

TWISTED SCRIPTURES

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Making a path straight

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Lesson Summaries

In 'Twisted Scriptures,' I aim to confront and dismantle long-standing biblical traditions and embrace a radical connection with God's Word.

Lesson 1 – Eliminating the law or discrediting corrupt leaders?

Mark 7 has long been considered the foundational passage where Jesus teaches the dismantling of the law of Moses and creates a new religion by cleansing all foods. Rather, I will show how 1st century Judaism created a framework where all clean foods prepared by Gentiles are considered common and unclean and how the passage “thus declaring all foods clean” doesn’t mean what it sounds like.

Lesson 2 – Cancelling the law or inviting Gentiles?

Peter receives a vision where God asks him to eat unclean animals. Considered a further proof text for how Jesus permitted his disciples to eat unclean foods contrary to the law of God. In this lesson, I will show how his vision was about confronting 1st century Judaism’s laws calling Gentiles unclean contrary to God’s will.

Lesson 3 – Abolishing the law or integrating Gentiles?

The third proof text to support the notion of Jesus erasing God’s commandments and creating a new religion in error. This time, I will show how Paul encourages fellow believers to be inclusive of Israelis and foreigners with different traditions around fasting, vegetarianism and holidays, not permitting sin or creating a new religion.

Lesson 4 – Controversies over the Gentiles heat up

Paul and Peter’s conflict in Galatia, demonstrates a complex confrontation with the Torah and the Oral Law. When

understood against the backdrop of first century Rabbinic laws, the evidence is clear, Paul was against segregation and the sinful traditions of the elders, not creating a new religion.

Introduction

Seekers, Students, Friends and Dearly Beloved, welcome to Twisted Scriptures, a four-lesson teaching series where I uncover traditions where translators purposefully translated words in bias and present a twisted meaning from the original. It's here we see examples of where the straight path becomes crooked and leads entire generations astray.

Since the ancient days of the Israelite exile to Babylon to occupation by the Greeks and Romans, to the many tumultuous times of present day the Israeli believers have rarely, if ever, been afforded a time to speak openly and share ancient wisdom and understanding of the scriptures with the Gentile world. Leaving much of the world in the dark with respect to their insight into the autograph.

It is with a spirit of unity, blessing and adoration of the Most-High God of Israel and his promises to his people and the world that this study is presented to you, for many for the first time in over 1900 years. A restoration of the first century and first-generation Apostolic interpretations of select biblical passages.

It is finally in this era of an abundance of knowledge and discovery like no generation before us, one can find the truth and resolve many of the mysteries of the scriptures with a certainty that was lost to the world since as early as the second century C.E.

With an open mind and open heart, walk with me through this adventure of uncovering ancient traditions and find a new appreciation and zeal for the word of God. May it be transformative to you for your maturity and dedication in pursuit of the Almighty Eternal One. Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'Olam!

The restoration of his people to the land of Israel, and their celebration of the first jubilee and the completion of 70 years in their return demonstrates that God's promises are alive and well in the twenty-first century, just as they were throughout history.

In the early days of the faith, the early "church" was founded and lead by Jewish-Christians. These Israeli believers were born and raised within the land of Israel, in the midst of generations of harsh persecution and occupation by foreign powers like the Greeks and Romans. As the message of the good news spread outside of their borders, an inevitable conflict would occur; they would be faced with how to adopt and integrate the people of the nations, what have come to be known as "the Gentiles".

Shortly after the first generation of Jewish-Christians leaders, known as the Nazarenes, or people of "the way" swift and hard lines of divisions that were laid and proceeding generations continually added to them. To the point where the historical perspective is that Judaism and Christianity, or Jewish-Christianity, "parted ways" in their early history, never to be reunited again. Many attest that in our modern day to be Christian, is to be vehemently *not* Jewish, as if history itself has forgotten that the scriptures were authored and presented by and for Israeli people.

After millennia of separation, fueled by polemics, lust for power, greed, racism, violence and murder, this generation is able to uncover and restore the true teaching that had been lost. God had a plan; to reach all people on earth and incorporate them into his people, his kingdom and share eternal life forever together.

Allow me to present the evidence within this booklet that demonstrates some of the foundational errors that are at the root of misunderstanding and division that led to many generations believing a lie that kept us all apart.

Can we find the truth? Can we reverse these sins and see clearly? Let's dive in!

Dominic St Pierre

Lesson 1

Eliminating the Law or Discrediting Corrupt Leaders?

For the first lesson of Twisted Scriptures, I find it particularly fitting to start with a passage that has misled generations into believing a lie about the messiah, and acts as a foundation for further twisted scriptures that I'll uncover in later lessons.

This one in particular isn't to be blamed for any nefarious reasons, but a gradual adoption of tradition that slowly but ultimately misinform the reader and become a cornerstone for error.

It's a tradition where we have variations of Greek manuscripts that insert the following:

Mar 7:19 (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”) (NIV)

The problem presented here has multiple levels to consider and unpack.

Textual Criticism of the New Testament

In order to address the first component, it is important that you get an understanding of textual criticism of the New Testament.

First are a number of text-type variants – these are collections of manuscripts that exhibit differences and are compiled in groups according to similarities.

This opens up a long history of textual criticism and is more than the scope of this lesson. However, the “Text-Types” are collections of manuscripts with various attributes, typically characterized by the traits of their geographic location.

When collecting and arranging manuscripts, various groups of pages and fragments that share similar traits in linguistic

morphology and are grouped together. The technicalities within specific letter shapes, writing styles, punctuation, ink and paper types all assist in identification and arrangement.

It is a way that scholars can sort through the many thousands of manuscripts in hopes to determine which manuscripts carry authority over another, or can be demonstrated as an earlier textual witness. It is all well and good until we get to disagreements or changes in the text, and consider how many some of the variations can be, in both date and content.

These are the 3 most popular text-types:

The Alexandrian Text-type – is a collection representing the oldest manuscripts. These represent some of the most recent discoveries, hence their lack of use in older bibles. They are dated between the 2nd to 4th centuries C.E., from in and around Alexandria, favored in many popular modern translations like the NIV, NASB, CSB.

The Western Text-type – a collection from between the 3rd to 9th centuries CE, from a wide area covering north Africa to Syria. Not commonly used as a main source in any translations, other than the Old Latin bible.

The Byzantine Text-type – the largest collection, representing the majority text and the textus receptus, dated between the 5th to 16th centuries CE, from in and around modern-day Turkey. These are some of the earliest discovered manuscripts, but latest witnesses and thereby favored in many early English bibles like the KJV, NKJV, WEB, Tyndale, Coverdale and Geneva bibles.

