

Galatians 2:11-14

“Paul Confronts Peter in Antioch”

“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’”

Paul’s letter to the Galatians is easily recognized to be the most difficult book of the Bible for generally all people within today’s Messianic movement.¹ Understandably, those aspects of Galatians where the Torah or Law of Moses, or issues like circumcision and proselytism, are directly addressed, receive more attention than other parts of the letter. The incident that took place between the Apostles Peter and Paul in Antioch, seen in Galatians 2:11-14, certainly does feature in a great deal of Christian discussion over why the Torah’s dietary code has apparently been abolished for the post-resurrection era. Galatians 2:11-14 can often be referenced in terms of *kashrut* needing to be abolished in order for table fellowship to be restored between the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers. Yet as one will be able to see, whether the actual issue that caused the schism was the fare served at fellowship meal gatherings, can be disputed.

Just surveying Galatians 2:11-14, it is easily recognized that an outside group entered in among the Messiah followers in Antioch, they interjected some kind of instability, divisions between the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers were taking place, and Peter was publicly confronted by Paul for being in error. There are Galatians interpreters who will posit the composition of Paul’s letter *after* the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, and who feel that the Apostle Peter was violating what was agreed upon for the inclusion of the non-Jewish Believers (Acts 15:20, 29). Other interpreters (including this writer) posit the composition of Galatians *before* the Jerusalem Council, and that it was only with the conference being convened, that a uniform agreement was in place regarding the non-Jews entering into the *ekklēsia*.²

A **common interpretation** of Galatians 2:11-14, as is seen among many examiners, is that prior to the arrival of the outsiders from Jerusalem, the Apostle Peter would eat with the non-Jewish Believers, and as such would eat non-kosher meat. Upon their arrival, he was errantly influenced, started eating kosher again, and in order for fellowship to be restored, the non-Jews in Antioch would have to start eating kosher themselves. An **alternative interpretation** of Galatians 2:11-14, as is detected among various other examiners, posits that due to the already high integration of non-Jews as God-fearers in the synagogues of Antioch, that a fair number of the non-Jewish Believers probably

¹ This section has been adapted and expanded from the commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic* (2007/2012) by J.K. McKee.

² For a further review, consult the entry for Galatians in *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

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already kept some level of a kosher or kosher-style diet. The separation of Peter from these Believers was not over the menu at fellowship meals, but rather the fact that the non-Jews had not been circumcised as proselytes. In order for harmony to ensue among the Body of Messiah, the non-Jewish Believers would have to become formal Jewish proselytes.

While there has been little detailed Messianic examination of Galatians 2:11-14 with the topic of kosher in mind, it is more or less detectable that the alternative view of Peter's separation being caused by the non-Jewish Believers not being proselytes is seen among various resources.

2:11 Having just described how there was some unity between himself and the Messianic Jewish leaders at Jerusalem, per Paul's unique mission among the nations (2:1-10),³ Paul now tells the Galatians about an incident that took place when Peter had come to visit the Believers in Antioch. We do not know anything else about this visit, other than what Paul records. We do not know when Peter visited Antioch, and whether this was a touch-and-go visit with Peter in transit to another place, or an intentional visit to Antioch with plans to return to Jerusalem. It may have been that after his arrest and being freed from the angel, that in going to Caesarea, Peter continued on to Antioch (cf. Acts 12:19b). Richard N. Longenecker notes, "There is much in 2:11-14 that we are not told about the situation at Antioch, and much of what we are told is mostly by way of allusion."⁴ He does go on, though, in discussing the composition of the assembly, that it may be widely assumed how there was a singular group of Believers, and that their fellowship times were apparently quite regular:

"Was it one congregation made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers? Were there two congregations, one Jewish and the other Gentile? Or were there a number of congregations meeting at various places in the city, some ethnically mixed and others not? The impression given by Paul is of one group composed of both Jews and Gentiles, and such an impression seems in line with what we know of Jewish-Gentile relations at Antioch at the time."⁵

Even though readers may lack a complete picture of the setting, this should not deter us from understanding Paul's point to the Galatians and how Peter had broken the private agreement made between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders, which involved the Greek Titus not being compelled to be circumcised as a Believer in Israel's Messiah, in order to be welcome as a fellow brother in faith (2:3). As a private agreement, we must remember that the requirements which would later be laid out by the Jerusalem Council, a public forum—specifically relating to blood and strangled meats (Acts 15:20)—had yet to be formalized. Hence, when Peter visited Antioch, and a scene erupted during one of the assembly meals, he may have claimed some kind of deniability. Likewise, in v. 12 we also must consider that Paul says nothing specific about the kind of food served during these meals. Was the meal elaborate, or was it simple? How much, or how little, observance of *kashrut* was taking place? When Peter separated himself from the non-Jewish Believers,

³ Consult the analysis of Galatians 2:7-10 in the publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?* by J.K. McKee.

⁴ Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians*, Vol. 41 (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1990), 64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

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would he have done so even if bread and water were all that were served? This is where examiners diverge in opinion.

Paul recalls to the Galatians, “when Kefa came to Antioch, I opposed him publicly, because he was clearly in the wrong” (CJB). In v. 11, *prosōpon autō antestēn* (πρόσωπον αὐτῶ ἀντέστην), is more correctly, “I opposed him to his face” (RSV/NRSV/ESV, NASU, et. al.). This is likely affected by various Tanach passages when the outcome of a situation was very critical. In Deuteronomy 7:24, for example, Moses says, “He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you will make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them.”⁶ The Hebrew *ish b’panekha* (אִישׁ בְּפָנֶיךָ) is literally rendered as “man in/with face,” as it regards the defeat of Israel’s enemies as the people march into the Promised Land. In a similar manner, could Paul at all be making an illusion that as this new chapter in salvation history is opening, Peter’s actions demonstrate that there will be at the very least tension, and most probably resistance, to the spread of the gospel among the nations? But why would Peter, as Paul puts it, stand “self-condemned” (NRSV)? Obviously, part of it relates to his violation of the private agreement, as one of the Jerusalem leaders, with Paul, to recognize the evangelization of the nations as valid.

But we also need to consider some of the social ramifications, and the widespread historical-political climate among Jewish communities of the First Century. Various examiners today draw attention to the fact that the Jewish people, on the whole, felt threatened by external forces, beginning with the Seleucid Greek invasion of the 160s B.C.E. to the Roman occupation of Judea. In the 40s C.E., an entire series of events helped fuel Jewish xenophobia toward Greeks and Romans, including (but by no means limited to): Caligula insisting that a statue of himself be set up in the Jerusalem Temple (40 C.E.), a series of poor Roman governors and administrators (44-46 C.E.), and the demand that the vestments of the high priest be held for safekeeping by the Romans (Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.1-9). When we add to this the challenges caused by the Zealot movement, and increasingly disparate relations with Rome—at the very least we see that many Jews would want to remain constrained to themselves and limited in their contact with others. These events were all contemporary to the Antioch incident, and Paul writing Galatians. James D.G. Dunn summarizes how these events probably affected the early Jewish Believers:

“The followers of Jesus within Palestine would not have been unaffected by these mounting pressures. The death of Stephen and the subsequent persecution (early or middle 30s) presumably had the effect of ensuring that those followers of the Nazarene who had been exempted from the persecution, or who had returned to Jerusalem thereafter, would take care to show themselves good Jews, loyal to their religious and national heritage.”⁷

Some of these factors indicate, as Dunn further states, how “many Jewish believers took it as axiomatic that Gentiles must be circumcised if they were to have a share in the Jewish heritage, and were prepared to exercise considerable advocacy and missionary

⁶ Cf. Deuteronomy 9:2; 11:25; Joshua 1:5.

