

Ask The Rabbi – April 27, 2021

Question:

If Jacob, (who must have been raised knowing about God), and if he passed it on to his family (concubines included), why would Rachel steal her father's idols?

Answer:

One can say to be raised knowing God and actually embrace the ways of God are two different perspectives.

As can be related today, you can be raised in a Christian home, by bible believing, God fearing parents and yet this doesn't mean they have embraced their parent's lifestyle and continue to walk in the faith they were raised in.

One can say this about Ya'akov as well. When the focus of Bereshit (Genesis) moves from Yitzchak to Ya'akov we learn more about Ya'akov and his relationship with Adonai. If we are to gain any specific insight towards Ya'akov is that he was a schemer. We saw him negotiate the rights of the first born from his brother Esav...

Gen 25:29 One day when Ya`akov had cooked some stew, `Esav came in from the open country, exhausted,

Gen 25:30 and said to Ya`akov, "Please! Let me gulp down some of that red stuff—that red stuff! I'm exhausted!" (This is why he was called Edom [*red*].)

Gen 25:31 Ya`akov answered, "First sell me your rights as the firstborn."

Gen 25:32 "Look, I'm about to die!" said `Esav. "What use to me are my rights as the firstborn?"

Gen 25:33 Ya`akov said, "First, swear to me!" So he swore to him, thus selling his birthright to Ya`akov.

Gen 25:34 Then Ya`akov gave him bread and lentil stew; he ate and drank, got up and went on his way. Thus `Esav showed how little he valued his birthright.

Ya'akov saw an opportunity and took it, literally and figuratively.

Then we saw Ya'akov scheme to obtain the blessing that was to be bestowed upon the firstborn and thus intended for Esav.

Gen 27:1 In the course of time, after Yitz'chak had grown old and his eyes dim, so that he couldn't see, he called `Esav his older son and said to him, "My son?" and he answered, "Here I am."

Gen 27:2 "Look, I'm old now, I don't know when I will die.

Gen 27:3 Therefore, please take your hunting gear—your quiver of arrows and your bow; go out in the country, and get me some game.

Gen 27:4 Make it tasty, the way I like it; and bring it to me to eat. Then I will bless you [*as firstborn*],

before I die."

We also see a conspiracy of sorts taking place whereby Rivkeh, Ya'akov's mother overhears what is to transpire and not only informs Ya'akov but assists in the deception...

Gen 27:5 Rivkah was listening when Yitz'chak spoke to his son `Esav. So when `Esav went out to the country to hunt for game and bring it back,

Gen 27:6 she said to her son Ya`akov, "Listen! I heard your father telling `Esav your brother,

Gen 27:7 'Bring me game, and make it tasty, so I can eat it. Then I will give you my blessing in the presence of Adonai, before my death.'

Gen 27:8 Now pay attention to me, my son; and do what I tell you.

Gen 27:9 Go to the flock, and bring me back two choice kids. I will make it tasty for your father, the way he likes it;

Gen 27:10 and you will bring it to your father to eat; so that he will give his blessing to you before his death."

Ya'akov had his doubts but listened to the instructions of his mother..

Gen 27:11 Ya`akov answered Rivkah his mother, "Look, `Esav is hairy, but I have smooth skin.

Gen 27:12 Suppose my father touches me—he'll know I'm trying to trick him, and I'll bring a curse on myself, not a blessing!"

Gen 27:13 But his mother said, "Let your curse be on me. Just listen to me, and go get me the kids!"

Gen 27:14 So he went, got them and brought them to his mother; and his mother prepared them in the tasty way his father loved.

Gen 27:15 Next, Rivkah took `Esav her older son's best clothes, which she had with her in the house, and put them on Ya`akov her younger son;

Gen 27:16 and she put the skins of the goats on his hands and on the smooth parts of his neck.

Gen 27:17 Then she gave the tasty food and the bread she had prepared to her son Ya`akov.

Thus fully prepared, Ya'akov would approach his father and thus the deception was now in full swing...

Gen 27:18 He went to his father and said, "My father?" He replied, "Here I am; who are you, my son?"

Gen 27:19 Ya`akov said to his father, "I am `Esav your firstborn. I've done what you asked me to do. Get up now, sit down, eat the game, and then give me your blessing."

Gen 27:20 Yitz'chak said to his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Adonai your God made it happen that way."

Gen 27:21 Yitz'chak said to Ya`akov, "Come here, close to me, so I can touch you, my son, and know whether you are in fact my son `Esav or not."

Gen 27:22 Ya`akov approached Yitz'chak his father, who touched him and said, "The voice is Ya`akov's voice, but the hands are `Esav's hands."

Gen 27:23 However, he didn't detect him; because his hands were hairy like his brother `Esav's hands; so he gave him his blessing.

Gen 27:24 He asked, "Are you really my son `Esav?" And he replied, "I am."

Gen 27:25 He said, "Bring it here to me, and I will eat my son's game, so that I can give you my blessing." So he brought it up to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine, and he drank.

Gen 27:26 Then his father Yitz'chak said to him, "Come close now, and kiss me, my son."

Gen 27:27 He approached and kissed him. Yitz'chak smelled his clothes and blessed Ya`akov with these words: "See, my son smells like a field which Adonai has blessed.

Gen 27:28 So may God give you dew from heaven, the richness of the earth, and grain and wine in abundance.

