

Galatians: The Letter that Saved the Church

# The Children of Abraham

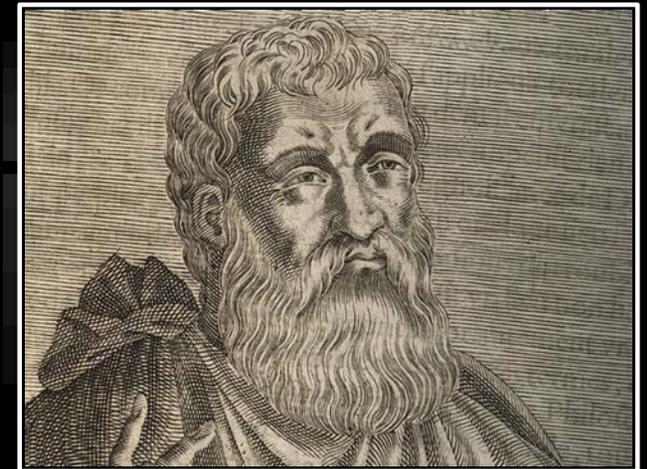


Galatians 3:1-18

Blackhawk Church 2021

# How Jews View Christians in the 2nd Century

But this is what we are most at a loss about: that you, professing to be pious, and supposing yourselves better than others, are not in any particular separated from them, and do not alter your mode of living from the nations, in that you observe no festivals or sabbaths, and do not have the rite of circumcision; and further, resting your hopes on a man that was crucified, you yet expect to obtain some good thing from God, while you do not obey His commandments. Have you not read, that soul shall be cut off from his people who shall not have been circumcised on the eighth day? And this has been ordained for strangers and for slaves equally. But you, despising this covenant rashly, reject the consequent duties, and attempt to persuade yourselves that you know God, when, however, you perform none of those things which they do who fear God. (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 10)



# The Context of Galatians

- *Situation:*

After Paul left Galatia, Jewish Christians (likely from Jerusalem) came to these churches and taught the Galatians that to be truly part of the KOG and become children of Abraham, they needed to embrace Jewish ethnicity by following some key elements of the Torah, in particular, circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws. These Jewish Christians also attacked Paul's authority as an apostle (not connected to Jerusalem), labeling him as a people-pleaser who avoided teaching the hard parts of the gospel (e.g., circumcision).

- *Content:* The letter is Paul's response to the situation

# The Context of Galatians

*Gal 1:11-2:14*

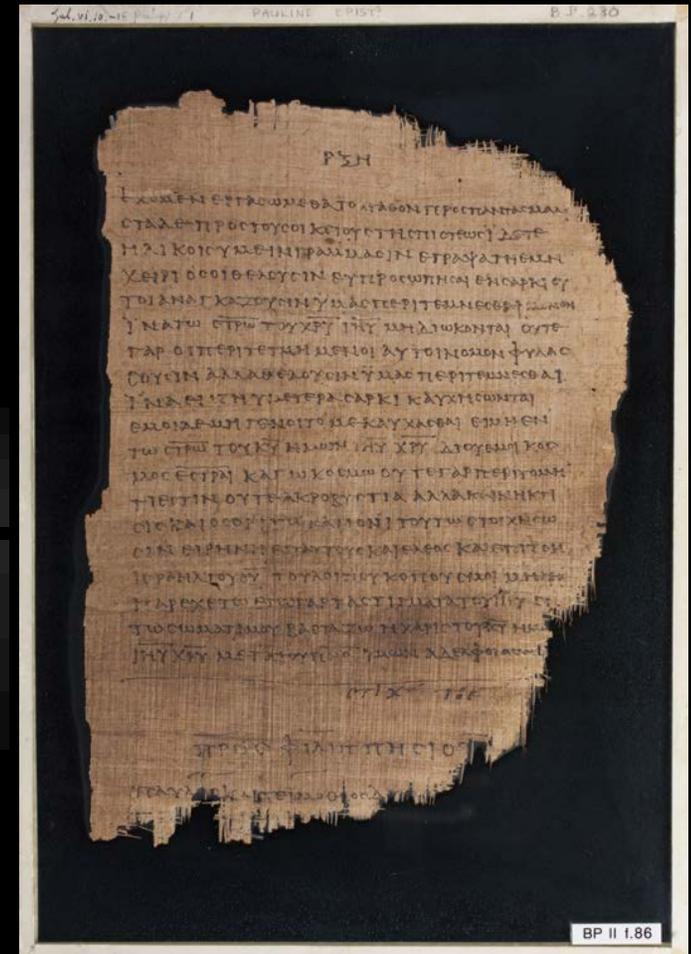
- Paul's gospel is superior. It is directly received from Jesus Christ.
- It's not connected to Jerusalem. But Jerusalem confirmed it.
- "Those guys" get their authority from the Jerusalem leaders.
- The Jerusalem leaders are hypocrites who are teaching things they know are wrong.