This lesson opens with the phrase in Mark 7:19:

“In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.”

The phrase exists in the majority of Greek manuscripts, however there is debate about its authenticity. The NIV translators, favouring older manuscript witnesses, resulting

from later discoveries, felt the need to include it in parenthesis. Where the KJV translators, using later manuscripts, which were discovered earlier in our history decided to omit any parenthesis.

The reason for this has to do with the phrase itself being within a parenthesis in the text and its gradual migration into the body of the text. The words began in the margins, then added into the body within parenthesis, and ultimately in some manuscripts ended up without the parenthesis in the text with no notice or warning to the reader.

When it began, like anyone may imagine, a note in the margin is obviously a note by the author or a later copy or copyist as a personal note or observation. This carries its own weight in considerations of its authenticity, but there is more to the story.

Let's compare a few. We'll consider Aramaic-English and Greek-English translations:

Aramaic-English

Lamsa NT (withdrawn): (Lamsa NT) Because it does not enter into his heart, but into his stomach, and then is thrown out through the intestines, thereby purifying the food.

Original Aramaic NT (withdrawn): (OANT-Ps-Pv) Because it does not enter his heart, but his belly, and is discharged by excretion, which purifies all foods."

Greek-English

Apostolic Bible Polyglot (withdrawn): (ABP+) For it enters not into his heart, but into the belly; and into the bowel it goes forth, cleansing all the foods.

Literal Version (withdrawn): (LITV) This is because it does not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and goes out into the waste-bowl, purging all the foods.

Literal Standard Version (withdrawn): (LSV) Because it does not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and into the drain it goes out, purifying all the meats.”

NIV (in parenthesis): (NIV) For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

Amplified Bible (withdrawn, but adds interpretation): (AMP) Since it does not reach and enter his heart but [only his] digestive tract, and so passes on [into the place designed to receive waste]? Thus He was making and declaring all foods [ceremonially] clean [that is, [8] abolishing the ceremonial distinctions of the Levitical Law].

[8] Footnote: I.e. He abolished all prohibitions given in the Law against certain foods.

ESV (in parenthesis): (ESV) since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

Complete Jewish Bible (in parenthesis): (CJB) For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and it passes out into the latrine." (Thus he declared all foods ritually clean.)

The Scriptures 2009 (withdrawn): (TS2009) because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purging all the foods?" b see footnote Mat_15:20. (Footnote: This refers to the mistaken belief that demons entered the person eating bread with "unwashed hands".)

Interesting to see which versions choose to include the parenthesis or omit them altogether. As mentioned, this is based on weights of choices for manuscripts, based on several things such as; age, location, specific tells of the letters, shape, writing styles, and so on. These lead to deciding which manuscripts may include or not include parenthetical notes like this one.

Let's consider the more wildly differing renditions:

The Amplified bible is well known for its paraphrase and added emphasis in attempts to more fully express the text. Here it suggests one of the most prevalent interpretations, that is, Jesus overruled the commandments of God in the Levitical distinctions of foods of Lev 11 and other places. It further impresses upon the reader with a footnote restating the same thing.

The Literal Standard Version suggests the foods here are "meats"

The Scriptures 2009 considers there was some superstition around eating without washed hands, which I'll address shortly.

Not surprisingly the Complete Jewish Bible inserts the simplest resolution to the text by adding the word "ritually" clean, however this word does not exist in the manuscripts and is also misleading, because their eating was not ritualistic.

These leave the avid student with much to ponder. Either the lawless interpretation is correct, that is, Jesus is suggesting the laws for the distinctions between clean and unclean foods from the Torah no longer apply to him and his disciples, or there is more to the story...

And this brings us to the next point:

The Halakha of the Rabbis

In the beginning of the chapter we see the context, let's get acquainted

Mar 7:1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus.

Mar 7:2 They noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them.

Mar 7:3 (The Pharisees—and indeed all the Jewish people—don't eat unless they wash their hands properly, following the tradition of their elders.

Mar 7:4 They don't eat anything from the marketplace unless they dip it in water. They also observe many other traditions, such as the proper washing of washing cups, jars, brass pots, and dinner tables.)

Mar 7:5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders? Instead, they eat with unclean hands."

Mar 7:6 He told them, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites. As it is written, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Mar 7:7 Their worship of me is worthless, because they teach human rules as doctrines.'

Mar 7:8 You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Mar 7:9 Then he told them, "You have such a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your own tradition! (ISV)

Let's summarize the context:

- The Pharisees and scribes noticed the disciples didn't wash their hands when eating.
- The Pharisees and *all* the Jewish people don't eat anything without washing their hands "properly", and especially from the marketplace unless they dip it in

water and wash their hands properly according to the tradition of their elders.

- The Pharisees and scribes live according to the tradition of the elders

We can gather a few things from the context. From v3, we can see that the tradition of the elders was pervasive to all Jewish people, and they all participated in the traditions of the elders, which had many regulations around washings, hands, foods, cups, dishes etc.

The astute student should immediately recognize there are no instructions about washing hands or dishes in the Hebrew bible. Apart from a command for the Levites to wash their hands before they serve in the Tabernacle or Temple, or any that may have touched a bodily discharge, or a dead body. Nothing regarding eating.

So, if these are *not* commandments within the Tanakh, “The Hebrew Bible”, then what are they?

Look closer at Rabbi Yeshua’s rebuttal:

They honour with their lips but their hearts are far from God

Their worship is worthless because they teach human rules as doctrines

They abandon the commandments of God and hold to human tradition

They reject God’s commandments for their own tradition (ISV)

I think he makes it very clear that he’s confronting the halakhot (rules/laws) of the rabbis. In this specific instance, we see the gezerot (prohibitions) at play as was established by Hillel & Shammai only a short lifetime earlier*.

*For more specific details and references, I touch on this in lesson 2 of Making a Path Straight.

We know that before the exile to Babylon, from the days of King Solomon, that he appears to be the first to institute new laws around hand washings. The Sanhedrin later added to these laws insisting that hands had to be washed in certain ways, and that food could only be handled in certain ways, with certain dishes, pots, cups, plates, bowls, utensils, all after a fashion of their choosing. The regulations are quite extensive.

