

## Acts 15:1–35 notes — the Council of Yerushalyim rules on the prerequisites for salvation

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

Acts 15 recounts a “watershed” moment among believers in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) — should believers among the nations be allowed into the assembly of Israel and how. These events didn’t happen in a vacuum. Events from Acts 1–14 led to this momentous ruling by the elders.

### Key questions in Acts 15

1. What must I do to be saved?
  1. Be circumcised?
  2. Be baptized?
  3. Do “works of law”?
2. Does teaching people to follow the Torah “put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear” (v. 10)?
  1. Is the Torah that “yoke,” i.e. burden?<sup>1</sup>
  2. How does Yeshua’s “yoke” compare to that of the Torah?
3. What is required of new believers, specifically, and all believers?
4. Can those of the nations become part of Israel?

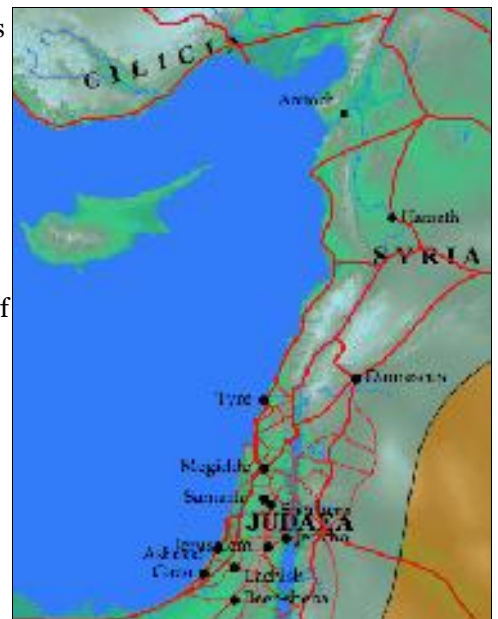
**Acts 15:1–3** — Believers from Yerushalayim taught in outlying areas such as Syrian Antioch that circumcision is required for salvation. Paul and Bar-Nabbus contended with them. The congregation in Syrian Antioch recommended the matter go before the elders in Yerushalayim for *halakhah* — a ruling.

- “came down from Iudea”
  - This continued the imagery of “going up” to God’s house in Yerushalayim, in hill country.
  - This seems to be connected to the group the Yerushalayim council warned of in its letter to outlying congregations, “some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls” (v. 24).
- “unless you are circumcised”
  - Circumcision as a sign of a contract “cut” between man and God predates Moshe.
    - God first instructed Abraham to circumcise his son, Yitskhak, and all the household (John 7:19–24; cf. Gen. 17:10–14).
  - In a sense, there was good reason to connect circumcision and salvation, or being brought back into God’s family.
    - The LORD told Abraham that any uncircumcised man would be “cut off from the people” (Gen. 17:14).
    - The LORD told Moshe that eating the Pesakh (Passover) was only available to those who are circumcised, including slaves and “sons of the strange ones,” i.e. foreigners (Ex. 12:43–45,47–49).
  - Yet, circumcision was to be of the heart too.

“Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.” (Deut. 10:12–17)

    - What is the connection between circumcision of the heart and stiffness of the neck?

“Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Yehudah and inhabitants of Yerushalayim, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds.” (Jer. 4:4)



<sup>1</sup> For a detailed study on the “burden” in this passage, see the paper “Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council” by Tim Hegg ([TorahResource.org](http://TorahResource.org), 2008).

- What link is there between circumcision of the heart and evil deeds?
 

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.” (Rom. 2:28–29)

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Col. 2:8–12)
- What are the lessons of circumcision?
  - Like blue-threaded *tsitsitot* (tassels) on clothing, circumcision was an outward sign of an inward commitment to loyalty, fidelity (Num. 15:38–41; cf. Deut. 22:12).
    - “to look at [literally, “seek”] and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them ... and be holy to your God” (Num. 15:39–40)
    - “not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot” (v. 39)
    - “I am the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God” (v. 41)
    - It’s likely no coincidence that the reiteration of the *tsitsitot* command in Deut. 22:12 followed commands against mismatching vineyard seeds, yoked animals and sewn fabric (vv. 9–11) and before a long warning against physical and spiritual harlotry (Deut. 22:13–23:11).
  - Outward symbolism can very easily become a show to gain the respect of other people.
    - Messiah warned against following doing things the wrong motive and crafting rules of holiness without having God’s Spirit to set apart the heart beforehand.
 

“Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. They tie up heavy burdens [*βαρῦς barus*, 926] and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries [*tefillin*] and lengthen the tassels [*tsitsitot*] of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called ‘Rabbi’ by men.” (Matt. 23:1–7)
    - Outward “commitment” to God without an inward commitment invites His wrath. Why?
      - Does the uncircumcised heart spurt forth words and deeds that blaspheme God’s name, His character and standards by which He teaches the world that they need saving?
 

“Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, “FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS” [Gen. 15:6]. How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.’” (Rom. 4:9–15)
    - Requiring a physical change before or in preference to a heart change is contrary to God’s Word and early rabbinical writings about the “yoke of the commandments”:
 

“Said R. Joshua b. Qorha, ‘Why does [the passage of] Shema precede [that of] “And it shall come to pass [if you keep my commandments]?” So that one may first accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and afterwards may accept the yoke of the commandments.’” (Seder *Zeraim*, *Berakhot* 2:2, of the *Mishna*)<sup>2</sup>

      - Accepting the responsibility for keeping God’s commandments before learning them would bring judgment on Israel (Deuteronomy 28–29; Leviticus 26).
      - However, “yoke of the commandments” in rabbinical writings was associated closely with circumcision, called “the covenant in the flesh” in the Talmudic comment regarding Yom haKippurim, or the Day of Atonement.
 

“... the day of atonement atones for each of the transgressions found in the Torah, regardless of antecedent repentance; except him who shakes off the yoke, explains the Torah not according to its real meaning and destroys the covenant in his flesh; as for him, the day of atonement atones, provided he first repented, otherwise it does not. Rabbi bases this, his opinion, on [Num. 15:31]: ‘Because the word of the Lord has he despised,’ which means, he who has shaken off the yoke of, and misinterpreted, the Torah, ‘and His commandments has he broken,’ which means, he who has destroyed the covenant in his flesh [i.e., circumcision] ....” (*Shebuot*, ch. 1,