*Gal 2:15-21*

- Why follow the Torah, if it can't fix what's wrong with us and the world?
- Only being united with Jesus can make us right (justify).

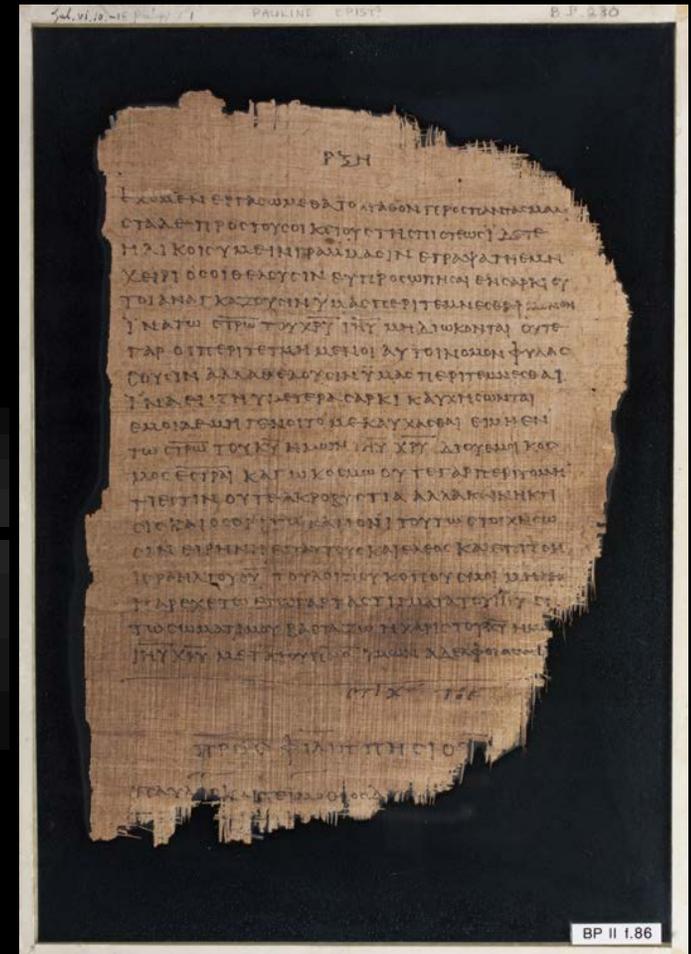
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**1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.** **2** I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? **3** Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? **4** Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? **5** So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?