These are the fundamental quotations that provide the ancient insight into a part of what was at play in this passage. From the 2nd century BC, I introduce to you, the 2 criminal Yoseis, leaders of the supreme court, in response to Greek persecution, put their sins into law and changed the history of Israeli and Gentile interactions forever:

Yosei ben Yo'ezer of Tzereida and Yosei ben Yoḥanan of Jerusalem decreed impurity on the land of the nations, that the land outside Eretz Yisrael transmits impurity. and they decreed impurity on glass vessels, even though glass is not listed in the Torah among the vessels that can become impure. (Shabbat 14b:5)

Another quote, further adding to the restrictions, according to their custom, Shammai and Hillel decreed impurity on the hands.

The Gemara asks further: Still, the matter is not clear, as the decree of hands was issued by King Solomon. As Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: At the time that Solomon instituted the ordinances of eiruv and of washing hands to purify them from their impurity, a Divine Voice emerged and said in his praise: “My son, if your heart is wise my heart will be glad, even mine” (Proverbs 23:15), and so too: “My son, be wise and make my heart glad, that I may respond to those who taunt me” (Proverbs 27: 11). The Gemara responds: Came Solomon and decreed impurity on hands to prohibit contact with consecrated items, and Shammai, Hillel, and their disciples came and decreed

impurity on hands even to prohibit contact with teruma. (that is, an offering) (Shabbat 14b:7)

Superstition or fear of Contamination?

Earlier we looked at the footnote from the Scriptures version for Matthew 15:20,

Footnote: This refers to the mistaken belief that demons entered the person eating bread with “unwashed hands”. (TS2009)

Indeed, this is historical, as several passages within the Oral Torah, aka the Talmud or Rabbinic writings speak about how evil spirits can afflict a person that doesn't wash their hands certain ways.

I sympathize that many of these traditions are hundreds to thousands of years old. Well before any considerations of advanced science or medicine, superstitions led many cultures into what modern people may consider silly or even eccentric traditions. In many cases similar to this around the world, the result of superstition inspired the creation of laws, many of which are still active. It is obvious they were on to something real, as we now know how important hand washing is in preventing contamination.

This is a direct example of a “pre-scientific” attempt to restrict contamination between hands, foods and vessels. The thing is, if these halakhot (laws) were simply about fundamental cleanliness, Rabbi Yeshua, and all of us would have no problem with it! It is about more than simple cleanliness as we'll see shortly. While we, in the modern era, take the simple concept of hand washing for granted, these are still active halakhot, (rules and laws) in place.

Here are some examples of the superstitions around washing hands, and direct quotations from the Oral law that inspired

the traditions of the elders that we see at work in Mark 7 and Matt 15.

For example:

“A hand that frequently touches the eye causes blindness. A hand that frequently touches the ear causes deafness. A hand that touches the nose or mouth causes polyps [polypus]. It was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Natan says: She is a liberated entity, this evil spirit that rests on one’s hands before they are washed in the morning, and she refuses to leave until one washes his hands three times.” (Shabbat 109a)

Another:

“an evil spirit on the hands and does not escape until the third wash.” (Kol Bo 69:26-27)

Another:

“They said about Shammai the Elder that he did not want to feed his children with one hand, to avoid having to wash it. This prevented the children from eating during all of Yom Kippur. Due to concerns about the health and the suffering of his children, they decreed that he must feed them with two hands, forcing him to wash both hands. What is the reason that they also said in general that one must wash his hands before touching food? Abaye said: Due to an evil spirit named Shivta, who resides on hands that have not been washed in the morning.” (Yoma 77b)

Another:

“Another custom of Rav Huna was that when he had a new medicine, he would fill a water jug with the medicine and hang it from the doorpost of his house, saying: All who need, let him come and take from this new medicine.

**And there are those who say: He had a remedy against the demon Shivta that he knew by tradition, that one must wash his hands for protection against this evil spirit.”
(Taanit 20b)**

Restoring the true teaching

I've taken some time to share various examples of how the plain text reading has serious reasons to be reconsidered. From variants in the text-type traditions and selection of manuscripts, to the considerable evidence around 1st century hand washing and food handling laws and regulations, and even a dose of superstition to impassion adherents. If being illegal was not enough, having the fear that an evil spirit could attach itself to you was ample motivation to do what they said.

I haven't really talked about what *is* this teaching actually about? I think it can be summed up with one verse:

Mat 15:20 These are the things that make a person unclean. But eating with unwashed hands doesn't make a person unclean." (ISV)

The Pharisees and Scribes object to Rabbi Yeshua and his disciple's rejection of the tradition of the elders. Their rejection of the halakhot is an outward expression of rebellion and disapproval of the establishment's rulings on these specific ordinances. The laws passed by the criminal Yoseis was known to be in direct conflict with the laws of God and many faithful Israelis knew it. Leveraging the example of overreach, Hillel & Shammai imitate their predecessors and further add to the transgression.

Rabbi Yeshua reinforces the proper authority of the Torah which are God's commandments. The defilement teaching had become an extraneous process wherein the religious authorities were leveraging their authority to segregate people

and control them. Perhaps most importantly, by doing so, they impute sin and guilt to the innocent, and ultimately profited from it in unquestioning adherents and financially via temple donations and sacrifices.

It is a radical rebuke that Rabbi Yeshua reproved and restored the truth.

As we read, *all of the Jewish people had adopted the traditions of the Elders*. At this time, the Sanhedrin, led by the leaders of the house of Hillel and Shammai, were the authorities, and their rules were law. Transgressors could be fined, arrested, lose privileges, all sorts of things. It was not simply a clash of religious opinions.

Rabbi Yeshua corrects their defilement teaching, which was based on a sinful overreach of the Rabbis and corrects them. Simply eating with unwashed hands doesn't defile a person. One can have dirty hands, but not be defiled before God. And that is the root of the issue here. Dirty doesn't mean rejected, excluded or profane.

Rabbi Yeshua upheld the commandments of God and taught that a designation between clean and unclean meats is appropriate for his disciples. This restores his teaching to its proper authority, not as one that sinned and abolished the laws of God, thereby creating a new religion. No, but as one that taught in line with the Torah, Prophets and the Writings and re-established the authority of God's commandments to a generation of religious leaders that were misusing it.

This brings me to the final point, just as those generations misused their authority to segregate and abuse others, so have generations of Gentile church leaders misused their authority and misinterpretations and abused those that want to keep God's commandments in their designations of clean and unclean meats in their holy lifestyle.

Will you revisit your beliefs and allow the inspiration and teaching of Rabbi Yeshua to influence you and make a radical decision to obey God's instructions?

