

Acts 1

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

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All passages are from the New American Standard version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

- What is the book known as the Acts of the Apostles?
 - It was written by someone intimately familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures and the religion of Israel.¹
 - It accurately describes Torah commandments and their observance.
 - The Shabbat
 - Israelisms: “a Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:12)
 - Shabbat-keeping
 - testifying about Yeshua on a Shabbat: Acts 13:14, 42, 44 (Pisidian Antioch); 16:13 (Phillipi); 18:4 (Corinth)
 - observed by believers: Acts 15:21
 - observance of the “feasts of the LORD”
 - mention of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, of which Passover is a part: Acts 12:3 (Herod arrests Peter during); 20:6 (Paul leaves Phillipi after)
 - Pentecost/Shavuot: Acts 2:1 (God’s Spirit descends on the 120 followers during); 20:16 (Paul hurries to make it to Yerushalayim in time for)
 - circumcision (by Paul of Timothy to be able to take him into Jewish areas, Acts 16:3)
 - nazirite vow (by Paul, Acts 18:18; by four believers in Yerushalayim, Acts 21:15–26; see Numbers 6 and Judges 13)
 - Some claim that the circumcision of Timothy, Paul’s nazirite vow and his sponsoring the four ending their nazirite vows were:
 - moments of weakness, capitulation to Pharisee believers (a.k.a. “those of the circumcision”).
 - They say he may have been weak like Peter in Antioch, when a visit by some Pharisee believers provoked Peter to separate himself from non-Jewish believers (Gal. 2:11–21).
 - evangelistic strategy: He “became all things to all men.”
 - To reach Jews and “those who fear God,” the most logical place to start would have been in the synagogue and on the Shabbat.
 - “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. 23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.” (1st Cor. 9:19–23)
 - After all, Paul wrote to the Colossian congregation: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: 17 which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body [is] Messiah’s. 18 Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increasing with the increase of God. 20 If you died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances, 21 “Handle not, nor taste, nor touch” 22 (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; [but are] not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.” (Col. 2:16–23)
 - Consider the ramifications of these interpretations of the apostles’ continued observance and teaching of the Torah after the resurrection of Yeshua:
 - Paul’s rebuke of Peter’s hypocrisy is recorded, and for good reason, so why wouldn’t Paul’s hypocrisy have been challenged?
 - If Paul’s observance of the Torah was “put on” to get him close to people to be a witness of

¹ McKee, J.K. “Acts of the Apostles.” *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*. TNN Press, Kissimmee, Fla., 2006. <www.tnnonline.net> pp. 25–28.

God's Anointed One, what kind of witness would that have been when he finally "took off" the Torah after convert's baptism in the name of Yeshua?

