

Acts of the Apostles recap notes

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

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All passages from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Major themes in Acts that recur in the apostolic letters

- The actions of the believers in Yeshua as Messiah are part of the history of Israel.
 - The spread of the words of God to the world via exiles and P'rushim (Pharisee) evangelism prepared the world for the arrival of the living Word of God, the Salvation of God.
 - As with ancient Israel, some believed the testimony of God but many didn't.
 - A "new covenant" would come via a widespread act of the Spirit of God to change hearts.
 - The offerings proscribed in the Torah pointed forward to the ultimate offering of Yeshua.
- The restoration of Israel involves the coming of the Kingdom of God.
- The Kingdom of God always was intended to reconcile the whole world to God, thus including all nations.

The actions of the believers in Yeshua as Messiah are part of the history of Israel.

- God promised that all nations would be blessed through the "seed" of Abraham.
- United Israel would be the vehicle for a "new covenant" (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–36).

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jer. 31:31–34)

 - *husband* = *לַעֲבָד* *baal* (H1166), “marry” or “rule over.”
 - *new covenant*
 - *שְׁבִיטֵי בְרִית* *berith chadash* (H2319 + H1285)
 - *καινός διαθήκη* *kainos diatheke* (G2537 + G1242)
 - *νέος καινός* *neos* (G3501b) *diatheke*: “young” (Heb. 12:24; Yeshua is the “mediator of a new covenant”)

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

“ ‘ ‘Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from 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 be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. I am not doing this for your sake,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!’ ”

“ ‘ ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. They will say, “This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.” Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.’ ” ” (Ezek. 36:22–36)

 - This passage from the prophet Y'khezq'e'l (Ezekiel, “God strengthens,” *יְחֶזְקֵאל*) doesn't include the phrase *new covenant*, but it has the same key elements of God's promise through the prophet Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah, “The LORD loosens,” *יִרְמְיָהוּ*):
 - It pertains to the House of Yisra'el.
 - The House of Yisra'el was conquered and exiled by the Assyrian empire.
 - The House of Yehudah was conquered and exiled by the Babylonian empire.

- Yehudah was allowed to start returning under the Persian empire.
- Yisra'el largely scattered among the nations, with its influence seen in cultures around the world.
- It involves God's directions for behavior:
 - Yirmeyahu: "My laws [*toratot*]"
 - Y'khezqe'el: "My statutes" and "my ordinances"
- Yet it would be a "new contract," with new responsibilities for the signatories:
 - Yisra'el broke the Sinai contract by "acting in bad faith." The people largely disregarded the LORD as God, continually refusing to believe in His promises and act accordingly.
 - Some Christians have trouble understanding the interplay between "faith" and "works," yet U.S. contractual law largely follows the description of faith in the Bible.
 - implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing

"A general assumption of the law of contracts, that people will act in good faith and deal fairly without breaking their word, using shifty means to avoid obligations or denying what the other party obviously understood. A lawsuit ... based on the breach of this covenant is often brought when the other party has been claiming technical excuses for breaching the contract or using the specific words of the contract to refuse to perform when the surrounding circumstances or apparent understanding of the parties were to the contrary."¹

 - Good faith

"Honest intent to act without taking an unfair advantage over another person or to fulfill a promise to act, even when some legal technicality is not fulfilled."²
 - Bad faith

"Intentional dishonest act by not fulfilling legal or contractual obligations, misleading another, entering into an agreement without the intention or means to fulfill it, or violating basic standards of honesty in dealing with others."³
- Who expressed "good faith" in the Sinai contract?
 - Human law can't judge a person's thoughts without their being expressed in words or actions, but God is the One Who "judges righteously, Who tries the feelings and the heart" (Jer. 11:20).
 - And the words of God can "judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).
 - *Judge* could be replaced with *critique* or *examine*, from the underlying Greek word κριτικός *kritikos*. In other words, the words of God provide a guide for determining whether what we're thinking or planning is the best for us.
 - Those intentions of the heart almost always turn into action or inaction.
 - Messiah expressed several different ways that the ancient promise of God to Yisra'el, "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it" (Deut. 30:14).

