself.

### ***What Scripture Says***

Paul saw several dangers for the recipients of his epistle to the Galatians. First, there was a danger that they might consider ritual conversion as a valid means to enter into covenant with God. Secondly, that they might return to forms of idolatry, especially those that were present in philosophical Judaism as represented in the teachings of Philo, the Jewish philosopher.

Read the following passages that contain the word “*stoicheia*.” Comment on how they relate to a danger of returning to some forms of idolatry, specifically the philosophical understanding of the elements of the universe:

Galatians 4:3:

Galatians 4:9:

Colossians 2:8-10:

Colossians 2:19-23:

How is it possible that classical Christian theology considers the Torah to be “elementary things of the world” and something that should be left behind? Now read the following passages and comment on the value of the Torah:

Deuteronomy 6:24-25:

Deuteronomy 17:18-19:

Deuteronomy 30:9-16:

Psalms 1:1-2:

Psalms 19:7-11:

Proverbs 3:17-18 (the “she” is the Torah, or “Wisdom” as Solomon calls it):

Proverbs 6:23:

Proverbs 13:14:

John 12:49-50 (does Yeshua give a different “commandment” than the Father?):

Revelation 22:14:

Going back “under the law” is something that everyone who comes from a classical evangelical background has been taught to abhor. Does that mean that we are to be lawless? Certainly that was not what was intended in classical Christian theology. Rather, it is clear from history that the real objection that Christianity has had to being “under the law” is the historic despising of anything seen as “Jewish.” In this line of thinking, “Jewish” is the antithesis of “faith.” Read and comment on the following usages of the phrase “under the law” or “under law”:

1Corinthians 9:19-22:

Galatians 4:4:

Galatians 4:5:

Galatians 4:21:

Galatians 5:18:

Is it possible that Paul has set aside the Law of God, the Torah? If so, then he was a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). Read and comment on the high view with which both David and Paul regard the Torah:

Psalms 119:1:

Psalms 119:18:

Psalms 119:77:

Psalms 119:92:

Psalms 119:126:

Romans 3:31:

Romans 6:15 (read the definition of sin in 1John 3:4: sin = *anomia* = “against the Torah”):

Romans 7:12-14:

Romans 7:22:

Is the Torah bondage? May it never be thought of as such! James calls it the royal Torah of liberty. John speaks of obedience to God’s instructions as being vital for our living for Him. Read and comment on the following passages:

James 2:8-12:

1John 2:3-6:

1John 5:2-3:



How many covenants are found in Scripture? In Galatians 4:24, it seems that Paul is saying that the two “covenants” (some would say these are “Sinai Covenant” and the “New Covenant”) are antithetical. Is that possible? Surely Paul said differently. Read the following and comment on the idea of God’s covenants ever being antithetical:

Genesis 17:7:

Exodus 34:1-10:

Galatians 3:15:

Galatians 3:17:

Of course, to those who think the “Sinai” being mentioned in Galatians 4:24 represents the covenant made at Sinai, the questions should be answered, *“Which covenant at Sinai? There are at least two.”* And additionally, *“What about the covenant made on the plains of Moab in Deuteronomy? Is that ‘Sinai’ as well?”* No, the “covenant” mentioned in Galatians 4:24 is not God’s covenant at all – but the mistaken understanding that ethnic status is how one enters the covenant.

### **Conclusion**

In 1Peter 3:15-16 Peter characterizes Paul as, “speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction.” There is a real danger in taking Paul’s words and allowing them to stand all on their own. If we do, we will misunderstand. The Holy Spirit means for us to understand Paul’s words. They were given to us as Scripture. They are profitable. To understand them however, they must be held against the balance of Scripture – and understood within their context. If we are careful to do this, we will work diligently to discover Paul’s meaning rather than allowing his words to undo Scripture as some have done.

Paul himself challenges us to use Scripture as a guide for righteous living.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

1Timothy 3:16-17

Let us be diligent to understand Galatians as the Holy Spirit intends – for it is intended as instruction in righteous living...