Lesson 2

Cancelling the Law or Including Gentiles?

For this lesson of Twisted Scriptures, we'll be reconsidering the events of the Apostle Simon Peter and the Roman centurion Cornelius. In the book of Acts, this famous story begins in chapter 10. The Apostle Peter receives a vision where God asks him to eat unclean animals three times.

This passage has widely been considered another proof text for the modern error of how Jesus changed the laws of God to create a new religion.

The idea; (what I propose is a misconception) is that by this vision, God was instructing Peter to eat unclean meats, which was his way of cancelling his previous rules in the Torah*. Thereby permitting believers to eat unclean foods, for the first time, without sinning by doing so.

I will demonstrate that in this passage, God did not do that, but was confronting and overruling a sinful law within 1st century Israel that made it illegal for Israelis to associate with Gentiles.

We begin with the introduction of Cornelius; a Roman Centurion, a commander of the Italian Regiment. During an angelic visitation, Cornelius is instructed to send three men to Joppa, now known as Jaffa, a port city part of modern-day Tel Aviv where Simon Peter was staying. This is roughly a 70KM distance from Caesarea where Cornelius lived, and making this journey would have taken as little as 3 or 4 days by horse & carriage.

Cornelius sent 3 "Gentiles", non-Israeli people, 2 of his home servants and 1 devout soldier, which will quickly become integral to our story.

*See Leviticus 11, Gen 7:8 [even before the covenant at Sinai, the patriarch Noah maintained a distinction of clean and unclean animals for consumption.] and Acts 15:20 [The Jerusalem Council maintained these same prohibitions]

Why a tanner?

We are told that Simon Peter was staying with Simon the tanner. As modern western readers, we may not consider this detail to be of any consequence, yet the author has mentioned him staying with a tanner 3 times in the passages of Acts 9, 10 and 11. When mentions like this occur in the scriptures it is often an invitation to look more closely.

Historically, a tanner was a profession that had some disdain from the Israeli people. Not that it was particularly noteworthy, but according to the Talmud, they were prohibited from becoming a king or the high priest because the people considered the occupation unbecoming, if not to some, detestable.

Tanners were even exempt from certain other regulations as a result of the stench they created. For example; their wives were permitted to divorce them much more easily than other professions. Also, they were exempt from attending the three annual high holidays in Jerusalem. They were in this way considered unwelcome in some cases to attend the Temple services.

It's interesting to read that Peter is staying with such a person, and I wonder why was he praying on the roof? A tanner's business involves many horrible smells, and this is the primary reason why the Israeli elders considered them with disdain. In Peter's sake, Simon's home may have been considered a place of refuge from the eyes of the religious authorities. Not simply by being remote in the sense that Simon's house is by the sea, but also remote in the sense that the religious elites would not normally visit such a home. So shortly after the miracle of Tabitha's resurrection and the immense fame and attention Peter would receive from that

event, he may have welcomed the seclusion afforded at Simon's house.

There are a few hints of deeper meaning in some of the details of this story. For one, Cornelius was visited by an angelic messenger around the 9th hour, that is, roughly 3PM. This happens to be around the time of the afternoon temple services. There is an association that God was present with the people at this hour, and it is interesting to note his interest in the Gentile people then specifically.

Likewise, Peter around the 6th hour of the day, around noon, is a time where many become hungry. It wasn't simply that he was hungry that is of note, but hungry *while* at the tanner's house. The tanner is a noteworthy detail because he represents a kind of people that are typically considered "unclean", much like the Israeli people of the time considered the Gentiles. In a way, the details themselves present intrigue to the story. That Peter, as we will see, only ate clean foods, but was abiding with a socially rejected or "unclean" person. The hour of his hunger even suggests that his body's physical response was in line with God's plan that was unfolding in front of him. That God "was hungry" (desires) for the Gentile people to be cleansed and join his people in one spirit.

Let's look at Acts 10:10-20:

Act 10:10 He became very hungry and wanted to eat, and while the food was being prepared, he fell into a trance
Act 10:11 and saw heaven open and something like a large linen sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the ground.
Act 10:1 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds of the air.
Act 10:13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter! Kill something and eat it."

Act 10:14 But Peter said, "Absolutely not, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean!"

Act 10:15 Again the voice came to him a second time, "You must stop calling unclean what God has made clean."

Act 10:16 This happened three times. Then the sheet was quickly taken back into heaven.

Act 10:17 While Peter was still at a loss to know what the vision he had seen could mean, the men sent by Cornelius asked for Simon's house and went to the gate.

Act 10:18 They called out and asked if Simon who was called Peter was staying there.

Act 10:19 Peter was still thinking about the vision when the Spirit told him, "Look! Three men are looking for you."

Act 10:20 Get up, go downstairs, and don't hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." (ISV)

Peter's distinction between common and unclean

In verse 14, Peter retorts that he has never eaten anything common or unclean. This goes back to my 2nd lesson in the Making a Path Straight series; the halakha of the rabbi's. Therein I discuss how the authorities instituted a law within Israel that "imputes uncleanness to all foreigners". This was by the 2 famous criminal Yoseis, of Tzereida and Jerusalem in roughly 180s BC, and later emended by Hillel & Shammai** around 150yrs later. Refer to lesson 2 of Making a Path Straight for much more detail.

In this passage, in Peter's retort to God, he makes a distinction between 3 kinds of meats available for purchase in Israel. These are: clean, common and unclean meats, although he only mentions two, the third (clean) is implied.

These are rudimentary designations for separation of clean and unclean meats that are fit for consumption:

Unclean meats: are animals considered unclean within the laws of Leviticus 11 or from other places in the Torah with any of these three elements: meats that are improperly slaughtered or have been torn or offered to idols.

Common meats: are clean animals as prescribed by Leviticus 11, that are drained of blood, slaughtered biblically, are not torn, have not been offered to idols, but have been sold by Gentiles or possibly not prepared according to Israeli civil law.

Clean meats: are animals considered clean by the laws of the Torah, as well as the rabbinic laws, or the Israeli civil law. This distinction is made as a result of the enactments passed by the 2 criminal Yoseis and Hillel and Shammai of previous mention.

Peter claims he's never consumed any common or unclean meats. This means he's been observant to the biblical laws of clean animals, but also of the much more strenuous and stricter Israeli (civil) laws imposed by the religious authorities.

Without an explanation it is easy to overlook this very small yet profound detail. In a modern example, one may visit a grocery store, and find therein 3 separately packaged and prepared portions of beef. One certified Kosher, one certified Halal, and one simply provided by the local butcher. In Peter's reply he says he's only eaten the equivalent to certified Kosher meats his whole life!