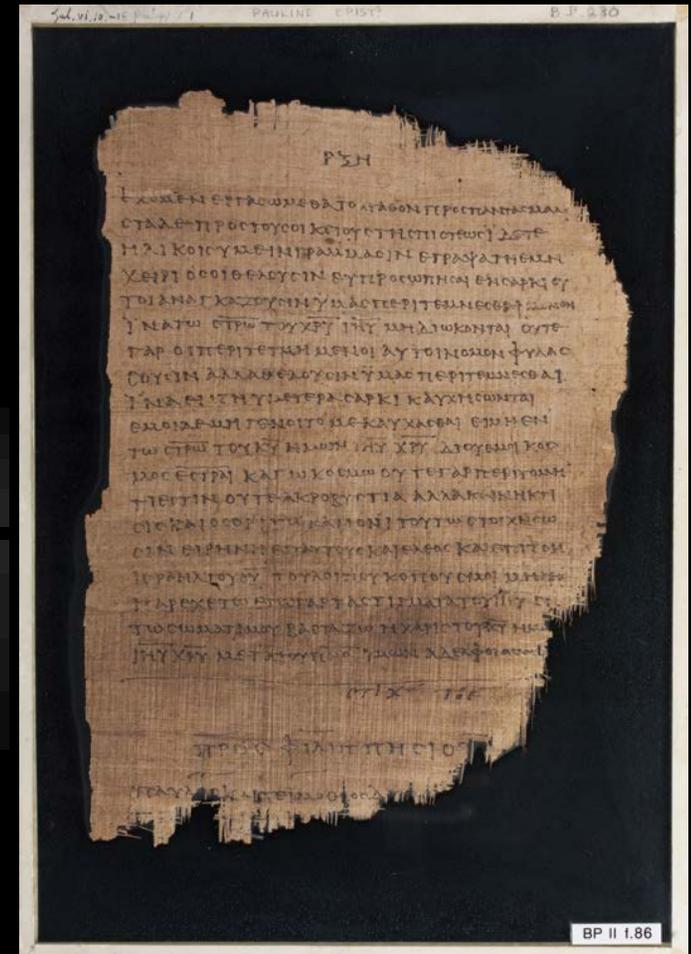
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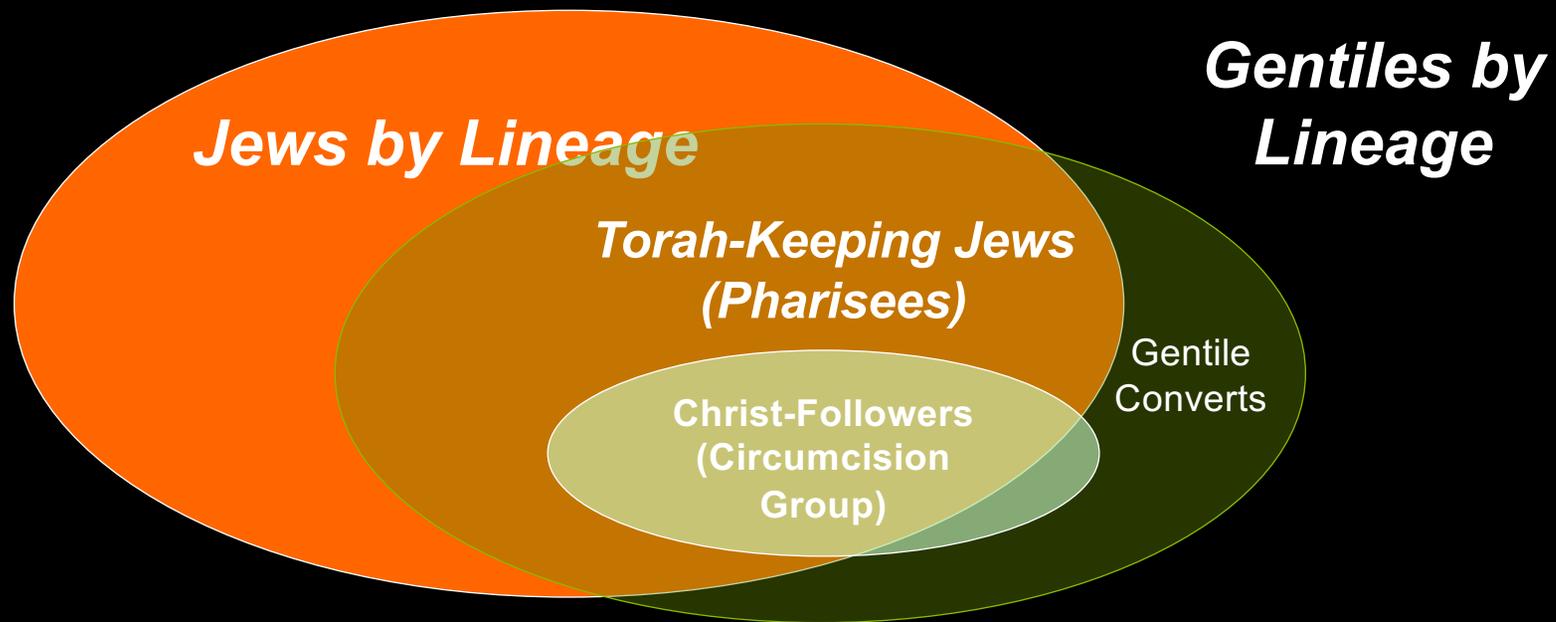
# Galatians 3:5-9

<sup>6</sup> So also **Abraham** “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who have faith are **children of Abraham**. <sup>8</sup> Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to **Abraham**: “All nations will be blessed through you.” <sup>9</sup> So those who rely on faith are blessed along with **Abraham**, the man of faith.



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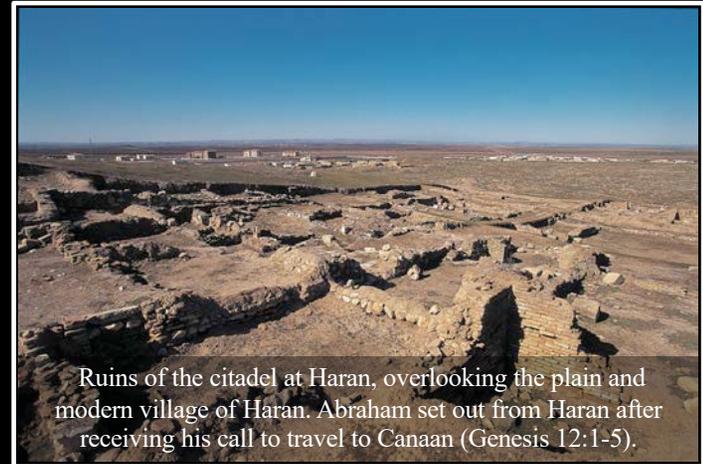
# The “True” Children of Abraham



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## Abraham and the Torah

<sup>19</sup> Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory. <sup>20</sup> He kept the law of the Most High, and entered into a covenant with him; he certified the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he proved faithful. <sup>21</sup> Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath that the nations would be blessed through his offspring; that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth, and exalt his offspring like the stars, and give them an inheritance from sea to sea and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth. (Ecclesiasticus [Sirach] 44:19-21)



Ruins of the citadel at Haran, overlooking the plain and modern village of Haran. Abraham set out from Haran after receiving his call to travel to Canaan (Genesis 12:1-5).

