

# פרשת בראשית / Parashat Bereshit

Shabbat Tishrei 26, 5768, October 18, 2008  
32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d  
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## Compromising the Torah?

### השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Genesis 1:1-6:8  
הפטרה: Isaiah 42:5-43:11  
הברית: John 1:1-14  
החדשה

10 In *Bereshit / Genesis 2:4* we find textual emphasis is placed upon the letter ה in בהבראם meaning "they were created." This week's scripture reading speaks of the account / record of the creation where the Lord creates the heavens and the earth.

וַיִּכְלֹ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכָל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

וְאֵלֹהֵי תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בַּיּוֹם עָשׂוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם: וְכָל וְשִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם

יְהִיָּה בָאָרֶץ וְכָל-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לְעִבֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה: וְאָדָם יַעֲלֶה מִן-הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת-כָּל-פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן-הָאָדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה: וַיִּטַּע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים גֶּן-בְּעֵדֵן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשֶׂם שֵׁם

29 v. כן בחומש יריחו ואת-כל מקף, ס"א ואת כל. 30 v. ס"א את כל-יזק. נ"א ואת- וכן ת"ע.  
ב. 2 v. נ"א הששי וכן ח"ש, ת"ע ות"ס. 3 v. כן ביריחו מנגן. 4 v. ה' זעירא. 6 v. ס"א  
וְאָדָם יַעֲלֶה. 6 v. ס"א את-כל. נ"א בן אשר את-כל, בן נפתלי את-כל. 8 v. ס"א גן.  
9 v. ס"א האדמה. 9 v. ס"א ועץ ונמסר עליה יריחו ועץ. 11 v. ס"א אשר.

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**Bereshit / Genesis 2:1-7**  
2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2:2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. 2:4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven. 2:5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 2:6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. 2:7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (NASB)

ה' זעירא  
ה' is little / small

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Creation (our origins) draws into question the inerrancy of scripture because today there are two mainline streams of thought, (1) G-d created with or without evolution and (2) there is no G-d, it's all evolution. The authority of G-d's word is the main issue. Now, as a believer, if one yields to the authority of Yeshua (Jesus) then consequentially one must yield to Yeshua's view of the scriptures. This means that anyone who claims to be a believer must also hold to the same view Yeshua did. The question is what did Yeshua believe on creation? Well, a short list will demonstrate Yeshua believed all of the scriptures, their historicity and authority giving an accurate account of creation.

### Examples of Yeshua's belief in the authority of scripture

- Mark 10:6 – From the beginning of the creation G-d made them male and female.
- Luke 11:51—Abel was a real person
- Matthew 24:37–39—Noah and the flood (Luke 17:26, 27)
- John 8:56–58—Abraham was real
- Matthew 10:15; 11:23, 24 (Luke 10:12)—Sodom and Gomorrah were real places.
- Luke 17:28–32—Lot (and wife!)
- Matthew 8:11—Isaac and Jacob were real (Luke 13:28)
- John 6:31, 49, 58—the Manna in the desert was real
- John 3:14—The deception of the Serpent
- Matthew 12:39–41—Jonah and the whale (vs. 42—Sheba)
- Matthew 24:15—the accounts of Daniel and Isaiah

There are many more references but for brevity this short list leaves no question whether Yeshua considered the scriptures G-d's authoritative word or not. Yeshua never compromised the written Word.

The question we need to be asking ourselves is “Am I compromising on the written word of G-d in my belief of the creation account or any other parts of scripture?” Today compromise is a very important topic. For example, in order to make people happy some religious leaders profess to accept scripture as “G-d's Word” but have a very low view of its inspiration teaching these are man's words. Is it acceptable to compromise in order to keep people coming back so as not to offend your brother? Now I don't believe we should compromise the Word of G-d in order to make someone else feel better, but have you ever asked the question if there are any references in the scriptures where the people compromised in order to make a community of believers work together better in agreement and it was considered ok? I say there is not, however, historically there is a portion of scripture that has been used and interpreted as a form of compromise in the Ketuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings).