2 Jacob Neusner. *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Yale University, 1988.

- Paul and Bar-Nabbas proclaimed the good news of the reconciling of the nations to congregations they passed in Phoenicia and Samaria (Acts 15:3).
  - I wonder whether there were redeemed from the nations in those assemblies they visited on the way.
  - Because they received the message of the “conversion of the gentiles” with great joy, these congregants they visited must have been Yehudim (Jews) who were likely:
    - Taught by the P’rushim (Pharisees) — who advocated taking the Word of the LORD to the nations.
    - Of the P’rushim themselves.
      - Note that Acts 15:5 says “some of the sect of the P’rushim who believed.” Not all were “Judaizers.”
      - “Judaizers,” a term used to describe believers who insisted that new believers follow Jewish law, were a corrupt form of Christianity (Acts 15:1; 21:20-25; Galatians 3–6).
  - The word *conversion* is translated from ἐπιστροφή *epistrofē* (Strong’s Greek lexicon No. 1995).<sup>4</sup>
    - In Greek literature it is used to mean repentance from evil deeds, turning back or returning.
      - The antonym is *apostrophe*, which literally means “rejection.” The punctuation mark is named that because with a contraction it denotes a “rejection” of letters (e.g. *can’t*).
    - It is used in the Apostolic Scriptures just in this place, but it is used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures 10 times, and only in the canonical books of Song of Songs and Ezekiel.
      - “I am my beloved’s, And his desire is for me.” (Song 7:11; cf. the popular quote in 6:3)
        - “אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְעַלֵּי תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ” (Song 7:11 BHS)
          - שׁוֹק is translated as “desire” in this passage.
          - Literally, this reads, “I am for my beloved, and upon me [is] his desire.”
        - “Ἐγὼ τῶ ἀδελφιδῶ μου, καὶ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ἡ ἐπιστροφή αὐτοῦ.” (Song 7:11 LXX)
          - ἐπιστροφή literally means “a return,” so the second line of this verse passage could be rendered, “and [it is] for me a return he [has made],” or “and he returned for me.”
        - Other uses in the Septuagint:
          - Bible: Ezek. 42:11 (“exits”); 47:7 (“return”); 47:11 (“fresh,” return to being fresh water).
            - Ezek. 47:7 is translated from the Hebrew verb שׁוּב *shuv* (Strong’s 7725).
          - Other books in the LXX: Sir. 18:21 (“repentance”); 40:1 (“return,” death); 49:2 (“turning around,” persuading to turn back to God); Sol. 7:0 (“returning,” i.e. repentance); 9:10 (“we shall hope in You when we return our souls toward You”); 16:11 (“if I sin, you discipline me to return me”).
      - ἐπιστροφή, a noun, comes from the verb ἐπιστρέφω *epistrefō* (Strong’s 1994), for “to turn, return.”<sup>5</sup>
        - In the LXX, the verb is used nearly 500 times for<sup>6,7</sup>:
          - הָפַךְ *hafakh* vb. turn, overturn (Strong’s 2015).
          - סָבַב *savav* vb. turn about, go around, surround (Strong’s 5437; esp. the *hiphal* form, 4524).
          - שׁוּב *shuv* vb. turn back, return (Strong’s 7725).
            - שׁוּב can mean to “turn back” from rebellion against God to God (תְּשׁוּבָה *teshuvah*) or to “turn from” God.
              - *turn to God* אֶל־יְהוָה שׁוּבָה *shuvah el-YHVH*
              - *turn back from God, apostatize* (מֵאַחֲרַי *me’akhrei YHVH*, from following the LORD): Nu 14:43, 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 15:11, 1<sup>st</sup> Ki. 9:6 (שׁוּב תְּשׁוּבוּ), Jer. 3:19, Num. 32:15, Josh. 22:16, 22:18, 22:23, 22:29; abs. (usu. + vb.) Judg. 2:19, 8:33, Josh. 23:12, Jer. 8:4, Psa. 78:41, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chron. 7:19. b. of י׃, turn away, מֵאַחֲרַי pers. Deut. 23:15.
              - A variation of the word is שִׁיבָה *shivah* (Strong’s 7870, 7622, 7871), translated as “restoration” or “captives” in Psa. 126:1 (125:1 in LXX).
        - There should have been as much joy that the nations were turning/returning to God as there was when God returned Israel from captivity.

#### Acts 15:4–12 — Testimony from Paul and Bar-Nabbas, some P’rushim believers and Peter.

- Paul and Bar-Nabbas testified to the signs of God’s Spirit being at work among the nations (vv. 4, 12).

3 Michael L. Rodkinson, translator. *Babylonian Talmud*. 1918. Sacred-Texts.com. Web. Sept. 12, 2009. <[www.sacred-texts.com/jud/to9/shbo2.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/to9/shbo2.htm)>. Quoted by Tim Hegg in the Acts 15 work referenced above.

4 Joseph H. Thayer. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. 1889.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Scribe, Inc. 1906, 1951.

- Some P'rushim believers asserted that, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses" (v. 5).
- Shimon Peter testified (vv. 7–11) that:
  - God years ago had chosen to send to the nations the good news of Messiah as the Salvation of God (v. 7; cf. chs. 10:1–11:18).
  - Belief in God and that good news was the most important factor (v. 7).
  - God spoke this message to the nations through the Spirit, and He had to Israel on that Shavu'ot (Pentecost) following Yeshua's resurrection (v. 8).
  - In giving the same Spirit to believers among the nations, God made no distinction, no separation (parash), between native-born and foreign-born (v. 9).
  - God declared existing believers (including native-born and previous converts) and new foreign-born believers "clean" before Him, based on their faith in the work of Messiah (v. 9). Believers Yehudim and Greek are "saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (v. 11).
    - *Faith* is translated from πίστις *pistis* (Strong's 4102), which carries the meanings of "belief" and "conviction of truth" as well as "character that can be relied on."
      - πίστις appears in the LXX 59 times for הנהגה *'emunah*, commonly for *faithfulness*, and אמת *'emet*, usually for *truth*.
        - Righteousness and faithfulness to God were interconnected in the account of David' speaking to Sha'ul after skipping the chance to kill the sleeping ruler in the cave:
 