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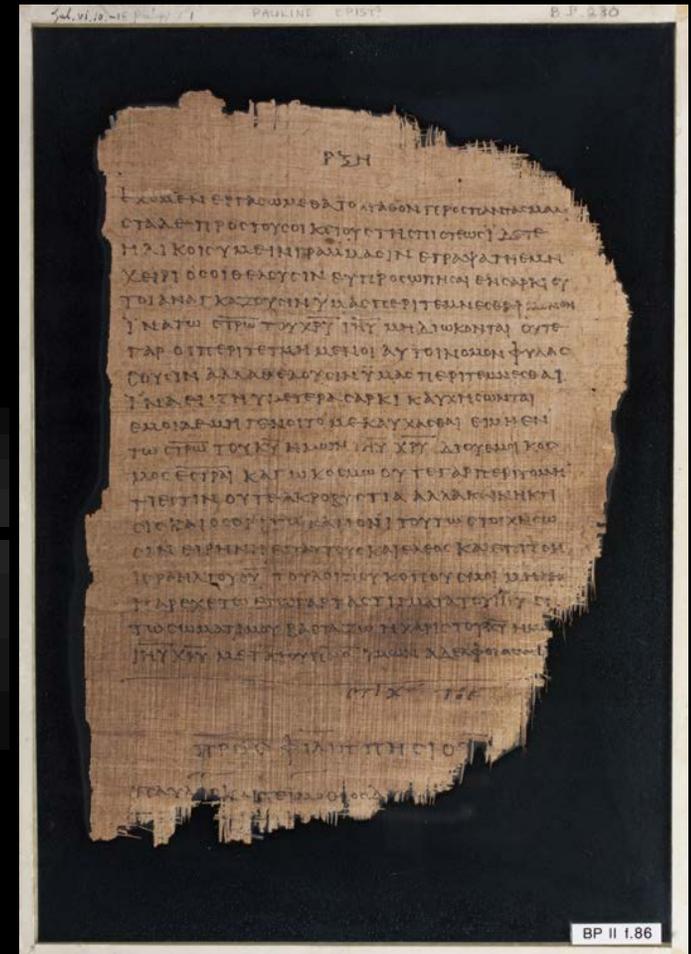
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### Story of Genesis

- Gen 12 Call of Abraham (blessing the nations)
- Gen 15 Promise of offspring like the stars. Abraham believed. Covenant initiation
- Gen 17 Sign of Covenant: circumcision
- Gen 22 The Sacrifice of Isaac

# Galatians 3:5-9

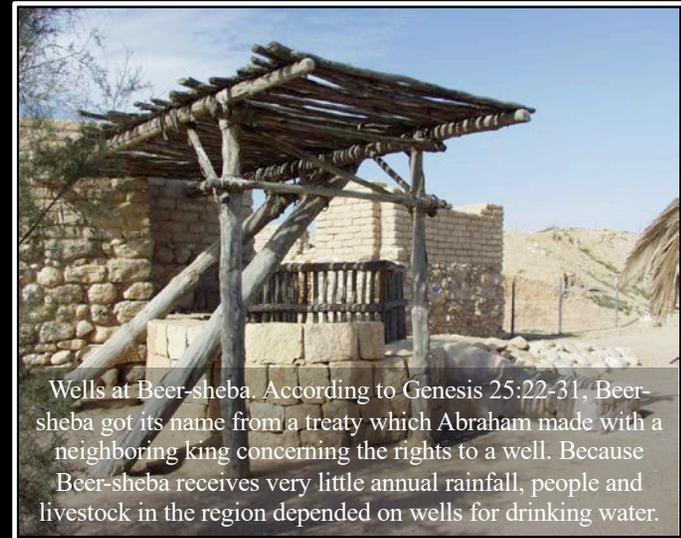
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## The Faith of Abraham

<sup>1</sup> After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” <sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” <sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” <sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Gen 15:1-6)