The portion of scripture deals with a very central issue concerning what does it mean to be at the same time both Jewish and a believer in Yeshua and how do the Gentile believers fit in especially in observing the Torah? The portion of scripture I want to look at is *Acts 15*.

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**Acts 15:1-5**

*15:1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' 15:2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. 15:3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 15:4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 15:5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.'* (NASB)

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The events leading to *Acts 15* can be summarized, the Apostle Shaul (Paul) ministered to the gentiles, subsequently the gentiles believed upon Yeshua as the Messiah of G-d and Shaul (Paul) was bringing this good news to the believers in Jerusalem. Reading through the first five verses of chapter 15 we find in *Acts 15:5* the believing Pharisees were insisting the gentile believers needed to undergo a “b’rit milah” in the manner prescribed by Moshe. Now I want to stop right here and I would like to think about this portion of scripture. *Acts 15:5* is a very significant verse. Why would Pharisee believers suggest the gentile believers need to perform a “b’rit milah” after having placed their faith in Yeshua and especially after hearing the gentiles had received the Holy Spirit? To understand why we need to look at some scripture prior to *Acts 15* which deals with ritual impurity (*Acts 11:11-18*).

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**Acts 11:11-15**

*11:11 'And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea. 11:12 'The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. 11:13 'And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; 11:14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' 11:15 'And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 11:16 'And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 11:17 'Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?' 11:18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'* (NASB)

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**Brit milah / בְּרִית מִילָה**

literally: "covenant [of] circumcision"), also berit milah (Sephardi), bris milah (Ashkenazi pronunciation) or bris (Yiddish) is a religious ceremony within Judaism to welcome infant Jewish boys into a covenant between God and the Children of Israel through ritual circumcision performed by a mohel ("circumciser"), on the eighth day after birth.

115 Pay particular attention to the response of those who heard the testimony of the Holy Spirit falling upon the gentile believers. In *Acts 11:18*, they quieted down and glorified G-d saying then G-d granted to the gentiles also the repentance that leads to life. Do you see the significance of this statement and how it is related to the later pharisaic claim that the believers need to perform a “brit milah?” If not start thinking about the mindset of the time, what were the people thinking when they quieted down and glorified G-d for this event? The mindset I am referring to is important and deals with ritual impurity.

120 After the destruction of the second temple the pharisaic sect was re-established as rabbinic Judaism and ultimately produced traditional Judaism today. For further insight into pharisaic understanding of ritual purity it is possible to do so by reading the Talmud. One can see the idea of ritual purity in table fellowship spoken by Rabbi Simeon in the Tosefta Avoda Zara. For brevity, we will not look into the Talmudic text. Essentially the Pharisaic mindset on ritual purity can be summarized by the following:

### Summary

130 According to the Torah all ritual uncleanness prevented you from entering into the presence of God. This is the basis for understanding the mindset behind Jewish understanding of the Gentiles in the early church. Gentiles are considered unclean because they do not keep the requirements for ritual purity and especially living a life that is governed by the Torah. The question is asked “can G-d come into any place that is unclean?” The answer is NO. Now, if G-d could not enter into a place which is unclean what about a person that is unclean? The mindset is G-d could not possibly enter into a person who was unclean because he cannot possibly be in an unholy place and presently that was reserved only for the Jewish men, women, and children, those who observed G-d’s holy ways according to the Torah of Moshe.

145 Understanding this mindset it becomes a little clearer why the believing Pharisees suggested the gentile believers needed to perform a “b’rit milah” in the manner prescribed by Moshe. These men from Judah are insisting the gentiles must become in every sense Jews and should be directed to observe the Torah of Moshe by which they mean both the Written and Oral Torah.

With this in mind let’s examine more of the text from Acts 15.