⁷ James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), pp 133-134.

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endeavour to ensure that heritage was neither diluted nor endangered.”⁸ When we take these things into consideration, we should more easily understand some of the negative attitudes that various Jewish Believers displayed toward the non-Jewish Believers. Many of them probably thought that short of proselyte conversion, that non-Jews should not be allowed into the assembly. Likewise, many of them would have been hostile to Paul—who taught that the entryway was faith in Israel’s Messiah and in what He had accomplished, as opposed to more national and/or sectarian identity markers (2:16). Yet, in spite of some of the justified skepticism that may have existed, the prejudices and phobias about the nations were not to be found in the Divine mandate issued by God in the Torah: “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3, NIV).

The reason Peter stood self-condemned, after withdrawing himself from his non-Jewish brethren (v. 12), was largely because he violated some of the very principles that he should have stood up for. Before Peter even visited Antioch, or Paul visited the Jerusalem leaders, Peter had already been accused of eating with uncircumcised, ungodly people by his fellow Jewish Believers. Luke records in Acts 11:1-3 the reaction that Peter received after visiting the God-fearing centurion Cornelius:

“Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, saying, ‘You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.’”

“[T]hose who were circumcised” is most likely referring to a group of very conservative “Jewish believers” (NLT), and not those who had undergone ritual proselyte conversion. However, rather than tell his accusers that he was somehow in the wrong, Peter instead recounts the vision of the sheet that God showed him (Acts 11:4-10; cf. 10:9-16). Peter’s own interpretation of this vision, as he told Cornelius, was “God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean⁹” (Acts 11:28, RSV).¹⁰ After Peter testified to what happened regarding the salvation of Cornelius’ household (Acts 11:11-17; cf. 10:17-48), those who had accused him rejoiced and saw that God was doing something new:

“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*’” (Acts 11:18).

By separating himself from his non-Jewish brothers and sisters in Antioch, Peter stood self-condemned because he violated the very things that began the Gentile mission: his vision of the sheet and the proclamation of the good news to Cornelius. Paul opposed Peter in Antioch for withdrawing from the table and his non-Jewish brethren, in a way similar to how Moses opposed Pharaoh (Exodus 8:20), and Joshua was promised by God to have no opposition (Joshua 1:5). Some have likened Paul’s opposition of Peter to an ancient legal trial. Josephus describes some of the emotions from an ancient trial, which Paul may have expressed at this incident:

“They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatever they say also is firmer than

⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁹ Grk. *koinoin ē akatharton* (κοινωνῶν ἢ ἀκάθαρτον).

¹⁰ As already discussed in this publication’s analysis on Acts 10:1-48, Peter’s interpretation has nothing to do with food and/or the annulment of the kosher dietary laws.

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an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury; for they say that he who cannot be believed without [swearing by] God is already condemned" (*Wars of the Jews* 2.135).¹¹

2:12 The scene that erupted in Antioch is noted by Paul in his letter to the Galatians: "for before certain people came from Jacob, he regularly ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he came to withdraw and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision" (TLV). Prior to the arrival of outsiders from the Messianic Jewish community in Jerusalem, the Apostle Peter made it his habit to eat with the non-Jewish Believers in Antioch. In the estimation of John R.W. Stott, "His old Jewish scruples had been overcome. He did not consider himself in any way defiled or contaminated by contact with uncircumcised Gentile Christians, as once he would have done. Instead, he welcomed them to eat with him, and he with them."¹² The importance of eating alongside the non-Jewish Believers was quite tangible, not just as a sign that in the Messiah, Jews and non-Jews were equal brothers and sisters—but perhaps even more so because Peter was one of the main Apostles (v. 9). G. Walter Hansen properly observes,

"Undoubtedly his presence at table fellowship with Gentile Christians was taken as an official stamp of approval on the union and equality of Jews and Gentiles in the [assembly]. We can imagine that the Gentile believers in the [assembly] were especially encouraged by Peter's wholehearted acceptance of them."¹³

While the Apostle Peter was opposed by the Apostle Paul for his behavior (v. 11), Peter eating with the non-Jewish Believers was in accord with what God had shown him in the Acts 10 vision of the sheet and subsequent visit to Cornelius. As F.F. Bruce confirms, this "is in complete accord with the picture given of him in Acts, where, after learning on Simon the tanner's roof-top in Joppa not to call any one unclean whom God has cleansed, he is happy to visit Cornelius in Caesarea and eat with him and his family (Acts 10:28; 11:3)."¹⁴ *The presence of outsiders in Antioch caused a change in behavior.*

Paul states the reason why Peter separated himself: "before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party" (RSV). The Greek speaks of *elthein tinas apo Iakōbou* (ἐλθεῖν τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου), "coming of certain from James" (YLT), and who these individuals were specifically, is not agreed upon by expositors. It is not agreed whether or not these people were actually from James, were just associated with James in some way, or claimed that they came from James. This is further compounded by those who believe that Paul and the Jerusalem assembly were generally in agreement (mostly conservatives/evangelicals), or those who believe that Paul and the Jerusalem assembly were at constant odds with one another (mostly liberals).¹⁵

Some might suggest that the "certain men from James" were sent to moderate possible disputes, as it is notable that James himself did accede approval to Paul for his

¹¹ *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, pp 605-606.

¹² John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 50.

¹³ G. Walter Hansen, *IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Galatians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 62.

¹⁴ F.F. Bruce, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 129.

¹⁵ Cf. Christopher R. Matthews, "Acts of the Apostles," in *EDB*, pp 15-18.

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mission among the nations (v. 9), and is the very person Paul desired to interview after his conversion (1:19). This would mean that the “certain men from James” coming was actually a good thing. David H. Stern renders v. 12 in his Complete Jewish Bible with, “prior to the arrival of certain people from [the community headed by] Ya'akov,” indicating that there is some difference in how to view the verse. But even if we assume that the arrival of these individuals from James was a good thing, and they represented James and his approval of Paul’s mission, their arrival is nevertheless what causes Peter’s inappropriate attitude and behavior to surface.

Many do think that these individuals, even if genuinely sent by James, overstepped their mandate (cf. Acts 15:24). In discussing the relationship of the dietary laws to the scene in Galatians 2, the entry on “Food Offered to Idols and Jewish Food Laws” in the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, by B.B. Blue, summarizes a widespread evangelical Christian conclusion that the “certain men from James” had, in fact overstepped whatever directions James had given them:

“[W]e should be cautious not to associate their position too closely with that of James. After all, James certainly voiced disapproval over their conduct (Acts 15:24). It is probable that they had exceeded the terms of their commission. Paul states that before certain men came from James, Peter was in the habit of regularly eating with Gentile Christians; nevertheless the presence of these Jewish Christians from the circumcision party caused Peter to begin to withdraw from his regular practice altogether.”¹⁶

Scot McKnight further says, “I suspect that they were truly from James, though they may not have been representing James with full integrity.”¹⁷ Those who arrived in Antioch are thought to be the same who would say in Acts 15:1, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” While Peter had his fears about those of the circumcision party (*tous ek peritomēs*, τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς), and the issue was initially table fellowship and communion among fellows—by the time the Jerusalem Council had to meet, things had apparently gone beyond just inclusion within the people of God, and things had decisively become salvation-oriented. As would be relayed to the Believers in Antioch from the Jerusalem Council, “we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls” (Acts 15:24).