The twisting happens in most English bibles within verse 15 – "...stop calling "unclean" what God has made clean."

However, many English bibles do translate this passage correctly and read "What God has made clean, do not call common."

Translating the ambiguous underlying word: Koinos, G2839 “call common, defile, pollute, unclean.” As common instead of unclean.

Here we see a striking contrast – God now interjects to Peter and makes a very powerful statement – “What I have cleansed, do not call common!”

God needed to step between the laws instituted by man and make a distinction from his holy commandments in the scriptures. Essentially discrediting the tradition of the Elders by overruling the earlier enactment of the 2 criminal Yoseis who imposed impurity on the nations.

The vision of the sheet with mixed animals coming down with the voice happened 3 times. Precisely the number of “imputed unclean” Gentiles that were arriving at the door.

The next day when they arrive at Cornelius’s house, as Peter goes in, he says to the group that had gathered:

Act 10:28 He told them, "You understand how wrong it is for a Jew to associate or visit with a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should stop calling anyone common or unclean,

Act 10:29 and that is why I didn't hesitate when I was sent for. (ISV)

Notice here, he continues to use the expression, “common or unclean”, and immediately interprets the vision for us, that it was referring to Gentiles, those who were by their very nature deemed rejected and unclean by the religious authorities in Israel!

Peter continues, he saying:

Act 10:34 Then Peter began to speak: "Now I understand that God shows no partiality.

Act 10:35 Indeed, whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him in any nation. (ISV)

God does not discriminate

“Now I understand that God shows no partiality”

In other words, the instructions of the religious authorities have taught us falsely, segregation between nations based on manmade rules had blinded him and all the others to see that the Gentiles were also a part of God’s redemptive plan.

Act 10:45 Then the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. (ISV)

This was a huge revelation to them! They had been so conditioned that the Gentiles were unclean and cast away that they couldn’t even imagine that God would be willing to do something like that!

Look even closer!

Act 11:1 Now the apostles and the brothers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God.

Act 11:2 But when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those who emphasized circumcision disagreed with him.

Act 11:3 They said, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" (ISV)

Peter recounts the experience and shares that God gave them the holy spirit just as they themselves received, and the final answer is:

Act 11:18 When they heard this, they calmed down, and praised God, saying, "So God has given repentance that leads to life even to Gentiles." (ISV)

Amen.

Let us recap. The story is a redemptive story about overcoming the rules and regulations of the land that artificially segregate people groups from interacting with one another, and most importantly, receiving the good news of God's redemptive plan for them.

Are there any kinds of people that you consider untouchable or reprehensible? Perhaps this lesson of Peter's vision can pierce your heart too and help you reconsider those whom you may consider as unclean and find compassion in your heart to deliver them the message and love of God.

The twisting of this passage has often led to Christians of all kinds to consider this some kind of example that God was retracting his commandments about clean and unclean meats, but as I have demonstrated, this is about God redacting the halakhot, the enactments and laws passed by the Elders that created segregation and nothing to do with food at all. God did not overrule his own commandments. God in his wisdom used the example of Peter and the tanner, the hour and three sheets of food because it most closely resembled the way that Peter, and the rest of the Israeli's had created illegal and unfair distinctions between people.

Lesson 3

Abolishing the Law or Integrating the Gentiles?

This is the third passage that is used to support the notion that Jesus overruled and replaced God's commandments and created a new religion, in error. Here, Paul encourages fellow believers to be inclusive of others with differing traditions and customs around fasting, abstaining from meats and customary observances.

This passage has often been cited in error to refer to another reason why Jesus made unclean foods permissible and how the biblical food laws don't apply to believers in Messiah. I will go through this in detail and hope you will see that this is a passage of Twisted Scripture that has built a false teaching that has led many astray for generations.

Our passage begins in Romans 14. This is a chapter where Paul is exhorting the believers to live in love, and helps explain how that may practically be put into practice. In his example he compares one person who eats meats, and another who eats only vegetables.

He makes the example that both are choosing to honor the Lord in their respective decisions to eat meat or abstain from meats, that "they both give thanks to God". He goes on to encourage us to "not criticize one another", or to "hold one higher or of more value than another", but that "both will bow down to God and give account".

In verse 5 he makes a comparison changing the topic somewhat into discussing the differentiation of days instead of only foods.

Rom 14:5 One person decides in favor of one day over another, while another person decides that all days are the same. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind: (ISV)

In verse 6 he compares one who eats meat to one who abstains from eating meat.

Rom 14:6 The one who observes a special day, observes it to honor the Lord. The one who eats, eats to honor the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. And the one who does not eat, refrains from eating to honor the Lord; yet he, too, gives thanks to God. (ISV)

In verse 10 he asks “Why, then, do you criticize your brother? Or why do you despise your brother?”

Rom 14:10 Why, then, do you criticize your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For all of us will stand before the judgment seat of God. (ISV)

The criticism and despising are between the Jews and Gentiles, more specifically, those who adhere to the tradition of the elders and those who do not.

Later in Romans 15:5, he encourages them to “**live in harmony**” and in v7 to “**accept one another**” and then goes on to say in v8 “**Messiah became a servant of the circumcised...**” and in v9 “**so that the Gentiles may glorify God...**”

In all of this discourse it becomes apparent that Paul is referring to dealing with Jews “of the circumcision” and the uncircumcised Gentiles. They were having some difficulties in their interactions together that had been causing some divisions. From my earlier lessons, I’ve been giving clear examples of how the “tradition of the elders” aka “the halakha of the rabbis” interfered with 1st century Gentiles in a big way.

Distinctions between clean and common

Here is the Twisted Scripture of this lesson:

We have the same example here in Romans 14:14 as we did in the previous lesson with Peter's vision. A distinction between "clean" and "common" foods was the contention. In this case, the difference between "clean" and "common" foods are a stumbling block between different kinds of believers.

The correct reading should read:

Rom 14:14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing by itself is common; except to the one deeming anything to be common, it is common. (LITV)

vs.

Rom 14:14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. (ESV)

This is the twisted scripture where we see the ambiguous word meant for "common" being translated as "unclean". Which supports the false tradition where Jesus, and now extended to Paul, endorse the creation of a new religion separate from God's commandments, teaching that unclean foods are permissible to Gentile believers in Messiah.