"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good" (Luke 6:45; cf. Matt 12:34; 15:18)
 - Apostle Ya'akov (James), just after writing that "speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty" (Jas. 2:12) and "mercy triumphs over judgment" (v. 13), wrote that faith must be put into action to be alive and useful:

"If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ... For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (Jas. 2:15-17, 26; cf. vv. 12-26)
 - God demonstrated "good faith" in the Sinai contract, leading up to . He held up His end of the Sinai contract.
 - " " ... the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.' " (Jer. 31:32)
 - Yisra'el breached the contract by not trusting the all that was encapsulated in God's statement, " 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.' " (Ex. 20:2).
 - "[Because] while we were still helpless, at the right time Messiah died for the ungodly.

1 Gerald and Kathleen Hill. *The People's Law Dictionary*. Fine Communications. Accessed June 19, 2010. <dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=906>

2 *Ibid.* <dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=819>

3 *Ibid.* <dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=21>.

[Because] one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. [Because] if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Yeshua Messiah, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” (Rom. 5:6–11)

- How has Yisra’el acted in “bad faith” to the Sinai contract?
 - Among many warnings Messiah Yeshua gave about hypocritical holiness (Matt. 6:2–16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; ch. 23; 24:51; Mark 7:6; Luke 6:42; 12:56; 13:15), He taught via parables that those who act like angels aren’t achieving anything long-term:

“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,” when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye. [Because] there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. ... The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart” (Luke 6:41–43, 45)
 - Apostle Yokhanan warned against such living by the loophole, i.e. hypocrisy, in several places of his first letter to far-flung congregations.
 - “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” (1st John 1:5–10)
 - Message: One cannot keep the Torah completely without the Spirit of the Torah-giver motivating behavior.
 - “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” (1st John 2:3–6)
 - Message: Though we cannot keep the Torah perfectly without God’s Spirit, the Torah is the code for behavior of believers in God.
 - “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” (1st John 2:15–17)
 - Message: Having God’s Spirit “blowing” our behavior means that we can’t keep one foot in worldly behavior and one foot in Godly behavior.
 - In the first letter, Yokhanan wrote about a “new commandment,” but he emphasized:
 - He was “not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning” (1st John 2:7).
 - Rather, this “new commandment” is “true in Him and in you” (1 John 2:8).
 - In other words, the “new commandment” was to have “truth” expressed in your behavior via God’s giving you a “new heart.”
- Israel at Sinai agreed to follow everything God said as His “holy nation” (Ex. 19:3–8), and God commanded that lapses in that agreement were to be atoned for via offerings brought by the priesthood (see the book of Leviticus).
- This “new covenant” would have the same terms of the “old covenant” in that the LORD will be Israel’s God and Israel would obey of his Torah (Jer. 31:33).
 - However, God would:

- נתן *natan* (H5414) “give” or “put” His Torah “within” the people of Israel.
 - קֶרֶב *qereb* (H7130) for “within” is translated throughout the Scriptures as physical inward parts of a person or nation, the seat of emotion (Psa. 51:10) and entrails of sacrificial animals (Lev. 1:9, 13; 3:3, 9, 14; 4:8, 11; 7:3; 8:16, 21, 25; 9:14).
 - “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psa. 51:10)
 - *create* = בָּרָא *bara* (H1254a)
 - This verb for *create* is only used in the Scriptures for God’s actions.
 - So, God must do this creating and renewing.
 - *renew* = חָדַשׁ *chadash* (H2318), to make new
 - *steadfast* = כּוּן *kun* (H3559), i.e. orderly, righteous.
 - *within* = קֶרֶב *qereb*
 - This corresponds with the New Covenant passages of Yirmeyahu and Y’khezqel, in which God puts a
 - The new creation via the Spirit of God is illustrated by the next lines:

“Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit.” (Psa. 51:11–12)

 - *restore* = חָדַשׁ *chadash*
 - *salvation* = יְשׁוּעָה *yesha* (H3468)
 - *joy* = שִׂשׂוֹן *sason* (H8342)

“And there will be a highway from Assyria For the remnant of His people who will be left, Just as there was for Israel In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt. Then you will say on that day, “I will give thanks to You, O LORD; For although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, And You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For the LORD GOD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation.” Therefore you will joyously draw water From the springs of salvation. And in that day you will say, “Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make them remember that His name is exalted.” ’” (Isa. 11:16–12:4)

 - Because the LORD is Israel’s salvation, her יְשׁוּעָה *yeshua*, He also is the spring of “salvation water” (cf. “the fountain of living water, even the LORD” Jer. 17:13).
 - How do we “drink” from this “well”?