Previously in vs. 2-10, Paul had taken great pains to express that James, Peter, and John all approved of his evangelistic activities, including giving him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (v. 8). Later, James is the one at the Jerusalem Council who made the final ruling regarding the non-Jewish Believers coming to faith (Acts 15:19-21), indicating that ritual circumcision would not be necessary for them to enter into the *ekklēsia*. So why do we see those of James’ party instigating Peter’s separation from his non-Jewish brethren?

The NASU renders v. 12 with “he *began* to withdraw,” for the imperfect verb *hupestellen* (ὑπέστειλεν) or “withdrawing” (Brown and Comfort has “was separating”¹⁸). As Donald K. Campbell describes it, “The verb tenses (imperf.) indicate a gradual withdrawal,

¹⁶ B.B. Blue, “Food Offered to Idols and Jewish Food Laws,” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 307.

¹⁷ Scot McKnight, *NIV Application Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 104.

¹⁸ Brown and Comfort, 656.

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perhaps from one joint meal a day, and then two; or it may be that he began a meal with Gentiles but finished it with only Jewish Christians.”¹⁹ Bruce concurs, “he did not make an abrupt break with his former practice, but proceeded to change it gradually.”²⁰ So, while a scene took place between Peter and Paul in Antioch, it did not happen instantaneously. It is not as though on one day Peter just got up from eating with some non-Jewish Believers, moving over to an area with Jewish Believers. His withdrawing himself started off slowly, and then became more regular. It reached a point of contention, when Paul finally asked him what he was doing, violating the very revelation God had given him. The New Jerusalem Bible depicts this as, “he backed out and kept apart from them.”

The improper actions of Peter are well summarized by the verb *aphorizō* (ἀφορίζω), “to remove one party from other parties so as to discourage or eliminate contact” (BDAG).²¹ But why would Peter do this? Is he just throwing out the revelation that God had given him regarding the cleansing of the nations (Acts 10, 11)? Stott interjects the important observations,

“Are we to suppose that Peter had now forgotten the vision at Joppa and the conversion of the household of Cornelius? Or that he now went back on the revelation that God had given him then? Surely not. There is no suggestion in Galatians 2 that Peter had changed his mind. Why then did he withdraw from fellowship with the Gentile believers in Antioch? Paul tells us. He ‘separated himself fearing the circumcision party’ (verse 12).”²²

Peter “was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group” (NIV).²³ And while later it is made clear that the individuals from James went too far (Acts 15:24), some of the initial reasons why they advocated circumcision of the non-Jewish Believers as proselytes, were likely political. As summarized by Hansen:

“It seems that during the late forties and fifties, Jewish Christians in Judea were facing bitter antagonism from Zealot-minded Jews for socializing with Gentiles. The fierce Jewish nationalism rampant in Palestine at that time led to harsh treatment of any Jew who associated with Gentiles. It is likely that the delegation from James simply reported to Peter that his open and unrestricted association with Gentiles in Antioch would cause (or had already caused) the [assembly] in Jerusalem to suffer greatly at the hands of *the circumcision group*, Jewish nationalists.”²⁴

The challenge, of course, is in recognizing that those sent from James apparently had some of those same views, even to the point of them ultimately making circumcision a salvation issue (Acts 15:1).

¹⁹ Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 595.

²⁰ Bruce, *Galatians*, 131.

²¹ BDAG, 158.

²² Stott, *Galatians*, 52.

²³ The Message goes a little too far in paraphrasing v. 12b with, “That’s how fearful he was of the conservative Jewish clique that’s been pushing the old system of circumcision.”

²⁴ Hansen, *Galatians*, 63; see also Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 155; Todd Scacewater. “Galatians 2:11-21 and the Interpretive Context of ‘Works of the Law’” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Vol. 56 No. 2 (2013):312-314 for a further historical summary.

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It is not difficult at all to understand that when Peter “separated himself” (RSV), problems could easily start erupting between the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Antioch—the very thing that, in terms of Paul’s overall message to the Galatians, he did not want to see happen in Galatia should the false teachers they were facing continue to lead people astray, by similarly insisting that non-Jewish Believers had to be circumcised as proselytes in order to be fully reckoned as members of God’s people and/or eternally redeemed.

In a point of weakness, we see Peter succumbing to peer pressure. During the moment Paul describes, Peter could have been worried about his reputation should he return to Jerusalem and word get out that he had eaten a meal with non-Jewish Believers, which would have offended the overly-conservative faction that demanded their circumcision. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, major criticism and disrepute for the expanding mission among the nations could have occurred, perhaps even with warnings being issued about Paul’s “gospel of faith.” By accusing Peter in public—presumably before these individuals—Paul could have deterred some major controversies before they began. In a dramatic way, he had to remind Peter what they all agreed about concerning his mission among the nations.

2:13 It would seem that Paul only took action when “The other Jews joined [Peter] in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray” (NIV). The verb *sunupokrinomai* (συνυποκρίνομαι) means “to play a part along with others” (LS).²⁵ Bruce renders this as “play-acting,”²⁶ as Peter’s separation set a very bad example for all of the Jewish Believers in Antioch. So bad was this example, that even Paul’s associate in ministry, Barnabas, was affected.

Table fellowship was very important in the ancient world, and so it is no surprise why Paul was so disturbed at the lack of interaction between the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Antioch, for which Peter was directly responsible. How we understand what was going on in Antioch—and properly apply it today as Messianics—is being affected by some of the proposals of the New Perspective of Paul in theological studies, which better attempt to understand Paul in his Jewish context.

First of all, it is important to consider the specific significance of table fellowship in Ancient Judaism. The Mishnah summarizes,

“R. Simeon says, ‘Three who ate at a single table and did not talk about teachings of Torah while at that table are as though they ate from *dead sacrifices* (Ps. 106:28), as it is said, *For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness [if they are] without God* (Ps. 106:28). But three who ate at a single table and did talk about teachings of Torah while at that table are as if they ate at the table of the Omnipresent, blessed is he, as it is said, *And he said to me, This is the table that is before the Lord* (Ez. 41:22)” (m.Avot 3:3).²⁷

The implication here implies that proper table fellowship has discussion that is focused around God and His Word. Surely it is not a far stretch to conclude that the conversations going on during the meals in Antioch were focused around the Lord. But another major factor that would have affected how the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers

²⁵ LS, 781.

²⁶ Bruce, *Galatians*, 128.

²⁷ Neusner, *Mishnah*, pp 678-679.

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would have fellowshiped during meals, would have been much more than table conversation, but would have pertained to the meals themselves. Since the Maccabean revolt (1 Maccabees 1:62-63), the need for loyal Jews to eat kosher was not just considered obedience to the Torah, but also a matter of national preservation. At these times of fellowship, the Jewish Believers would have been concerned about the type of meat served, whether the meat was tainted by idolatry, and the matter of butchering.²⁸ Is it impossible to conclude that just to get the Jewish Believers to sit down with the non-Jewish Believers, some level of *kashrut* had to be considered?

