



**Is the Torah A PART of Covenant with God?
Is the Torah A PART of following Yeshua?**

A Study of Acts 15

Is Acts 15 teaching us that the Torah is **A PART** of God's Kingdom or **APART** from God's Kingdom? Have we really looked at this chapter to see what it's teaching us? **What is the issue in this chapter? The question that's being asked here is "How does a Gentile come into covenant?"**

We have to remember that the early church communities (assemblies) were Torah communities, so if we aren't looking at this chapter through this lens, we're looking at it incorrectly. We know that the "Jews", those in the religion of Judaism (a mix of Babylonian paganism and faith in God), had many man-made laws that were contradictory to God's Law. We know this because Yeshua rebuked the Sanhedrin for putting a yoke on the people of the traditions of men. **Was this yoke God's Law or man-made laws and traditions? It's the latter.** Let's look at some things Yeshua taught:

- (1) **Matthew 5:17-20** is a very important teaching. *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.** Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* So, where is everything accomplished? Revelation 21. Yeshua says, "I make all things new." All prophecies will be fulfilled when the new earth is given to man and the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and the Kingdom of God is established on the earth. This is when eternity begins and it's when ALL is accomplished. So Yeshua teaches that not even the smallest mark of a letter will pass from the Law until then. Everything else has to be viewed in this context.
- (2) In **Mark 7:1-12**, *"Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that **some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.** (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to **the tradition of the elders**, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches). And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, *"Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"* And He said to them, *"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."* And He said to them, *"You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, 'Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban'" (that is, given to God) then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."**
- (3) **Matthew 23** we see the difference between what He taught and what the Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes taught. In verses 1-15, Yeshua says, *"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on **Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they***

themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of Gei Hinnom as yourselves."

So Yeshua did NOT teach that God's Law was a yoke. What He taught was that the traditions of men were the yoke (because many times they contradicted the commandments of God). The Sanhedrin was prideful—they thought they had all of the knowledge. They had perverted the Torah by adding onto it, and this was rejecting the Torah, therefore, rejecting the Messiah. Why? Because Yeshua is the Word made flesh, so rejecting God's Law is rejecting Messiah, putting Him to the test. It's why they were blind to Messiah. They wanted to be Jewish—they didn't want to be in Messiah. They wanted their positions, money, control, power/esteem, which all come from man-made tradition/religion. If they would've followed Him, they would've had to humble themselves. They would've had to give things up. They were unwilling to believe in God's Son because He didn't teach their rules. He taught the Father's ways. He was the authority. They weren't. They wanted their man-made laws more than they wanted God's Laws—they wanted to do the ways of man more than they wanted to do God's ways.

They thought they had "*the way*", but Yeshua said in **John 14:6**, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. Was His way a "new way" or was it the way of the Father? He did not do His own thing. He kept the Father's ways (the Torah), not the ways of man. The Torah wasn't the yoke he had to bear. The yoke was the curse of sin (the law of sin and death) that He had to bear because we had broken the Torah. The gospel of the disciples was the gospel of the Bible. It was based on the Torah and the prophets who prophesied the Messiah who would save Israel by suffering and being raised from the dead, who would inaugurate the New Covenant, who would be the High Priest, the Lamb and the ox. But He would have to be the perfect Lamb, without spot or blemish. This means He had to keep the Law of His Father perfectly. Not to do this would've resulted in Him having spot and blemish and He would not have been able to be the sacrifice. God's requirement was perfection.*

He also addressed the religious elites who were proselytizing people into Judaism. He said they wouldn't enter the Kingdom of heaven. Why is this? Because man's ways don't lead to salvation.

The verses we've discussed give us a lot of context about what was going on in Acts. We have the Sanhedrin who had taken on the ways of the rabbis—teachers who taught the Torah AND the Talmudic Judaism commandments. We also have them proselytizing people into Judaism. This includes Gentiles. And there's this sect, called "*the Way*", that is teaching the ways of the Messiah (the ways of the Father) that most of Israel had rejected. There were 3,000 initial converts from Judaism to the way which began the early church and then the Gentiles started coming in after Peter's vision which showed him he could go to the Gentiles. "*The Way*" was growing quickly and shaking things up in the world of religion. There were the religions of paganism on one side and the religion of Judaism on the other, but the disciples were preaching the gospel of repentance (from obeying man and disobeying God) and telling people to turn to

God through the Messiah. They were telling these people involved in religion that the Messiah who resurrected was the way to the Father. This was quite different than they believed, but the truth was winning. Many Gentiles were coming in, so there was a mix of Jews and Gentiles coming to faith in the Jewish Messiah. Remember, the book of Acts was written shortly after Yeshua's ascension, and the same problems existed then that existed a few years before.

