

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 12

The Yerushalayim Council ~ Part 1

We pick up the ongoing story of **Sha'ul** in Acts 15:1.

Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.

Introduction

The tour through ancient **Asia Minor** apparently ends somewhere around 47 CE. **Sha'ul** and **Bar-Nabba** probably settled back into concentrated efforts at teaching in the local area of **Antioch** in **Syria**, but their respite did not last long. By 48 CE, there was trouble brewing in the **Kehillah**. Certain **Messianic Jewish Believers** from Yerushalayim went north to **Antioch**, teaching **Messianic Gentile Believers** that they must be circumcised in addition to being baptized and demanding that they must keep the entire law.¹

The Judiazers Prompt Meeting in Yerushalayim

Specific chapters in the **Brit Hadasah** are uniquely crucial for **Messianic Jews** because they bear directly on the central issue of **Messianic Judaism**, which is: What does it mean to be at the same time both **Jewish** and a believer in **Yeshua**, and how does one go about doing justice to both? This is one of those chapters, along with Acts 21; Romans 7, 9–11; Galatians 2–4; Ephesians 2; Messianic Jews 7–10; Ya'akov 2; and others.

My friend, Ron Cantor, recently published an article about Acts 15. He opens with this statement:

One of the most misunderstood passages of scripture is Acts 15. In particular, those four strange prohibitions that the apostles gave to the Gentiles.

1. *Don't eat blood.*
2. *Don't eat the meat of strangled animals.*
3. *Don't eat meat sacrificed to idols.*
4. *Don't commit sexual immorality (porneia) (Acts 15:20)*

To read the full article, click [here](#).

¹ But some men came down from Y'hudah to Antioch and began teaching the brothers, "You can't be saved unless you undergo b'rit-milah (circumcision) in the manner prescribed by Moshe." ² This brought them into no small measure of discord and dispute with Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba. So the congregation assigned Sha'ul, Bar-Nabba, and some of themselves to go and put this sh'eilah (a theological question) before the emissaries and the elders up in Yerushalayim.

Discord and dispute with Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba arose because their mission was to bring the **Gospel** to as many **Gentiles** as possible, and they were altogether unwilling to have needless barriers put in their way.

The emissaries and the elders up in Yerushalayim. **Yerushalayim** was not only the source of **Messianic** faith, but its center, for the **emissaries** were still there, and other experienced **elders** were there too. Since **Sha'ul** and **Bar-Nabba** had come from there (Acts 4:36, 9:26–30 12:25), they would be subject to **Yerushalayim's** jurisdiction and would accept their verdict.

¹ F. LaGard Smith, The Narrated Bible in Chronological Order (emphasis added).

³ After being sent off by the congregation, they made their way through Phoenicia and Shomron, recounting in detail how the Gentiles had turned to God; and this news brought great joy to all the brothers. ⁴ On arrival in Yerushalayim, they were welcomed by the Messianic community, including the emissaries and the elders; and they reported what God had done through them. ⁵ But some of those who had come to trust were from the party of the P'rushim, and they stood up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the Torah of Moshe."²

Though the **P'rushim** (including Sha'ul) had opposed **Yeshua** bitterly, some had become believers (6:7). In this case, a group failed to understand the freedoms He had won for **Believers**.

In our next post, **Sha'ul** and **Bar-Nabba** return to **Yerushalayim**.

² Acts 15:1–5.