Nothing specific is mentioned in the text regarding the type of food served at these meals, but these meals were regular occurrences and it is doubtful that they were all vegetarian. Hans Dieter Betz generally says, "Nothing is said whether these meals were ordinary meals or celebrations of the Lord's Supper, or both. . . The point of concern is the Jewish purity requirements which must be observed whatever meals were involved."²⁹ He goes on to state, though, "The issue at stake was not Cephas' breaking of fellowship but first participation in and subsequent withdrawal from the meal, but his shifting attitude with regard to the Jewish dietary and purity laws."³⁰ It is commonly concluded among a variety of Christian examiners, that what divided the Believers in Antioch was the meal which was being served at the fellowship gatherings, and that Peter had improperly drifted back into keeping kosher.³¹ As summarized by Beverly R. Gaventa,

"Despite the fact that Paul says Peter and the others withdrew from eating with Gentiles, it is probably not the identity of the diners but the character of the menu that proved divisive. Those who carefully followed Jewish law found eating with Gentiles difficult, not because fellowship with Gentiles was inherently objectionable but because the food offered would not conform to dietary laws."³²

McKnight takes an improper liberty, in trying to relay his conclusion of what was going on in Antioch:

"Peter was probably eating 'baby back' barbequed spare ribs or shrimp scampi, and the more conservative Jews took issue with his cavalier violation of the law....There was now, in effect, two churches: a kosher church and a Gentile church."³³

The kind of statement that communicates Peter eating "baby back ribs" or "shrimp scampi," unnecessarily complicates an objective, First Century reading of Galatians 2:11-14. Bruce is much fairer in his assertion,

"[A]t the ensuing [Jerusalem] council, against some opposition...circumcision must not be required of Gentile Christians...but that they should undertake to conform to the

²⁸ Cf. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, pp 137-138.

²⁹ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 107.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Stott, *Galatians*, 55; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 75; Hansen, *Galatians*, 66; McKnight, *Galatians*, pp 101-103; Witherington, *Galatians*, 153; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 139-142.

³² Beverly R. Gaventa, "Galatians," in James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1377.

³³ McKnight, *Galatians*, pp 103, 105.

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most important Jewish food-restrictions (in particular, the avoidance of the flesh of pagan sacrifices and of flesh from which the blood had not been drained) and the Jewish code of regulations between the sexes.”³⁴

While today’s Messianic people should not be surprised to see various Christian examiners of Galatians conclude that the issue of Peter’s separation was over the fare served—we should be a bit taken aback at the conclusion drawn by David H. Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, over the thought that when interacting with non-Jews such as those in Antioch, it would have been a more-or-less regular practice for a figure like Peter to eat non-kosher things. As Stern puts it:

“To live Messianic-Jewishly means sometimes to ‘live Goyishly’ from the viewpoint of a non-Messianic Jew! Why? Because of the way in which the *Torah* has been modified under the New Covenant to take into account the inclusion of Gentiles in God’s people. Thus the *Torah*-true Messianic Jew may break the laws of *kashrut* for the sake of preserving Jewish-Gentile fellowship in the Body of Messiah (and the *Torah*-true Messianic Gentile may sometimes choose to eat *kosher* for the same reason).”³⁵

While there are times where eating non-kosher things is necessary, it is often via the imperative of, “Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you” (Luke 10:8), or “If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience’ sake” (1 Corinthians 10:27). The setting of the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Antioch was one of their regular, fellowship meals, most likely associated with a time of worship and teaching—not a time where a figure like Peter, Paul, or Barnabas was testifying of Yeshua in the home of a Greek or Roman non-Believer.

Not all present examiners are agreed that the issue in Galatians 2:11-13, with the Apostle Peter separating himself from the non-Jewish Believers in Antioch, is at all over him apparently only fellowshiping with those who ate *kashrut*. Instead, it has been suggested that given the high degree of interaction and integration of non-Jewish people within the Jewish community of Antioch as God-fearers, that they would have kept *some* level of *kashrut*. Perhaps with an overall kosher-style of diet observed by the Believers, divisions occurred among those being relatively moderate (the non-Jewish Believers), and one quite stringent (“the men from James”). Or, what is much more of a factor from the text, is that Peter was regularly socializing with uncircumcised non-Jewish Believers. Richard B. Hays describes,

“The Law of Moses contains no prohibition of eating with Gentiles. The people of Israel were commanded to abstain from unclean foods and from meat or wine tainted by association with idolatry; but as long as certain fundamental dietary precautions were observed, there was no reason why even strictly Torah-observant Jews could not share table fellowship with Gentiles...It is possible that the food at the common meals was not kosher, that Peter and other Jewish Christians were disregarding basic Jewish dietary laws by eating meat with blood in it, or pork and shellfish...On the other hand, it

³⁴ Bruce, *Galatians*, 130.

³⁵ David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), pp 531-532.

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seems unlikely that such flagrant violation of Jewish norms would have been practiced at Antioch, particularly if the Gentile converts were drawn primarily from the ranks of the 'godfearers,' who presumably have already assimilated to Jewish dietary practices. It is more probable that the 'men from James' were objecting to the practice of associating with Gentiles at table."³⁶

Some kind of kosher food would have had to be present in order for the Jewish Believers to really be there, eating at the meals. Dunn notes a significant interpretation option for v. 12, which has probably not been given enough publicity among contemporary Christian readers:

"Peter and the other Jewish believers were sharing table-fellowship with Gentile believers on less clearly defined Jewish terms—that is, not only welcoming Gentiles to their table, but accepting invitations to Gentile tables without asking too many questions (cf. 1 Cor. x.27), though presumably on the assumption that the Gentile believers would have been mindful of the basic food rules. The James' people, having come to Antioch to visit primarily the Jewish believers (cf. ii.9), would then have been shocked at the degree of laxness being shown by these Jewish believers and criticized them accordingly."³⁷

The level of kosher observed among the Antioch Believers would have been a basic kosher style diet, which avoided pork, shellfish, blood, etc. It was probably not up to the same standard as many of the Jerusalem Believers would have observed, but was likely normative for the level of exchange between Jewish people and those considered God-fearers, in the Mediterranean Diaspora. That a kosher or kosher-style of meal was indeed served at the fellowship meal gatherings—and not pork or shellfish (certainly not "baby back ribs" or "shrimp scampi," as McKnight put it), among other things—is deduced from how the First Century historian Josephus recorded how in this region,

"The Jewish race, densely interspersed among the native populations of every portion of the world, is particularly numerous in Syria, where intermingling is due to the proximity of the two countries. But it was at Antioch that they especially congregated. . . . Moreover, they were constantly attracting to their religious ceremonies multitudes of Greeks, and these had in some measure incorporated with themselves" (*Wars of the Jews* 7.43, 45).³⁸

³⁶ Richard B. Hays, "The Letter to the Galatians," in Leander E. Keck, ed. et. al., *New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol 11 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 11:232-233; cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Black's New Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), pp 121-122.

³⁷ Dunn, *Galatians*, 121.

³⁸ Flavius Josephus: *Josephus: The Jewish War, Books IV-VII*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1961), pp 517, 519.

Note how there is a variance of translation of Josephus' statement, *aei te prosagomenoi tais thrēskeiais polu plēthos Hellēnōn* (ἀεί τε προσάγομενοι ταῖς θρησκείαις πολὺ πλῆθος Ἑλλήνων): "They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually" (Whiston; *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 753); "They also made converts of many of the Greeks and thereby in a way got them to share in their own destiny" (Flavius Josephus: *A New Translation of the works of Josephus*, trans. Patrick Rogers [2001-2010]. Accessible online at <<http://www.biblical.ie/josephus/War/WE07.asp>>).

The key verb of interest is *prosaḡō* (προσάγω), which in the middle voice can relate "to bring or draw to oneself, attach to oneself, bring over to one's side" (LS, 685). It goes too far to suggest that these non-Jewish people were, on the whole, formal proselytes to Judaism, as much as they were simply integrated into the daily affairs of the Antiochene Jewish community.

