

'James the Just': Re-evaluating his legacy

There is considerable historical information about 'James the Just'¹, the brother of Yeshua and about his role in the first decades of the 'Christian church', the first believers in Yeshua as the Messiah. While there are some questions over the accuracy of some of this historical evidence from early Christian writers such as Hegesippus (via Eusebius), Clement of Alexandria, and Epiphanius, as well as from Josephus, there is still considerable details that we can be fairly confident in.

A very brief historical outline is presented in the appendix. This outline should at least establish that James (here-after I will refer to him mainly by his Hebrew name Ya'acov, was a most righteous and holy man of prayer who spent much time at the Temple in Jerusalem, and who may even have exercised the role of High Priest sometime during Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) in the period from 32 – 62 CE. He was also clearly a significant leader amongst the followers of Yeshua.

The Book of James:

The Book of James seems to be generally ignored by most Christian commentators and students of the New Testament, or at least, not given the primacy of authority that it arguably should have within the New Testament Canon.

This is strange given that there is much evidence that this was chronologically the first book written of all the books in the New Testament² and given that Ya'acov was most likely the legitimate author of this book or epistle (letter), and also the head of the church during the period from shortly after the ascension of Yeshua until the untimely death of James, most likely in 62 CE.

Based on both historical and contextual evidence there is a high probability that the Book of James was written sometime between 37 CE (after the stoning of Stephen) and prior to the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), which most likely occurred around 45-49 CE.

Most NT Biblical scholars argue that the first epistle of the Apostle Paul was Galatians and that it was written around 49 CE.

It is also intriguing to reflect on why Ya'acov became the head of the 'Church' (after the ascension of Yeshua) and not one of the 12 Apostles such as Peter (Kepha).

If the original 12 Disciples of Yeshua were foretold to one day be the 12 Judges of Israel, why was Ya'acov made the first head of the community of followers of Yeshua? Given the mandate that the Twelve were to go out to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God and the resurrection of the Messiah, perhaps his role may have been to remain in Jerusalem to support them all from there.

It is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul mentions that the resurrected Yeshua appeared to James/Ya'acov: *"For among the first things I passed on to you was what I also received, namely this: the Messiah died for our sins, in accordance with what the Tanakh says; and he was buried; and he was raised on the third day, in accordance with what the Tanakh says; and he was seen by Kefa, then by the Twelve; and afterwards he was seen by more than five hundred brothers at one time, the majority of whom are still alive, though some have died.*

7 Later he was seen by Ya'acov, then by all the emissaries;
and last of all he was seen by me, even though I was born at the wrong time. For I am the least of all the emissaries, unfit to be called an emissary, because I persecuted the Messianic Community of God." - 1 Corinthians 15: 3-9

As a brother of Yeshua, it would I think be fair to expect that Yeshua's example and teaching would have had a huge impact on Ya'acov. While he and the rest of Yeshua's siblings appear not to have accepted his Messianic claims prior to the Resurrection (see for example, John 7:5), it seems likely that meeting with the resurrected Yeshua had a huge impact on Ya'acov.

¹ or in Hebrew, Ya'acov or Yaakov HaTzadik - יעקב הצדיק – transliterated to Jacob (the Righteous) and then to James!

² *"It still seems possible, with Mayor and Robertson, to hold to an early date, even the earliest of any NT book. Indeed, the epistle reflects no knowledge of the existence of Gentile Christians. There is no whisper of the controversy relating to the council at Jerusalem. James was early in power (Acts 12:17). No man in the apostolic circle at this period had the ear of the Jewish Christians as did James. One does not have to wait many decades to find need for strong ethical preaching ...The extreme "Jewishness" of writer and reader in every way tends to confirm the probability of an early date—perhaps a.d. 45-48."*

- from <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/epistle-james> and referring to the works of J. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (1913), and A. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James* (1959)

Now that he was convinced of the full truth of Yeshua's claims, who better than one of his brothers who knew him so intimately to now lead the community of his followers to ensure that they maintained a path that was faithful to Yeshua's vision.

