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Paul Meets Peter and James in Jerusalem

1: 18-24

Paul meets Peter and James in Jerusalem DIG: What proof does Paul offer to show that he was an independent missionary and preached extensively without formal approval or supervision by the apostles in Jerusalem. How does that relate to Paul's major point here? Why did Paul mention the fifteen days? Why were the other apostles initially afraid to meet Paul? Who broke down that barrier? How many years did Paul spend in the regions of Syria and Cilicia?

REFLECT: Who is your mentor? Who holds you accountable? Who asks you the hard questions? Who are you mentoring? Don't waste your sorrows. If someone came to you with what he or she said was a message from God, not from man, how would you determine whether their message was true or false? Whom do you know who was once very hostile to Messiah, but is now a believer? What brought about that change?

Paul went up to Jerusalem to visit with Peter and James. But because of his reputation, they were afraid to meet with him. However, Barnabas interceded on his behalf and convinced them that Paul's conversion was genuine. After preaching his gospel in Zion, [unbelieving] Hellenists, tried to kill him. Then Paul escaped to the regions of Syria and Cilicia for the next ten years before returning for the Jerusalem Council.

37 AD

After escaping from Damascus after the Jews there had plotted to kill him (Acts 9:23-25), Paul went up to Jerusalem to visit with Peter, going in and out, staying with him fifteen days (1:18). All the other Messianic communities in Judea knew that Paul, who had previously created havoc in the Church was now a believer, and preached the very gospel he once disdained. Nevertheless, the people in those churches never saw him in person or had any opportunity to influence his doctrine because he had left so abruptly when he went to Arabia for three years (to see link click [Ai](#) - A Harmony of Acts 9 and Galatians 1).

Paul mentions **fifteen days** to show what a brief period of time **he** stayed with **Peter**. On the one hand, it was too short a time to get **his** theology from **Peter**; on the other hand, it was long enough to show if **Paul** was preaching a false **gospel**, **Peter** would have been able to expose **him**.³⁶ **When Paul came to Jerusalem he tried to meet with the apostles, but they were all afraid of him because they did not believe that he was truly saved. But, Barnabas took Paul and brought him to Peter and James, describing to them how Paul had spoken boldly in the name of Yeshua. So, Paul was with them, going in and out in Jerusalem for fifteen days, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord (Acts 9:26-30). He saw none of the other apostles, however, who may have been too afraid to see him, or may have been away from Jerusalem at the time (1:19).**³⁷

James was the Lord's half-brother (Mark 6:3; Galatians 2:9 and 12; First Corinthians 15:7; Acts 15:13 and 21:18), the one who was head of the **Jerusalem** council (see the commentary on [Acts Bs - The Council at Jerusalem](#)), but also one of the **apostles**, as were **Barnabas** and **Paul himself** (Acts 14:4 and 14; First Corinthians 9:5-6). This means that there were more than twelve **apostles** (see **Romans 16:7**), even though the role of the **Twelve** is unique (**Matthew 19:28; Revelation 21:14**); indeed **Ephesians 4:11** suggests that the office of **apostle** continues to be a gift to the Messianic Community.³⁸ **Paul** considered these facts so important in **his** demonstration of **his apostolic** independence that **he** added these words: **In what I'm writing you, before God, I do not lie (1:19-20).**

Paul spoke boldly to the Jews in Yerushalayim in the name of the Lord, arguing with the [unbelieving] Hellenists, but they were trying to kill him (Acts 9:28-29). Fearing for **his** life, a protected escort helped **him** travel to the port of **Caesarea** where **he** sailed to **Tarsus (Acts 9:30).** **ADONAI** sent **Paul** there so that other aspects of **his** spiritual life could grow to match **his** zeal. During that time, however, **he** was far from idle (**Second Corinthians 12:1-4**). Between this time and the time **Barnabas** found **him** in the seaport of **Tarsus** and brought **him** to **Antioch** (see the commentary on [Acts Bj - The Church at Syrian Antioch](#)), **he** was aggressively doing what **ADONAI** had called **him** to do.

Then Paul went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia (see [Aq - Syria and Cilicia during the Time of Paul](#)), the latter of which included **his** home town of **Tarsus**. With a population of perhaps around 500,000, **Tarsus** apparently possessed a sizeable **Jewish** population by the first century - one which was still vibrant in the fourth century when the patriarch sent an envoy there to collect contributions from the **Jewish** community. As a free city under Augustus - who confirmed the privileges won by its citizens' pro-Caesarean sympathies - it enjoyed self-government and tax-exempt status (Pliny, *Natural History* 5.22.92).³⁹

Here we have ten years of **Paul's** life passed over in silence, between **his** flight from **Jerusalem** to **Tarsus** in **38 AD** and **his** return to **Tziyon** for the **Jerusalem** council in **48 AD**. As a result, **the Messiah's communities** outside of **Jerusalem**, in the larger area of **Judea**, **didn't even know what Paul looked like; they only kept on hearing, "The one who once persecuted us now proclaims the Good News he once tried to destroy" (1:21-23 CJB)!** He left **Jerusalem** for **Cilicia** and **Tarsus** so abruptly that **the Messianic communities** in **Judea** had no opportunity to become acquainted with **him**. **Had he** been a disciple of **the other twelve apostles**, **his** ministry would have been in **Judea**, but because it was not, that showed that **he** was an independent missionary, and that **he** was not operating under the supervision of **the Messianic community** in **Yerushalayim** or **the Twelve**.⁴⁰

So, they kept on praising God because of me (1:24). The verb is imperfect and presents continuous action. **Paul** means that **his** example was the cause of **the Messianic communities** in **Judea** glorifying **God**. **Paul** shows the cordial attitude of **the Messianic communities** of **Judea** towards **himself**, contrasting the hatred which **the Judaizers** displayed in **their** antagonism against **him**.

Modern-day **Judaizers** like their ancient counterparts, reject the authority of **Paul** and try to undermine **the gospel he** preached. In **Paul's** day, their message was, "**the gospel plus** Torah." In our day it is, "**the gospel plus** any number of religious leaders, religious books, or religious organizations." **You cannot be saved unless** (you fill in the blank), is their message (**Acts 15:1**). And that **unless** usually includes joining their group and obeying their rules. If you dare mention **the gospel** of grace as preached by **Yeshua, Paul, and the other apostles**, they reply, "But **God** has given us a new revelation!"

Paul and **Messiah** have the answer for **them**. **Paul** stated: **If anyone proclaims a gospel to you other than what you have received, let that person be under a curse (Galatians 1:9)!** And **Yeshua** declares: **If anyone adds to the prophecy of this book [Revelation], God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book (Revelation 22:18).**

When a sinner trusts **Messiah** and is **born again** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ By - Jesus Teaches Nicodemus**), he or she is set free - no longer a slave to sin, the Adversary, or to human religious systems (see **Bo - When the Fullness of Time Came, God Sent Out His Son**). **So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36)!**⁴¹