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After Fourteen Years, Paul went up to Jerusalem, and took Titus and Barnabas with Him 2: 1-2a

After fourteen years, Paul went up to Jerusalem, and took Titus and Barnabas with him DIG: Why would Paul take Barnabas with him to Jerusalem? What history did they have together? Why did the believers cherish Jerusalem? Why does the Bible say "Go up to Jerusalem," or "Go down from Jerusalem?" What was this revelation that Paul had? How would this form of communication from God continue throughout his ministry? Who was Agabus? What did he prophesy? What was significant about the famine relief being sent to the elders of the Messianic community and not to the apostles?

REFLECT: In Paul's day, the question was, "Can these Gentiles really be believers?" Today the question, by far too many Gentiles, is, "Can these Jews really be believers?" Why do you think that's the case? Paul saw to it that relief was sent to the suffering Jews by Gentiles, what are Gentiles doing today to send relief, either physically or spiritually, to suffering Jews? After all, Paul would later write, "To the Jew first and then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16 NIV).

After an absence of more than a decade, Paul journeys to Jerusalem in the company of Barnabas and Titus with a collection for famine relief.

48 AD

Then, fourteen years after his encounter on the Damascus Road (**to see link click Ai – A Harmony of Acts 9 and Galatians 1**), **Paul went up again to Jerusalem (2:1a).** Try to understand the significance of **Yerushalayim** for the believers. They cherished **the Holy City**, not only as the place of the Temple, as the place of **the Master's** tomb, and as the capital of the future Messianic

Kingdom, but also as the home of **the apostles**. **The City of David** was where the elders and the original **apostles** could be found. No doubt that **they** had a synagogue of **their** own in **Tziyon**. **They** had an academy of learning, I am sure. **They** had **their** own *beit din* (court of judgment), and **they** had **James (Ya'akov)** the just, half-brother of **Yeshua**.

Paul took with Barnabas, the **one** who had vouched for **him** on **his** last visit, **and Titus with him (2:1b). Barnabas** was a **Jewish** believer who had good credentials among **the Gentiles**. He was a veteran **apostle** and had been very influential since the years of **Messiah's** death and resurrection. **Titus** represented the opposite: a proselyte at the Gate (see the commentary on **Acts Bb – An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53**) from **Antioch**. **He** was uncircumcised and seemingly had no plans to do so. **He** was one of **Paul's Gentile** disciples.

I went up to Jerusalem: No matter where one is coming from in their travels, it is always **up to Yerushalayim**. It may not always be physically **up** if you were coming from Nepal, for example. But it is certainly **up** in the sense of a spiritual pilgrimage, and drawing close to **God's** presence. Leaving **the Holy City** is always referred to as **going down from Tziyon**.

Because of a revelation (2:2a). A **revelation** is something revealed from heaven. After the first encounter on the Damascus road **(Acts 9)**, revelations like that directed **Paul's** life. **The Master** appeared to **Him** in **the Temple (Acts 22:17-21)**; a vision in prison **(Acts 23:11)**; and **the Ruach Ha-Kodesh** prevented **him** from entering **Bithynia**, but wanted **him to go to Macedonia** instead **(Acts 16:6-10)**.

Now at the end of the first **year** of the co-ministry of **Barnabas** and **Sha'ul, prophets came down from Jerusalem to** Syrian **Antioch (Acts 11:27).** Now **a prophet** was one who received direct revelation from **God**. The early Messianic Community had **prophets**, like **Judah** and **Silas (15:32)**, and the church at **Antioch** had **prophets** like **Lucius the Cyrenian**, **Simeon called Niger, Manaen (13:1).** For **one** to be **a prophet one** had to give **a near historical prophecy**. **One of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted through the Ruach that there was going to be a great famine over all the** Roman **world.** The Greek word for **world** used here is oikouméne, which means *the inhabited world*, or *the Roman world*. Indeed, **this took place during the reign of Claudius (Acts 11:28),** who was emperor from 41 AD to 54 AD.

