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Peter's Report to Jerusalem

11: 1-18

42 AD

Peter's report to Jerusalem DIG: Why might Luke have taken the time and space to record the events of 10:9-46 all over again? Of what importance is the gift of the Ruach ha-Kodesh in Peter's argument? Why would this have such a strong effect on the Jerusalem believers? Why is it misunderstood (see 1:6)? Why do you think God chose Peter to be the first to go to the Gentiles? Why did they speak in tongues? How do you explain the change in attitudes from verse 2 to verse 18? How does this story relate to 1:18?

REFLECT: How might this principle affect how you treat "unacceptable" people you meet? How have you been criticized for breaking the religious traditions of your place of worship? Why did you do so? What did you feel was at stake? The lesson of 10:34-35 and 11:18 was not easily learned, even by Peter (Galatians 2:11-14). What might have happened if the early Messianic Community denied the new principle (10:15, 28 and 11:9) that ADONAI taught Peter?

Now while Peter was still ministering in Caesarea, word of the remarkable events that had taken place reached the Messianic community in Yerushalayim. The news of his interaction with the Gentiles had spread like wildfire. The apostles who had remained in Jerusalem after the persecution of the Hellenistic Jews (to see [link click Ax - The Stoning of Stephen](#)), and the Jewish believers in the Messianic Congregation throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God (11:1).



The charge: But when Peter returned to Jerusalem from his Judean ministry, those belonging to the sect of the Pharisees, those of the circumcision (15:5), took issue with him, saying scornfully: You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them (11:2-3)! It was as if they were saying, “You, who are supposed to be a faithful Jew, associated with, and even ate with Gentiles. How could you!” Centuries of Jewish practice made them critical of what Peter had been reported doing, especially his action with eating with the Gentiles. Even though the Gentiles had become converts, the problem still existed. If Jewish believers felt bound to the kosher eating regulations of the Torah, there could be no fellowship with Gentile believers (or Gentile unbelievers) unless the Gentiles were circumcised and kept kosher themselves. Therefore, those of the circumcision were zealots for the Torah (21:20) and insisted on the necessity of circumcision even for Gentiles. This was not only a matter of religion, but also of culture, and cultural norms are very hard to break. On this key issue they were not afraid to challenge Peter, the chief of the apostles. All this would come to a head later on (see [Bs - The Counsel at Jerusalem](#)).²³⁶

But Kefa (Peter) had nothing to fear. ADONAI chose him as His instrument to bring Yeshua to the Gentiles precisely because he was an observant Jew; in this way all would know that God's hand was in it. Had a less Torah-observant Jew seen the vision, it would have been no less of YHVH, but those of the circumcision might have dismissed him as being self-serving, as much as people regarded Sha'ul, but for different reasons (Acts 21:21; Romans 3:8).²³⁷

The defense: Instead of entering into a heated rebuke of their prejudice, Peter began explaining to them what happened in a complete, detailed chronological order, point by point, saying: I was in the city of Joppa praying, and I saw a vision - something like a great sheet coming down, being lowered from

heaven by its four corners, and it came right to me. I looked inside, considering it carefully, and saw four-footed *kosher* creatures of the earth, wild animals (non-*kosher*), reptiles (a mixture of *kosher* and non-*kosher*), and birds of the air (once again a mixture of *kosher* and non-*kosher*). I also heard a voice saying: **Get up, Peter. Kill and eat (11:4-7).**

But I said: Certainly not, Lord! For never has anything unclean, or treif, entered my mouth. But a voice from heaven answered a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not consider unholy." This happened three times for emphasis, and then everything was pulled up to heaven (11:8-10). At first, **Peter** thought **God** was speaking about food. **He** came to understand, however, that **the vision of the sheet and kosher and non kosher animals** had to do with people, not food.

At that very moment, three men arrived at the house where we were, sent to me from Caesarea. The Ruach told me to go with them without hesitating. These six Jewish brothers (who were standing there with him) also went with me, and we entered the man's house. Peter admitted that **he** entered **the house of a Gentile**, but **his** defense is that it was not the wrong thing to do. **He reported to us how he had seen an angel standing in his house and saying: Send to Joppa and bring Simon called Peter. So both men received a divine invitation. He will speak words to you by which you will be saved - you and all your household (11:11-14).** Therefore, **Peter's** point was that **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** told **him** to go.

