–Save This Page as a PDF–

# James (Jacob or Ya'akov)

**James** (**Jacob**, or **Ya'akov**) is named as **Yeshua's** half-brother in the gospels, along with Joseph (Joses), Simon and Judah, all popular Hebrew names in Eretz (Land of) Isra'el during this period, and an unspecified number of unnamed sisters **(Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3; First Corinthians 9:5)**. The exact manner in which **Jacob** became the leader in the Messianic community in Jerusalem is hard to trace. Many identify **Acts 12:17** as the significant turning point when Peter **left** Jerusalem **and went to another place** after being delivered from prison by **an angel of the Lord (Acts 12:1-19).** It seems that the leadership void was filled – in an unspecified fashion – by **Ya'akov's** rise to prominence. Being **Yeshua's** brother, **his** personal qualities, **his** Davidic descent and the prompting of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** all played a part in **his** rise to leadership in the Jerusalem community.

Christian tradition has long held that **James** represented the "Torah-observant" stream of early Christianity in contrast to **Paul's** "Torah-free" gospel. The **certain men of James (2:12)** were not Judaizers (**to see link click Ag – Who Were the Judaizers?**), for **Ya'akov** would not send such men, but Jewish believers, who, like **Jacob**, were still most scrupulous in their obedience to the 613 commandments of the Torah. Even after the decision by the Jerusalem council (see the commentary on **Acts Bt – The Council's Letter to the Gentile Believers**) regarding the relation of Torah observance to Gentile believers, still held to the view that Jewish believers still needed to be "Torah-observant."

Even the Church Father Eusebius' description of **James** – based on Hegesippus – supplies no definite certification of **James'** pharisaic status, **his** most outstanding characteristic – **his** Nazirite existence – being a commitment made by many different people, as also **his** ascetic lifestyle and dedication to prayer, "The leadership of the Church passed to **James** the brother of **the Lord**, together with the Apostles. **He** was called "the Just" by all men from **the Lord's** time to ours, since many are called **Jacob**, but **he** was [a Nazirite] from **his** mother's womb. **He** drank no wine or strong drink, nor did **he** eat [animal] flesh; no razor went upon **his** head; **he** did not anoint **himself** with oil. **He** alone was allowed to enter alone into the sanctuary, for **he** did not wear wool, but linen, and **he** had a habit of entering

the Temple alone and could be found kneeling and praying for forgiveness for *the people*. So that from **his** excessive righteousness **he** was called "the Just," and *Oblias*, which in Greek means, *protection of the people and righteousness*, as the prophets declare concerning **him.**[31]

**Jacob** remained the leader of the Messianic community in Jerusalem until **his** death around 62 AD. While **he** lived, **his** influence was so great that even some of the leading citizens of **the City** believed that **Yeshua** was the long-awaited **Messiah**. This horrified the members of the Sanhedrin (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lg – The Great Sanhedrin**). Somehow, because he was known to be "Torah observant," the Pharisees thought that they could get **James** to discourage the people from believing in **Messiah**. So, they asked **him** to **stand on the highest point of the Temple Mount.**

The dizzying vantage point in the southeast corner of **the Temple Mount** was specifically from the Royal Stoa. Both **Mattityahu** and **Luke** use the same Greek word *pterygion*, which is a diminutive form of *pteryx* or *wing*. In B'rit Chadashah times, *pterygion* generally described the outermost part of something. Therefore, this expression can be translated *tower*, *pinnacle*, *apex*, *peak* or *extreme point*, seen in the lower left-hand corner of the picture below.

Both **Matthew 4:5** and **Luke 4:9a** have the definite article coming before *pterygion*, which indicates that a specific, well known **highest point** is being dealt with. Not only that, but both authors use the word *hieron* or **Temple Mount**, and not *naos* or Sanctuary, for the expression **the highest point of the Temple.** Once

this is understood, the spot is easy to identify. The most imposing vantage **point** in the entire **Temple Mount** is described by the Jewish historian Josephus. He wrote: The Royal Stoa was a structure more noteworthy than any under the sun. The depth of the ravine [below] was so great, when combined with the height of the Stoa, that no one [would dare] bend over [the ledge] because he would become so dizzy he wouldn't be able to see the end of the measureless depth (paraphrased for readability).[32] Josephus also reported that the drop to the valley floor was some 450 feet.

This is exactly where **the ancient Serpent** took **Yeshua**, and tempted **Him** saying: **If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.** To make the temptation more persuasive, **the great dragon** quoted Scripture. Quoting **Psalm 91:11-12**, **he** said: **For it is written, "He will command His angels concerning You to guard you carefully; and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:6; Luke 9b-10).**

With that subtle and clever twist of quoting **Psalm 91:11-12**, **the deceiver** thought **he** had backed **Messiah** into a corner. It's as if **Satan** was saying, "You claim to be **God's Son** and trust **His** Word, so why don't you demonstrate your **Sonship** and prove the truth of **His** Word by putting **Him** to a **test** – a scriptural **test**? If you won't use your *own* divine power to help yourself, let your **Father** use ***His*** divine power to help **You**." For **Yeshua** to have followed **the devil's** suggestion to be saved by heavenly **angels** would have been, in the eyes of many Jews, a sure proof that **He** was **the Messiah**. But, **Yeshua** would not yield to **the deceiver**, and neither would **James**.

The Pharisees and Sadducees asked **Ya'alov** to stand at **the highest point of the Temple Mount** on Pesach and speak to the people below. Apparently **James** agreed. They brought **him** to *the wing* of **the Temple Mount** and shouted so that the people could hear, "Oh, **righteous one**, in whom we are able to place great confidence; the people are led astray after **Yeshua**, the crucified one. So declare to us, what is this way, **Yeshua**?"

Obviously, this wasn't a very wise thing for them to do. **Jacob** was ready to defend **his** faith at any cost. **His** words are memorable, "Why do you ask me about **Yeshua, the Son of Man**? **He** sits in heaven at the right hand of the great Power, and **He** will soon come on the clouds of heaven!" The Pharisees and Sadducees, realizing their terrible mistake, threw **him** off **the highest point of the Temple**

**Mount** to **his** death because **he** would not renounce **his** faith.[33]