If we then accept that

- Ya'acov was most likely Yeshua's brother³;
 - that he was the head of the community of believers based in Jerusalem;
 - and that his book or epistle was the first letter written to the community of believers in Yeshua scattered through out the world;
- then his message should take on greater meaning and significance.

Given that it also appears to have been written before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, we can appreciate that the message shared by Ya'acov is intended to be for the Jewish portion of the 'community of believers' only (there being no Gentile 'portion' anyway in these first years before 45-49 CE).

We might also expect this letter to contain any important new doctrinal revelations that may have been introduced to the religion of Israel with the live, death and resurrection of Yeshua.

Let us begin by looking at the major features and issues presented by this letter. Three principal features are:

- 1) the comparative lack of distinctive Christian doctrine, or depending on your perspective on what qualifies for 'Christian' doctrine, the seemingly total lack of any Hellenistic Christian doctrines;
- 2) it is a very practical letter which is so consistent with the Jewish maxim 'deeds matter more than creeds'; and
- 3) it is clearly very Jewish in its background, focus and emphasis.

This may in part, explain why Martin Luther was so unimpressed with this letter. Luther noted that Ya'acov/James mentions the Messiah only a few times but he does not teach anything about him, or the amazing events of the Resurrection, and he appears to instead teach only about a general faith in YHVH and only to the Jewish people, and not to Gentiles. Martin Luther is then quoted as stating that this Epistle of James is: *"a right strawy epistle in comparison with the writings of Paul, Peter and John."*⁴

Some scholars have argued though that this letter introduced more of the words of Yeshua, than all the other NT letters put together.

Ya'acov also appears to be addressing both 'believing' (in Yeshua as the Messiah) and non-believing Jews, and he certainly does not seem to be aware of the more distinctive teachings (or at least interpretations of the teachings) of the Apostle Paul (Sha'ul). There is certainly no discussion of how Gentiles are to be included in the commonwealth of Israel, and in the family of Abraham and so there is no discussion of the rites of Judaism, and thus there is also no recognition or acknowledgement, of either the Jerusalem Council's decision or of the pivotal 'works of the law' teaching of the Torah observant Sha'ul.

Clearly Ya'acov should be seen as a 'moralist', rather than a theologian in any normal sense. His whole emphasis is on the living expression of faith in YHVH, rather than any argument for doctrinal perspectives and understandings. For example, he does not in any way even mention baptism or the Christian doctrine of the 'Lord's Supper or 'communion'.

In chapter 2:1; Ya'acov addresses his readers as those having the 'faith of Yeshua' (see the Greek Stephanus translation of 1550) rather than 'faith in'. This is certainly consistent with Sha'ul's use of this phrase, 'faith of Yeshua' in Romans 3:22 where he equates it to the 'faith of Avraham' (Romans 4:16)⁵.

The very Jewish nature and focus of this letter is seen:

- from the first verse where Ya'acov states that he is addressing the 12 Tribes of Israel in the Diaspora;
- the emphasis of Torah observance (quoting both Leviticus 19:16-18 in verse 2:8, which is a summary of the Ten Words, as well as specifically addressing them in such places as verses 2:9-12);
- the reference to Avraham as 'our ancestor' (2:21);
- the reference to the Sh'ma in 2:19;

³ Some, mainly Catholic theologians, argue against this as they believe for theological reasons, that Yeshua's mother, Miriam (Mary) had no other children.

⁴ <http://www.biblicalstudies.com/bstudy/expostudy/james.htm>

⁵ See <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/The%20Faith%20of%20Jesus.pdf>

- and in the reference to ‘anointing with oil’ (5:14-15) which is not found in any other NT letter.

There is also an interesting parallel with Yeshua, in that the very sins and weaknesses that Ya’acov speaks out against, are the very ones that Yeshua was strong in condemning amongst his fellow Israelites, especially the Pharisees.