- It was written for those familiar with common Greek writing.
 - It describes events and details, such as travel routes and time spent in various locations, to a level of found in other Greek works, such as Homer's *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey*.
 - Scholars call the Greek used in Acts among the most refined found in the Apostolic Scriptures.
 - The Greek style is similar to that of the account of Yeshua's life attributed to Luke.
 - The Greek is said to be similar to that of the Septuagint's.
 - Some of this can be seen in comparing Acts and Peter's letters in a more literal translation.
 - The first chapter of Acts uses the standard opening used in multivolume Greek works.
 - Brief recap of the previous work (Acts 1:1–5).
 - Summary of the new volume (Acts 1:6–8).
 - The restoration of Israel — Messiah's other role — would come when God has scheduled it to come.
 - The mission of the moment is to go with the power of the Spirit of God to be witnesses of Yeshua's words, deeds and "infallible proofs" of His resurrection, as described in the first volume, throughout Yudea (Judea), Samaria and the rest of the planet.
 - The work is addressed to "Theophilus," or "Friend of God." It's the same name and introductory style as Luke's account of Yeshua.
- It covers about 30 years of history from just after Yeshua's resurrection to Paul's house arrest in Rome.
 - It records the "breakout," as one commentator put it², of the promise God's reconciliation to Him via Messiah from being only for Jews to being for all people, as promised to Abraham and reiterated by King Solomon and the prophets.
 - Luke's account of the "great commission" of the apostles to reach the world (Acts 1:8)
 - Peter's vision of the unclean animals on the tallit and his visit with Cornelius (Acts 10 & 11)
 - The Yerushalayim Council, during which the elders decided to allow the Spirit to draw in and mature believers from the goyim (Acts 15)
- The book of the Acts of the Apostles compares well with the historical accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures.
 - Both contain the story of Israel.
 - *Yisrael* is Hebrew for "struggles with God." It was the name the messenger of God gave Ya'akov after wrestling with Him all night (Gen. 32:28).
 - Both advance God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations through him.
 - God picked Abraham's descendants through Yitzkhak and Yisra'el to become "a nation of intermediaries and a set-apart nation" (Ex. 19:6).
 - Wherever Yisra'el went, free or in captivity, the truth about the Creator God went with its people.
 - The nations — goyim in Hebrew, gentiles in Greek — would be "grafted into" the "tree" of Yisra'el after God pruned the "dead wood" from the tree (Romans 11).
 - Believers in Yeshua as the Anointed One of God to bring reconciliation between God and man are to be God's ambassadors of this good news of reconciliation to the nations (2nd Cor. 5:20).
 - Both contain accounts of mighty words and deeds wrought by messengers of God via the Spirit and Word of the the LORD.
 - Both contain widespread rejection of God's messages, prophecies and miracles by many of those who were supposed to be God's shepherds of Israel.
 - Both have messages from God based on the Word of God.
 - The history of Israel records the actions according to or against His Word.
 - Prophecy is based on that Word and that history.
 - Both contain the record of God's adoption into Israel of those loyal to Him from the nations.
 - **Rahab** and **Ruth** became part of Israel and Messiah's human lineage.
 - **Uriah** was a Hittite but a trusted general of David's.
 - Roman soldiers such as **Cornelius** (Acts 10 & 11) were God-fearers.
 - Both contain examples of God influencing mighty powers through His servants acting from seemingly weak positions.
 - **Yosef** was a slave who became prime minister of Egypt because of his loyalty and God's direction.
 - **David** was a young man when he faced Goliath on the battlefield and defeated him.
 - **Daniel** was a prisoner of war who faithfully served Babylon and Medo-Persia as prime minister.
 - **Israel** was a tiny vassal of Rome, but it influenced the whole empire.

² Dart, Ronald L. *Christian Origins Bible Study Series Book 1: The Breakout*.

<<http://www.borntowin.net/newsite/Store/index.aspx?depart=cem&category=christian%20origins&id=4>>

