



A Jewish Stumbling Block

What about the FIRST Jerusalem Council?

Sure-fire way to get a blank look?

Mention the first Jerusalem Council. The title from Acts 15 is “The Council at Jerusalem” but it’s not a frequently-discussed topic today because the Council resolved everything . . . or did it?

Shaul (Paul) was a Pharisee who came to faith in Yeshua. This meeting in Jerusalem found him debating other Pharisees who were also believers in Yeshua (Acts 15:5). (That’s right, Nicodemus wasn’t the only one.) They’re debating what Gentiles needed to do in order to be accepted as followers of the Jewish G-d and His Messiah Yeshua. Kephas (Peter) put up a good argument about why Gentiles don’t have to become Jews and observe the full laws of Moses. And Ya’agov (James) bottom-lined it,

“ . . we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”

This decision by the Jewish disciples resolved serious issues regarding the Gentiles. The Jewish disciples decided to open wide the gates and let the Gentiles in. Gentiles who accepted the Jewish G-d and His Messiah only had to abstain from: food polluted by idols, sexual immorality, the meat of strangled animals and from blood. That provided standards of decency, and no awkwardness at the weekly Jewish/Gentile close of Shabbat meal when someone brought steak tartare!

But the unresolved part never occurred to anyone! Who could possibly anticipate that one day Gentile Christians would require Jews who believed in their own G-d and His Messiah to give up being Jews – in essence to become Gentiles! Yet this happened over and over throughout history, and continues today in some denominations.

Hence the need for a second Jerusalem Council, wherein the church welcomes the Jews back to their Messiah without requiring them to give up the holy days that G-d established for them, or their cultural practices.

Enough with the stumbling blocks already!