For example, Ya’acov speaks out against:

- a superficial hearing of God’s Word;
- pious speech on what the Jewish people should believe, but little practice of the same;
- the error of being dogmatic about both the Written and Oral Torah, yet not fully understanding proper practice – for example, the healing of a man on the Sabbath⁶;
- a failure to fulfill the most foundational requirements of Torah, while at the same time getting pedantic about the more minor requirements (the narrative in Matthew 23 is a great example of this where Yeshua finishes (see v23) his condemnation with a reference to the great Micah 6:8 passage. See James 1:26 for just one example of how Ya’acov addresses this;
- the pursuing of wealth which leads to divided loyalties between riches and YHVH;
- the futility of the exercise of prayer without faith in God;
- the slandering and cursing of their neighbours, and;
- the taking of oaths too lightly (perhaps indicative of a lack of commitment to the path of holiness).

Also, it is interesting to note that unlike all the other NT letters that are clearly addressed to Gentiles, there is no mention of idolatry or even sexual immorality. Similarly, we see no need to defend the observance of the Sabbath and other holy days, etc.

In fact, in his *‘An Introduction to the NT’* (1891), M Dods went so far as to write “the epistle is Jewish in every line”.

There appear to be some parallel’s in this letter to the writings of the Prophets in the Tanakh, to the degree that some theologians have called Ya’acov the ‘Amos of the New Testament’.

This letter is not part of the 2nd century CE ‘Old Latin Version’ and ‘Muratorian Fragment’. From only the 3rd century does it appear in Greek version, then in Latin and finally in Syrian translations of the NT (see JH Ropes in ICC’s ‘St James’ 1916). This apparent early ignorance of this letter of Ya’acov may be explained by the fact that it was written very early to the Jewish ‘believers’ throughout the Diaspora, and not originally seen as at all relevant to the Hellenistic Church after its separation from its Jewish roots in the years between 80 – 130 CE approximately.

A counter argument to the contention that this letter is very Hebraic and ‘Judaic’ in it’s content and message is that many scholars consider the earliest extant versions to be very good Greek. While the Galilee where Yeshua and Ya’acov grew up had many Greek towns and communities in close proximity, the latest archaeological evidence is that the ‘lingua franca’ of Yeshua and his brothers and disciples was Hebrew, followed by Aramaic. Greek was still of course quite common and many Hellenistic Jews also joined the community of believers, so it is possible that one of these Hellenistic Jews who was a very good Greek speaker and writer may have acted as a scribe, co-editor or translator for Ya’acov.

It seems likely, for reasons that I detail in my *‘The New Testament: The Hebrew Behind the Greek’*⁷ that Ya’acov first wrote this letter in Hebrew to be hand delivered to various synagogues throughout the Diaspora and would most likely have first been read in their Sabbath services, which were almost certainly presented mostly in Hebrew.

Some have also argued that the opening address to the ‘twelve tribes of the Diaspora’ refers to followers of Yeshua, both Jew and Gentile. In refuting this argument, FJA Hort writes in his ‘The Epistle of James’ (1909): *“But this comes in very strangely at the head of a letter with no indication of a spiritual sense”*.

⁶ Luke 13:14 “but the President of the synagogue, indignant that Yeshua had healed on Shabbat, spoke up and said to the congregation, “there are six days in the week for working; so come during those days to be healed, not on Shabbat!” Yeshua was falsely accused. He is both condoning a practice that had developed (Oral Torah), and expanding it in an intriguing way. The practice had been developed that if a boy’s 8th day from birth was the Sabbath, the person (a ‘mohel’) performing the circumcision was allowed to break the Sabbath by carrying the tools required through the village and performing the ritual. It was considered that when this conflict between the requirements of observing the Sabbath and of circumcising a male child on the 8th day were in conflict the circumcision took precedence. If however the child was ill on his 8th day since birth (which say was the Wednesday) and he was not well until the Saturday, the Sabbath, the ruling was that now, the Sabbath took precedence and so the circumcision would not be performed until a later day. Yeshua by his comments appears to condone this approach to the potential conflict between these mitzvot (commandments). However, Yeshua also argues that, given this ruling, why should he be condemned for healing the whole man on the Sabbath. The clear understanding being that circumcision was a form of healing (not only a token, or marker but a positive commandment), perhaps primarily because it was a mark of entry into the family/tribe of Israel.