### ***Prayer Focus***

The *Shacharit* [morning] prayer service begins with prayers of praise for God as Creator. In His work of the beginning, we know that angels were created early on. Drawn largely from passages in the Prophets, this prayer reflects upon the angels' response to the Almighty and how they praise Him continually. As Isaiah and Revelation tell us, these holy ones are ever before Throne of the Almighty, singing His praises. May we join them in praise of our Redeemer and King! May we too accept upon ourselves the yoke of heavenly sovereignty daily. ***The Torah is not bondage, it declares our freedom!***

#### ***Tit'barach***

*May You be blessed, our Rock, our King, and Redeemer, Creator of holy ones; may Your Name be praised forever, our King, O fashioner of ministering angels; all of Whose ministering angels stand at the summit of the Universe and proclaim – with awe, together, loudly - the word of the Living God and King of the Universe. They are all beloved; they are all flawless; they are all mighty, they all do the will of their Maker with dread and reverence. And they open their mouth in holiness and purity, in song and hymn - and bless, praise, glorify, revere, sanctify, and declare the Kingship of...*

*The Name of God, the great, mighty, and awesome King; holy is He. Then they all accept upon themselves the yoke of heavenly sovereignty from one another, and grant permission to one another to sanctify the One Who formed them, with tranquility, with clear articulation, and with sweetness. All of them as one proclaim His holiness and with awe:*

*"Holy, holy, holy is HaShem, Master of Legions, the whole world is filled with His glory."*

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## Lesson Eleven: Galatians Chapter Five – Walk by the Spirit

*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:25

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

Ezekiel 36:26-27

### ***As You Begin***

- Find a quiet place and start your study with prayer.
- Ask the Father, Who gives to all generously, to fill you with His Holy Spirit, and cause you to walk in a way pleasing to Him.
- Read Galatians chapter five in the Hebrew Names Version found at the end of this workbook.
- Meditate on this passage:

*But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My Torah in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

Jeremiah 31:33

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- Would the Spirit of God ever lead us to disobey God's instructions?
- If the "works of the Flesh" are disobedience, and the Flesh is contrary to the Spirit – what are the works of the Spirit (the "Fruit of the Spirit") – are they obedience?
- Does not being "under the Law" mean I am free to sin?

### ***Historical Context***

#### **The Singularity of the Torah**

*Yes, I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

*For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Galatians 5:3; 14

Some commentators find it unique the way that Paul distills the “whole law” into a single unit. However, this is the way that it was treated in the First Century and before. Instead of a collection of commandments, it was seen as a single command.

*Another [Baraitha] taught: Because he hath despised the word of the Lord — this refers to him who maintains that the Torah is not from Heaven. And even if he asserts that the whole Torah is from Heaven, excepting a particular verse, which [he maintains] was not uttered by God but by Moses himself, he is included in "because he hath despised the word of the Lord."*

b.Sanhedrin 99a

*Isaiah came and reduced them to six [principles], as it is written, He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, He that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hand from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ear from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil; he shall dwell on high...*

*Micah came and reduced them to three [principles], as it is written, It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: only to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly before thy God...*

*Again came Isaiah and reduced them to two [principles], as it is said, Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye justice and do righteousness. Amos came and reduced them to one [principle], as it is said, For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye Me and live. To this R. Nahman b. Isaac demurred, saying: [Might it not be taken as,] Seek Me by observing the whole Torah and live? — But it is Habakuk who came and based them all on one [principle], as it is said, but the righteous shall live by his faith.*

b.Makkot 24a

Paul would have completely agreed with Hillel who said:

*“What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it.”*

b.Shabbat 31a

But the “whole law” to the Sages did not only apply to the written Torah, but the oral Torah as well. As we have previously seen, the teachings of the Sages were included in the understanding of what the “whole Torah” encompassed. Paul’s point in Galatians 5:3 relates to the proselyte’s commitment to adhere to both the written and the oral Torah.

Scripture itself reduces the commandments to a single unit. Numerous times in the Torah, all of the commandments of God are simply called “the commandment.” Sometimes this is done at the expense of what appears to be proper grammar (at least in English). This is why some English translations do not correctly translate the word *הַמִּצְוָה* (*ha-mitzvah*), “the

commandment”) as singular. This is unfortunate, because it can obscure the fact that the whole Torah is “the Commandment.”

*Now this is **the Commandment**, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.*

Deuteronomy 6:1-2

*For **this Commandment** which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.*

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

It is this passage that Paul quotes in Romans 10:5-8. The Apostolic Scriptures also teach the singularity of the Torah.