"The LORD will repay each man for his righteousness [קצ' *tsadaq*] and his faithfulness [נהגה]; for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I refused to stretch out my hand against the LORD'S anointed.'" (1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 26:23)
        - Cleansing faith, thus, is conviction in God's words that results in heartfelt loyalty to His words.
          - As the apostle Ya'akov wrote after discussing what it truly means to follow God's commandments:
 

"So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 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. But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works'; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS' [Gen. 15:6], and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:12–26)
          - The author of Hebrews started out the "Hall of Faith" chapter with this introduction:
 

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval." (Heb. 11:1–2)

            - All the people mentioned in this chapter moved forward in what they did based on their conviction of and loyalty to God's words.
  - *Grace* is translated from χάρις *charis* (5485), which has the meanings of "goodwill, loving-kindness, favor" when one is receiving grace and "thankfulness" when one is giving grace.
    - The Hebrew equivalent for the sense of "loving-kindness" is חסד *khesed*.
    - The English word *charisma* comes the Greek word χάρισμα (Strong's 5486), for "gift of grace."
    - *Charity* in English, comes from the Latin *caritas*, which means "dear."<sup>8</sup> *Caritas* is how the Latin Vulgate translated the Greek αγαπε *agape*,<sup>9</sup> which means "unselfish love."
  - Yeshua's *grace* upon the world in sacrificing Himself to take the curse of death due us for our rebellion against God plus God's offer of cleansing us from the stain of that curse through *faith* — conviction plus loyalty — are good news indeed!
  - Because God didn't distinguish to which *believers* He gave His Spirit to testify the good news, Peter asked (presumably, those who advocated circumcision and observance):
 

"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our

8 New Oxford American Dictionary.

9 "Charity (practice)." *Wikipedia*. Accessed Aug. 28, 2009. <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charity\\_\(practice\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charity_(practice))>

fathers nor we have been able to bear?” (Acts 15:10)

- “Put God to the test” is a direct quote from the LXX version of Psa. 78:18 (77:18 LXX): “And they tested God in their hearts by demanding food for their souls.”
  - Psalm 78 recounts Israel’s disregard for the miraculous workings of the LORD’s salvation of the nation from Mitsraim (Egypt).
  - The psalm contains a sober warning for lack of faith in the obvious working of God in providing salvation.

“Therefore the LORD heard and was full of wrath; And a fire was kindled against Ya’akov And anger also mounted against Yisrael, Because they did not believe in God And did not trust in His salvation [שׁוּעָה] *yeshu’ah*.” (Psa. 78:21–22)

    - As we’ve seen in Yeshua’s and the apostles’ quotes from the Scriptures (e.g., “house of prayer,” “den of robbers”), they often quoted from the beginning of a passage that contained a “punchline” later on.
    - Those who had memorized Psalm 78, as Peter had, knew of the warning.
  - Peter seemed to be warning these P’rushim that they were demanding outward signs of these new believers’ conviction and loyalty to God via circumcision, when God had already shown through miracles among these believers — actions of the Spirit that Paul and Bar-Nabbas had been recounting — that God was with them, as He had been with Israel during the Exodus.
  - Peter also seemed to be asking the P’rushim:
    - whether God had demanded outward signs of Israel in bondage in Mitsraim before saving the nation, other than their crying out for help (Ex. 3:7) and trusting His words that the blood of innocent lambs on the doorposts of their homes would פסח *pesakh* — block — the wrath of God on Mitsraim.
    - whether God had demanded circumcision when they first assented to joining God’s family, typically at age 13.
      - Their circumcision in the flesh was part of a contract between their parents and God “cut” eight days after birth to teach the words of God.

#### **Acts 15:13–21 — halakhah of Ya’akov on standards for new believers coming into Israel**

- Peter’s testimony and that of the prophets was the call of God to the nations to join His kingdom had been going forth for years (vv. 14-18).
  - The quote comes from the LXX version of Amos 9:11–12.
    - It refers to the “tabernacle [תֹּכַח *sukkat*] of Daud,” rather than the “temple.”
      - The tabernacle was meant to be mobile, moving as God directed.
      - Amos 9 refers to this rebuilding of the tabernacle during a time of the “winnow the house of Israel among the nations” (v. 9), a time of hitting the reset button for the nation of priests.
      - The tabernacle would be a magnet for the those among the nations who identify themselves with the reputation and character of the LORD. This would be an answer to King Shlomo’s prayer at the dedication of the first temple, the transition from tent to building:

“Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name.” (1<sup>st</sup> Ki. 8:41-43)
    - The *Talmud* (*Sanhedrin* folio 96b–97a)<sup>10</sup> has an interesting messianic take “tabernacle of David that is fallen” in Amos 9:11

“R. Nahman said to R. Isaac: ‘Have you heard when *Bar Nafle* will come?’ ‘Who is *Bar Nafle*?’ he asked. ‘Messiah,’ he answered, ‘Do you call Messiah *Bar Nafle*?’ — ‘Even so,’ he rejoined, ‘as it is written, in that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David *ha-nofeleth* [that is fallen].’ He replied, ‘Thus hath R. Johanan said: in the generation when the son of David [i.e., Messiah] will come, scholars will be few in number, and as for the rest, their eyes will fail through sorrow and grief. Multitudes of trouble and evil decrees will be promulgated anew, each new evil coming with haste before the other has ended.’ ”

      - The Soncino version of the *Talmud* associates *ha-nafle* with *clouds*, rather than *fallen*: “Lit., ‘son of the fallen.’ *Bar Nafle* is generally assumed to represent the Greek [G], the ‘son of the clouds;’ cf. Dan. 7:13, ‘there came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man,’ which R. Nahman gave a Hebrew connotation.”
        - The word for *cloud* in Dan. 7:13 is νεφέλων *nephelon* (3507), but the Aramaic word is

<sup>10</sup> Sourced from *Come and Hear* <[www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_96.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html)>, Sept. 10, 2009.

- יגאנאן (6050).
    - Amos is referring to a fallen tabernacle, not one of the clouds. So Messiah is not Son of the Clouds but Son of the Fallen. That mission was borne out in prophecy in Isaiah 53 and in practice in the life of Yeshua.
- New believers must not be “troubled” while they are returning to the LORD (v. 19).
  - *Troubled* is translated from παρενοχλέω *parenochleō* (Strong’s 3926).
    - In the LXX it is used for צוּץ *tsuq* (6693) for:
      - Samson’s first wife’s “exasperating” him for the answer to the riddle of the lion and honey (Judg. 14:7) and Delilah’s doing the same for the secret of his strength (16:16).
      - The LXX of Psa. 35:13 starts with, “But as for me, when they troubled me.”
        - Rather than “But as for me, when they were sick [חלה *khalah*, 2470]” (NASB, from Hebrew).
        - Verses 11–12 talk about “malicious witnesses” “repay[ing] evil for good to the bereavement of my soul” (NASB). This suggests that the correct reading is “they troubled me,” as rendered in the LXX (circa 300–100 B.C.E.), rather than “when they were sick” in the latest available Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text (circa 800–1100 C.E.).
    - How is saying that new believers must follow the Torah “exasperating” or “pressing”?
- The new believers must abstain from (Acts 15:20):
  - “things contaminated by idols”
    - Ex. 34:15-17
    - *Avodah Zarah* in the Mishnah has a long list of rulings regarding allowed and forbidden interactions with people of the nations, their things and food and their temples. Three general categories are:<sup>11</sup>
      - aiding idolators in their idolatry
      - benefitting from idolatry or paganism
      - worshipping or participating in worship of idols
  - “fornication”
    - Lev. 18:6-23
  - “what is strangled” and “blood”
    - Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10, 14; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23; 15:23
  - “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden [βάρος *baros*, 922] than these essentials” (v. 28).
    - In Yeshua’s message to the faithful in the assembly of Thyatira (Rev. 2:18–29), who hadn’t known the “deep things [*bathus*] of Satan” (v. 24), included no other “burden” (βάρος) than to “hold fast,” “overcome” and “keep My deeds [ἔργον *ergon*, 2041].”
      - A Iezabel-like figure in the congregation was leading people to immorality and eating food dedicated to idols based on a supposed word from God (v. 20).
      - This was the basic “burden” put on new believers from the nations in Acts 15.
- That much is required, “For [i.e., because] Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” (Acts 15:21)
  - Shabbat, which is part of the words of God, is still in place for new believers from the nations.
  - The Spirit is the One who determines when each person is convicted of a word of God (Rom. 14:5).
  - The words of God in the Torah contain more than the three or four prerequisites in Acts 15:20.
    - If there is no distinction between the Yehudim believers and the believers from the nations, then is there a distinction in what is applicable to one group and the other?
      - Remember all 613 laws traditionally found in the Torah don’t apply to everyone. Some apply to the high priest, priests in general, Levites, men, women, judges, kings, etc.
      - Yet, the P’rushim and the prophets helped show that although the provisions weren’t required of everyone, they were applicable and valuable for everyone.
    - The so-called One Law teaching advocates new believers in Messiah from the nations must be under one law, the Torah.
      - גֵּר *ger*, stranger (1616)
        - Ex. 12:48–49 — The *ger* can eat the Pesakh if they’re circumcised.
        - Ex. 20:10 — Shabbat applies to the *ger* staying with you.
        - Deut. 1:16 — Cases are to be decided equally for a native Israelite and “his *ger*.”
      - תּוֹשָׁב *toshab*, sojourner (8453): Gen. 23:4, Lev. 25:23, 25:35, 25:47, 1<sup>st</sup> Chron. 29:15, Psa. 39:13