So now we can look at the book of Acts with clear eyes and what the issue was and what the solution was. We see that the Holy Spirit was trying to make a clear distinction between who was a part of the covenant and who was apart. And just as these 5 letters can have two completely different meanings depending on how it's laid out--written and spoken, the Word of God can have 2 completely different meanings depending on how it's laid out—spoken and interpreted. **The church has taken this chapter to mean that if you keep the Law, you're APART from covenant, but if you don't keep the Law, you're A PART, but it's just the opposite:**

APART=LAWLESSNESS

A PART=OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW

With all of this context in mind, now we're going to break it down the right way. Let's go to Acts 15. And let's talk about the issues once again. (read chapter)

What is the issue in this chapter? The question that's being asked here is "How does a Gentile come into covenant?" Salvation is coming into covenant. The covenant was with Israel. We have descriptions of the New Covenant in Ezekiel 11, 36, Jeremiah 31, Micah 4,5, Joel 2, and Isaiah 54. Nowhere in the Bible does it say the New Covenant was given to a Gentile church. It's the opposite. Gentiles would be able to become a part of Israel, because Israel would stumble over Messiah and Gentiles would believe in Him. And this is exactly what was happening then.

Here are some issues being brought out in this chapter that we need to look at:

- (1) **Were they going to prescribe to God's Word or man-made rituals/rules?** Ritual worship and oppressive rules don't bring joy. However, God's Law is freedom (perfect and the Law of Liberty according to **James 1:25**).
- (2) **What do the 4 laws they decided on have to do with?** Pagan worship, Gentile ways. If they continued doing these things they weren't born again, because repentance from breaking God's commandments would have happened and baptism. They have made the commitment to die to themselves and live for Yeshua. In this time, there was a problem, because some Gentiles were doing both. Paul tells them in **1 Corinthians 10:21** that they can't participate at the table of demons and the table of the Lord. The ways of the Gentiles identified them as pagans. They had to come out of Babylon and into the Kingdom of God.

This matches what the Torah teaches us. God told Israel (us) not to even learn the ways of the (pagan) nations in Jeremiah 10:2. The Torah literally shows us how to make sure we don't learn the ways of the pagan nations. It's God's instructions on how to live separately from the Gentiles (unbelievers, pagans). It teaches us that we can't be covered by the blood if we do the things the pagans do. We can't be a part of Israel, in covenant with God, if we break His commandments.

Yeshua didn't follow man's ways or do ANYTHING pagan, so if we're in Him, what do we do?

- Do we celebrate pagan feasts/holidays?
- Do we walk in the ways of the world?
- Do we have idols in our homes?
- Do we go to pagan temples?
- Do we eat pagan foods (unbiblical, unclean foods)?
- Do we do the things/traditions that society and culture does?
- Do we get tattoos?
- Do we engage in sexual immorality?
- Do we see the Torah as a prohibition?

OR

- Do we submit and commit to following the Father's ways as He did?
- Do we see His Torah as a covenant and a promise?
- Do we see the Father's ways as perfect and holy?
- Do we see the New Covenant for what it is?
- Do we want to walk in His ways?

THE WAY WE LOOK AT THINGS MATTERS!

Exodus 12:49 *"There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."*

Leviticus 24:22 *"You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the Lord your God."*

Numbers 15:15-16 says, *"For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the Lord. One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you."*

Israel was a mixed multitude then, in the times of Acts, and today. And there is only ONE LAW, the royal eternal Law of God's eternal Kingdom. The disciples would have never taught that there was one way for Israel and another way for Gentiles. They were called *"the Way"* and they knew there was one way, and one way only. Prior to them coming to faith, the Jews focused on the Law, but they didn't believe in Messiah. The Gentiles had no focus on the law, and they believed in their multiple gods. But then these two groups of people came together through Messiah Yeshua and those who came to faith began to walk in the **ONE WAY!**

In **1 Corinthians 10**, Paul talks about the problem with Israel. They rebelled against God and disobeyed, and even though God delivered them all from Egypt, with most of them He was not pleased, and they perished in the wilderness. They didn't get to go into the promised land. This is a lesson for us today, and Paul says so in this chapter. In verse 14, he says *"flee idolatry."* Why would he say this? Because Israel was idolatrous, and this is why they perished. So Paul is warning the church of Corinth to leave idolatry. Because if you're idolatrous, you're separated from the covenant. If we do this, we provoke the Lord to jealousy. And the lawless can't be in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 7:23, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:5, Hebrews 12:14, Revelation 22:15).

So in Acts 15, the call was to forsake idolatry., and the Holy Spirit gave the Jerusalem council wisdom about the violation of the Torah instructions which demonstrated that people were still involved in idol worship, and breaking 4 instructions would be the demonstration. He gave them the solution to the problem that the proselytizers presented. There was a distinct separation from pagans and the people of God. And the 4 things is how they were going to know.