*[Yeshua] said to them, “All too well you reject **the Commandment** [singular] of God, that you may keep your tradition.”*

Mark 7:9

*That you keep **the Commandment** [singular] without spot, blameless until our Lord Messiah Yeshua's appearing.*

1Timothy 6:14

## Walking the Walk

Nearly sixty times in the Apostolic Scriptures, the Greek word περιπατέω [*paripateo* = walk] is used to describe how someone lives their life.

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind.*

Ephesians 4:17

*This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.*

2John 6

“Walk” was a common Hebrew idiom for the way of living. The word used in the TaNaKh is **הלך** [*halak*]. To this day, the noun form “*halakah*” is used to refer to specific traditional methods one uses to obey Torah commandments.

To “walk in the Spirit” is not a new idea for Paul. It was something that comes from the Torah first.

*You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.*

Deuteronomy 13:4

### **The Persecution of Paul**

*But I, brothers, if I still proclaim circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been removed.*

Galatians 5:11

On many levels it is a shame that Paul is viewed by some as one who nullified the “Jewish Law” for Christians. In some circles, he is even praised for being anti-Semitic. Our brother Paul has been falsely accused. What is a shame is that he suffered for the opposite reason – his love for Israel, and his strong support for “the Law.” Paul was diligent to maintain his status in the Jewish community. Many know that Paul was beaten because of his refusal compromise with Jewish authorities regarding Yeshua. Paul tells us:

*Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold — I speak foolishly — I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Messiah? — I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.*

2Corinthians 11:18-24

What may not be known is *why* Paul was beaten. It was because *he chose* to be beaten. Excommunication was an option that Paul never chose. In the Second Temple period, if someone was convicted of a crime that bore the penalty of *karet* [to be cut off], he had two choices:

- To be excommunicated as the penalty
- To be beaten with forty blows (minus one) – and thus pay the penalty in full

Proof of Paul's love for Israel is found in the fact that five times he went under the blows. The reason why the forty were reduced by one was because of the real possibility of dying – and the one delivering the blows was himself guilty of murder if the recipient died and there was one blow beyond the proscribed forty.

*MISHNAH. ALL WHO HAVE INCURRED [THE PENALTY OF] KARETH, ON BEING FLOGGED OBTAIN REMISSION FROM THEIR PUNISHMENT OF KARETH; FOR IT IS SAID, FORTY HE SHALL HAVE HIM BEATEN HE SHALL NOT EXCEED . . . LEST THY BROTHER SHALL BE DISHONoured BEFORE THINE EYES, WHICH SHOWS THAT ON HAVING RECEIVED THE FLOGGING HE IS [CONSIDERED] "THY BROTHER": THESE ARE THE WORDS OF R. HANANIAH B. GAMALIEL. AND, SAID R. HANANIAH B. GAMALIEL, IF IN ONE TRANSGRESSION A TRANSGRESSOR FORFEITS HIS SOUL, HOW MUCH MORE SHOULD ONE WHO PERFORMS ONE PRECEPT HAVE HIS SOUL GRANTED HIM?*

b.Makkot 23a

This passage reveals the deep and abiding love that Paul had for the Jewish community. He surrendered himself to possible death five times, just to keep from being rejected from his brothers and sisters. It is sad that so many of those who quote Paul to condemn Israel, do not know the context of the words of this great and learned man – and his deep love for his fellow Jews. While it is true that he was never received by many leaders in his day and the generations that followed, yet if they had been able to see his teaching as godly reproof, they would have understood him better.

*R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: I wonder if there is one in this generation who knows how to reprove! R. Johanan b. Nuri said: I call heaven and earth to witness for myself that often was Akiba punished through me because I used to complain against him before our Rabban, Gamaliel Beribbi, and all the more he showered love upon me, to make true what has been said: Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; reprove a wise man and he will love thee.*

b.Arachin 16b

Paul brought reproof to much of the leadership of Judaism in his day. Paul felt so strongly that ritual conversion to Judaism was wrong – and yet as strongly he loved Israel – and for those reasons he was persecuted.

## ***What Scripture Says***

### **The Spirit vs. the Flesh**

Some people, when they read Galatians five, they contrast “the Law” with the Spirit. Sadly, that is not at all what is being contrasted.