This is not to be confused with the Greek word that means exclusively unclean: "akathartos" (G169). That is the antithesis to clean, strictly meaning unclean, dirty and/or profane. Whereas the word above that is regularly translated in error as unclean, is, in all 3 mentions of Romans 14:14 the Greek word, "koinos" (G2839), meaning common, shared by all, not reserved for special use, a root to the popular Greek word "Koinonia", which means fellowship; the common practice of gathering together for common reasons.

To reiterate from previous lessons, the designation of “Common Meats” are meats from animals that are designated biblically as “clean” by the restrictions of Leviticus 11, but are treated as “less than clean” or “ceremonially unclean or defiled” by the tradition of the Elders if procured from Gentiles or not strictly authorized by the civil laws of 1st century Israel.

Some common examples for them to reject the meats were: because the preparation methods were unknown or procured from Gentile vendors, or even unauthorized Israeli vendors, or weren’t delivered in authorized containers and things like that.

Since the time of the 2 criminal Yoseis, they passed a law that made every Gentile in the land to be regarded as “imputing uncleanness” simply by their very existence. All of their foods, utensils and dishes were also treated as unclean.

A couple generations later, roughly 40-50 years before Rabbi Yeshua’s lifetime, there was a major focus put on the cleanliness of every Israeli’s hands. The new laws being passed at that time were enacted to treat all hands as defiled unless washed 2 or 3 times with prayers and strictly by using approved pitchers, cups and so on including several other restrictions. These were imposed by Hillel & Shammai.

I need to reiterate; some modern readers might consider these traditions as extraneous or difficult to understand. I want you to consider that the ancient religious authorities were strongly focused in their attempts to reach a level of cleanliness likened to a forensic lab kind of sterility. Especially whenever it came to meats, and particularly for animals and meats meant for Temple worship uses.

They were very concerned with specific washings, the purity of water, of pitchers, cups, plates, utensils and especially of what materials they were made of. Not only that, but also

who handled or touched them, and from where it came, and to where it was going.

It should be obvious that strict regulations around meat handling and preparation was and is still extremely important. Consider how easily improper handling can pass sickness and disease through common meats even today.

Back to dissecting Paul's letter. There are a few things at play here, let's break it down:

- Those who eat meats – who's faith is strong
- Those who eat only vegetables, and/or abstain from meats – who's faith is weak
- Those who observe a day as special or more holy than another
- Those who observe all days with the same importance

I think we need to break it down further to get a clear understanding of how each of these examples support the distinction between Israeli & Gentile. Specifically, the Israeli customs surrounding fasting, and the Gentiles lack thereof.

Fasting customs

The “special day” mentioned is in some way connected with eating or abstaining of meats. Let’s consider the differing days and ways of fasting between:

“The disciples of Rabbi Yeshua of the circumcision”

vs.

“The Yeshua doubting adherents of the Pharisees and Sadducees”

vs

“The Gentiles”

According to one of the earliest teachings of the apostles called the “Didache” the first century believers in Rabbi Yeshua fasted on different days than the Pharisees & Sadducees. It writes in chapter 8: “But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week. Rather, fast on the fourth (Wednesday) day and the Preparation (Friday).”

The Didache is an extrabiblical document by the early Nazarene (Jewish Christian) community. It calls itself “The teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles” and is regularly dated as early as the 1st century or by some into the 2nd century. It is a good example of how the early Jewish and Gentile believers were instructed to continue in the apostles teaching even after their deaths. We should treat this witness as something that is true and supportive a clearer understanding around some of the first century believers’ beliefs and customs.

Consider Rabbi Yeshua’s parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, this Pharisee boasts of his righteousness compared to the tax collector and says:

Luk 18:12 I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of my entire income.' (ISV)

This is a further witness of the common practice of fasting among the various Israeli groups. The Pharisees had different fasting practices and days than the Nazarene's, as did the Sadducees and the Essenes.

Here are several citations from the Talmud regarding fasting practices and their various institutions that support these voluntary fasting traditions, consider the following quotations:

“It has already been accepted as a Jewish custom not to eat meat or enter a bathhouse during this week until after the fast.” Mishneh Torah, Fasts 5:8-10

That is a good example of a tradition of abstaining from meats for a special day or series of days.

And:

“When the Temple was destroyed a second time, there was an increase in the number of ascetics among the Jews, whose practice was to not eat meat and to not drink wine.” Bava Batra 60b:11

That is a reference that names both meats and wine in their fasting customs, like Paul mentioned in v 21.

And:

“The Gemara asks: What is Rav Huna teaching us? We already learned this: The court may not decree a fast on the community starting from a Thursday, so as not to cause an increase in prices. Rather, the first three fasts are established on Monday, and Thursday, and Monday.” Taanit 10a:18

This example makes distinctions about who and when particular days apply and don't apply to fasting.

And:

“There are those that say that there is a decree to fast on every Monday and Thursday regarding the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash (Temple) and on the Torah that was burned, and on the desecration of the Name, and in the future, Hashem will change these (days) into joy and happiness.” Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 580:3

This example demonstrates that some esteem certain days above others, and mention differing concerns about their why and when of fasting.

And:

“There are those that are accustomed not to eat meat nor drink wine this week. But, it is allowed to use wine vinegar [Agudah and Maharil]. And there are those that add (on the custom to not eat meat/drink wine) from Rosh Chodesh (Av) until the Fast (Tisha B'av), and there are those that add from Shiva Asar B'Tammuz.” Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 551:9

This is a great quote as it demonstrates the nature of the “customs” of those who have elected to fast for various reasons, methods and practices. It should be obvious that not everyone would fast, or was even included in the fasting traditions.

These have been some good examples to demonstrate the distinctions between various Israelis and the Gentiles regarding eating meats and drinking wine, and esteeming a day above another. This is something directly related to the 1st century believers, whether they participated in any of the customs or not, they would be exposed to them.

Now, how very appropriate for Paul to discuss how to lovingly navigate some of these Israeli customs and traditions by the Gentiles he was training.

Special Note: In this example I've used 2 references to fasting abstinence as a tradition added after the destruction of the 2nd Temple, that is after 70ad. This presents a problem because the epistle to the Romans seems to be concretely dated to 57ce. 13yrs before the temple's destruction.

I've also demonstrated that there are other traditions about fasting in different months, weeks and days, foods and drinks, based on many traditions. The traditions are good and show a deepfelt connection to the Israeli people and their suffering from ancient times to present day. There are also a great many other examples not mentioned here, into the 10s or 100s to consider from the Talmud, I've selected only a few to make this point.

