

## A Sketch of Paul

Paul introduced in conjunction with Stephen (Acts 6-7)

Stephen's address to leaders in Jerusalem:

Main point is their obdurate and multi-generational disobedience

No hint of them trying too hard to work for salvation

Response was to execute Stephen. Paul in agreement.

Likely the sect was causing great dissension:

*(Ac 6:7)*

*7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.*

Dissension around Stephen was in the synagogues (of Freedmen, made up of Diaspora Jews)

The movement was fast becoming a major threat in the synagogues not only in Jerusalem but was spreading out into into the Diaspora

Acts 8: Paul sent to Damascus by High Priest to remove believers from Diaspora synagogues. (timing perhaps 32)

This is good evidence that the Messianics were throughout the synagogues into the Diaspora within a few years of the resurrection. (Timing often placed around 33).

## Paul's Early Years

Paul's Commission from Yeshua:

(Ac 9:15)

*15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the **Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel**;*

Details: Paul not shown from The L-rd, but had to learn his role from believers.

Hananiah: Described as a very observant Jew (22:12). Not a former Jew. This fits a pattern, G-d works through His people first and foremost.

After Encounter with Yeshua Paul travels to Damascus

Preaches in synagogues in Damascus. Stayed for quite some time (after many days, 9:23)

Leaves for Arabia for three years apparently studying

Returned to Jerusalem, associated with believers in Jerusalem.

Barnabas rescues Paul, and they have much interaction with Diaspora Jews living there

Paul returns to Tarsus. Stays there 3 years. Barnabas fetches him from Tarsus to Antioch. They stay there a year. The moniker Christian is first used there..

In all these places Paul is in the Jewish community.

## Antioch

Capital of Syria. Founded by Seleucus 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE

First inhabitants Jewish mercenaries (or conscripts?) from the army.

Very large Jewish community. Influential into 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

(Chrysostom wrote against and about them) Gained citizenship rights from Seleucus.

Jews throughout the city. Several distinct communities.

Daphne, a wealthy suburb (rich Jews)

Poorer Jews lived north of Antioch and grew rice.

Close ties between Israel and Antioch Jewish communities. Much travel and communication between the two communities

In 4<sup>th</sup> century, when Christianity was prominent Antioch Jewish community had much influence.

Antioch was not a “Hellenized” Greek, and assimilated Jewish community, rather it was considered a center of Jewish life, closely allied with Jerusalem.

A rabbinical court existed in Antioch and the religious Jewish community was considered “frum” They observed kashrut, and had mikvaot (baptismals) throughout the community.

Historical writings indicate that Jews and Gentiles mixed quite thoroughly in the Jewish community of Antioch.

## Paul's First Travels

### Acts 13 - 14

Traveled with Barnabas to Jerusalem with relief supplies possibly a famine? Around 44?

Journeyed with Barnabas and John Mark. To Cyprus, Perga, then Antioch (Pisidia in Turkey), Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, then returned the same way to Antioch in Syria.

Each of these communities had significant Jewish populations, even Lystra.

Cyprus, Paphos, most the people mentioned were Jewish, even a Jewish false prophet!

Antioch Pisidia. Paul in synagogue.

Second week, nearly whole city, both Jews and Gentiles (proselytes and G-d-fearers) heard him.

Much dissension from jealous Jews.

Famous statement here. Turning to the Gentiles. Those Gentiles were part of the synagogue at that place! This is often used to justify an exclusively non-Jewish outreach by Paul. The text provides a very different picture.

Iconium. In the synagogue

Lystra 21 miles from Iconium. Timothy from there, grew up in Jewish tradition in a partly Jewish family. Synagogue not mentioned but there was a Jewish presence there. The encounter with pagans here was not sought out, but was a response to a healing.

## The Jerusalem Council

### Acts 15

Major issue is one of how the Gentiles can be a part of the community. Do they have to become Jews? That was the big question.

The answer was clearly no.

The incoming Gentiles were foreseen by Amos and this is in accord with Torah Amos 9:11-12. Peter makes this clear that G-d had originally planned the Gentiles to take part in the Kingdom.

Yet, they were not to be forced to take upon themselves the Mosaic constraints of Israel. The so-called boundary markers. Gentiles were not to be forced to convert, but were expected to become a part of the Jewish community.

The four constraints dealt with communal issues. Jerusalem saw a single community where the Gentiles were a part of the Jewish community, not the other way around.

Paul and Barnabas, and Judah and Silas were to be sent to Antioch and surroundings with this message. This set the stage for Paul's second journey. To deliver the message of the Jerusalem council. (Acts 15:25 - 30).

## Paul's Second Journey Acts 15 - 18

Task was to bring letters from Jerusalem concerning the Gentiles participation in the synagogue.

Paul parts from Barnabas and John Mark.

Barnabas goes to Cyprus to revisit the congregations from the first journey

Paul and Silas go to Asia Minor then on to Greece.

Syria, Cilicia, then Beroea, Lystra where Timothy, whose mother was Jewish and a believer lived. Timothy went with him and Silas.

They were delivering the letters and decrees from Jerusalem (Acts 15) This was a message for Jewish communities to incorporate Gentiles, Not to Gentile Churches with no more Jewish contacts. (Acts 16:4)

Phrygia and Galatia were next. Not allowed to go to Asia.

Mysia, to Troas.

Philippi, Worshipped on the Sabbath. (16:13) Met a woman, Lydia a G-d Fearer at the river.

They were jailed for ruining a female slave who was a diviner (by casting out the spirit).

Went to Thessalonica. Another synagogue, another message to Gentiles and leading women of the city. From there to Berea, and then to Athens

Athens: In the synagogue (17:17) both Jews and Gentiles also in marketplace  
Invited to the Aeropagus. Message is about knowing the true G-d.

## Athens and Corinth

Athens: Much made of Paul using a different approach. Often used to justify friendliness to pagan forms of worship in order to attract pagans.

But this is why he was invited:

*(Ac 17:16-17)*

*16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.*

*17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.*

Paul was not happy about all the idols, and was speaking to the congregations. On the hill he spoke essentially against idol worship and encouraged them to know the true G-d.

Corinth. Met Jews from Rome, and joined an existing synagogue. Lived there two years

His activity:

*(Ac 18:4)*

*4 And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*

When he was removed from the synagogue he moved in with a G-d fearer who lived next to the synagogue. Crispus though was a believer and leader of the synagogue.

After 18 months Jewish leaders complained he was teaching Jews contrary to law. (18:12)