Complete the chart that follows:

| The Enmity Between Flesh and Spirit |   |                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Galatians 5:13-26                   |   |                                 |
| Ref                                 | Works of the Flesh                      | Works of the Spirit             |
| 5:13; 5:26                          | Conceit, provoking, envying one another | Through love, serve one another |



## Walk In the Spirit

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

Galatians 5:16

Ironically, some have assumed enmity between the commandments of God and the Spirit of God. How could that ever be true? The enmity is between God's commandments (which His Spirit empowers us to "live out"), and the lust of the flesh. How does "living out" the commandments of God act against the lust of the flesh? Read and comment on the following passages. Try to focus on what should be done, or not done.

Romans 6:12-14:

Romans 7:10-13:

Ephesians 4:21-24:

2Timothy 2:22:

Titus 2:11-14:

1Peter 1:13-16:

## Conclusion

*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.***

Ezekiel 36:25-27

It is a confused and inconsistent theology that in its attempts to nullify all the things that it sees as “Jewish,” places the very Spirit of God in opposition to His commandments. A sad part is that with such obfuscation, the message of Galatians chapter five can be missed. The Holy Spirit is the gift of enablement. It is the gift that gives power and life to the commandments of God!

### **Prayer Focus**

*Ahavah Rabbah* [Abundant Love] is a part of the *Shacharit* [morning] prayer service. One of the blessings of the Shema (prayed immediately before reciting the Shema) is *Ahavah Rabbah*.

#### ***Ahavah Rabbah***

*With an abundant love You have loved us, HaShem our G-d; with exceedingly great pity have You pitied us. Our Father, our King, for the sake of our forefathers, who trusted in You and whom You taught the decrees of life, may You be equally gracious to us and teach us. Our Father, the merciful Father, Who acts mercifully, have mercy upon us, instill in our hearts to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach, safeguard, perform, and fulfill all the words of Your Torah's teaching with love.*

*Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah, attach our hearts to Your commandments, and unify our hearts to love and fear Your Name, and may we not feel inner shame for all eternity. Because we have trusted in Your great and awesome holy Name, may we exult and rejoice in Your salvation.*

*Bring us in peacefulness from the four corners of the earth and lead us with upright pride to our land. For You effect salvations, O G-d; You have chosen us from among every people and tongue. And You have brought us close to Your great Name forever in truth, to offer praiseful thanks to You, and proclaim Your Oneness with love.*

*Blessed are You, HaShem, Who chooses His people Israel with Love (Amein).*

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## Lesson Twelve: Galatians Chapter Six – Do Not Grow Weary

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

1Corinthians 15:58

*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Galatians 6:9-10

*Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

James 3:18

### ***As You Begin***

- Find a quiet place and start your study with prayer.
- Are you dry and dusty from living life in this world? Ask the Father, Who gives to all freely, for strength to continue to live a life that pleases Him.
- Read Galatians chapter six in the Hebrew Names Version found at the end of this workbook.
- Meditate on this passage:

*For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.” Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

Romans 11:24-29

### ***Some Questions to Ask***

- As a Gentile follower of Messiah Yeshua, am I a part of Israel? Am I Jewish?
- Am I a part of the covenant community – the People of God?
- What is my duty with regard to greater Israel – am I to treat them as my brothers and sisters – or are they merely targets for “evangelization” like any other pagan?
- Am I ever permitted to “give up” on Israel or Jewish people?

## ***Historical Context***

Following the destruction of the Holy Temple in 70 CE, the Roman Emperor Vespasian enacted a tax called “*Fiscus Judaicus*.” This tax was levied on all Jews ostensibly to repay the cost of the Jewish Revolt (67-73 CE). Even those who lived like Jews were included in this huge financial burden. More and more, within the followers of Yeshua, the Gentiles were being given reasons not to identify with their Jewish brothers and sisters. By early in the Second Century, Gentiles within the followers of Yeshua outnumbered the Jews. With cultural and financial troubles they began to feel detached from the descents of Jacob. Added to that, there had been real persecution from some of the leadership within greater Judaism.

Gentiles began to look for theological ways to distance themselves from Israel. As a result, the Second Century saw the rise of the theological system called “Supercessionism” or as it is more commonly referred to as “Replacement Theology.” This theological system taught that the “church” has replaced Israel in regard to the promises and covenants of God. Elaborate explanations of “Old Testament” texts are created – often resorting to allegory when the plain reading of the text confirmed the eternal covenant between God and Israel.

Supercessionism provided the theological reason not only to distance “the church” from Jews, but ultimately for persecuting Jews as “Christ killers” and “disloyal slaves to Jewish law.” The pogroms that began in earnest during the Crusades were justified as a way of subduing Jews and Judaism to the superiority of “Christianity.” Countless Jews have been tortured and killed under the guise of service to the “cross” and “Christianity.”