Why would Paul consider one weak vs strong?

There are at several ways to consider this: the one who is fasting; is weak. Not particularly in his faith directly, but weak because their body is being deprived of nourishment in fasting. This doesn't make a particularly great rationale.

Another is the one who observes these fasts, whether for traditions of fasting or by the halakha of the rabbis, is weak for a different reason. He may be considered weak because his faith doesn't fully trust in the power that Messiah brought.

The Complete Jewish Bible translates this verse eloquently:

Rom 14:1 Now as for a person whose trust is weak, welcome him - but not to get into arguments over opinions. (CJB)

Consider when Paul wrote in v14: "I'm convinced by the Lord Jesus that nothing is common of itself." This is his contention with the rabbinic rulings in opposition to his faith in Messiah Yeshua.

He takes liberty in the righteousness revealed in Messiah arisen to the right hand of God to mean that he's no longer concerned with the traditions of the Elders in their minutia as he once was. Suggesting that those of the faith in Messiah who still hold to the traditions of the Elders are those who lack trust in Messiah's authority are weak as they are not fully convinced and still elevate the authority of the Elders over Messiah Yeshua like how they were before the faith.

It's a very important detail. Because we see 2 actual distinctions in Paul's consideration of faith. The first is, arguably, as he sees himself, convinced that the halakha of the rabbis in support of the sinful decrees of the 2 famous criminal Yoseis (and others) have no bind on those who live by faith in Rabbi Yeshua. This would be his strong faith.

But also, a faith that believes in Rabbi Yeshua, but for one reason or another, want, need, or must submit to the halakha of the rabbis and designate between clean and common meats. This one has weak faith, and is caught between several factions or groups of opinions on what is right and acceptable. Opinions specifically regarding meats, or what is considered a holy day and what is acceptable for Gentiles to participate in and among Israelis. These are all reasons to cause a great many arguments and disagreements and opinions, as the CJB so rightfully translates.

How many groups?

Finally, I think is important to reiterate about how in this chapter Paul refers to 3 groups of believers in Rabbi Yeshua:

1. Israeli's adhering to the halakha of Rabbi Yeshua above the rabbis.
2. Israeli's still adhering to the halakha of the rabbis yet incorporating Rabbi Yeshua's teachings. Calling them believers of the circumcision.
3. Gentiles who are unfamiliar with either group's convictions who come from a foreign background.

Let's wrap up.

It's a difficult passage, easily misunderstood. 1st century Judea was a complex place, Paul is strongly motivated to guard, teach and integrate the believers into various groups of Israelis. As a result, the Gentiles involvement led to many disagreements with those of the circumcision, and he teaches how to love in the midst of this tumultuous time masterfully.

We'll dive even deeper in the next lesson regarding Paul and Peter's conflict in Galatians.

Lesson 4

Controversies over the Gentiles heat up

This lesson involves practicing several of the previous lessons and putting our thinking caps on as we review Galatians, in particular chapter 2. In this chapter there isn't a specific word or phrase that is twisted, but I chose this example to demonstrate in fact how difficult it is at times to thoroughly understand Paul's sayings.

Like Peter says here:

2Pe 3:16 He speaks about this subject in all his letters. Some things in them are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, leading to their own destruction, as they do the rest of the Scriptures.

2Pe 3:17 And so, dear friends, since you already know these things, continually be on your guard not to be carried away by the deception of lawless people. Otherwise, you may fall from your secure position. (ISV)

You may have heard this passage being thrown around a lot, it's an easy one to cite. In this particular example, you'll come to see why I chose to quote it here.

In previous lessons, I've worked hard to reveal the different factions at play within the body of believers. We have a complex setting in 1st century Judea and surrounding area. Roman occupation, divisions among the sects of the Jews, Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, also those from within each of those sects that now have faith in Rabbi Yeshua as the messiah. Finally, Gentiles, from all walks of life coming to the very same faith. A difficult melting pot of ideas, authorities and cultures.

Segregation over food?

In Galatians 2 verse 12-13 we see the beginning of controversy about to unfold.

Gal 2:12 Until some men arrived from James, he was in the habit of eating with the Gentiles, but after those men came, he withdrew from the Gentiles and would not associate with them any longer, because he was afraid of the circumcision party.

Gal 2:13 The other Jews also joined him in this hypocritical behavior, to the extent that even Barnabas was caught up in their hypocrisy. (ISV)

Ok, this seems simple enough, Peter, Paul, Barnabas and several Gentiles are all eating and spending time together. Suddenly, “*some men arrived from James*” and Peter gets scared of them, gets up and leaves, and manages to get all the Jews including Barnabas to leave also.

That sounds a lot like Peter’s previous behaviours, where he was practicing segregation between Jew and Gentile according to the Oral Law. Just as he was pre-Acts 10 before his vision and revelation with the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius.

But why? What did Peter have to be scared of? “*men from James*” implies these are Jewish believers in Messiah. Peter and James are considered the leadership Apostles together. What could it be?

First it is important to point out, there is no biblical rule or law prohibiting a Jew from sitting, associating or eating with any Gentile at all.

Because Paul talks extensively about the Law, aka the Torah, there is a presumption that in this specific contextual example the reason for Peter and the rest of the Jew’s hypocrisy was

due to them actually transgressing a law of God by eating with the Gentiles. This is not what's going on here, at least not exactly.

The oral tradition over the written word

Is there a set of rules and laws against associating, eating or gathering with Gentiles? Yes, it is not the Hebrew bible, but the “traditions of the elders”, aka the oral law, which ultimately became the Talmud has many.

As I shared in previous lessons, the 2 criminal Yoseis passed a law that all the people of the nations were all of a sudden “imputing uncleanness”. This created a segregation between people groups. It was not a commandment from God, but a commandment of men, and a great sin that divided the people in a most serious way.

In order to understand a little about why this was so impactful, it's important to establish a little of how the Jewish people consider the oral law. The “traditions of the elders”, are of the highest order, treated as if they are in submission to the written Torah, but treated as equivalent in authority to the written Torah, and in some ways elevated above the Torah. Elevated above the Torah by enactments that overrule the written Torah, demonstrating the authority the rabbis as overreaching, and in some cases imputing sin where there is no sin.

Quoting the Chumash:

“One who denies that the Rabbinic tradition, what is commonly called the Oral Torah, was given by God to Moses is castigated as someone who “despises the word of God”” (Sanhedrin 99a)

“And Rambam labels such a person a heretic.” (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:8)

A kindlier quotation is in order, here a tale about the 2 houses, of Hillel and Shammai, some 30 years before the life of Rabbi Yeshua.