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The thought of Dunn is that, “though there were clear boundary lines between Jew and Gentile, marked out, not least, by the food laws and the complex of traditional attitudes and practices gathered round them, there were many Gentiles who were eager to cross these boundaries, to at least some extent, and who were welcomed by Jews when they did so.”³⁹

It would seem probable that with many of the non-Jewish Believers in Antioch, having already been integrated into the Jewish community—even as God-fearers prior to encountering Paul and the good news of Yeshua—that they were already used to a certain level of kosher eating. Some level of *kashrut* was probably observed in Antioch, but a slight liberalizing of the kosher dietary restrictions, because of the mixed community of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, could have incurred some rebukes from the individuals sent by James, *which only then inflamed an apparent need of why figures like Peter should have separated from non-proselytes*. The eating in view would had to have been consistent with the later Acts 15 ruling, of meat from proper animals with the blood drained (Acts 15:20). Yet, this may not have been the higher level of *kashrut* adhered to by the Jerusalem party, with whom Peter was associating, for which eating kosher may have been more than just observing Biblical commandments (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14), but an issue of national identity.

Secondly, and far more important, is how we consider the ongoing debates in Second Temple Judaism about whether or not Jewish people could even sit down with non-Jews at the table to conduct affairs. Some discussion in the Mishnah indicates that, with few stipulations, a Jewish person could sit down with a non-Jewish person to eat and talk:

“[If an Israelite] was eating with [a gentile] at the same time, and he put a flagon [of wine] on the table and a flagon on a side table, and he left it and went out—what is on the table is forbidden. But what is on the side table is permitted. And if he had said to him, ‘You mix and drink [wine],’ even that which is on the side table is forbidden. Jars which are open are forbidden. And those which are sealed [are forbidden if he was gone] for a time sufficient to bore a hole and stop it up and for the clay to dry” (m.*Avodah Zera* 5:5).⁴⁰

While this quotation indicates that Jewish and non-Jewish people could interact at a table, it is to be contrasted with the decree, “Dwelling places of gentiles [in the Land of Israel] are unclean” (m.*Ohalot* 18:7),⁴¹ which largely forbade *any* Jewish and non-Jewish interaction. And as the Roman historian Tacitus indicates, the common Gentile response to these sorts of views was not that much better. As he writes, “Whatever their origin, these observances are sanctioned by their antiquity. The other practices of the Jews are sinister and revolting, and have entrenched themselves by their very wickedness” (*The Histories* 5.5.1-2).⁴²

These are exactly the kinds of attitudes that Paul undoubtedly wanted to see reversed in Antioch, and did not want to see settle themselves in Galatia. He wanted both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers to come together as one people in Yeshua, fellowshiping together, and uplifting Him and His grace. In the case in Antioch, the

³⁹ Dunn, *Galatians*, 121.

⁴⁰ Neusner, *Mishnah*, 671.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 980.

⁴² Cornelius Tacitus: *The Histories*, trans. Kenneth Wellesley (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 273.

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ungodly attitudes were being displayed from the Jewish segment of the Believers. Tim Hegg correctly summarizes,

"These data highlight a phenomenon well attested throughout the literature, namely, that the *halachah* of table fellowship between Jew and non-Jew was not yet completely settled in the early centuries. There appears to have been two opinions: one, that accommodation to the Gentiles was necessary and even acceptable, and a second, that close contact with Gentiles, especially in the realm of table fellowship was not only unwise, but a compromise of essential covenant requirements. One could well imagine that the more lenient view was the majority, while this strict position was held by the few."⁴³

By separating himself away from his non-Jewish brothers and sisters, Peter would have been favoring the more conservative of the options. As Paul puts it, he was "fearing the party of the circumcision" (v. 12). Aside from the fact that Peter knew from previous experience, "All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also" (Acts 10:45), he gave into some of the social pressure that was common to the time within much of the Jewish community. Some level of kosher (clean meats without blood) may have very well been observed in Antioch—but the significant majority of the non-Jewish Believers had not gone through ritual proselyte conversion, and then a problem ensued when those from Jerusalem arrived.

We all must learn from Peter's example, so that as Messianic Believers today we do not take action *to separate or divide groups of Believers* on the basis of ethnicity, when God desires the Abrahamic promise of all peoples being blessed to be fulfilled. Ultimately, we know that the Jerusalem Council would meet to address this issue, which decreed a moderate solution. As Hegg indicates,

"The gospel had been so long cast in a Jewish mold, that to envision it ever existing otherwise was not only impossible, it was also theologically errant. Here we come to understand that the message of Yeshua, and even more so Paul, was revolutionary, not because it was brand new or never heard, but because it cut across so many layers of traditions. And having cut across so much tradition, it appeared innovative and new, when in fact it was a throwback to a time when Torah defined Israel rather than Israel defining the Torah."⁴⁴

We do experience some of the same issues in today's Messianic community regarding how Jew and non-Jew are to be one in Yeshua, partaking of the blessing of Abraham. How do we maintain a high opinion of Jewish culture and tradition, while respecting the value of all peoples in the sight of God? How do we keep God's commandments—the most important of which is to demonstrate His love and blessings to others? How strong is the temptation to break away and separate, when the Lord wants us to bond together? How often have we fallen prey to interpretations and applications of the Torah that are too overly conservative, *exactly because they separate*, when more moderate solutions (as demonstrated throughout the Pauline Epistles) are needed? Admittedly, today's generation of Messianic Believers is asked some difficult questions by vs. 11-13.

⁴³ Tim Hegg, *A Study of Galatians* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2002), 61.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 63-64.

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2:14 Paul holds all of the Jewish Believers who separated from the non-Jewish Believers in Antioch responsible for not being “straightforward about the truth of the gospel,” or not “acting consistently with the truth of the gospel” (NRSV), but Peter is specifically targeted as having been in error. Paul’s accusation before Peter in v. 14 is that he is living “like the Gentiles.” How this is to be interpreted in light of the clauses which are witnessed, has been vigorously debated in recent Christian scholarship, and is probably one of the hardest parts of the Bible for most Messianic Believers to understand.

While Peter was publicly rebuked for his actions by Paul, seemingly in front of all of the Antioch Believers, surely Paul would have followed the Matthew 18:15 imperative, “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” It is quite possible that some kind of private encounter between Paul and Peter had already been conducted, with or without success. At the same time, if Peter’s separation from the non-Jewish Believers in Antioch had been a gradual process, and finally it reached a breaking point, enough unstated tensions could have simply caused the need for a full on, public confrontation. As Bruce says, “For aught we know, he may have remonstrated with Cephas privately before rebuking him publicly. But perhaps he would have said that, since the offence was public, the rebuke had also to be public.”⁴⁵

We have to understand that first, Peter’s vision of Acts 10 (cf. 11:1-16) demonstrated that via the sacrificial work of His Son, God considers all human beings to be clean. No unnecessary impediments should be placed before the nations in order for them to be evangelized, and turn to God in repentance. Furthermore, the new, non-Jewish Believers needed to be welcomed into the assemblies of Jewish Believers as full and equal members of God’s people because of their expressed faith in Israel’s Messiah. The sharing of a common meal was critical for establishing good faith and community with people in the First Century world. But by separating themselves, the Jewish Believers in Antioch—especially Peter—were not seeing that God’s objective of all being welcome was being fulfilled.