Even the Protestant Reformation did not bring to light the error of Supercessionism. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin were decidedly anti-Semitic, not only in their theology, but in their words and deeds. Martin Luther’s own words added fuel to the fire of the Jew-hatred. Eventually, errant theology is born out in terrible deeds. Imagine the words of Martin Luther as they undoubtedly echoed in the minds of those in Germany in the 1930s. From his tract, “*The Jews and Their Lies*” he wrote:

*What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews?*

*First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christian.*

*Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. Instead they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn, like the gypsies.*

*Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.*

*Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.*

*Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like.*

*Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping. The reason for such a measure is that, as said above, they have no other means of earning a livelihood than usury, and by it they have stolen and robbed from us all they possess.*

*Seventh, I commend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, as was imposed on the children of Adam. For it is not fitting that they should let us accursed Goyim toil in the sweat of our faces while they, the holy people, idle away their time behind the stove, feasting and farting, and on top of all, boasting blasphemously of their lordship over the Christians by means of our sweat. No, one should toss out these lazy rogues by the seat of their pants.*

*But what will happen even if we do burn down the Jews' synagogues and forbid them publicly to praise God, to pray, to teach, to utter God's name? They will still keep doing it in secret. If we know that they are doing this in secret, it is the same as if they were doing it publicly. For our knowledge of their secret doings and our toleration of them implies that they are not secret after all and thus our conscience is encumbered with it before God.<sup>19</sup>*

Martin Luther

Martin Luther's little book, *"The Jews and Their Lies"* was published and distributed by the Nazis in the 1930s.

Supercessionism was the dominant theological construct from the Second Century until the late Nineteenth Century, when Dispensational Theology appeared on the scene within Protestant denominations. Supercessionism had answered the question "Is God finished with Israel?" with a decided "yes." Dispensationalism answered the same question with "yes, for the time being." Dispensationalism sprang from the difficulties that Supercessionism had in explaining away the future restoration of Israel as found in the Prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc.). Dispensationalism wanted to treat those passages as literal. However well-intentioned, as a theological system it still could not deal with what

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Volume 47: The Christian in Society IV*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). pp 268-293

Supercessionism had done in “theologizing” the “Old Testament” – there were still those “Jewish things” to deal with. With Dispensationalism, the overt ugliness and anti-Semitism of Supercessionism was replaced with a kinder gentler theology that still considers the commandments of the Almighty to be “Jewish Law.” Nearly all of Christian theology falls into one of these two camps: Supercessionism and Dispensationalism.

For the most part, Dispensationalism over the past hundred years has provided a stable ground for nurturing an interest in (and even a love for) Israel and the Jewish people. However, it did that at the expense of a principle biblical concept: **God has only one People**. All of the promises made were to one family: The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.

So the ancient Sages of Israel weren’t so far off – if Gentiles wanted to be a part of the covenant, they needed to be a part of the family of Jacob – they needed to become a part of Israel. But as Paul warns, it was not by “becoming Jews.”

There was another way: **to be adopted**. And this was Paul’s reason for writing the Epistle to the Galatians.

### ***What Scripture Says***

Paul’s picture of the believer being “grafted into” Israel is an enduring one. The picture of Israel as the cultivated Olive Tree is beautifully expressed. David described himself and those who are of faith as a “green olive tree.”

*But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.*

Psalms 52:4

Read Romans 11:17-24. Paul drew his analogy of Israel as the Olive Tree undoubtedly from Jeremiah 11:16-17. Complete the chart that follows (not all ideas are expressed in both passages, but include them regardless):

| The Olive Tree   |  |
|--|--|
| Jeremiah 11:16-17  | Romans 11:17-24  |
| Israel and Judah: “Green Olive Tree”<br>Kindled a fire and branches broken | Israel: olive tree; Gentiles: “wild olive tree”<br>Some branches cut off |
|  |  |

Now read and comment on Paul's statement in Romans 11:1-2:

Considering that Paul drew his Romans 11 "Olive Tree" analogy from Jeremiah 11, where could he have gotten the *positive restoration* of the Olive Tree?

Read Ezekiel 37:1-28 and in the chart that follows, list the things that God will do in restoring Israel.