⁷ <http://www.amazon.com/The-New-Testament-Hebrew-Behind-ebook/dp/B009X00NQU/>

Another interesting and from my perspective at least, important question is whether this letter is addressed to only 'believing' Jews or all Jews in the Diaspora (if you accept that it is not addressed to both Jewish and Gentile 'Christians' as already discussed).

His opening statement makes no differentiation as to whether he is addressing all Jews or only those who share his belief that Yeshua is the 'glorious' Messiah⁸.

In the following passages it appears Ya'acov is speaking specifically to 'believers':

2:1 *"My brothers, don't hold the faith of our Messiah Yeshua of glory with partiality."*

2:7 *"Don't they blaspheme the honorable name by which you are called?"*

5:7-8 *"Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receives the early and late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."*

5:14 *"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord,"*

Alternatively, when we consider chapter 4:1-4, we would hope at least that he is speaking generally to all Jewish people, rather than just to the 'enlightened believers':

"Where do wars and fightings among you come from? Don't they come from your pleasures that war in your members? You lust, and don't have. You kill, covet, and can't obtain. You fight and make war. You don't have, because you don't ask. You ask, and don't receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it for your pleasures. You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Also in chapter 5:1-6 he predicts the judgment of those whom he appears to be addressing and then in verses 7-10 contrasts them with the 'believers' in Yeshua:

"1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming on you.

2 Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and your silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be for a testimony against you, and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up your treasure in the last days.

4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you have kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of those who reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Armies.

5 You have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure. You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned, you have murdered the righteous one. He doesn't resist you.

7 Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receives the early and late rain.

8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

9 Don't grumble, brothers, against one another, so that you won't be judged. Behold, the judge stands at the door.

10 Take, brothers, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord."

Given that this letter was composed at a time when only Jews were part of the 'believing community' of followers of Yeshua, and that these Jews still met every Sabbath in their local synagogues, along with their fellow 'unbelieving' Jews, it seems reasonable to assume that the letter would be read out in the synagogue and therefore while primarily sent to, and addressing his 'brothers' in this 'community of faith'. I believe that the letter was also written cognizant of the fact that the rest of the Jewish community would most likely hear it read out, or in turn get to read it and thus, may be impacted by the import of the message.

This approach is not at all dissimilar to the Sermon on the Mount which, in the first instance addresses the followers of Yeshua (Matt 5:1-2) and later on is clearly addressing all of Israel (Matt 7:28-29 *"It happened, when Yeshua had finished saying these things, that the multitudes were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them with authority, and not like the scribes."*).

Now, I wish to very briefly comment on a few of the more notable aspects of this letter and then suggest where I see this letter of Ya'acov in the whole revelation of the NT.

⁸ *"My brothers, practice the faith of our Lord Yeshua, the glorious Messiah, without showing favoritism."* – James 2:1 (CJB)

The Ethics of Ya'acov:

This is a book of ethics. Just as a number of Jewish scholars, such as Joseph Klausner⁹ of Hebrew University in Jerusalem (1874-1958), have recognized that Yeshua was a great ethical teacher, the same emphasis on ethics is seen in this short Book of James/Ya'acov.

It starts with a message of encouragement to those facing temptations/trials. Part of the answer from Ya'acov to such challenges is to call his readers to heed the Torah because it brings freedom!