It is with this in mind that Paul makes the accusation, “If you, a Jew born and bred, live like a Gentile, and not like a Jew, how can you insist that Gentiles must live like Jews?” (NEB). **What is this supposed to mean?** While Paul rightly acknowledges Peter’s background as a Jew (Grk. *su Ioudaios huparchōn*, σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων), what does he mean by saying that he “livest after the manner of Gentiles” (KJV)? Furthermore, how are we to understand the final clause, “how the nations dost thou compel to Judaize” (YLT)? As noted by Longenecker, Peter “living like a Gentile” is most frequently taken by Christian examiners in terms of him eating unclean things:

“The terms ἔθνικῶς [*ethnikōs*] and Ἰουδαϊκῶς [*Ioudaikōs*] refer to living according to Jewish and Gentile customs, particularly here with respect to the observance of the Jewish dietary laws—the former ignoring and the latter observing them.”⁴⁶

The significance of Paul’s question in v. 14, can only be appreciated from the original Greek: *pōs ta ethnē anagkazeis Ioudaizein* (πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις Ἰουδαῖζειν), “why do you compel the nations to Judaize?” (LITV). V. 14 is the text of Scripture from which the common designation “the Judaizers” originates—per the false teachers or Influencers

⁴⁵ Bruce, *Galatians*, 132; also Schreiner, *Galatians*, 139.

⁴⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 78.

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who were leading the Galatians astray—yet by his usage of the verb *Ioudaizō* (Ἰουδαῖζω), Paul is making an important point to the Jewish Believers in Antioch which need not be overlooked. *BDAG* defines this verb as to “**live as one bound by Mosaic ordinances or traditions, live in Judean or Jewish fashion.**”⁴⁷ But what one considers to be Jewish customs or traditions has considerable variance among the First Century branches of Judaism. And, it is legitimate for one to wonder, as Hegg notes, “It hardly seems possible that Paul would have so sharply denounced Peter if he was simply trying to persuade the Gentiles to take on Jewish customs.”⁴⁸

Perhaps the most significant usage of the verb *Ioudaizō* outside of Galatians is seen in the Septuagint rendering of Esther 8:17, where we see that “in every city and province wherever the ordinance was published: wherever the proclamation took place, the Jews had joy and gladness, feasting and mirth: and many of the Gentiles were circumcised, and became Jews [*Ioudaizon*, ἰουδαῖζουσιν], for fear of the Jews” (LXE). The Greek verb *Ioudaizō* renders the Hebrew *yahad* (יָהַד), meaning “to **pose as a Jew**” or “to embrace Judaism” (*HALOT*).⁴⁹ As Longenecker renders v. 14, “If you, a Jewish believer, can live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentile believers to become Jews?” (*WBC*).⁵⁰

Another important usage of the verb *Ioudaizō* appears in Josephus’ account of the Jews fighting the Romans, and how a Roman named Metilius was spared from death, because he promised to be circumcised and become a Jew:

“And thus were all these men barbarously murdered, excepting Metilius; for when he entreated for mercy, and promised **that he would turn Jew, and be circumcised** [*peritomēs Ioudaisein*, περιτομῆς ἰουδαῖσειν], they saved him alive, but none else” (*Wars of the Jews* 2.454).⁵¹

The verb *Ioudaizō*, “to Judaize,” is something which tends to occur in instances or situations of force.

Betz well summarizes the issue of v. 14: “In Paul’s view. . .it describes forcing one to become a Jewish convert...”⁵² Hansen also comes close to this, detailing, “the verb that the NIV translates *to follow Jewish customs* would be more accurately translated as ‘to become Jews.’ For the Gentiles would have to do more than follow a few Jewish customs; they would have to come Jews in order to have table fellowship...”⁵³ And McKnight further states, “The term ‘to follow Jewish customs’ (*ioudaizein*) may mean no more than to live like a Jew. However, I tend to agree with those who understand the term as ‘converting to Judaism’ in the fullest sense.”⁵⁴

The answer to the problem caused by Peter separating himself, from the non-Jewish Believers to the Jewish Believers, **was that the non-Jewish Believers would have to become Jewish proselytes** in order for unity to be restored. As Longenecker puts it,

⁴⁷ *BDAG*, 478.

⁴⁸ Hegg, *Galatians*, 66.

⁴⁹ *HALOT*, 1:393.

⁵⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 63.

⁵¹ *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 626.

⁵² Betz, 112.

⁵³ Hansen, *Galatians*, 67.

⁵⁴ McKnight, *Galatians*, 107 fn#19.

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"Instead of treating them as true believers in Jesus...his action would have resulted in their becoming converts to Judaism."⁵⁵

This is something that Paul would have nothing to do with, as unity among God's people was not something to be achieved by one's ethnicity, economic status, or even gender (3:28). *Unity was to be founded on what Yeshua the Messiah had accomplished for everyone*, in being sacrificed for human transgression and resurrected from the dead. Here, the issue of "Judaizing" is not so much placed at the feet of the Influencers in Galatia, but at the feet of the Apostle Peter. While the Influencers in Galatia no doubt wanted the new, non-Jewish Believers to undergo ritual conversion—what was Paul asking of Peter? What did Paul want Peter to think through, that he perhaps had not considered via his inappropriate actions?

When Paul accused Peter in the immediate clause prior, that he "live[s] in the manner of Gentiles" (NKJV) or *huparchōn ethnikōs* (ὑπάρχων ἑθνικῶς), what did he mean? Did he mean, as some have extrapolated it, "[you] have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile" (NLT)? Was Paul claiming that now that Peter had found Christ the Mosaic Torah was now of no affect for either of them? Was it that Peter was now living like a Gentile, but in v. 14 is seen reversing his lifestyle and again living like a Jew—by peer pressure from outsiders—meaning that he was not following the Torah, and was now following it? Or, was Paul making the observation that Peter's behavior and attitudes—though he was a Jew—were more consistent with that of pagan Gentiles? As the Goodspeed New Testament has it, "...you live like a heathen..."

Many consider Paul's remarks made to Peter that being a Jew, versus being a Gentile, are to be understood as living according to Jewish and Gentile cultural norms—in this case pertaining to the kosher dietary laws and/or ritual purity.⁵⁶ From this point of view, Peter considers ritual purity—his "being a Jew"—to be more important than sitting down with his non-Jewish brothers and sisters and fellowshiping as one in the Lord. Among Messianic interpreters, Hegg partially concurs with this view, viewing Paul's remark to "live like the Gentiles" as regarding the table fellowship of the Believers in Antioch (as opposed to the validity of *kashrut*) from which Peter withdrew. He suggests that Jews who did not follow a set of particular cultural expectations could be considered as though they were a Gentile (1QS 2.4-5).⁵⁷ Thus, when Paul tells Peter that he is "living like a Gentile," this would be a phrase common to First Century Jews where Peter would be associating with non-Jews at the table.⁵⁸ Having done this, how then can Peter reverse his actions and require the non-Jewish Believers to somehow "Judaize"? He concludes,

"[W]e should understand the phrase 'live like the Gentiles' to be a common phrase of the intra-Jewish debate over the inclusion of Gentiles. The party of the circumcision must have used language like this to disparage those Jews who were willing to forego the

⁵⁵ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 78; Against: Hays, in *NIB*, 10:235; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 147; Scacewater, in *JETS*, 56:314-315, all who argue for "Judaize" being limited in the sense of adherence to the Torah's dietary laws.

⁵⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 78.