Gen 27:29 May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. May you be lord over your kinsmen, let your mother's descendants bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

Gen 27:30 But as soon as Yitz'chak had finished giving his blessing to Ya`akov, when Ya`akov had barely left his father's presence, `Esav his brother came in from his hunting.

Thus technically, Ya'akov misrepresented himself to his father and in doing so, bearing false witness. Secondly, Ya'akov stole the blessing that was intended for his brother. Yitzchak intended the blessing for Esav in that he summoned him with the intention of bestowing the blessing upon him. Ya'akov, as his name conveys, supplanted his brother through theft. Now there are aspects pertaining to Ya'akov's actions and what Adonai already knew would happen in that it was prophesied when Rebecca was pregnant...

Gen 25:22 The children fought with each other inside her so much that she said, "If it's going to be like this, why go on living?" So she went to inquire of Adonai,

Gen 25:23 who answered her, "There are two nations in your womb. From birth they will be two rival peoples. One of these peoples will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

We witnessed how little Esav valued his birthright and only when it was time to receive his father's blessing did he care, for the distress he encountered upon the realization that Yitzchak had thought he had already blessed him and could not invoke the same blessing.

Gen 27:31 He too had prepared a tasty meal and brought it to his father, and now he said to his father, "Let my father get up and eat from his son's game, so that you may give me your blessing."

Gen 27:32 Yitz'chak his father said to him, "Who are you?" and he answered, "I am your son, your firstborn, `Esav."

Gen 27:33 Yitz'chak began trembling uncontrollably and said, "Then who was it that took game and brought it to me? I ate it all just before you came, and I gave my blessing to him. That's the truth, and the blessing must stand."

Gen 27:34 When `Esav heard his father's words he burst into loud, bitter sobbing. "Father, bless me too," he begged.

Gen 27:35 He replied, "Your brother came deceitfully and took away your blessing."

Gen 27:36 `Esav said, "His name, Ya`akov [*he supplants*], really suits him—because he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and here, now he has taken away my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"

Gen 27:37 Yitz'chak answered `Esav, "Look, I have made him your lord, I have given him all his kinsmen as servants, and I have given him grain and wine to sustain him. What else is there that I can do for you, my son?"

Gen 27:38 `Esav said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Father, bless me too!" `Esav wept aloud,

Gen 27:39 and Yitz'chak his father answered him: "Here! Your home will be of the richness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above.

Gen 27:40 You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you break loose, you will shake his yoke off your neck."

Gen 27:41 `Esav hated his brother because of the blessing his father had given him. `Esav said to himself, "The time for mourning my father will soon come, and then I will kill my brother Ya`akov."

Thus, when we come to the time when Ya'akov resides in the house of his father-in-law who would deceive him on several occasions is confronted by Lavan regarding the disappearance of his idols, Ya'akov denied that he had taken them and did not know of his wife Rachel's action to her father's idols.

Gen 31:32 But if you find your gods with someone, that person will not remain alive. So with our kinsmen to witness, if you spot anything that I have which belongs to you, take it back." Ya`akov did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

For Ya'akov is now involved in another deception, yet this time he is unaware of what is transpiring. The relationship between Ya'akov and his father-in-law Lavan is built on many deceptions, perceived deceptions and unknown deceptions to where this final interaction involving Rachel

Gen 31:34 Now Rachel had taken the household gods, put them in the saddle of the camel and was sitting on them. Lavan felt all around the tent but did not find them.

Gen 31:35 She said to her father, "Please don't be angry that I'm not getting up in your presence, but it's the time of my period." So he searched, but he didn't find the household gods.

Thus, based on the original premise of the question, deception ran in the family, both her father and her husband had authored many deceptions and have been the recipients of many deceptions to the point that the perceived relationship Ya'akov had with Adonai was more of a distant relationship than an intimate relationship...

Gen 31:41 These twenty years I've been in your house—I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock; and you changed my wages ten times!

Gen 31:42 If the God of my father, the God of Avraham, the one whom Yitz'chak fears, had not been on my side, by now you would certainly have already sent me away with nothing! God has seen how distressed I've been and how hard I've worked, and last night he passed judgment in my favor."

Notice the phrasing here. The God of my father, the God of Avraham, not the God of Ya'akov. This relationship dynamic will change in a rather profound way when Adonai and Ya'akov wrestle.

Thus Rachel lived in an environment of deception and thus the theft of her father's idols fell within the realm of this environment.

Rachel did not live a long life and thus it is likely the dishonor of her father in stealing his property even though they were idolatrous items led to her untimely death while giving birth to her second and final son Benjamin...

Gen 35:16 Then they traveled on from Beit-El, and while there was still some distance to go before arriving in Efrat, Rachel went into labor, and she had great difficulty with it.

Gen 35:17 While she was undergoing this hard labor, the midwife said to her, "Don't worry, this is also a son for you."

Gen 35:18 But she died in childbirth. As she was dying she named her son Ben-Oni [*son of my grief*], but his father called him Binyamin [*son of the right hand, son of the south*].

Gen 35:19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Efrat (that is, Beit-Lechem).

Gen 35:20 Ya'akov set up a standing-stone on her grave; it is the standing-stone of Rachel's grave to this day.