“He said to him: Two, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. The Gentile said to him: With regard to the Written Torah, I believe you, but with regard to the Oral Torah, I do not believe you....Convert me on condition that you will teach me only the Written Torah. Shammai scolded him and cast him out with reprimand....The same Gentile came before Hillel, who converted him and began teaching him Torah. On the first day, he showed him the letters of the alphabet and said to him: Alef, bet, gimmel, daletHillel said to him: You see that it is impossible to learn what is written without relying on an oral tradition. Didn't you rely on me?...Therefore, you should also rely on me with regard to the matter of the Oral Torah, and accept the interpretations that it contains.” Shabbat 31a:5

It is no small matter to consider the oral torah and the ramifications to the 1st century Israeli's whether they were believers in Rabbi Yeshua or not.

Refer to making a path straight lesson 2 for far more details. For this example, it's necessary to understand that to the written Torah and the Oral Torah are employed as being one and the same. The oral law is not all bad or evil, but there must be an understanding that both the oral and written have been held together in practice as a single voice.

Divisions among the council

As I demonstrated in Twisted Scriptures Lesson 2, Peter had to consider that serving God was of more import than segregation by the oral law, at least when it came to justification by faith. God was not a respecter of a person's background or culture. Any that are willing to believe his word and the testimony of his son, are acceptable to him.

Peter's fear in this case may have had to do with his calling to be an emissary to the circumcision, and his association with Gentiles may have, in ways, made his testimony or reputation questionable with those of the unbelieving circumcision party.

It begs the question, how likely is it that as of yet the pillars of the assembly in Jerusalem, Peter, James and John were not yet entirely resolved on the matter of Gentiles? What their interactions with the torah and specifically the oral torah were to be. They hadn't fully defined the resolutions for Rabbi Yeshua's adherents and how to integrate these two vastly different people groups, after generations of segregation.

Paul refers to the peace and hope both groups have in Messiah

Eph 2:14 For it is he who is our peace. Through his mortality he made both groups one by tearing down the wall of hostility that divided them. (ISV)

That brings me to the meat of this lesson. In this chapter, the contention is simply this: Justification. Before the righteousness of Rabbi Yeshua and his righteousness was put on display by his resurrection from the dead, and raising him into the heavens to sit at the right hand of Yehovah. Now those putting their trust in him are justified.

Apart from this, it was only ever the Torah that had any consideration for justification before God. It's important to understand, while there was contention, in this case, the contention was between believers!

There are opposing opinions about whether this letter was given before or after the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, it seems most apparent to me that this letter, and the particular conflict between Paul and Peter *is* one of the direct contributing factors to why the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 was necessary, and hadn't happened yet.

Act 15:1 Then some men came down from Judea and started to teach the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Law of Moses, you can't be saved."

Act 15:2 Paul and Barnabas had quite a dispute and argument with them. So Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders about this question.

Act 15:5 But some believers from the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and ordered to keep the Law of Moses."

Act 15:7 After a lengthy debate, Peter stood up and told them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose me to be the one among you through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the gospel and believe.

Act 15:8 God, who knows everyone's heart, showed them he approved by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.

Act 15:9 He made no distinction between them and us, because of their faith-cleansed hearts.

Act 15:10 So why do you test God by putting on the disciples' neck a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we could carry?

Act 15:11 We certainly believe that it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, that we are saved, just as they are." (ISV)

Notice all of this was among believers. These were all believers, in particular those of the party of the Pharisees who were contending that the circumcision of the torah was necessary for the conversion of the Gentiles. It should be noted, it wasn't an innovation to consider that Gentiles were required to be circumcised, up until the experience Peter had at Cornelius's house in Acts 10, the entire Israeli worldview was that Gentiles, in order to come to faith, all males would inevitably be required to be circumcised.

Paul builds his case very carefully to compare the two paths of justification, that of the Law; the Torah, or that of Faith in

Rabbi Yeshua Messiah, the righteousness of Yehovah on display for the world.

Justification by faith, not of works

Here is how he puts it:

Gal 2:16 even so, we have come to realize that a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua's trusting faithfulness. Therefore, we too have put our trust in Messiah Yeshua and become faithful to him, in order that we might be declared righteous on the ground of the Messiah's trusting faithfulness and not on the ground of our legalistic observance of Torah commands. For on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, no one will be declared righteous. (CJB)

The purpose of this lesson is to delicately traverse the complex cultural landscape and discern the multiple groups involved. The traditions of the elders held up among the groups of believers who were also a part of the party of the pharisees.

We can see that the faith of Messiah Yeshua put these Israeli men in difficult circumstances. Pitting the written and oral laws against one another. Old segregations and those who supported them were still very active and apparent in their culture and society.

Among the Israelis today, parties of the Pharisees are considered to still exist, and their devotion to the oral torah and its tradition has only since the 1st century, grown in its breadth. Come Yeshua come!

Closing thoughts

I hope you enjoyed reading through this short booklet. Admittedly, it does seem rather strange to have spent as much time as I did discussing food handling practices as one of the central themes to these teachings.

The results of severe oppression by the Greeks arguably forced the hand of the two Yoseis, in enacting that all the nations impute uncleanness. The results of cutting off a people group from another, enforced by laws that create segregation are demonstrably against the will of God. I chose to label them as criminals as a result of their laws inspiring segregation that has lasted to present day in some circles. Not only that however, their enactments overruled the God's commandments, and that is a criminal offense. Desperate times call for desperate measures, which is exactly what transpired, however they were never redacted and that too is a criminal oversight.

Choosing to believe that any person, of any race or culture is deserving of the love of God, despite what many might consider despicable practices or heinous backgrounds is the ultimate truth of these lessons. Please think deeply and take them to heart.

As the prophet said:

Isa 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; for those living in a land of deep darkness, a light has shined upon them. (ISV)

The commandments written within the Torah, the teaching and instructions of the Elohim of Israel are holy, right and good. The great wisdom of the commandments is his way of life. They are his character and are intrinsic to his holiness.

Re-evaluating these key passages sheds a proper light on the separation between not only the Jew and Gentile, but between the “church” and the Torah, or specifically, the instructions and teaching of God’s character.

Join me, revisit, reestablish and reevaluate the long-twisted scriptures and make a path straight. For now, may your trust be strong, and your conviction strong, and may you cleanse and rinse your own traditions and align yourself with a proper biblical understanding and practice.