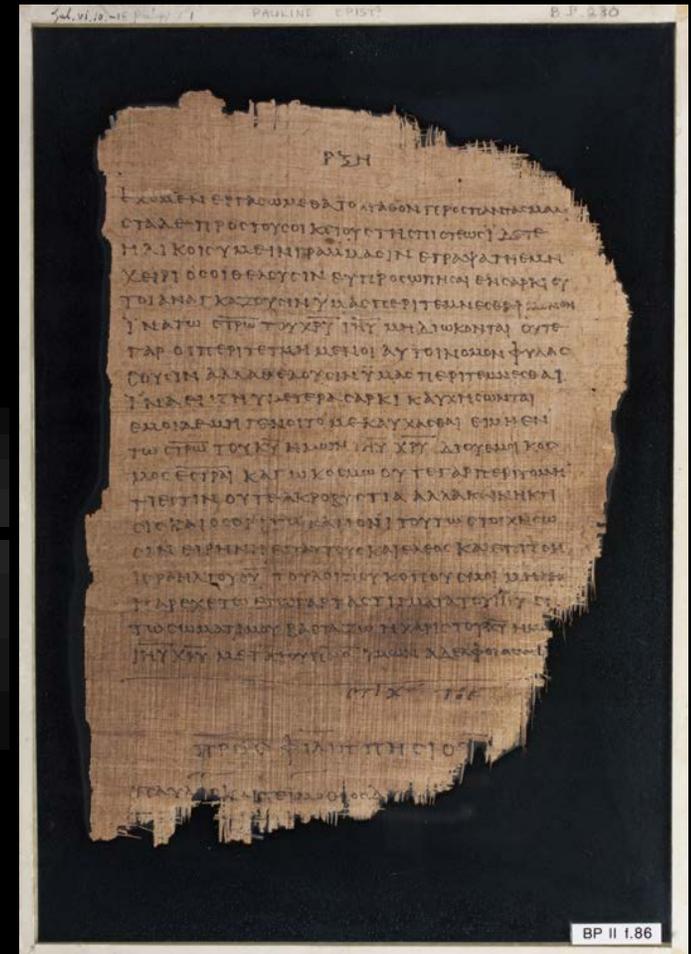


Wells at Beer-sheba. According to Genesis 25:22-31, Beer-sheba got its name from a treaty which Abraham made with a neighboring king concerning the rights to a well. Because Beer-sheba receives very little annual rainfall, people and livestock in the region depended on wells for drinking water.

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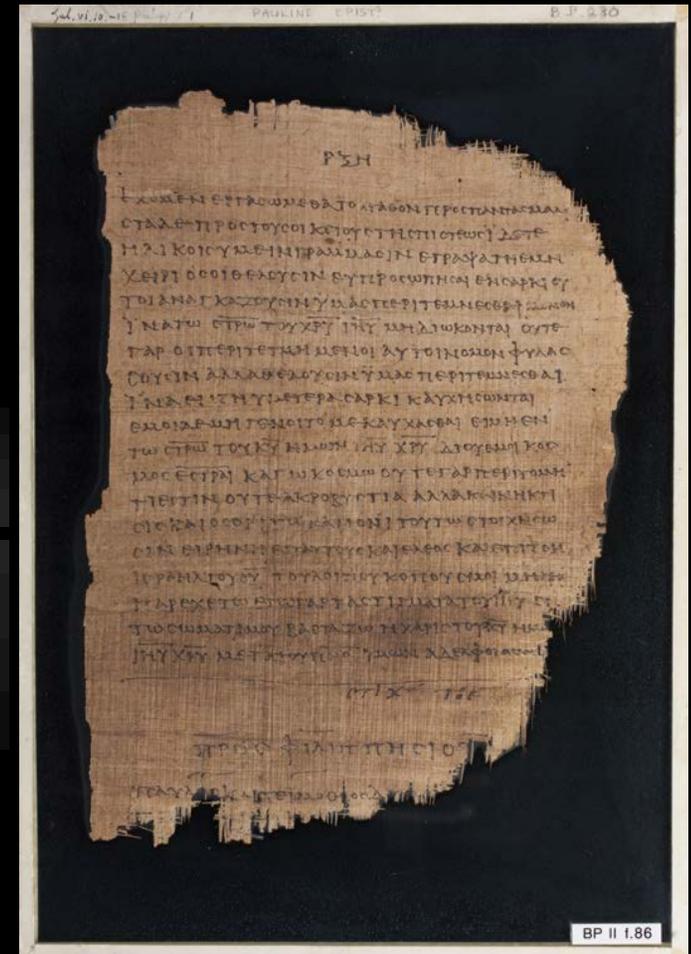
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11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