*"But if a person looks closely into the **perfect Torah, which gives freedom**, and continues, becoming not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work it requires, then he will be blessed in what he does."* James 1:25¹⁰

With the Exodus, the Jewish people were freed from physical slavery in order to voluntarily place themselves under the restrictions of moral integrity. As Rabbi Benjamin Blech states in *'Freedom without limits'*: *"Freedom without any restraints may very well be just as destructive as slavery. "No one can ever tell me what to do" – an idea not limited by ethical constraints – is potentially just as much a threat to the social order as slave masters..."*

It is also interesting, as alluded to earlier, that there is no doctrinal teaching regarding the Crucifixion and Resurrection, or that even seems to allude to it. For example, in James 1:12 he writes *"How blessed is the man who perseveres through temptation! For after he has passed the test, he will receive as his crown the Life which God has promised to those who love him."* We see here that obedience and perseverance in obedience brings the 'Crown of Life' not some intellectual ascent to the Resurrection as is the understanding and interpretation of many based on Romans 10:9¹¹.

Ya'acov's call in v1:22 *"Don't deceive yourselves by only hearing what the Word says, but do it!"* is strongly reminiscent of much of what Yeshua declared in terms of obedience to the divine instructions (Torah) of the Almighty. For example, in Matt 12:50 we read: *"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

In chapter 2:13, Ya'acov having just stressed the need to be obedient to all 10 of the Ten Words, then makes the powerful call to his Jewish brethren to both speak and act with this appreciation of the Ten Words, while recognizing that ultimately while the Almighty will judge us in terms of our obedience to Torah, His mercy will temper and even triumph over His judgment so that we need have no anxiety with respect to our, at times, imperfect obedience to the perfect Torah of freedom: *"So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the Torah of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."* James 2:12-13

In this statement I believe we can also hear the echo of Micah 6:8: *"He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does YHVH require of you, but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

This is even further accentuated when Ya'acov goes on to write:

"18 But someone will say that you have faith and I have actions. Show me this faith of yours without the actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions!

19 You believe that "God is one"? Good for you! The demons believe it too – the thought makes them shudder with fear!" – James 2:18-19

Notice that Ya'acov is extremely emphatic that 'faith' or belief without 'works' or 'actions' is no faith at all. As he confirms, even the demons have faith or believe that YHVH is One, that there is no God beside Him, but such faith of demons will not save them because they are not exercising such knowledge of the One True God.

Ya'acov is so strong on the need to act according to our faith in YHVH that he gives the analogy that just as a person dies when their 'spirit' (the breath of God, or that which animates them) leaves them, so to, faith that is not exhibited through living obedience is really dead or non-existent.

⁹ Klausner argues that Yeshua was best understood as a Jew who was trying to reform the religion, and that he died as a devout Jew. He writes: *"But Jesus is, for the Jewish nation, a great teacher of morality and an artist in parable. He is the moralist for whom, in the religious life, morality counts as – everything. ... in his ethical code there is a sublimity, distinctiveness and originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical code; neither is there any parallel to the remarkable art of his parables. The shrewdness and sharpness of his proverbs and his forceful epigrams serve, in an exceptional degree, to make ethical ideas a popular possession. If ever the day should come and this ethical code by stripped of its wrappings of miracles and mysticism, the Book of the Ethics of Jesus will be one of the choicest treasures in the literature of Israel for all time."* - Klausner, Joseph "Jesus of Nazareth; His Life, Times, and Teaching" (1925) p 413-414

¹⁰ See my article *'Freedom and the Law'* - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/Freedom%20and%20the%20Law.pdf>

¹¹ See *'Romans 10: Toward the Autograph'* for a discussion on v10:9 - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Romans%2010%20-%20Toward%20the%20autograph.pdf>

"Indeed, just as the body without a spirit is dead, so too faith without actions is dead." – James 2:26

I think this statement alone, if taken seriously should bring terror to the hearts of most in mainstream, Hellenistic Christendom, which in my experience are very anti-nomian¹².

Further confirmation, though not needed, is then seen in v22 where Ya'acov clarifies that 'works' or actions (i.e. obedience) 'completes' faith:

"22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;

23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness—and he was called a friend of God.