⁵⁷ "[A]nd lift up His gracious countenance upon you for everlasting peace.' The Levites in turn shall curse all those foreordained to Belial. They shall respond, 'May you be damned in return for all your wicked, guilty deeds'" (1QS 2.4-5; Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996], 128).

⁵⁸ Hegg, *Galatians*, pp 65-69.

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halachah of separation from Gentiles, by judging them as having adopted a Gentile lifestyle. Paul uses the very language of the influencers to shame Peter. From their vantage point, anyone who engaged with table fellowship with Gentiles was as though he was 'living like a Gentile.'⁵⁹

While this would be one way of looking at Paul's comments to Peter in v. 14, I would suggest that Paul's remarks do not primarily concern Peter's observance of ritual purity and/or *kashrut*, **but instead concern Peter's behavior and motives**. A better way of looking at Paul's rebuke to Peter, "live like a Gentile," is to approach it from an ethical standpoint. The term *ethnikos* (ἔθνικός) can "**pert. to nationhood foreign to a specific national group, w. focus on morality or belief**" (*BDAG*).⁶⁰ Note that Paul's accusation to Peter is that he is "living [like] the nations," yet from a ritual standpoint Peter clearly is not. Peter has separated himself to go join those who came from James (vs. 11-12), who likely held to highly conservative views of the Torah and ritual purity. If anything, Peter was living like highly conservative, (hyper-)purity-conscious Jews. So how in doing this *can Peter actually be considered to be living as a pagan Gentile?*

Consider how Peter had adopted the same kind of attitude that the Gentiles at large held of the Jews, perhaps similar to what the Roman historian Tacitus, who has been previously quoted, claimed: "The. . . practices of the Jews are sinister and revolting, and have entrenched themselves by their very wickedness" (*The Histories* 5.5.1-2).⁶¹ Paul publicly rebukes him, "you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews." By separating himself to the Jewish Believers in Antioch—and not sharing table fellowship with the non-Jewish Believers—a big gulf between them would be created. And this is why Paul asks Peter the pertinent question: "why do you compel the nations to Judaize?" (LITV).

In v. 14, Paul could very well be using some form of ironic rebuke, to get Peter to reconsider his actions. Peter, in wishing to demonstrate an example as a "good Jew" to those who came from James, in actuality found himself living like a pagan Greek or Roman who would tend to treat Jews with disgust. By his attitudes here, Peter had surely lost all moral authority as an Apostle and representative of the pillars in Jerusalem (v. 9). He does not demonstrate this behavior toward his fellow Jewish Believers—and instead fails to show generosity, hospitality, or a welcoming attitude toward his fellow non-Jewish Believers. Peter, in attempting to be Jewish, was behaving no differently than a Gentile Greek or Roman and how he would treat a Jew. As Ben Witherington III points out (for his extended observations on v. 1), throughout the Mediterranean, "competition was [often] the essence of such a culture, not least because it was believed that honor was a limited good, that is in short supply, such that for one person to have it, another would have to be deprived of it."⁶²

By separating himself from his fellow non-Jewish brethren in Antioch, Peter would definitely have found himself robbing his fellow Believers of their self-respect and who they were as new creatures in the Lord, and certainly be caught not acting in accordance with "truth of the gospel," in a manner disrespectful of Yeshua's work. He treated them

⁵⁹ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁰ *BDAG*, 276.

⁶¹ Tacitus, *The Histories*, 273.

⁶² Witherington, *Galatians*, 129.

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no differently than they—were they non-Believers—would commonly have treated him. The Greco-Roman hostility toward the Torah practice of circumcision, and the Jews who practiced it, is well documented.⁶³ Could it be that Peter was acting in a reverse attitude toward uncircumcised, new non-Jewish Believers, as they would have probably acted toward him prior to their salvation experience?

I would paraphrase what Paul asks Peter in v. 14 as, "How can you {dare} compel non-Jewish Believers to convert to Judaism, when you act like a pagan Gentile?" *Peter had no right, by his actions, to imply the necessity of proselyte conversion for the non-Jewish Believers, when he had ethically acted like a pagan!* The aspects of "to Judaize" (YLT) in v. 14 here are seen as negative, as by his actions Peter may have had no idea what he communicated to the non-Jewish Believers in Antioch.⁶⁴ Ironically, Peter may not have even been that consciously aware that, by separating himself unto the Jewish Believers, the only way that many of the non-Jewish Believers may have thought that they could have fellowship with them, was by going through ritual proselyte conversion and by becoming a member of the overly conservative, somewhat secluded Jewish community (that Paul himself, even though a loyal Pharisaic Jew, did not represent). Rather than having one group of people fellowshiping in one accord in Antioch, with their common identity being rooted in the Lord Yeshua and His completed work—Peter found himself instigating a schism with two groups, with the great travesty being that Peter had attitudes more like those of the pagans than his own Jewish people who were raised with a Torah ethic (v. 15).

It is unfortunate that many Christians have taken Paul's words in v. 14 and misconstrued them as Paul being against all Jewish tradition for all time—separating his words from the actual scene in Antioch. If anything, Paul was against embedded Jewish tradition and attitudes which impeded the Torah's mandate for Abraham's blessing to reach out to all nations (3:8). This, in Paul's mind, came before the rite of circumcision and took precedent. Of all the Jerusalem Apostles who should have understood this—Peter should have. Peter, one of Yeshua's inner three Disciples, could have fellowshiped with the non-Jewish Believers in Antioch and told them all about the Messiah who they had come to believe in. He did not do this.

Peter needed Paul to confront him, and realize that what he communicated, to his fellow non-Jewish brethren in Antioch, was more important than what his fellow Jewish brethren from Jerusalem might see (v. 12). Peter could easily go back home to Jerusalem and explain his actions in Antioch to those who may have heard that he "ate" with "Gentiles" (cf. Acts 11:18)—issues that would later be hammered out at the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council. But Peter would leave Antioch with no explanation for his actions of separation *but his actions*. And, that could cause some problems that Paul did not want to have to rectify. Paul wanted Peter to set a proper example. Paul explains this to the Galatians to demonstrate how Peter was in the wrong, and how he did not want the Galatians' own times of fellowship to be divided between those who were overly conservative in their Torah observance—at the sake of splitting up the assembly—and

⁶³ Cf. J.P. Hyatt, "circumcision," in *IDB*, 1:629-631.

⁶⁴ As Witherington, *Galatians*, 159 indicates, "It is doubtful that Peter was in fact 'compelling' Gentiles to Judaize, this is just Paul's polemical way of indicating that Peter left the Gentiles no choice if they wanted to have fellowship with him and other Jewish Christians."

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those who were new in faith and needed to be welcomed in, treated with respect, and certainly disciplined in holy living.

Galatians 2:11-14 application As Josephus' record indicates (*Wars of the Jews* 7.43, 45), the Jewish synagogues of Antioch attracted many of the locals into their ranks, who in turning away from Greco-Roman religion, were widely integrated into the local Jewish community. This surely affected the makeup of the assembly of Messiah followers. So, while many of these non-Jewish Believers were not formal Jewish proselytes, they were probably keeping some level of kosher, **and the mealtimes between the Believers**—as is agreed by various Galatians examiners—**did not serve non-kosher meat**. At most, those in Antioch did not follow as high a level of *kashrut* as those who came from Jerusalem did. The real issue that caused the schism in Antioch, by Peter separating himself to the Jewish Believers, was that Peter was actually fellowshipping with uncircumcised Greeks and Romans (2:12). The issue was over disputed table fellowship scruples, over which the Jewish community itself was internally divided.⁶⁵ In order for proper fellowship and communion to be restored, the non-Jewish Believers would apparently have "to Judaize" (2:14b) and become formal proselytes—and this is something the Apostle Paul would have nothing to do with.