### The Restoration of Israel: Ezekiel 37

Bones are the whole house of Israel... [I] will bring you into the Land of Israel  
You shall know that I am the LORD

In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians he openly explains what had previously been only hinted at. In Ephesians chapters two and three, Paul reveals the "mystery of the Gospel" – where he explains God's plan from the beginning was to graft Gentiles *into* Israel.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3:12 and answer the following:

In 2:1-9, the way we are "saved" is outlined. How are we "saved?"

In 2:10: for what purpose were we "saved?"

In 2:11: Who is directly addressed?

In 2:1-3 and 2:11-12 how are those to whom he is writing described?

2:13-17 repeats the way these are "saved" – how are they "saved?"<sup>20</sup>

In 2:18-22, Paul uses three analogies for the covenant community. How many "countries" or "families" or "temples" are named?

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<sup>20</sup> In verse 15, if your translation uses something akin to "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" it is a poor translation. The word "ordinances" is the Greek word "*dogma*" which always refers to man-made commandments, not God's.



In 3:1-5, Paul tells the reader that he is now going to reveal a mystery. In verse 6 and following, what is the mystery, now revealed?

Now is the time to write down in your own words what you have learned. We have asked many questions. Among them, we have asked, *“Does all Israel have a part in the World to Come;”* *“Are followers of Messiah members of the family of Israel?”* and *“Who is Israel?”* We have discussed many possible answers to those questions. We have seen what Scripture says while we have attempted to maintain the historical context. What does it all mean? *What does it all mean to you?*

## ***Conclusion***

Paul was fearful for the believers in Galatia. He was fearful that they would forget how they had come to faith, how they had become covenant members. He was fearful that they would think that something else was needed for their full membership in the family of God. He was fearful that they would succumb to man-made rituals at the expense of the plain teaching and the commandments of God. Is it any different today?

Are there some who think that they can become covenant members by departing Judaism and claiming that they are “Christians” now?

Are there some who think that they can become covenant members by departing “Christianity” and undergoing ritual conversion to “Judaism?”

Are there some who think that they can become covenant members by “walking an aisle” or “raising their hand?”

Are there some who think that God has different standards for His people, depending upon whether they are Jew or Gentile?

Are there some who think that there are “two peoples or God” – the “church” and Israel?

Do you think that being Gentile or Jewish is what matters?

*Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.*

1Corinthians 7:19

What can be added to the work of Messiah?

Nothing.

### **Prayer Focus**

#### ***Aleinu***

*It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to ascribe greatness to the Molder of primeval creation, for He has not made us like the nations of the lands and has not emplaced us like the families of the earth; for He has not assigned our portion like theirs nor our lot like all their multitudes (for they bow to vanity and emptiness and pray to a god which helps not). But we bend our knees, bow, and acknowledge our thanks before the King Who reigns over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He. He stretches out heaven and establishes earth's foundation, the seat of His homage is in the heavens above and His powerful Presence is in the loftiest heights He is our God and there is none other. True is our King, there is nothing beside Him, as it is written in His Torah: “You are to know this day and take to your heart that HaShem is the only God – in heaven above and on the earth below – there is none other.”*

*Therefore we put our hope in You, HaShem our God, that we may soon see Your mighty splendor, to remove detestable idolatry from the earth, and false gods will be utterly cut off, to perfect the universe through the Almighty's sovereignty. Then all humanity will call upon Your Name, to turn all the earth's wicked toward You. All the world's inhabitants will recognize and know that to You every knee should bend, every tongue should swear. Before You, HaShem, our God, they will bend every knee and cast themselves down and to the glory of Your Name they will render homage, and they will all accept upon themselves the yoke of Your Kingship that You may reign over them soon and eternally. For the Kingdom is Yours and You will reign over all eternity in glory as it is written in Your Torah: HaShem shall reign for all eternity. And it is said: HaShem will be King over all the world – on that day HaShem will be One and His Name will be One.*

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## Hebrew Names Version: Epistle to the Galatians