- **Peter and Paul** were beaten and pursued for bringing the good news to the world of reconciliation to God through Messiah Yeshua, but their work advanced more strongly.
- It's often taught that there is a big difference between the "Word of the LORD" or the "Spirit of God" in the Hebrew Scriptures coming and going from God's prophets, leaders and others, and the Spirit remaining on people in the Apostolic Scriptures.
 - Having a Spirit-blown course in life is a big theme in Acts as well as the apostolic letters.
 - We will see a distinction made in Acts between the "mikvah of Yokhanan" or the "mikvah of repentance" (Acts 1:5; 10:27; 13:24; 18:25; 19:4) and the "mikvah of the Spirit" (Matt. 3:11 et al).
 - Peter clarifies the progression a believer in God needs to go through from conviction to repentance to justification to Spirit-led direction in life (Acts 2, especially v. 38).
- Now that we have an overview of the book of Acts, let's look more closely at chapter 1.
 - Why did Yeshua spend 40 days with His closest followers before He returned to Heaven (Acts 1:3)?
 - He gave "convincing proofs"³:
 1. Appeared Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary (Matt. 28:1–9).
 2. Appeared to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:15).
 3. Appeared to Simon Peter (Luke 24:34).
 4. Appeared to ten of the apostles, Thomas being absent, arriving through the walls of a locked room. (Luke 24:36; John 20:19). (All these four appearances took place on the day of his resurrection.)
 5. Appeared to the eleven disciples eight days later, Thomas being then with them (John 20:26).
 6. Appeared to seven of the apostles in Galilee, at the sea of Tiberias, and ate with them (John 21:4).
 7. Appeared to Ya'akov (1st Cor. 15:7), likely in Yerushalayim.
 8. Appeared to the apostles when were assembled together, and when he led them unto Bethany then ascended to heaven (Luke 24:50; Acts 1:4).
 9. Appeared to more than 500 believers at once (1st Cor. 15:6).
 - Spoke about the kingdom of God.
 - As seen with Yeshua's appearance to the disciples of the road to Emmaus, there was a lot about the prophecies of the kingdom of God and Messiah's role that Yeshua had to straighten out.
 - Forty-day periods of reflection before receiving God's Word is recorded in the lives of major prophets Moshe, whom Yeshua was to supersede in glory, and Eliyahu, in whose spirit and power the prophet Yokhanan proclaimed Yeshua's coming.
 - Why was Moshe on Sinai for 40 days and another 40 days to receive the Word of God?
 - The 40 days was as much a time of testing for Israel in waiting for Moshe to return with God's Word as the time was for Moshe on the mountain.
 - Why was Eliyahu on Horeb for 40 days waiting for the Word of God (1st Kings 18–19)?
 - He learned to listen to God when He spoke loudly, like on Mount Carmel with fire, and softly. Eliyahu had been gripped by fear for his life after God visibly defeated the false god at Mount Carmel and humiliated Queen Yezebel (Jezebel).
 - He learned that he wasn't the only one devoted to God left in Israel, despite the prevalent wickedness and hostility of the leadership toward true faith in God.
 - Similarly, why was Noakh (Noah) made to wait 40 days as the Flood waters rose (Genesis 6–8)?
 - "Is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)
 - The Greek word for "kingdom" in verse 6 is *basileia* (βασιλεία, Strong's 932), which means "royal power, kingship, dominion, rule" and is commonly used in the Apostolic Scriptures to refer to the reign of Messiah.⁴
 - It wasn't an unreasonable expectation of the Messiah. Luke, the author of Acts and the account of Yeshua's life, records that the messenger of God told Miriam that the child she would be carrying would "reign [*basileia*] over the house of Ya'akov, and His kingdom [*basileia*] will have no end" (Luke 1:32–33). That would be a fulfillment of "the government shall be upon His shoulders" (Isa. 9:5–6; vv. 6–7 JPS).⁵
 - It is important to note that the return of self-rule to Israel would still come, but in God's timing. The great battle for *basileia* of the world is detailed in apostle Yokhanan's book *Revelation*.
 - "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom [*basileia*] of the world has become the kingdom [*basileia*] of our Lord and of His Christ; and He

3 Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Acts 1." *The Adam Clarke Commentary*.
www.studydrive.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=ac&chapter=001>. 1832.

4 Thayer and Smith. "Greek Lexicon entry for Basileia." *The New Testament Greek Lexicon*.
www.studydrive.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=932>.

5 Stern, David H. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. p. 216.

- will reign [*basileia*] forever and ever.’ ” (Rev. 11:15)
- “a cloud hid him” ... “Yeshua ... will come back in just the same way” ... Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9–12)
 - This shows that the expectations of Messiah’s grand arrival on Earth aren’t being tossed out or reinterpreted. They will happen.⁶
 - As we’ve seen in exploring Yeshua’s trial and Stephen’s execution, the description of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven was a messianic prophecy from Dan. 7:13: “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming. He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.”
 - The prophet Zechariah wrote that Messiah would come to rescue Israel on the Day of the LORD: “Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. 4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.” (Zech. 14:1–4).
 - “They drew lots” for the new 12th apostle who had witnessed Yeshua’s ministry, death and resurrection (Acts 1:21–22, 26). Isn’t fortune and chance a pagan concept?
 - Consider this from *Proverbs*: “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole decision is from the LORD” (Prov. 16:33).
 - The goat for the LORD and the goat for Azaz’el were identical and selected by lot (Lev. 16:8).
 - The land of Israel was divided among the tribes based on casting of lots (Joshua 18).

⁶ Ibid., p. 218.