Question:

The question is regarding Gentiles and kashrut, specifically regarding Acts 15 and the 4 directives given in verse 20:

1. Abstain from things polluted by idols (food related?)
2. Fornication
3. What is strangled (food related)
4. Blood (also food related, in some cases)

It would seem that if kashrut were to apply to Gentile believers, it would have been included here, especially since the issue of food is addressed. I've heard some say that this was the basic beginning point for Gentile believers, in order for them to have table fellowship with Jewish believers at the time, with an eye toward the future where they would be taught further to observe kashrut as part of being a talmidim. However, I don't see that, but that doesn't mean it's not there somewhere.

Answer:

Regarding Acts 15 and what is known as the Jerusalem Council there was a specific issue being addressed - "What do we do with Gentiles who are coming to faith in the Jewish Messiah?"

There was significant confusion in the early stages after Kefa went to the home of Cornelius and Sha'ul went to the Gentile nations. Adonai, through His Ruach was expanding the Kingdom of believers in Yeshua by leaps and bounds, reaching many non-Jewish people.

Act 15:1 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 in the manner prescribed by Moshe."

Act 15:2 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 before the emissaries and the elders up in Yerushalayim.

Act 15:3 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.

Having arrived in Yerushalayim Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba meet to discuss the challenges they are experiencing.

Act 15:4 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.

Act 15:5 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."

Of those in attendance, are people of the P'rushim who offered their two shekels whereby the vast influx of new Gentile believers should be circumcised and instructed to obey Torah of Moshe.

Notice the combination – circumcise and obey.

Act 15:7 After lengthy debate, Kefa got up and said to them, "Brothers, you yourselves know that a good while back, God chose me from among you to be the one by whose mouth the Goyim should hear the message of the Good News and come to trust.

Act 15:8 And God, who knows the heart, bore them witness by giving the Ruach HaKodesh to them, just as he did to us;

Act 15:9 that is, he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their heart by trust.

Act 15:10 So why are you putting God to the test now by placing a yoke on the neck of the talmidim which neither our fathers nor we have had the strength to bear?

Act 15:11 No, it is through the love and kindness of the Lord Yeshua that we trust and are delivered—and it's the same with them."

It would be Kefa, who experienced first hand in the house of Cornelius where Adonai would pour out His Spirit upon the Goy, whereby none of them had been circumcised. Kefa was still sharing about the Good News of Messiah when it happened...

Act 10:44 Kefa was still saying these things when the Ruach HaKodesh fell on all who were hearing the message.

Act 10:45 All the believers from the Circumcision faction who had accompanied Kefa were amazed that the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh was also being poured out

Act 10:46 on the Goyim, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Kefa's response was,

Act 10:47 "Is anyone prepared to prohibit these people from being immersed in water? After all, they

have received the Ruach HaKodesh, just as we did."

Act 10:48 And he ordered that they be immersed in the name of Yeshua the Messiah. Then they asked Kefa to stay on with them for a few days.

The very thing that happened on Shavuot whereby Adonai poured out His Spirit upon the Jewish people who resided in Y'hudah and who were present having traveled to Yerushalayim for the moadim of Passover and Shavuot...

Act 2:5 Now there were staying in Yerushalayim religious Jews from every nation under heaven.

Act 2:6 When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered; they were confused, because each one heard the believers speaking in his own language.

Act 2:7 Totally amazed, they asked, "How is this possible? Aren't all these people who are speaking from the Galil?"

Act 2:8 How is it that we hear them speaking in our native languages?

Act 2:9 We are Parthians, Medes, Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Y'hudah, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia,

Act 2:10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome;

Act 2:11 Jews by birth and proselytes; Jews from Crete and from Arabia. . . ! How is it that we hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things God has done?"

Thus what had happened in Yerushalayim and Y'hudah is happening in the nations as Yeshua conveyed would happen, and in this order...

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Ruach HaKodesh comes upon you; you will be my witnesses both in Yerushalayim and in all Y'hudah and Shomron, indeed to the ends of the earth!"

Thus, now it was Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba's turn to share what had transpired and the many miracles they had witnessed themselves.

Act 15:12 Then the whole assembly kept still as they listened to Bar-Nabba and Sha'ul tell what signs and miracles God had done through them among the Gentiles.

And thus the dialog continued between the emissaries with Ya'akov drawing the following observation:

Act 15:13 Ya'akov broke the silence to reply. "Brothers," he said, "hear what I have to say.

Act 15:14 Shim'on has told in detail what God did when he first began to show his concern for taking from among the Goyim a people to bear his name.

Act 15:15 And the words of the Prophets are in complete harmony with this for it is written,

Act 15:16 ' "After this, I will return; and I will rebuild the fallen tent of David. I will rebuild its ruins, I will restore it,

Act 15:17 so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, that is, all the Goyim who have been called by my name,"

Act 15:18 says Adonai, who is doing these things.' All this has been known for ages.

And thus concluding.

Act 15:19 "Therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God.

Act 15:20 Instead, we should write them a letter telling them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood.

Where did Ya'akov come up with the following prohibitions being placed on Gentiles coming to faith in the Jewish Messiah, while not requiring circumcision?

1. Abstain from things polluted by idols (food related?)
2. Fornication
3. What is strangled (food related)
4. Blood (also food related, in some cases)

While three of the four can be food related, none of them are related to Kashrut but are related to common pagan practices demonstrated throughout the known world. I have included an excerpt from the Thematic Torah Portion – Acharei Mot

Thus we have the final letter transmitted to the nations by the emissaries...

Act 15:23 with the following letter: From: The emissaries and the elders, your brothers To: The brothers from among the Gentiles throughout Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings!