In the dialogue that ensues, Paul describes to Peter how, "We *are* Jews by nature, and not sinners from the nations" (2:15, PME). Much of this had to do with the fact that having been reared with God's Instruction, they should have known the sinful ways of the nations at large, and known when they fell into some of the same negative attitudes the pagans at large demonstrated toward them as Jews.

But what was considered to be the key sin here, that the Jewish Believers in Antioch should have known about? Having been trained in the Torah's instruction their whole lives, knowing its principles of right and wrong, and knowing what God expected of them, what were Peter and those he separated to doing wrong? How did it relate to Jewish and non-Jewish relations in the Body of Messiah? Much of it pertains to the attitudes of exclusivism, turning people from the nations who were definitely seeking God away, and in promoting a spiritual culture that seeks to minimize the inclusion of others from outside—one which decisively skewed the Abrahamic mandate of being a blessing to others (3:8).

This is why Paul further asserted how justification was not to come *ex ergōn nomou* (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), but instead *dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou* (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). While there are debates regarding this terminology which are beyond the scope of our examination here, *ergōn nomou* or "works of law" is probably Paul's equivalent of *ma'asei haTorah* (מעשי התורה), appearing in 4QMMT of the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the club rules of inclusion to the Quman community were in view—here likened unto ritual proselyte circumcision meriting non-Jews "true membership" in God's people. Quite contrary to this, true membership for anyone among the redeemed comes "through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah," or what is accessible by His obedience to the Father unto death for sinful humanity:

"[Y]et knowing that a person is not justified by the works of law but through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah, even we have believed in Messiah Yeshua, that we

⁶⁵ Cf. "Table Fellowship in the Rabbinical Literature," in Hegg, *Galatians*, pp 60-62.

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might be justified by the faithfulness of Messiah, and not by the works of law; since by the works of law will no flesh be justified" (2:16, PME).⁶⁶

Today in segments of the Messianic community, we are experiencing some similar problems, as those which manifested in Antioch. Many non-Jewish Believers in the past two decades (1995-2015) have expressed a sincere interest in their Hebraic Roots and spiritual heritage in Judaism. They attend Messianic Jewish congregations which have a fair number of Jewish people in attendance, and in leadership. But these individuals, because they are not Jewish, often feel excluded. They do not feel ministered to personally the same way that they were in their previous church settings, nor do they often feel that their spiritual gifts and talents are properly used and appreciated. Simply because God chose them to be of another nationality, they are not included. Perhaps the Jewish leadership of the congregation unintentionally acts like Peter, and just inadvertently spends more time with the Jewish Believers. But what message does this send to the non-Jewish Believers? Are not all to be one in Messiah Yeshua (3:28)?

How is this problem rectified in such Messianic congregations? Many non-Jewish Believers simply get turned off to the Messianic movement, and return to their previous churches. Many endure the treatment of being "second class," because for them the rewards of being Torah observant and fellowshiping with Jewish Believers—even if they themselves are not treated fairly—outweigh the disadvantages of having to do this alone in one's own home. But then, a few non-Jewish Believers, being drawn to the "things of Torah" and of Judaism, seek acceptance beyond the Messianic synagogue. They start attending a non-Messianic synagogue—perhaps an Orthodox Jewish synagogue—and they find that they will be fully accepted as proselytes to Judaism. The disturbing thing about this is that often the non-Jewish proselyte *will be accepted more heartily* than he or she would have been accepted in the Messianic congregation. And of course, in order to become such a proselyte, **saving faith in Yeshua must be renounced.**

We have the responsibility to make sure that all are welcomed into our Messianic congregations. While a Jewish style of worship and procedure should be respected, it should not be to the extreme where entire groups of people are excluded from ministry outreach. Failure to do so, in some cases, **has already encouraged apostasy from the Messiah.**

In his resource, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians*, D. Thomas Lancaster fairly observes how, "In Antioch, Peter discovered an amazing community of believers where, in the midst of the believing Jewish community, God-fearing Gentile believers (the disciples of Paul and Barnabas) mingled freely. They worshipped with the Jewish believers; they kept the Sabbath and the festivals along with the Jewish believers; and they ate and drank with the Jewish believers at fellowship meals, at ritual meals, festival meals, and so forth—not as guests in the synagogue or second-class citizens, but as brothers and sisters in the Messiah."⁶⁷ The Apostle Peter's inadvertent action, for which he was seemingly quite sorry for at the later Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7-11), would have seen

⁶⁶ For a further discussion, consult the articles "What Are 'Works of the Law'?" and "The Faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah," appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah* by J.K. McKee; also the relevant sections of the commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*.

⁶⁷ D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians: Sermons on a Messianic Jewish Approach* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), pp 81-82.

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that the only way the non-Jewish Believers to feel fully welcome and accepted among their Jewish peers, was to seek proselyte conversion. Far from “works of law” being the entryway and identity-focus of the Body of Messiah, **what the Messiah had done was to be the identity-focus of the Body of Messiah** (2:16).

Lancaster goes on to recognize, “We have this same issue in the Messianic Jewish movement all the time. This is always the issue, and it is always the question. When Gentiles start doing Jewish things, it blurs those neat lines of distinction. Our problems in Messianic Judaism are not new problems; they are ancient problems, biblical problems, the same problems with which the disciples of the apostles and the apostles themselves struggled.”⁶⁸ In today’s Messianic congregations *in the Diaspora*, there are mixed demographics of people. The answer of some, and we should think quite wrongly, has been to offer a method conversion for non-Jewish Believers to Messianic Judaism.⁶⁹ And an overarching problem is that a complementarian ideology of *differences first* among people, tends to prevail, as opposed to a more egalitarian ideology of *common faith first*.⁷⁰

Alternatively, recognizing Paul’s word that it is by Yeshua’s faithfulness that men and women are regarded as justified, and members of the company of redeemed, we should instead be facilitating congregations and communities of Messiah followers—where a major reason why someone would be separate from another group of people, is because someone might be sick and does not want to get others sick. There are differences among Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, men and women, rich and poor, etc. But, separating from others because of ethnicity or nationality—people for whom Israel’s Messiah died—was something that Paul had nothing to do with. Thankfully, I can say that I myself attend a Messianic Jewish congregation—which while not perfect (there are no perfect congregations!)—does say that it is

..called to be a Messiah-centered, Spirit-empowered, disciple-making community that reveals the truth of Yeshua (the Jewish Jesus) to both Israel and the nations. We are committed to making Yeshua the L-rd of our life, faith and ministry. Our community seeks to be like the first Jerusalem congregation where both Jew and non-Jew function as one new man, equal before G-d (Acts 2)

Many Messianic people, non-Jewish or even Jewish, do not have such a local faith community to which to belong. And perhaps quite sadly, circumstances similar to those in Antioch, do not have those like Paul present to correct Peter when appropriate...

⁶⁸ Lancaster, *Galatians*, 84.

⁶⁹ Consult the excursus, “Should Non-Jewish Messianic Believers ‘Convert’ to (Messianic) Judaism?”, appearing in *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*.

⁷⁰ Consult the exegesis paper on Galatians 3:28, “Biblical Equality and Today’s Messianic Movement,” appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues* by J.K. McKee.