Contemporary records demonstrate that a series of famines affected Mediterranean agriculture during his reign. In the winter of 40/41 AD Rome experienced such a lack of food that stores were only stocked for a week. This crisis continued at least into **Claudius'** second year 41/42 AD. **Yerushalayim's** status as the "navel of the earth" unfortunately does not include the advantages of a city endowed with natural resources or trading materials. The mountains yield only stone in large quantities and most raw materials are lacking. More significantly, **Jerusalem** naturally possesses only one real water source, the spring of **Siloam (Second Kings 20:20; Second Chronicles 32:2-4; Nehemiah 3:15; Isaiah 8:6, 22:8-11; John 9:7ff).**

In times of famine grain supplies were the first to be affected, and here too **Tziyon** is ill-served by its geographical location, the soil in the surrounding area is notoriously poor in quality. **The City's** chief requirements had to be imported from Galilee, Samaria and the Transjordan. However, the capital produced fruits and vegetables, such as olives, dates, vines and honey. While **Jerusalem** enjoyed a high standard of living, **her** citizens also suffered from a higher cost of living than the rest of the country. In times of drought and famine, these prices soared and **the City** experienced special hardships. Any severe disturbance to the wheat and barley production and/or transport could cause the price to escalate more than sixteen times. Only a few exceptional urban centers in the ancient world depended upon foreign imports for their food. Unfortunately, **Jerusalem** was one of them. In time of need, aid from the diaspora provided a vital source of sustenance, and the Diaspora communities felt a strong sense of responsibility to the believers in **Judea**.[42]

The prophesied **famine** came to Judea in **44 AD** and lasted for three years until the end of **46 AD**. **The Talmud refers to it as "the years of scarcity." Josephus reports that food was scarce, extremely expensive, and many people died as a result.** The poor in **Jerusalem** were especially hard hit. **Sharing all things in common, selling their property and possessions and sharing them with all, as any had need (Acts 2:44-45)** had taken its toll. The impoverished community did not have the means to lay up provisions for themselves. In keeping with our **Lord's** teachings about giving one's wealth to the poor, the early Jewish believers came to be known as *the evyonim*, meaning *the poor ones*. They would be the hardest hit by the coming famine.

So, following **Joseph's** example of preparing for a seven-year famine (see the commentary on **Genesis Kq – Joseph and the Famine**), **the disciples** of

Antioch decided to send relief to those kedoshim (brothers and sisters) living in Judea, each according to his ability. The Talmud preserves several similar instances of collections for charity in the Diaspora. So the Messianic community in **Yerushalayim** sent **Barnabas** a teacher in **Antioch**, and the church at **Antioch** sent the Messianic community in **Jerusalem relief** from **the famine**. This is in keeping with **Romans 15:25-27**, when **the Gentiles** receive **spiritual blessings** from **the Jews, they are obligated** to share **their material blessings** with **them**. **This they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Sha'ul (Acts 11:29-30).** This is the first use of the word **elders**. **They** did not **send relief** to **the apostles**, but to **the elders**. This shows that **Acts** is a transitional book, and the leadership in **Jerusalem** was being transformed from **apostles**, which ended with the death of **John** around **98 AD**, to **elders**, which is a permanent office.

After **Paul's** First Missionary Journey (see the commentary on **Acts Bm – Paul's First Missionary Journey**), **Paul and Barnabas** collected funds from the church in **Antioch** for **their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem**. The gift served a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, it provided for the **Jerusalem brothers and sisters** much as the careful preparations of **Joseph** had provided for **his brothers** (see the commentary on **Genesis Lt – Joseph Reassures His Brothers**); on the other hand, the collection was a dose of spiritual reality to **the Jews in Jerusalem** that the **Gentiles** were actually **their** spiritual **brothers and sisters**.