Act 15:24 We have heard that some people went out from among us without our authorization, and that they have upset you with their talk, unsettling your minds.

Act 15:25 So we have decided unanimously to select men and send them to you with our dear friends Bar-Nabba and Sha'ul,

Act 15:26 who have dedicated their lives to upholding the name of our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah.

Act 15:27 So we have sent Y'hudah and Sila, and they will confirm in person what we are writing.

Act 15:28 For it seemed good to the Ruach HaKodesh and to us not to lay any heavier burden on you than the following requirements:

Act 15:29 to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will be doing the right thing. Shalom!

Absent from the letter is a verse that was influential in the deliberation of the emissaries as they concluded that Gentiles should abstain from these four practices which are in alignment with practices Adonai had revealed to Isra'el:

<i>Torah Passage</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Acts Passage</i>
Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:1-9	Proper Worship	Acts 15:29 (1 st phrase)
Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:10-15	Proper Diet	Acts 15:29 (2 nd & 3 rd phrase)
Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:1-30	Proper Sexual Relations	Acts 15:29 (4 th phrase)

The very practices being addressed are the very aspects of life Adonai addressed to the nation as part of the Sinai Covenant through Moshe.

Thus, the emissaries have established an outline by which Gentile believers would transform their lives full of pagan practices into a lifestyle honoring Adonai, the Father and Adonai the Son – Yeshua, through the power of the Ruach Ha Kodesh.

Act 15:21 For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat."

Just as Cornelius went to the Temple for prayer, so to those outside of Yerushalayim would go to the synagogue on Shabbat and listen to Torah being read, discussed and even debated. We have seen this practice throughout the Book of Acts, especially the vast representation of those who would attend.

Act 17:1 After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Sha'ul and Sila came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue.

Act 17:2 According to his usual practice, Sha'ul went in; and on three Shabbats he gave them drashes from the Tanakh,

Act 17:3 explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and that "this Yeshua whom I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah."

Act 17:4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and threw in their lot with Sha'ul and Sila, as did a great many of the Greek men who were "God-fearers," and not a few of the leading women.

Thus the practice of Kashrut would be part of this experience in that when the readings for Vayikra 11 and D'varim 14 would be read and thus further taught. Consider that none of the four practices referenced spoke specifically of the types of animals that were to be eaten but rather the practices that occurred. Kashrut addresses specifically which animals are permissible for eating.

Therefore the initial letter by the emissaries to Gentile believers throughout the nations was to address that which is obvious and easily addressed for which align with Vayikra 17. Then, as they become introduced to Torah and its teachings, they would transform their lives through the renewal of their minds...

Rom 12:1 I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical "Temple worship" for you.

Rom 12:2 In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the `olam hazeh. Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed.

The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15

One of the great debates of our day concerns whether or not the Torah is valid for New Covenant disciples. This is unfortunate. The Torah is eternal and it was intended for all who would call upon the one and only true God, the God of Avraham (**Abraham**), Yitzchak (**Isaac**) and Ya'akov (**Jacob**). It makes no difference whether we are Jewish or not. The real question is, which God are you serving?

I'd like to give you one proof that the Torah was never abolished. It's based on the events of Acts 15 and the thematic connections that exist to this week's parshah (**Torah portion**).

*15:1 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 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 before the emissaries and the elders up in Yerushalayim. 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." 6 The emissaries and the elders met to look into this matter. 7 After lengthy debate, Kefa got up and said to them, "Brothers, you yourselves know that a good while back, God chose me from among you to be the one by whose mouth the Goyim should hear the message of the Good News and come to trust. 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore them witness by giving the Ruach HaKodesh to them, just as he did to us; 9 that is, he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their heart by trust. 10 So why are you putting God to the test now by placing a yoke on the neck of the talmidim which neither our fathers nor we have had the strength to bear? 11 No, it is through the love and kindness of the Lord Yeshua that we trust and are delivered — and it's the same with them." 12 Then the whole assembly kept still as they listened to Bar-Nabba and Sha'ul tell what signs and miracles God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 Ya'akov broke the silence to reply. "Brothers," he said, "hear what I have to say. 14 Shim'on has told in detail what God did when he first began to show his concern for taking from among the Goyim a people to bear his name. 15 And the words of the Prophets are in complete harmony with this for it is written, 16 "**After this, I will return; and I will rebuild the fallen tent of David. I will rebuild its ruins, I will restore it, 17 so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, that is, all the Goyim who have been called by my name,**" 18 says ADONAI, who is doing these things.' All this has been known for ages. 19 "Therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God. 20 Instead, we should write them a letter telling them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood. 21 For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat." 22 Then the emissaries and the elders, together with the whole Messianic community, decided to select men from among themselves to send to Antioch with Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba. They sent Y'hudah, called Bar-Sabba, and Sila, both leading men among the brothers, 23 with the following letter: From: The emissaries and the elders, your brothers To: The brothers from among the Gentiles throughout Antioch, Syria and Cilicia Greetings! 24 We have heard that some people went out from among us without our authorization, and that they have upset you with their talk,*