### *Acts 15:6-30*

150 *15:6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 15:7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 15:8 ‘And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 15:9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 15:10 ‘Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of*

160 *the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to*  
*bear? 15:11 'But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the*  
*Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.' 15:12 All the people kept*  
*silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating*  
*what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.*  
165 *15:13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying,*  
*'Brethren, listen to me. 15:14 'Simeon has related how God first*  
*concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His*  
*name. 15:15 'With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is*  
*written, 15:16 'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the*  
*tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I*  
170 *will restore it, 15:17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And*  
*all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' 15:18 Says the Lord, who*  
*makes these things known from long ago. 15:19 'Therefore it is my*  
*judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among*  
*the Gentiles, 15:20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things*  
175 *contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled*  
*and from blood. 15:21 'For Moses from ancient generations has in every*  
*city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every*  
*Sabbath.'*

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180 *15:28 'For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no*  
*greater burden than these essentials: 15:29 that you abstain from things*  
*sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from*  
*fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well.*  
*Farewell.' 15:30 So when they were sent away, they went down to*  
185 *Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered*  
*the letter. (NASB)*

The pharisaic claim that gentiles convert to Judaism and the teaching behind  
the requirement constitute a serious threat to the gospel message. If people are  
not born into the Jewish culture / society and are required to become Jews before  
G-d will recognize their faith in Him then logically far fewer gentiles would come  
to accept the gospel message. The whole issue is “can faith in G-d and His  
Messiah transcend Jewish culture?” In other words, can a gentile become a true  
accepted believer by G-d without also becoming a Jew? This is the mindset  
amongst the early believers and needs to be understood in order to understand  
why the apostles gave the four fold requirement in *Acts 15:20*. Also I want to  
make note of something, today isn't it interesting this mindset today has been  
turned around? The Main issue today has become precisely the opposite with the  
question “can a Jew become a follower of Yeshua the Messiah without becoming  
a Goy?”

200 Examining the rest of the text coming upon *Acts 15:10* it says “... A yoke ...  
which neither our fathers nor we have had the strength to bear ...” Much of the  
teaching today is one that I believe is erroneous on the idea that “yoke of the  
Law” and in contrast to Yeshua's words “My yoke is easy, and my burden is  
light” (*Matthew 11:30*) means the yoke of the Law is burdensome and harsh. The

205 mistake comes on two fronts; (i) ask any observant and knowledgeable Jew if  
they consider the Torah a burden or a joy. You will be informed it is a joy. When  
something is regarded as pleasant you won't be able to tell him or her it is  
unpleasant. (ii) There is a misunderstanding on the true meaning of "yoke" and  
210 what is being referred too here. The point is the concept of "yoke" does not imply  
an oppressive burden any more than when Yeshua said to accept his Yoke. What  
is being referred too here is of the detailed mechanical rule-keeping, regardless of  
heart attitude that some Pharisees, and including the ones mentioned in *Acts 15:5*  
believed to be the essence of Judaism. This is certainly not the yoke of the  
mitzvot (commandments) prescribed by G-d but a yoke of legalism prescribed by  
215 men! The yoke of legalism is unbearable, but the yoke of the mitzvot has always  
required first a heartfelt love for G-d (*Mark 12:28-24*) and for your neighbor. It  
also implies love toward Yeshua the Messiah. Love can never be legalistic. The  
Apostle Shaul (Paul) also spoke of the legalism as the yoke of slavery in  
*Galatians 5:1* and gives a detailed explanation of the subject in *Romans 1-11* and  
220 *Galatians 2:16*.