1:1 Paul, an emissary (not from men, neither through man, but through Yeshua the Messiah, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), 1:2 and all the brothers who are with me, to the assemblies of Galatia: 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, 1:4 who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father—1:5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1:6 I marvel that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Messiah to a different “good news”; 1:7 and there isn’t another “good news.” Only there are some who trouble you, and want to pervert the “good news” of Messiah. 1:8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should proclaim to you any “good news” other than that which we preached to you, let him be cursed. 1:9 As we have said before, so I now say again: if any man preaches to you any “good news” other than that which you received, let him be cursed. 1:10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? For if I were still pleasing men, I wouldn’t be a servant of Messiah. 1:11 But I make known to you, brothers, concerning the “good news” which was preached by me, that it is not according to man. 1:12 For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Yeshua the Messiah. 1:13 For you have heard of my way of living in time past in Judaism, how that beyond measure I persecuted the assembly of God, and ravaged it. 1:14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 1:15 But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me through his grace, 1:16 to

reveal his Son in me, that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I didn't immediately confer with flesh and blood, 1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were emissaries before me, but I went away into Arabia. Then I returned to Damascus. 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter, and stayed with him fifteen days. 1:19 But of the other emissaries I saw no one, except Jacob, the Lord's brother. 1:20 Now about the things which I write to you, behold, before God, I'm not lying. 1:21 Then I came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 1:22 I was still unknown by face to the assemblies of Judea which were in Messiah, 1:23 but they only heard: "He who once persecuted us now preaches the faith that he once tried to destroy." 1:24 And they glorified God in me.

2:1 Then after a period of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. 2:2 I went up by revelation, and I laid before them the "good news" which I proclaim among the Gentiles, but privately before those who were respected, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. 2:3 But not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 2:4 This was because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who stole in to spy out our liberty which we have in Messiah Yeshua, that they might bring us into bondage; 2:5 to whom we gave no place in the way of subjection, not for an hour, that the truth of the "good news" might continue with you. 2:6 But from those who were reputed to be important (whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God doesn't show partiality to man)—they, I say, who were respected imparted nothing to me, 2:7 but to the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the "good news" for the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the "good news" for the circumcision 2:8 (for he who appointed Peter to be an emissary of the circumcision appointed me also to the Gentiles); 2:9 and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, Jacob and Kefa and Yochanan, they

who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision. 2:10 They only asked us to remember the poor—which very thing I was also zealous to do.

2:11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I resisted him to his face, because he stood condemned. 2:12 For before some people came from Jacob, he ate with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 2:13 And the rest of the Jewish believers joined him in his hypocrisy; so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 2:14 But when I saw that they didn't walk uprightly according to the truth of the "good news", I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live as the Gentiles do, and not as the Jews do, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as the Jews do?"

2:15 "We, being Jews by birth, and not Gentile sinners, 2:16 yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Yeshua the Messiah, even we believed in Messiah Yeshua, that we might be justified by faith in Messiah, and not by the works of the law, because no flesh will be justified by the works of the law. 2:17 But if, while we sought to be justified in Messiah, we ourselves also were found sinners, is Messiah a servant of sin? Certainly not! 2:18 For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a law-breaker. 2:19 For I, through the law, died to the law, that I might live to God. 2:20 I have been crucified with Messiah, and it is no longer I that live, but Messiah living in me. That life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. 2:21 I don't make void the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Messiah died for nothing!"

3:1 Foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you not to obey the truth, before whose eyes Yeshua the Messiah was openly set forth among you as crucified? 3:2 I just want to learn this from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing of faith? 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now completed in the flesh? 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain, if it is indeed in vain? 3:5 He therefore who supplies the Spirit to you, and works miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the law, or by hearing of faith? 3:6 Even as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” 3:7 Know therefore that those who are of faith, the same are children of Abraham. 3:8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the “good news” beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you all the nations will be blessed.” 3:9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who doesn’t continue in all things that are written in the scroll of the Torah, to do them.” 3:11 Now that no man is justified by the law before God is evident, for, “The righteous will live by faith.” 3:12 The law is not of faith, but, “The man who does them will live by them.”

3:13 Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree,” 3:14 that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Messiah Yeshua; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 3:15 Brothers, speaking of human terms, though it is only a man’s covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds to it. 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He doesn’t say, “To seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “To your seed,” which is Messiah. 3:17 Now I say this. A covenant confirmed beforehand by God in Messiah, the law, which came four hundred thirty years after, does not annul, so as to

make the promise of no effect. 3:18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by promise.

3:19 What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise has been made. It was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. 3:20 Now a mediator is not between one, but God is one. 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could make alive, most certainly righteousness would have been of the law. 3:22 But the Scriptures imprisoned all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Yeshua the Messiah might be given to those who believe. 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, confined for the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 3:24 So that the law has become our tutor to bring us to Messiah, that we might be justified by faith. 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 3:26 For you are all children of God, through faith in Messiah Yeshua. 3:27 For as many of you as were immersed into Messiah have put on Messiah. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. 3:29 If you are Messiah's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise.