unsettling your minds. 25 So we have decided unanimously to select men and send them to you with our dear friends Bar-Nabba and Sha'ul, 26 who have dedicated their lives to upholding the name of our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah. 27 So we have sent Y'hudah and Sila, and they will confirm in person what we are writing. 28 For it seemed good to the Ruach HaKodesh and to us not to lay any heavier burden on you than the following requirements: 29 to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will be doing the right thing. Shalom! 30 The messengers were sent off and went to Antioch, where they gathered the group together and delivered the letter. 31 After reading it, the people were delighted by its encouragement. 32 Y'hudah and Sila, who were also prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. 33 After they had spent some time there, they were sent off with a greeting of "Shalom!" from the brothers to those who had sent them. 34 But it seemed good to Sila to stay there. 35 But Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba stayed in Antioch, where they and many others taught and proclaimed the Good News of the message about the Lord. 36 After some time, Sha'ul said to Bar-Nabba, "Let's go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we proclaimed the message about the Lord, and see how they're doing." 37 Now Bar-Nabba wanted to take with them Yochanan, the one called Mark. 38 But Sha'ul thought it would be unwise to take this man with them, since he had gone off and left them in Pamphylia to do the work by themselves. 39 There was such sharp disagreement over this that they separated from each other, with Bar-Nabba taking Mark and sailing off to Cyprus. 40 However, Sha'ul chose Sila and left, after the brothers had committed him to the love and kindness of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the congregations.

Believers usually point to Acts 15 to prove that the Torah is not for New Covenant disciples. The argument usually goes like this:

- According to Romans 6:14 - *For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace.* - and Romans 7:4 - *Thus, my brothers, you have been made dead with regard to the Torah through the Messiah's body, so that you may belong to someone else, namely, the one who has been raised from the dead, in order for us to bear fruit for God.* - we are not under the Torah and we are dead to the Torah because it was abolished when Yeshua died. We are now under the New Covenant of grace.

Would like to understand what Sha'ul (**Paul**) meant when he said, "we are free from the law," "we are dead to the law," and we are "not under the law?"

- According to Acts 15:1 (*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 in the manner prescribed by Moshe."*) - and 15:5 (*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."*) - the Jews were Judaizing by trying to make the non-Jewish believers keep the Law, which according to them, was abolished. Furthermore, according to Acts 15:8-11 (*8 And God, who knows the heart, bore them witness by giving the Ruach HaKodesh to them, just as he did to us; 9 that is, he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their heart by trust. 10 So why are you putting God to the test now by placing a yoke on the neck of the talmidim which neither our fathers nor we have had the strength to bear? 11 No, it is through the love and kindness of the Lord Yeshua that we trust and are delivered — and it's the same with them.*) - the law is a yoke of bondage which we needed to be set free from.

- According to Acts 15:19-20 (*19 "Therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God. 20 Instead, we should write them a letter telling them to abstain*

from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood.) - the council decided not to trouble the Gentiles by having them keep the "Old Testament." Instead, they were to simply follow some *general principles*:

- Don't eat meat sacrificed to animals
- Don't drink/eat blood or eat strangled animals.
- Don't commit fornication

Now at first glance it may seem that they have a strong argument. I won't go into the reasons why and how they've twisted most of these verses. Let's just deal with the four requirements listed in Acts 15.

How Can We Miss the Obvious???

It is sad that most believers think the Torah was abolished. It is particularly pathetic (**excuse my negativity**) that Acts 15 is used as a "proof text" to prove such an assertion. In my opinion, there are three main reasons why believers think this way:

1. They either have not read the Torah at all.
2. They have not seriously studied the Torah to see what it actually teaches.
3. They don't know how to study the Scriptures thematically.

Most believers fall into these categories. Now, let's find the reason for each of those three reasons listed above.

Do you have any idea why the Jerusalem council chose those *particular four requirements* in Acts 15:28-29? Do you have any idea **WHERE** the Jerusalem council obtained these requirements? Read Acts 15:28-29 - *28 For it seemed good to the Ruach HaKodesh and to us not to lay any heavier burden on you than the following requirements: 29 to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will be doing the right thing. Shalom!* Thematically, what are the topics being discussed? (**Proper worship, proper diet, and proper sexual relations.**) Can you think of any passage from the Torah thematically related to these three topics? (**Parshah Acharei Mot. Vayikra [Leviticus] 17-18 deals with these three subjects!!!**)

17:1 ADONAI said to Moshe, 2 "Speak to Aharon and his sons and to all the people of Isra'el. Tell them that this is what ADONAI has ordered: 3 'When someone from the community of Isra'el slaughters an ox, lamb or goat inside or outside the camp 4 without bringing it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to ADONAI before the tabernacle of ADONAI, he is to be charged with blood — he has shed blood, and that person is to be cut off from his people. 5 The reason for this is so that the people of Isra'el will bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice out in the field — so that they will bring them to ADONAI, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the cohen, and sacrifice them as peace offerings to ADONAI. 6 The cohen will splash the blood against the altar of ADONAI at the entrance to the tent of meeting and make the fat go up in smoke as a pleasing aroma for ADONAI. 7 No longer will they offer sacrifices to the goat-demons, before whom they prostitute themselves! This is a permanent regulation for them through all their generations.' 8 "Also tell them, 'When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you offers a burnt offering or sacrifice 9