24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." - James 2:22-24 (ESV)

And here is where serious problems have arisen as the 'Christian' community has put more emphasis on the writings of the Apostle Paul (Sha'ul), and then misinterpreted Sha'ul's letters to say that we are NOT 'justified by works'. This despite the fact that in Romans 2:13, Sha'ul has echoed the sentiments of Ya'acov is stating: *"For it is not the hearers of the Torah who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Torah who will be justified."*

This introduces what I believe is one of the foundational errors that Christianity makes today in trying to understand Sha'ul. Despite Romans 2:13, they go on to read such passages as Romans 3:20; Romans 4:2 & Galatians 3:11¹³ and interpret these passages as stating that 'a person is (NOT) justified by works', in total contradiction to James 2:24.

I address this in some detail in the appendix to my book *'Defending the Apostle Paul: Weighing the Evidence'* which is accessible from my Circumcised Heart website [here](#) as well¹⁴.

Finally, I also love the humble and gracious manner in which Yaacov explains that a life of obedience to Torah, being a life of true freedom, is then also, by implication, a life that exhibits a pure and peaceful attitude towards others, so that it can be seen that the faithful servant of YHVH is truly 'loving his neighbor as himself'.

"Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him demonstrate it by his good way of life, by actions done in the humility that grows out of wisdom." – James 3:13

"But the wisdom from above is, first of all, pure, then peaceful" James 3:17

Conclusion:

This letter from the leader of 'The Way', the believers in Yeshua as the Messiah, for the first 3 decades, should, after the very words of Yeshua himself, stand in pride of place within the New Testament Canon. Given how similar both the ethical message of Ya'acov is to that of his brother Yeshua, as well as the exemplary example they both set, it should be clear why Ya'acov was the leader of the believers after the ascension of Yeshua.

In some ways though, it seems that it is only a miracle, that the Letter of James is even part of the New Testament at all, having been 'lost' from the Canon for some time (though apparently still being read in some of the churches), and then only 'restored' with Origen around 200 CE. Given the great schism that occurred between the 'Christian Church' and its Jewish foundations in the years from around 80 – 130 CE, it seems more surprising that the Letter of James ever found its way back into acceptance, given its very pro-Torah emphasis.

If we only had the Tanakh, the Synoptic Gospels, and the Book of James, I would think most serious, committed and deep-thinking Gentile 'believers' would recognize a need to convert to Judaism to be part of the faith of Yeshua and the Jewish people and to fully worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I would even suggest that at the time he wrote this letter, Ya'acov would have also supported such Gentile conversion (in general agreement with the great Rabbi's Hillel and Shammai).

¹² Anti-nomian: Someone "who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation" - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinomianism>

¹³ Romans 3:20 "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

Rom 4:2 "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God."

Gal 3:11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for The righteous shall live by faith. – all ESV translations

¹⁴ In the appendix I explain that these references to 'works of the law' (sometimes erroneously shortened to just 'works') are references to the 'rites of Jewish proselytization' or Jewish 'conversion'. Such a dramatically different understanding of 'works (of the law)' significantly changes the message of the Apostle Paul and removes many of the apparent contradictions in his letters.

In fact, increasingly today, many are taking this very path as they are convinced that the writings of the Apostle Paul are seriously flawed and 'anti-nomian' (anti-Torah).

However!

If we also accept:

- the authorship, timing and chronology of the Letter of James;
- the authenticity of the events at Cornelius' House;
- the following edicts of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), as proclaimed by Ya'acov the Righteous himself;
- and then, we also acknowledge the logical necessity that '*works of the law*' must refer to the Jewish rites of proselytization;

we can arrive at a very reasonable and believable scenario, which removes all the apparent contradictions and conflicts, and introduces the true and astonishingly glorious revelation of how the life of Yeshua has really presented the God of Israel, not just to the people of Israel, but to all of the Gentile world as well.