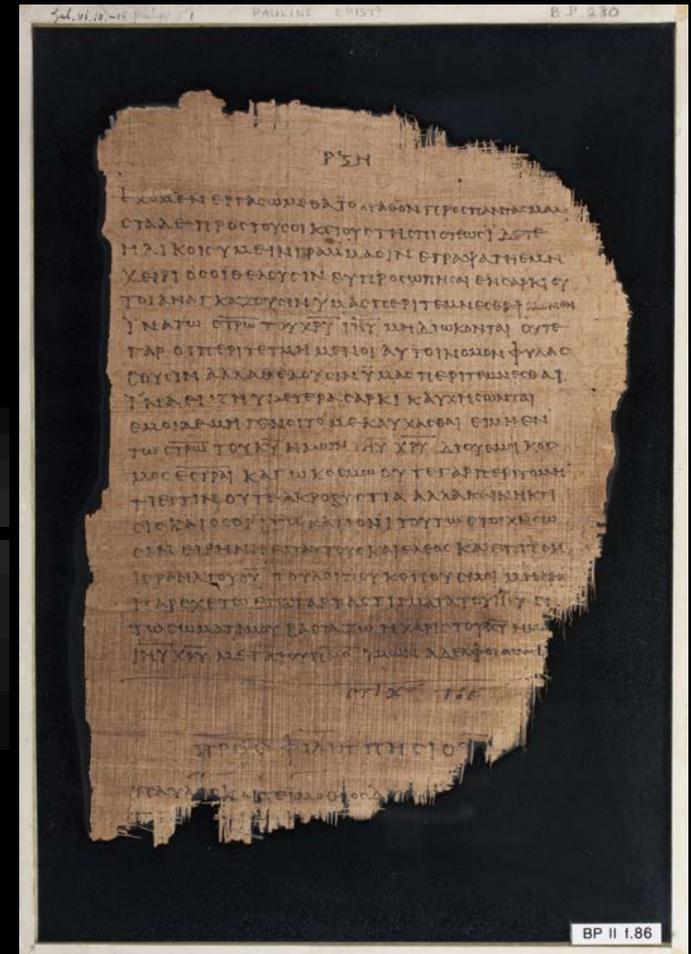


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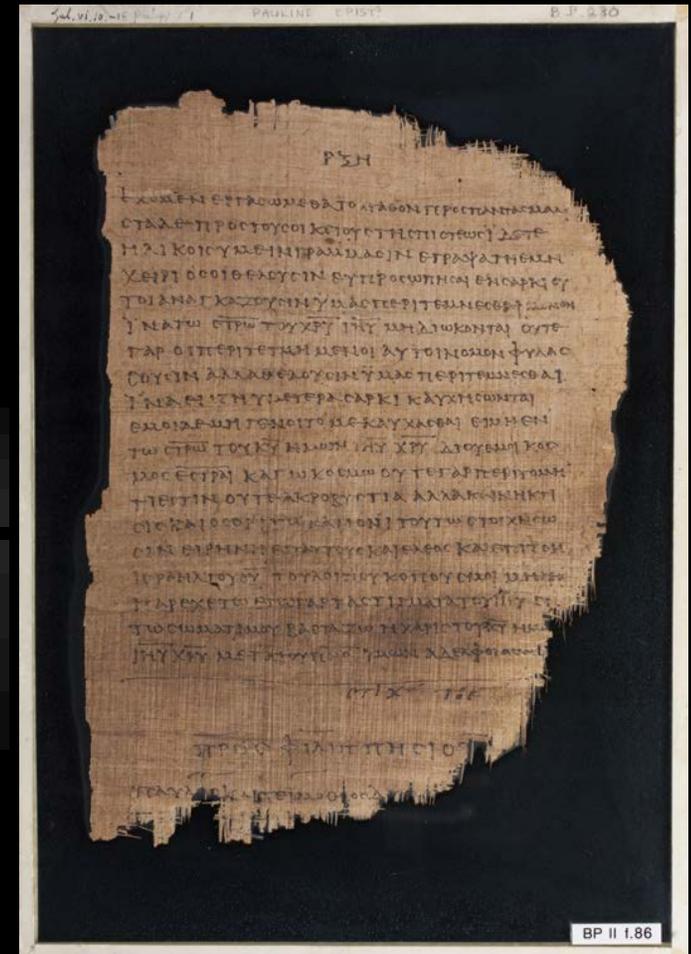
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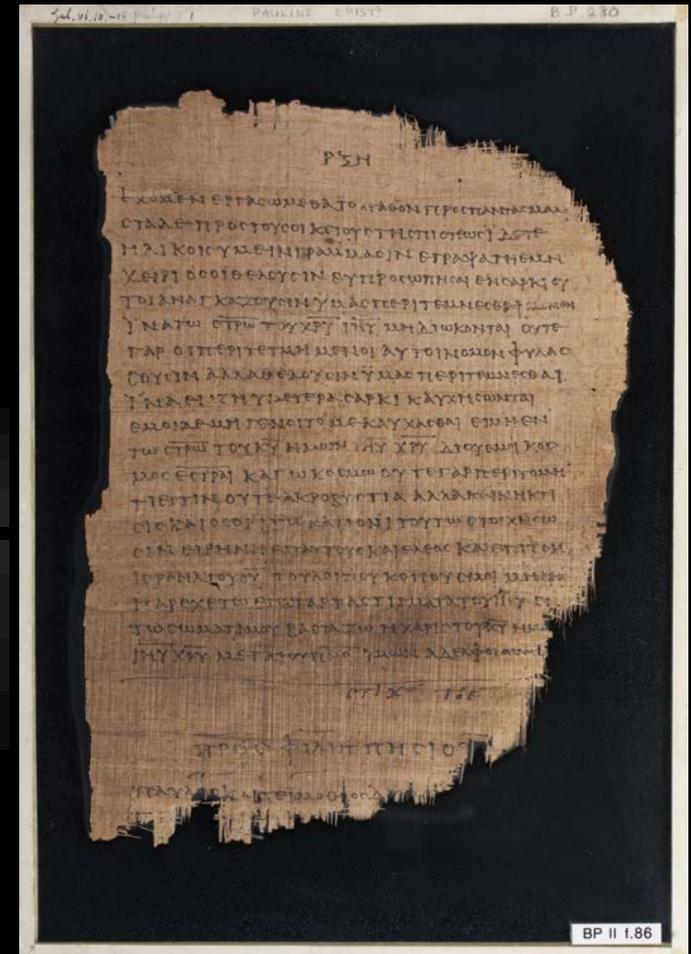
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## The Curse of the Torah (Deut 27)