When the Jerusalem counsel is being discussed in *Acts 15*, classical  
interpretation suggests the decisions on the Gentile believers appeal to the  
Noachide Laws along with the decision gentile believers do not need to become  
225 proselytes in order to be saved. Having confirmed salvation by G-d's grace  
through faith in Yeshua, the Apostles required the Gentile believers to submit to  
four halakhah, listed in *Acts 15:28-30*, to abstain from (i) things sacrificed to  
idols, (ii) from blood, (iii) from things strangled and (iv) from fornication.  
Examining these four requirements it is interesting to note three appear to be food  
230 laws and the fourth is related to sexual purity of the body dealing with  
immorality. In order to explain these four requirements scholars have suggested  
these refer to the Noachide Laws and are taken from latter rabbinic materials, i.e.  
the Babylonian Talmud. That's right, whether you believe it or not, the so called  
seven Noachide laws are rabbinic and are defined in the Talmud. The question is  
235 when were these Noachide laws developed? The earliest clear reference to the  
Noachide Laws is found in the Tosefta. The Tosefta is a secondary compilation  
of the Oral Law from the period of the Mishnah, it was meant to preserve material  
that appeared to be marginal. For further study on this topic refer to the Tosefta  
Avodah Zarah. Tim Hegg with TorahResource.com wrote a short survey of the  
240 rabbinical literature on this issue of the Noachide Laws in an article titled "*Do the  
seven, Go to Heaven?*" I recommend this as supplementary material to this  
week's parsha for further study on the origins of the Noachide Laws which can be  
found at <http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/NoachideETS2.pdf>

245 The point is the decision of the Jerusalem Council on the basis of these four  
requirements which has been claimed as referring to the Noachide Laws is clearly  
an attribution of something to a period in which it does not belong, and a  
misunderstanding of the function of the Noachide Laws which are found in the  
post-destruction rabbinic literature. In the post-destruction period, the  
development of the Noachide Laws was not meant to be a set of laws for gentiles  
250 to attain a righteous status, and not even as a code of ethics for gentiles. The  
Jerusalem Council did not give the gentile believers a minimal list of

commandments exempting them from the full expression of faith in the Lord's Torah. The main points of these requirements were to ensure the gentile believers had completely removed themselves from the idolatry of pagan worship. If we survey the letters written by Shaul (Paul) this problem with idolatry of pagan worship and immorality is very apparent. (Shaul's (Paul's) letters to the Corinthians, Romans, etc the issue of immorality and pagan worship was certainly a problem.) I happen to believe these requirements were not a minimal list but a starting place for one to move further into ones expression of faith in the Torah after having already been saved in the blood of Yeshua the Messiah!

In this week's parsha we started with a discussion on creation and compromising the Word of G-d. I asked the question on whether there are any places in the bible which show compromise? I gave the example from *Acts 15* which has been classically interpreted as a form of compromise for the gentile believers when in fact this has been a misinterpretation of *Acts 15*. We have looked at the mindset on ritual purity, on the yoke of the Torah, and the post destruction rabbinical definition of the Noachide Laws. I want to emphasize the entire bible was written within a Jewish life style and within the Jewish culture. This leaves us with the difficult task of figuring out the Jewish context in the first century as we study the Ketuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings). Without the right context and understanding (and not understanding the rabbinic literature) one can make the text of the bible say almost anything one wants. That is exactly what has happened with *Acts 15*.

Our relationship with G-d begins with understanding how G-d wants us to relate to Him. The Torah ultimately points to Yeshua the Messiah, our relationship begins with our faith in Yeshua and his shed blood, the Torah then shows us how we are to relate to God and how not to relate to Him. We have a responsibility to understand the bible within its Jewish context. Today I believe the mercy of G-d is taken for granted leading one to complacency, smugness, self-satisfaction, and even accepting Yeshua in our heads but never truly accepting the gift of salvation in Yeshua the Messiah in the heart where our lives are changed and we live out our faith for the Lord. Take time today to carefully consider your walk before the Lord; is it one that demonstrates compromise or a love?

Heavenly Father,

I don't want to look like a copy of a true believer; I want to be a real authentic believer. If I have committed the sin of complacency and compromise over accepting your Holy Word please forgive me. I have substituted head knowledge over relying upon and believing in your Word. Today I truly and unconditionally believe your Word that Yeshua died for my sins. I receive you into my heart and be Lord of my life. Please help me and create in me a new heart. Help me to live according to your will and purpose so that I can be a blessing to others and to you Lord.

In Yeshua's Name I pray. Amen!

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**Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!**

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever

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