This revelation is that Torah is Spiritual; the Torah is freedom; and that the Jewish people are indeed called to obey the Torah, Writings and the Prophets (the Tanakh). They should also rejoice as Sha'ul and Ya'acov did, in the knowledge that their glorious Messiah is Yeshua and that he is coming again (James 5:7-8).

Add to this revelation of Yeshua and his brother Ya'acov, and their call to obey Torah, the revelation given to Sha'ul that Gentiles can remain Gentiles and still join the 'family of Abraham', and have full and equal membership.

For Gentiles this also involves being obedient to Torah, specifically the Ten Words and the Noahide Laws as enumerated in Acts 15, but the circumcision (the sign of membership) for Gentiles is the 'circumcision' of the Messiah (Colossians 2:11).

For some further details on how this all works please see my article ['The Tripartite Salvation Paradigm'](#) at circumcisedheart.info

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Appendix:

An Historical Outline:

Eusebius, *quoting from the Memoirs of Hegesippus* (circa 110 -180 CE), and translated below:

"James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James.

He was holy from his mother's womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath. He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woollen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people.

Because of his exceeding great justice he was called the Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek, 'Bulwark of the people' and 'Justice,' in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him.

- from Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book II, xxiii –see <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.vii.xxiv.html>

It seems that Eusebius' quoting is a little suspect, or the original 'Memoirs' may have been 'legendary' or fable to some degree as some of the details do not match what is now well known about the customs of Second Temple Judaism during the first century.

Some other historical quotes that I have not tried to verify, but which appear to be reasonably consistent in the picture they paint of James (Ya'acov) are:

Gospel of Thomas

"We know that you will go away from us. Who will be great over us? Jesus says to them, "In the place to which you have gone (Jerusalem), you will go to Jacob the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth were created."

(Gospel of Thomas, Saying eight)

Eusebius

"Peter, and Jacob and John did not contend for the honor because they had previously been favored by the Savior, but chose James the Just as Bishop of Jerusalem." (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History II, 1)

"After the resurrection of the Lord imparted the higher knowledge (gnosis) to James the Just, John, and Peter. They gave it to the other apostles, and the other apostles to the Seventy, one of whom was Barnabus. Now there were two Jameses: one, James the Just, who was thrown down from the Parapet (of the temple) and beaten to death with a fuller's club; the other, the James who was beheaded."

*... And indeed, on account of **his exceeding great piety**, he was called the Just (i.e. Tzaddik) and Oblias (i.e. Ophla-am), which signifies Justice and the People's Bulwark; as the Prophets declare concerning him.* (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, II, 1)

Epiphanius

"We find that he (Jacob the Just) was of David's race, being the son of Joseph, and that he was a Nazarene (or Nazorite?) as Joseph's first born son, and thereafter dedicated..." (Epiphanius, Panarion, Lixivia, cited by Hugh Schonfield¹⁵)

Clements of Rome

"Jacob (James) was called 'the supreme Supervisor, who rules Jerusalem, the holy Community of the Hebrews, and the communities everywhere excellently founded by the providence of God' and was called or addressed as 'Lord Jacob'". (Epistle of Clement to Jacob, preceding the Clementine Homilies., also quoted by Schonfield)

Jerome

Discussing the reference that the Jewish people had for him, Jerome writes that people *"... would crowd around him and strive to touch the hem of his garment."* - his 'tzitzit' (Jerome, Commentary on Galatians.)

Josephus

*"He (James the Just) was surnamed the Just because **of both his piety towards God and his benevolence to his countrymen.**"* (Josephus, Antiquities, Xii.43). Josephus also informs us that the high priest, Ananus, who instigated the plot against James, was stripped of his office by King Agrippa for his crime against James. This also illustrates the significant esteem that James (Ya'acov) had within the Land of Israel.

¹⁵ <http://www.biblesearchers.com/hebrewchurch/primitive/primitive11.shtml>