4:1 But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a bondservant, though he is lord of all; 4:2 but is under guardians and stewards until the day appointed by the father. 4:3 So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental principles of the world. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent out his Son, born to a woman, born under the law, 4:5 that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of children. 4:6 And because you are children, God sent out the

Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” 4:7 So you are no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Messiah. 4:8 However at that time, not knowing God, you were in bondage to those who by nature are not gods. 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, why do you turn back again to the weak and miserable elemental principles, to which you desire to be in bondage all over again? 4:10 You observe days, months, seasons, and years. 4:11 I am afraid for you, that I might have wasted my labor for you. 4:12 I beg you, brothers, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong, 4:13 but you know that because of weakness of the flesh I preached the “good news” to you the first time. 4:14 That which was a temptation to you in my flesh, you didn’t despise nor reject; but you received me as an angel of God, even as Messiah Yeshua.

4:15 What was the blessing you enjoyed? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. 4:16 So then, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? 4:17 They zealously seek you in no good way. No, they desire to alienate you, that you may seek them. 4:18 But it is always good to be zealous in a good cause, and not only when I am present with you.

4:19 My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Messiah is formed in you— 4:20 but I could wish to be present with you now, and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. 4:21 Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, don’t you listen to the law? 4:22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the free woman. 4:23 However, the son by the handmaid was born according to the flesh, but the son by the free woman was born through promise. 4:24 These things contain an allegory, for these are two



covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar. 4:25 For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to the Jerusalem that exists now, for she is in bondage with her children. 4:26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 4:27 For it is written,

“Rejoice, you barren who don’t bear. Break forth and shout, you that don’t travail. For more are the children of the desolate than of her who has a husband.”

4:28 Now we, brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 4:29 But as then, he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. 4:30 However what does the Scripture say? “Throw out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the handmaid will not inherit with the son of the free woman.” 4:31 So then, brothers, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the free woman.

5:1 Stand firm therefore in the liberty by which Messiah has made us free, and don’t be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. 5:2 Behold, I, Paul, tell you that if you receive circumcision, Messiah will profit you nothing. 5:3 Yes, I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 5:4 You are alienated from Messiah, you who desire to be justified by the law. You have fallen away from grace. 5:5 For we, through the Spirit, by faith wait for the hope of righteousness. 5:6 For in Messiah Yeshua neither circumcision amounts to anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love. 5:7 You were running well! Who interfered with you that you should not obey the truth? 5:8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you. 5:9 A little yeast grows through the whole lump. 5:10 I have confidence toward you in the Lord that you will think no other way. But he who troubles you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

5:11 But I, brothers, if I still proclaim circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been removed. 5:12 I wish that those who disturb you would cut themselves off. 5:13 For you, brothers, were called for freedom. Only don't use your freedom for gain to the flesh, but through love be servants to one another. 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, be careful that you don't consume one another. 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, that you may not do the things that you desire. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness, 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, 5:21 envyings, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these; of which I forewarn you, even as I also forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, 5:23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 5:24 Those who belong to Messiah have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let's also walk by the Spirit. 5:26 Let's not become conceited, provoking one another, and envying one another.

6:1 Brothers, even if a man is caught in some fault, you who are spiritual must restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourself so that you also aren't tempted. 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Torah of Messiah. 6:3 For if a man thinks himself to be

something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 6:4 But let each man test his own work, and then he will take pride in himself and not in his neighbor. 6:5 For each man will bear his own burden. 6:6 But let him who is taught in the word share all good things with him who teaches. 6:7 Don't be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 6:8 For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 6:9 Let us not be weary in doing good, for we will reap in due season, if we don't give up. 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let's do what is good toward all men, and especially toward those who are of the household of the faith.

6:11 See with what large letters I write to you with my own hand. 6:12 As many as desire to look good in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised; only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Messiah. 6:13 For even they who receive circumcision don't keep the law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. 6:14 But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 6:15 For in Messiah Yeshua neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. 6:16 As many as walk by this rule, peace and mercy be on them, and on God's Israel. 6:17 From now on, let no one cause me any trouble, for I bear the marks of the Lord Yeshua branded on my body.

6:18 The grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

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