without bringing it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to ADONAI, that person is to be cut off from his people. 10 When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you eats any kind of blood, I will set myself against that person who eats blood and cut him off from his people. 11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life.' 12 This is why I told the people of Isra'el, 'None of you is to eat blood, nor is any foreigner living with you to eat blood.' 13 "When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you hunts and catches game, whether animal or bird that may be eaten, he is to pour out its blood and cover it with earth. 14 For the life of every creature — its blood is its life. Therefore I said to the people of Isra'el, 'You are not to eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it will be cut off.' 15 "Anyone eating an animal that dies naturally or is torn to death by wild animals, whether he is a citizen or a foreigner, is to wash his clothes and bathe himself in water; he will be unclean until evening; then he will be clean. 16 But if he doesn't wash them or bathe his body, he will bear the consequences of his wrongdoing." 18:1 ADONAI said to Moshe, 2 "Speak to the people of Isra'el; tell them, 'I am ADONAI your God. 3 You are not to engage in the activities found in the land of Egypt, where you used to live; and you are not to engage in the activities found in the land of Kena'an, where I am bringing you; nor are you to live by their laws. 4 You are to obey my rulings and laws and live accordingly; I am ADONAI your God. 5 You are to observe my laws and rulings; if a person does them, he will have life through them; I am ADONAI. 6 "'None of you is to approach anyone who is a close relative in order to have sexual relations; I am ADONAI. 7 You are not to have sexual relations with your father, and you are not to have sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother — do not have sexual relations with her. 8 You are not to have sexual relations with your father's wife; that is your father's prerogative. 9 You are not to have sexual relations with your sister, the daughter of your father or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or elsewhere. Do not have sexual relations with them. 10 You are not to have sexual relations with your son's daughter or with your daughter's daughter. Do not have sexual relations with them, because their sexual disgrace will be your own. 11 You are not to have sexual relations with your father's wife's daughter, born to your father, because she is your sister; do not have sexual relations with her. 12 You are not to have sexual relations with your father's sister, because she is your father's close relative. 13 You are not to have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative. 14 You are not to disgrace your father's brother by having sexual relations with his wife, because she is your aunt. 15 You are not to have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law; because she is your son's wife. Do not have sexual relations with her. 16 You are not to have sexual relations with your brother's wife, because this is your brother's prerogative. 17 "'You are not to have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter, nor are you to have sexual relations with her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are close relatives of hers, and it would be shameful. 18 You are not to take a woman to be a rival with her sister and have sexual relations with her while her sister is still alive. 19 You are not to approach a woman in order to have sexual relations with her when she is unclean from her time of niddah. 20 You are not to go to bed with your neighbor's wife and thus become unclean with her. 21 "'You are not to let any of your children be sacrificed to Molekh, thereby profaning the name of your God; I am ADONAI. 22 "'You are not to go to bed with a man as with a woman; it is an abomination. 23 "'You are not to have sexual relations with any kind of animal and thus become unclean with it; nor is any woman to present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; it is perversion. 24 "'Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, because all the nations which I am expelling ahead of you are defiled with them. 25 The land has become unclean, and this is why I am punishing it — the land itself will vomit out its inhabitants. 26 But you are to keep my laws and rulings and not engage in any of these disgusting practices, neither the citizen nor the foreigner living with you; 27 for the people of the land have committed all these abominations, and the land is now defiled. 28 If you make the land unclean, it will vomit you out too, just as it is vomiting out the nation that was there before you. 29 For

those who engage in any of these disgusting practices, whoever they may be, will be cut off from their people. 30 So keep my charge not to follow any of these abominable customs that others before you have followed and thus defile yourselves by doing them. I am ADONAI your God.’”

Look at the order of the topics listed in Acts 15:28-29 and Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17-18. Now compare them to the order of topics taken from Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17-18!

<i>Torah Passage</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Acts Passage</i>
Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:1-9	Proper Worship	Acts 15:29 (1 st phrase)
Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:10-15	Proper Diet	Acts 15:29 (2 nd & 3 rd phrase)
Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:1-30	Proper Sexual Relations	Acts 15:29 (4 th phrase)

Do you see it? How do we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Acts 15:29 is thematically related to Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17-18? Because, Acts 15:29 is a summary of Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17-18. Even the order is the same! This is why I made the three (negative) assertions above concerning why most believers erroneously believe that the Torah has been abolished based on Acts 15. The requirements placed on the Gentiles in Acts 15:29 are the same Torah commandments listed in Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17-18! So much for the Torah being abolished. The Jerusalem council simply gave the new Gentile converts Torah commandments (**which were still valid, even for non-Jews**). How can anyone miss it?

Well, it's easy. It's as simple as this--**if you don't study the Torah, you won't know what it says!** How could anyone who has seriously studied the Torah not immediately see that the requirements of Acts 15:29 are the same Torah commandments listed in Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17-18?

Eating Blood—When most Western New Covenant believers read the prohibition against blood in Acts 15, they think this command prohibits the *drinking* of blood. Therefore, they think they don't have to worry about breaking it. After all, who in the Western world would even consider drinking the blood of a dead animal? But, is that what it really means? Let's see what the prohibition of eating blood is really about.