“Now on the last day, the great day of the feast [Sukkot], Iesous stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.’ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.” ’ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Iesous was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37–39; cf. Jn. 4:10; Isa. 44:3; 55:1; 58:11)
 - This shows Kingdom of God has come and is still to come:

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. I, Iesous, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the [assemblies]. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.’ The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.” (Rev. 22:12–17)
 - *sustain* = סָמַךְ *samak* (H5564), i.e., hold up, support.
 - *willing* = נָדְבָה *nedibah* (H5082), from נָדַב *nadab* (H5068), or “to incite, impel,” i.e., moved by an external influence to do something.
 - “νεύματα ἡγεμονικῶν στήρισόν με” (Psa. 50:14 LXX), literally “via an authoritative/governing spirit support/strengthen me.”
 - The Spirit of the LORD supports us by giving us governance of our actions.
 - Critics of religion often assert that it incites the unthinking to do the unthinkable. How is God’s Spirit inciting us to do the LORD’s will?
- The context of the “gospel,” the news of the Kingdom of God, was rooted in the history and Scriptures of

Israel, as evident in the appeals of Peter on that Shavu'ot after Yeshua's resurrection, of Stephen before his execution, of Paul to the synagogues he visited and later.

- God gave His Son as the blood spilled as atonement for Israel under the new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25) and gave His Spirit as the “Inciter” for doing the will of God.
“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
“Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
“But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.” (2nd Cor. 3:1–11)
- In context of the testimony of Israel and her Messiah, we see that God's covenant with Israel never was intended to be Torah only but Torah through God's Salvation and God's Spirit.

The restoration of Israel involves the coming of the Kingdom of God.

- The Kingdom came with the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah.
 - Yeshua is the Word of God, speaking the true intent of God in the Torah and Writings.
 - Yeshua is the Lamb of God, slain to כּפּוּר *pesakh* the wrath of God against sin in the world.
 - Yeshua is the Firstfruits of the resurrection.
- The Kingdom came with the arrival of the Spirit of God with special power.
 - The Spirit of God had come with power throughout time.
 - An agent at Creation (Gen. 1:2).
 - Judging the world before the Flood (Gen. 6:3).
 - Enabling certain people for certain tasks or at certain times.
 - Craftsmen of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:3).
 - Elders of Israel (Num. 11:25).
 - Moshe hinted of a time, foretold via the prophet Yo'el (Joel 2:28-32), when the Spirit of God would fall on all of Israel (Num. 11:29).
 - Peter started his Shavu'ot appeal in the temple by quoting Yo'el (Acts 2:14–21).
 - The Spirit of God is a key agent in bringing the realm of God into the world.
 - At that great Shavu'ot, the Spirit of God was poured out in the temple as a testimony to the message of the apostles.
 - The Spirit moved through Peter, Stephen and Paul in their words and actions.
 - The Spirit testified to Stephen and the agents of the Sanhedrin that his stand for Yeshua as Israel's Messiah was warranted.
 - The Spirit gave Paul confidence during his trials, attacks and calamities that he would make it through them to the point where God wanted him. That confidence was a testimony to those around him (Felix, the people shipwrecked with him in Acts 27-28).
 - The Spirit of God came as a deposit of the finished work God would do in and through us.

The Kingdom of God always was intended to reconcile the whole world to God, thus including all nations.

- Bringing in all nations into the commonwealth of Israel was part of this reconciliation process.
- Those in Israel must not bar “the lost sheep of Israel” and other believers in the Anointed One of God from becoming part of the commonwealth of Israel.
 - This was the key undercurrent of *Acts*, starting in chapter 10.
 - Exclusionism is a key reason for the discussions about circumcision, “works of [the] law” and “under [the] law” in Paul's letters.
 - This tension led to the Council of Yerushalayim decision regarding conversion of God-fearers, recorded first in Acts 15 and recounted in Acts 21.