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<sup>11</sup> Hegg, *ibid*.

- There are several Torah passages in which the LORD says Israel will have one Torah for native-born, strangers (i.e., people from other nations) and sojourners (i.e., travelers).  
 “But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you.” (Ex. 12:48–49; cf. Num. 9:14)  
 “The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.” (Lev. 19:34)
  - One of the two greatest commandments applies to foreigners too.  
 Regarding a foreigner wanting to make an offering by fire: “As for the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the alien who sojourns *with you*, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the alien be before the LORD. There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you. ...You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them.” (Num. 15:15–16, 29)
    - Foreigners could even bring a sin offering to the tabernacle!
- Yet, were the elders of the Yerushalayim Council in its Acts 15 ruling and Paul in his letters saying that these things no longer applied to new believers from the nations?<sup>12</sup>
  - Yeshua said that He did not come to change Torah (Matt. 5:17–20) and warned teachers not to denigrate the Torah.
    - His words were the basis for the “good news” that guided the council and Paul.
    - Therefore, neither the council nor Paul were teaching that the Torah is obsolete.
  - Yeshua taught the 12 to teach new believers in Messiah to “observe all that I command” (Matt. 28:20).
    - Some say that the “law of Messiah” is “Torah Lite,” i.e., without the “Jewish stuff.”
    - Yeshua Himself said He wasn’t editing anything from the Law.
  - Paul taught that “the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12).
  - Paul wrote that physical circumcision isn’t as significant as “keeping the commandments of God” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 7:19).
  - Paul taught that believers from the nations were “brought near” to God and inducted into the “commonwealth of Israel,” in which there was no “dividing wall” between believers of the nations and those native-born (Eph. 2:11–16).
    - Paul noted a dividing wall created by those advocating citizenship via “works of [the] law” vs. “works of faith” (Galatians 3–6; 1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 1:3; Rom. 3:27–28; 4:5; 9:32).
    - Paul reminded those seeking citizenship via circumcision were required to “keep the whole law” (Gal. 5:3).
  - The apostle Yokhanan — who was particularly close to Yeshua, the way Yahunatan/Yonatan was with David — defined sin as “lawlessness” and one of Yeshua’s roles as Messiah to “take away sin” (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 3:4).
    - Paul wrote that Yeshua was born “under the law” (*hopu nomou*) to redeem those “under the law” (Gal. 4:4–5). In other words, Yeshua rescued us from condemnation due those who subjected themselves to the law without availing themselves of the mercy — the *Yeshua*, or salvation — God provided.
  - Yokhanan in the same letter said that the evidence of our love for God is to “observe His commandments,” which are not “burdensome” (βάρος) (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:2).

<sup>12</sup> For more on this, read D. Thomas Lancaster’s “One Simple Verse: Galatians 5:3.” *First Fruits of Zion Blogs*. Sept. 11, 2009 Web. 12 Sep 2009. <[ffoz.org/blogs/2009/09/one\\_simple\\_verse.html](http://ffoz.org/blogs/2009/09/one_simple_verse.html)>.