15 “**Cursed** is anyone who makes an idol—a thing detestable to the LORD, the work of skilled hands—and sets it up in secret.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

16 “**Cursed** is anyone who dishonors their father or mother.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

17 “**Cursed** is anyone who moves their neighbor’s boundary stone.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

18 “**Cursed** is anyone who leads the blind astray on the road.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

19 “**Cursed** is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

20 “**Cursed** is anyone who sleeps with his father’s wife, for he dishonors his father’s bed.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

21 “**Cursed** is anyone who has sexual relations with any animal.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

22 “**Cursed** is anyone who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

23 “**Cursed** is anyone who sleeps with his mother-in-law.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

24 “**Cursed** is anyone who kills their neighbor secretly.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

25 “**Cursed** is anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

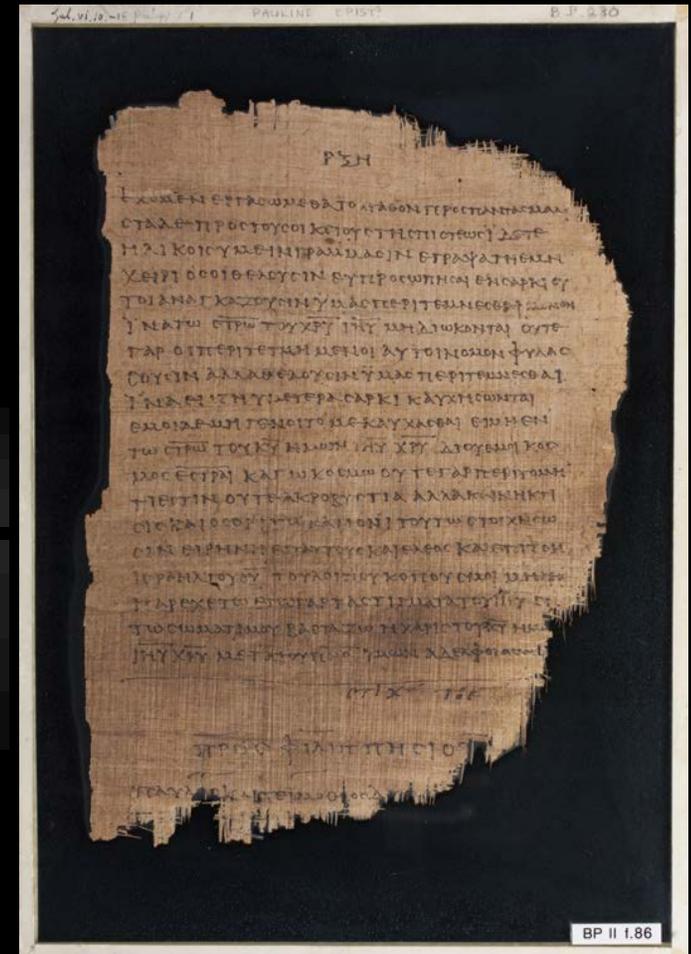
26 “**Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.**” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