So far, the most important point we've learned is that the four requirements of Acts 15 are actual Torah commandments. With this as a foundation, let's read Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17:10-16 to see what the prohibition of eating blood is all about. *10 When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you eats any kind of blood, I will set myself against that person who eats blood and cut him off from his people. 11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life.' 12 This is why I told the people of Isra'el, 'None of you is to eat blood, nor is any foreigner living with you to eat blood.' 13 "When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you hunts and catches game, whether animal or bird that may be eaten, he is to pour out its blood and cover it with earth. 14 For the life of every creature — its blood is its life. Therefore I said to the people of Isra'el, 'You are not to eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it will be cut off.' 15 "Anyone eating an animal that dies naturally or is torn to death by wild animals, whether he is a citizen or a foreigner, is to wash his clothes and bathe himself in water; he will be unclean until evening; then he will be clean. 16 But if he doesn't wash them or bathe his body, he will bear the consequences of his wrongdoing."*

Read Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:10 and 12 - *10 When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you eats any kind of blood, I will set myself against that person who eats blood and cut him off from his people. 12 This is why I told the people of Isra'el, 'None of you is to eat blood, nor is any foreigner living with you to eat blood.'*

What is the negative commandment given? **(Do not eat any blood.)** Notice, it says not to **eat** any blood. These verses say nothing about **drinking** blood. Therefore, the drinking of blood is not the issue.

Now the Torah will define, in explicit **terms, what one must do in order to not eat blood!** Read Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:13-14 - *13 "When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you hunts and catches game, whether animal or bird that may be eaten, he is to pour out its blood and cover it with earth. 14 For the life of every creature — its blood is its life. Therefore I said to the people of Isra'el, 'You are not to eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it will be cut off.'*

According to the Torah, what action must be performed in order to not eat blood? **(If one wishes to eat a bird or animal, its blood must be poured out and covered with earth!)** What are we talking about here? We're talking about eating meat—food! Why must you pour the blood out and cover it? **(So that you won't eat it.)** Note how many times the Torah uses the phrase consume/eat blood in Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17:10-16!

In other words, when the Torah says don't eat blood, it means don't eat meat that has not had the blood properly vacated from the body.

Now here's one of the most important phrases in this portion of Scripture. Look at Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17:13: *When someone from the community of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living with you hunts and catches game, whether animal or bird that may be eaten, he is to pour out its blood and cover it with earth.*

What does the Torah mean by the phrase “animal or bird that may be eaten”? Are there some beasts and fowl that may not be eaten? Furthermore, which beasts and fowl may be eaten? The answer is given in Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 11:1-47 where the Torah lists the clean/tahor/pure animals that may be eaten!

11:1 ADONAI said to Moshe and Aharon, 2 "Tell the people of Isra'el, 'These are the living creatures which you may eat among all the land animals: 3 any that has a separate hoof which is completely divided and chews the cud — these animals you may eat. 4 But you are not to eat those that only chew the cud or only have a separate hoof. 5 For example, the camel, the coney and 6 the hare are unclean for you, because they chew the cud but don't have a separate hoof; 7 while the pig is unclean for you, because, although it has a separate and completely divided hoof, it doesn't chew the cud. 8 You are not to eat meat from these or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you. 9 "Of all the things that live in the water, you may eat these: anything in the water that has fins and scales, whether in seas or in rivers — these you may eat. 10 But everything in the seas and rivers without both fins and scales, of all the small water-creatures and of all the living creatures in the water, is a detestable thing for you. 11 Yes, these will be detestable for you — you are not to eat their meat, and you are to detest their carcasses. 12 Whatever lacks fins and scales in the water is a detestable thing for you. 13 "The following creatures of the air are to be detestable for you — they are not to be eaten, they are a detestable thing: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, 14 the kite, the various kinds of buzzards, 15 the various kinds of ravens, 16 the ostrich, the screech-owl, the seagull, the various kinds of hawks, 17 the

little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, 18 the horned owl, the pelican, the barn owl, 19 the stork, the various kinds of herons, the hoopoe and the bat. 20 “All winged swarming creatures that go on all fours are a detestable thing for you; 21 except that of all winged swarming creatures that go on all fours, you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet, enabling them to jump off the ground. 22 Specifically, of these you may eat the various kinds of locusts, grasshoppers, katydids and crickets. 23 But other than that, all winged swarming creatures having four feet are a detestable thing for you. 24 “The following will make you unclean; whoever touches the carcass of them will be unclean until evening, 25 and whoever picks up any part of their carcass is to wash his clothes and be unclean until evening: 26 every animal that has a separate but incompletely divided hoof or that doesn’t chew the cud is unclean for you; anyone who touches them will become unclean. 27 Whatever goes on its paws, among all animals that go on all fours, is unclean for you; whoever touches its carcass will be unclean until evening; 28 and whoever picks up its carcass is to wash his clothes and be unclean until evening — these are unclean for you. 29 “The following are unclean for you among the small creatures that swarm on the ground: the weasel, the mouse, the various kinds of lizards, 30 the gecko, the land crocodile, the skink, the sand-lizard and the chameleon. 31 They are unclean crawling creatures; whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean until evening. 32 Anything on which one of them falls when dead will become unclean — wooden utensil, article of clothing, leather, sacking — any utensil used for work; it must be put in water, and it will be unclean until evening; then it will be clean. 33 If one of them falls into a clay pot, whatever is in it will become unclean, and you are to break the pot. 34 Any food permitted to be eaten that water from such a vessel gets on will become unclean, and any permitted liquid in such a vessel will become unclean. 35 Everything on which any carcass-part of theirs falls will become unclean, whether oven or stove; it is to be broken in pieces — they are unclean and will be unclean for you; 36 although a spring or cistern for collecting water remains clean. But anyone who touches one of their carcasses will become unclean. 37 If any carcass-part of theirs falls on any kind of seed to be sown, it is clean; 38 but if water is put on the seed and a carcass-part of theirs falls on it, it is unclean for you. 39 “If an animal of a kind that you are permitted to eat dies, whoever touches its carcass will be unclean until evening. 40 A person who eats meat from its carcass or carries its carcass is to wash his clothes; he will be unclean until evening. 41 “Any creature that swarms on the ground is a detestable thing; it is not to be eaten — 42 whatever moves on its stomach, goes on all fours, or has many legs — all creatures that swarm on the ground; you are not to eat them, because they are a detestable thing. 43 You are not to make yourselves detestable with any of these swarming, crawling creatures; do not make yourselves unclean with them, do not defile yourselves with them. 44 For I am ADONAI your God; therefore, consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am holy; and do not defile yourselves with any kind of swarming creature that moves along the ground. 45 For I am ADONAI, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. Therefore you are to be holy, because I am holy. 46 “Such, then, is the law concerning animals, flying creatures, all living creatures that move about in the water, and all creatures that swarm on the ground. 47 Its purpose is to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.”

