

## **What Does the Book of Acts** **Say About the Torah?**

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**In a continuing quest** to rightly divide Scripture and dispel doctrines that have arisen from wrongly applying fragments, we will take a look at the book of Acts, and what it really has to say with regard to Torah observance.

Some have used the book of Acts as “proof” that Christians should not observe the Torah. They cite chapter 15 as proof to validate these claims. Unfortunately, without reading the Scriptures in context, one could wrongly come to such conclusions. Let's start with the beginning of the chapter, Acts 15:1 "And certain men came down from Yehudah (Judea) and were teaching the brothers, 'unless you are circumcised, according to the practice of Mosheh, you are unable to be saved'. We need to stop right here and consider these words. The issue is salvation, not whether the Torah should be observed, but whether its observance was a requisite for salvation [we know it is not]. This was such a debated issue that it was brought before the elders at Yerushalayim, that they might decide.

Acts 15:7 "And when there had been much dispute, Kepha [Peter] rose up and said to them, 'Men, brothers, you know that a while ago YHWH chose among us, that by my mouth the gentiles should hear the word of the Good News and Believe". Kepha goes on to tell how YHWH gave them the same Set-apart Spirit as was given to the Jews and made no distinction between them, cleansing the gentiles' hearts by their belief. Acts 15:10 "Now then, why do you try YHWH by putting a yoke on the neck of the taught ones which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? [11] But through the favor of the Master Yahshua the Messiah we trust to be saved, in the same way as they". Let's stop again. The issue is still salvation by faith. Kepha questions them [Jews] as to why they would tell the gentiles they must keep the Torah perfectly in order to be saved when the Jews, themselves, could not do so. He points out that just as the Jews are saved by the favor of Yahshua Messiah, so too are the gentiles. After this Barnaba and Sha'ul declared the miracles and wonders that YHWH did amongst the gentiles. In Acts 15:19-21 the council renders its decision, saying, "but that we write to them to abstain from the defilements of idols, and from whoring, and from what is strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moshe has, in every city, those proclaiming him - being read in the congregations every Sabbath". Let's give this a careful review. The issue has been whether or not the gentiles must observe the whole Torah before being saved. The ruling is no. However, the council does give a ruling on what requirements the new gentile believers should practice. These entry-level requirements were the things that the Jews found to be most disgusting. It is interesting to note that in that day the only way to kill a pig was by strangling it to death. A careful look will also reveal that they [the new believers] would hear the whole Torah during the Sabbath readings in the congregations. In other words, don't burden them with everything at once, as being necessary for salvation. Let these basic, fundamental observances serve as an immediate outward sign of their inward change and let them learn to practice the whole Torah as they learn of it during Sabbath readings in the congregation.

Many have contended that to practice any of the Torah is to denounce Yahshua as Messiah and fastens Him again to the execution stake. This is pure hogwash. In Acts 16:3 [immediately following the meeting in Yerushalayim] we read the following, "Sha'ul wished to have this one go with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Yehudim who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek". Why would Sha'ul [Paul] circumcise this man [Timothy, his mother a Jew, father a Greek] if such an action would mean denying Yahshua

as Messiah? Sha'ul continued throughout his ministry to observe the Torah. In Acts 21:24 Sha'ul is instructed by the leaders to demonstrate to the Jews that what had been said of him was untrue and that he was Torah observant. Such Scriptures disprove that observance of the Torah equals denial of Yahshua. This issue has always been one of salvation. It is shown in Scripture that salvation is by confession in Yahshua, and the favor of Him. What then do we make of the "Law"? It is simple, we observe the Father's Torah because we trust that He knows what is best for us. We observe his Torah as an outward sign of an inward change, knowing that our salvation is not by our works, but by His.

The book of Ya'aqob [James] puts it this way in 2:17, "So also belief, if it does not have works, is in itself dead. [17] But someone might say, 'You have belief, and I have works'. Show me your belief without your works, and I shall show you my belief by my works". It's not far after this statement that Ya'aqob states that not many should become teachers. Interesting.

The book of 2Kepha [Peter] has this to say on the subject in 3:15, "...as also our beloved Sha'ul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given him [16] as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these matters, in which some are hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the other Scriptures. [17] You, then, beloved ones, being forewarned, watch, lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the delusion of the lawless. [Lawless = without Torah]

The book of Revelation says this in 3:8, "I know your works - see, I have set before you an open door, and no one is able to shut it - that you have little power, yet have guarded My Word, and have not denied My Name."

It is not often considered how the "anti-Semitic" attitude of ancient has persisted even to today, affecting the mindset of unknowing believers. Very few take time to consider the lifestyle of the One whom they call the Messiah. He was not, and is not, a blue eyed, blond haired westerner. He is a Jew. While many Christians think of the Torah as a burden, the Jews consider it a prized blessing. Many a Christian claims to be under "Grace" and the "Law of love" and not under the "Law of sin and death". The law of sin and death is really quite simple to understand; you sin, you die. I ask, if we are under the "Law of love" should not we demonstrate that love with actions. If we cherish YHWH's Word, should we not apply that Word to our lives? Grace has been given to give us life when we miss the mark of the Torah. To use Grace as a tool to excuse ourselves from the Torah is to frustrate it. Torah observance comes from a heart of love, with respect for the Father and His Word.

Honor and obey your parents, for this is the first commandment with promise. Who is your Father? Selah! ~

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