Before we get into the 4 things in **Acts 15**, let's talk about one thing that most people get confused about. Peter speaks to the crowd in **verse 10** and says, *"Now, therefore, why are you **putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples** that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"* Would tempting God be breaking His own Law? No. Putting God to the test was disobeying His Law. This was the problem with Israel. They broke God's Law and they were no longer in covenant. So the verse is NOT talking about God's Law. It's talking about the laws the rabbis added onto God's Law. This is violation of the Torah, and it meant they were already out of covenant. But they tried to make it look like they were in covenant, and this is why Yeshua rebuked them. In **verse 10**, the same thing is being talked about by Peter. He is rebuking the Pharisees for commanding people to get circumcised and keep the Law of Moses for salvation, for being a part of the congregation. And in **verse 21**, Peter said, *"For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."* They were going to go to the synagogue every Sabbath and learn God's Law. But none of us know God's entire Law and are able to keep it when we first come to faith. We have to study and grow in the Lord. God would be sought by them, and if we're seeking God, we're seeking His ways. We're seeking His Word. We want to learn. We have to have the Word and the Word made flesh so we know what/who to follow and what to do. This is the overview of what Peter is saying.

They instructed the Gentiles who came from paganism to do 4 things:

- (1) **Abstain from things/foods sacrificed to idols.** Once pagans sacrificed meat to their gods, there was meat leftover, which was either sold at the markets or eaten. This would be a violation of the 1st and second commandments, which prohibit worshipping other gods. In addition, **Exodus 34:12-16** says, *"Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and **when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.**"* God told the children of Israel that if they did these things, they were whores.
- (2) **From eating/drinking blood.** Pagans ate/drank blood as part of ritual worship to pagan gods. The Bible says, *"the life is in the blood"* and their rituals represented taking life and eating/drinking blood which was prohibited by God in His Torah in 3 different verses:
 - a. **Leviticus 3:17** *"It shall be a **statute forever** throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that **you eat neither fat nor blood.**"*
 - b. **Leviticus 7:26-27** *"Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. **Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.**"* It's so serious that God would cut someone off who ate/drank blood.

- c. **Leviticus 17:10** *“If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.*

So now we see why it’s so important not to eat blood. God gave us blood to make atonement for us. But to ingest it is an abomination to God. We see that God said the commandment was for Israel and the strangers who sojourned among them. The same was true in Acts.

- (3) **Eating meat that’s been strangled.** The Torah commands us to do something specific with animals before we eat them. **Leviticus 17:13-14** *“Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.* So any animal that is hunted must be killed so that the blood can be poured out of it before it is eaten.
- (4) **Sexual immorality/fornication.** The Torah instructions about sexual immorality are in Leviticus 18. This is not one specific law, but a multitude. And before He gave these instructions In Leviticus, God specified that the sexually immoral acts were things that the pagans did.

Yeshua mentions two of these commands to the church at Pergamum in **Revelation 2:14**: *“But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.”* And He mentions it to the church at Thyatira in **verse 20**: *“But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.”* Yeshua says He is against them because they’re doing these things, so they are definitely not what God’s people do. So, we see God is right. He never changes, His Word doesn’t change, and it’s eternally fixed in the heavens. His Law stands. So let’s now look at the words a part and apart. Was the Jerusalem council saying that the lawless/people who broke God’s commandments would be a part of the Kingdom or apart from the Kingdom? Were they saying that the people who kept the Law would be a part of God’s Kingdom or apart from it?

This is why we have to study diligently. We have to stop listening to people and believing them blindly. We have test everything and we have *“to study to show ourselves approved to God, a workman that needs not be ashamed”* so we know how to *“rightly divide the Word of Truth”* (**2 Timothy 2:15**). The sword of the Spirit is very different from the sword of the enemy. He doesn’t rightly divide the word of truth. In **2 Timothy 2:19**, Paul says to Timothy, *“But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”* Iniquity is sin/lawlessness. **1 John 3** tells us that if we continue in it, we have neither seen Yeshua nor know Him. He told us the same thing in **Matthew 7:21-23**. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”*

This is why we need to study. We have to know that our enemy is a thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to steal the Word of God from you and just like he did with Adam and Eve, he's trying to convince the world that they don't have to obey God's commandments. We know what happened with Adam and Eve. Do you want that same thing to happen to you? Do you want to be a part of the Kingdom, of Yeshua, or apart from the Kingdom and Him?

If you want to be part of God's Kingdom, you should be spending time every day in the Word of God, studying and seeking His face and the Holy Spirit's teaching and counsel regarding His Word. If you don't, you will be deceived. Many people watching and listening have been deceived by a false teaching about this chapter and many other chapters in the Bible.

I hope you'll come back and study with me and test everything. I pray you will open your eyes and your mind to the truth.