That’s right. We’re talking about the kosher requirements that make food fit and proper to eat. There are basically two requirements. First, the animal must be a kosher animal; second, the blood must be properly vacated.

The Torah is very plain in its definition of not eating blood. It means that you must only eat a kosher animal whose blood has been properly drained. Remember, the Torah says “any beast or fowl **THAT MAY BE EATEN.**”

Now we know what the Torah means when it says that one should not eat blood. It's talking about all of the kosher requirements. We also know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the Jerusalem council gave the same Torah commands in Parshah Acharei Mot to the Gentiles. Therefore, when the Jerusalem council commanded the Gentiles to not eat blood, they were commanding the Gentiles to observe all kosher requirements! It had nothing to do with commanding them not to drink blood (**even though it's obvious that drinking blood is also a violation of Torah**).

The reason why most New Covenant Western believers don't understand the four requirements of Acts 15 is because they don't study the Torah seriously or they just plain don't study it. These verses have been here for centuries. They're easy to interpret once you realize that they're simply a shortened version of the commandments listed in Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17-18. Some of you may ask, "Do you mean that I, a non-Jewish believer, am supposed to eat only kosher food?"

To which I answer, yes! You are only supposed to eat kosher food. Can the Bible be any clearer? If you've been confused it's because you didn't know the Biblical definition of "eating blood." It has everything to do with eating a Biblically kosher diet!

Kosher For Gentiles—Did you notice who was commanded not to eat blood in Vayikra (**Leviticus**) 17:10-16? Was the command given to Israelites only? (**No.**) Now here's where our translations hurt us again. If you use the NIV or the NASB, you will see that the "alien living among you" is also commanded to abstain from blood. If you are using the KJV or NKJV, you will see that the "strangers" who live among you are also commanded to abstain from blood. If you use the CJB you will see that the "foreigners" living with you is also commanded to abstain from blood.

So, who are these aliens, strangers, and foreigners? Well...the Hebrew word translated variously as alien, stranger, or foreigners (ger—גֵּר), means - The Hebrew ger (in post-Biblical times translated as "proselyte") literally means "**resident**" and refers to a non-Israelite who lived among the Israelite community. When the Torah commands compassion and equal justice for the ger, it is referring to these "residents".

A proselyte is a non-Israelite who joins himself to the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov (**Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**). With this understanding, we know the Torah teaches that a Gentile who repents and converts must also eat a kosher diet! Now look at Acts 15 again. What have the Gentiles done? They have repented and converted, by believing in the salvation given by the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov (**Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**). Therefore, it only stands to reason that Gentiles would have to eat a kosher diet.

The reason why the Emissaries (**Apostles**) (**Acts 15**) required the Gentiles to eat a kosher diet (**a Biblically kosher animal that has had its blood properly vacated**) is because the Torah commanded (**Vayikra [Leviticus] 17**) that the ger eat a Biblically kosher diet.

If you have struggled with wondering if you should eat kosher or not, struggle no more. You will be blessed as you eat only of those animals that are ritually pure. Remember, obedience to the commandments leads to life, not death.

So let us sum up Acts 15, the issues Jewish Believers faced with accepting the Ger or Goyim (**Gentiles**) coming to faith by accepting Yeshua. They are two fold.

1. Physical circumcision was not a requirement for coming to faith as was being pushed by a faction within Judaism known as Judaisers. Therefore the obstacle is not Torah but circumcision in that this is the issue being discussed in Acts 15.
2. Abstaining from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood conveys that they were to refrain from these practices. These practices were found in cultures outside of Am Israel - prevalent pagan practices. The Bi-product for not requiring circumcision is “How are the Goyim (Gentiles) to live when becoming part of the Messianic Community. These practices, once part of their lives, were no longer acceptable for the lifestyle they have been transformed to live by.

Read Act 15:19 – 21. *19 "Therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God. 20 Instead, we should write them a letter telling them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood. 21 For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat."*

Considering the instruction to abstain from these four practices is followed immediately in verse 21 by the observation that Moshe (**Moses**) [**another term for Torah**] is in every city where there is a synagogue and is read every Shabbat aligns with the intention of the Emissaries (**Apostles**) to transform those who are coming into the Messianic Community through Torah. Therefore the notion taught by many that Torah has been done away cannot be supported by the Jerusalem Council's decision in Acts 15.

Some say that obedience to the Torah commandments is legalism. Legalism is obedience to man's commandments (**oral law**). Following Adonai's commandments is called **faith!**” You see, it's man who says that the Torah has been abolished. It's man who says that we need not eat a kosher diet. **But is that what Adonai's word says?**