Then **Peter** states the most important part of **his** defense: **As I began to speak, the Ruach ha-Kodesh fell on them (Gentiles) and they began to speak in tongues (languages), just as on us (Jews) at the beginning at Shavu'ot (see [AI - The Ruach ha-Kodesh Comes at Shavu'ot](#)).** And I remembered the word of the Lord, how **He** used to say: **John immersed with water, but you will be immersed in the Ruach ha-Kodesh (11:15-16).** **God's** stamp of approval was on this ministry to **the Gentiles**.

Then **he** wrapped up **his** defense with a summary: **Therefore, if God gave them the same gift of the Ruach ha-Kodesh as also to us after we put our trust in the Lord Messiah Yeshua, who was I to stand in God's way (11:17)?** The answer was obvious. **Peter** could do nothing else than what **he** did in light of **ADONAI's** commands to **him**. The miraculous phenomena signaling the arrival of **the Spirit of God**, corroborating testimony by unsympathetic but trustworthy

witnesses, and the promise of Scripture spoken by **the Lord Himself** was enough evidence to silence the protests.²³⁸

The verdict: Just as **Peter** had been convinced of the evidence, so now were **the Jews** in **Jerusalem**. Shocked as **they** were, **the council members** could not deny what had happened. Even **those belonging to the sect of the Pharisees** had nothing to say. **Their** reaction was stunned silence. **When they heard these things they became quiet.** However, silence quickly gave way to praise, and even **the Pharisees** who had become believers **glorified God**, saying: **Then even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance leading to life (11:18)! They** were now full members of the Church, therefore, **circumcision** and being **Torah** observant were unnecessary for salvation. The Church was one - **Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14-18).**

The Gentile issue was not yet fully resolved, the debate had just been suspended, and the criticism temporarily silenced until Acts 15. Even Peter would later vacillate and withdraw from eating with Gentiles at Antioch under pressure from the Judaizers (Galatians 2:11-14). Nevertheless, the door had been opened to the Gentiles for salvation and Luke is prepared to recount how an opportunistic and zealous evangelist (Paul), with another trustworthy brother (Barnabas), under the guidance and commissioning of a congregation that already involved both Jews and Gentiles (Antioch), was going to seize the moment and begin the first efforts to evangelize the Gentile nations. Surprisingly, it would not be an initiative undertaken by the Jerusalem community itself.²³⁹

As believers, we are to receive one another and not argue over cultural differences or minor matters of personal conviction (**Romans 14** and **15**). Some of **the Jewish** believers in the early Messianic community wanted **the Gentiles** to become **Jews**, and some of **the Gentile** believers wanted **the Jews** to stop being **Jews** and become **Gentiles!** This attitude can create serious division in the Church even today, so it is important that we follow the example of **Acts 11:18** and **accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of disputes about opinions (Romans 14:1).** We must receive those whom **ADONAI** has also received.²⁴⁰

These events were happening for specific reasons in this period of historical transition. **The Gentiles** received **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** at the time of conversion. **They** spoke in **tongues (languages)** at the moment they were saved,

as proof to everyone that **they** were then part of the Church. The norm is salvation and the reception of **the Ruach** at the same time. **Peter** was present, and therefore **he** could report to the Jewish members of the Jerusalem counsel that **the Gentiles** were true believers. At the same time, **the Gentiles** would recognize the authority of **the apostles** because **Peter** had been with **them** and had led **them** to **Messiah**. Most importantantly, both groups knew that **they** had the same **Ruach** and were part of the same body.²⁴¹

This was the beginning of the divine effort to lay the groundwork for the first Gentile church. About twelve years had passed from Shavu'ot to the founding of that church at Antioch (see **Bj - The Church in Antioch**). There were several reasons for that delay. First, apostolic authority had to be established. It took time for the believers to become grounded in **the apostles' teaching (2:42)**, and for the development of leaders. During those years, the apostles laid the doctrinal of the church. Second, individual believers needed to be brought to a sufficient level of maturity before they could be sent out. Immature believers would not make effective missionaries. Third, it took time to tear down the long-established walls of prejudice. That was starting to be achieved (**Galatians 2:11-14**), so the time was right to give birth to a church in a **Gentile** land and to move to the last phase of **ADONAI's** plan for evangelism - **to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8)**.²⁴²

The observant **Jews** in the Messianic Community were amazed that **Gentiles** could become part of **God's people**, part of **the Body of Messiah**, without first becoming **Jews**. But today the situation is exactly the opposite; many **Gentile** Christians are amazed at a movement of **Messianic Jews** that claims **Jews** can accept the **Jewish Messiah, Yeshua**, without taking on the lifestyle of **Gentiles**. The more things change, the more they stay the same.²⁴³