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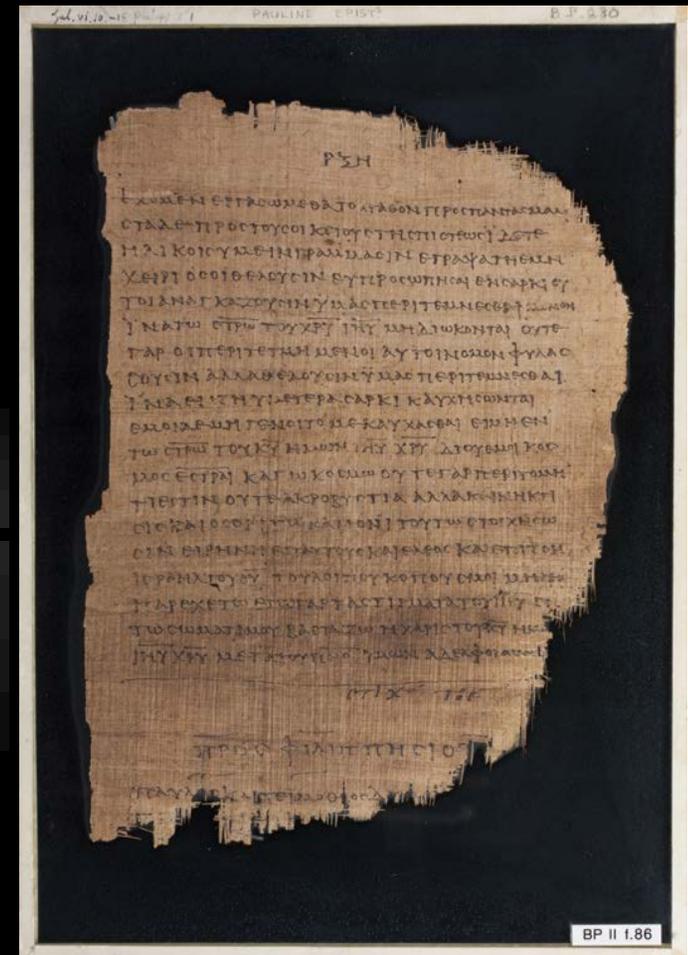
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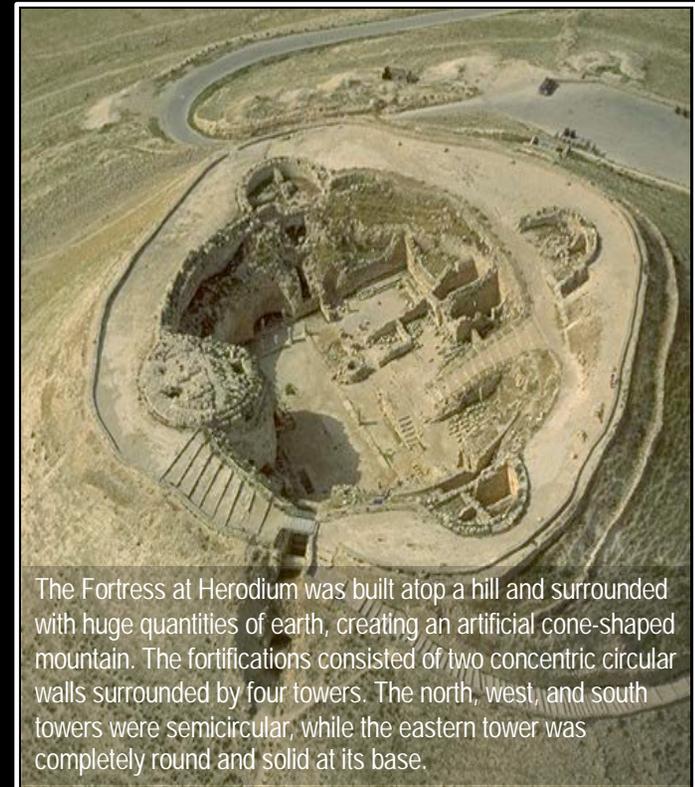
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## The Righteous Will Live by Faith

- Habakkuk: O Yahweh, why the injustice? (Presumably in Israel) (Hab. 1:1–4)
- Yahweh: My punishment is coming via the Chaldeans (Hab. 1:5–11)
- Habakkuk: Wait! Chaldeans are worse than us!?!? (Hab. 1:12–2:1)



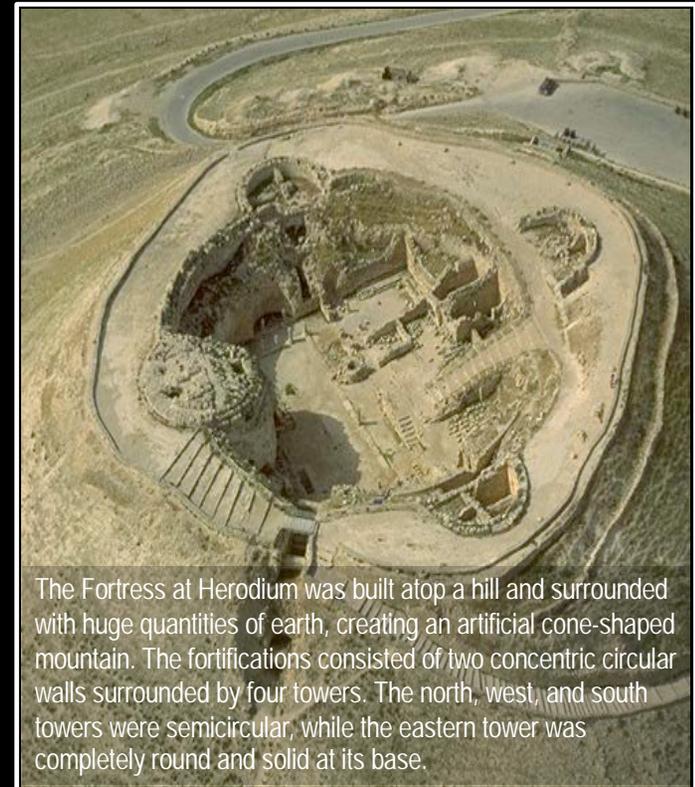
The Fortress at Herodium was built atop a hill and surrounded with huge quantities of earth, creating an artificial cone-shaped mountain. The fortifications consisted of two concentric circular walls surrounded by four towers. The north, west, and south towers were semicircular, while the eastern tower was completely round and solid at its base.

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## The Righteous Will Live by Faith

- 1 I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.
- 2 Then the LORD replied:  
“Write down the revelation  
and make it plain on tablets  
so that a herald may run with it.
- 3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time;  
it speaks of the end  
and will not prove false.  
Though it linger, wait for it;  
it will certainly come  
and will not delay.
- 4 “See, the enemy is puffed up;  
his desires are not upright—  
but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness.



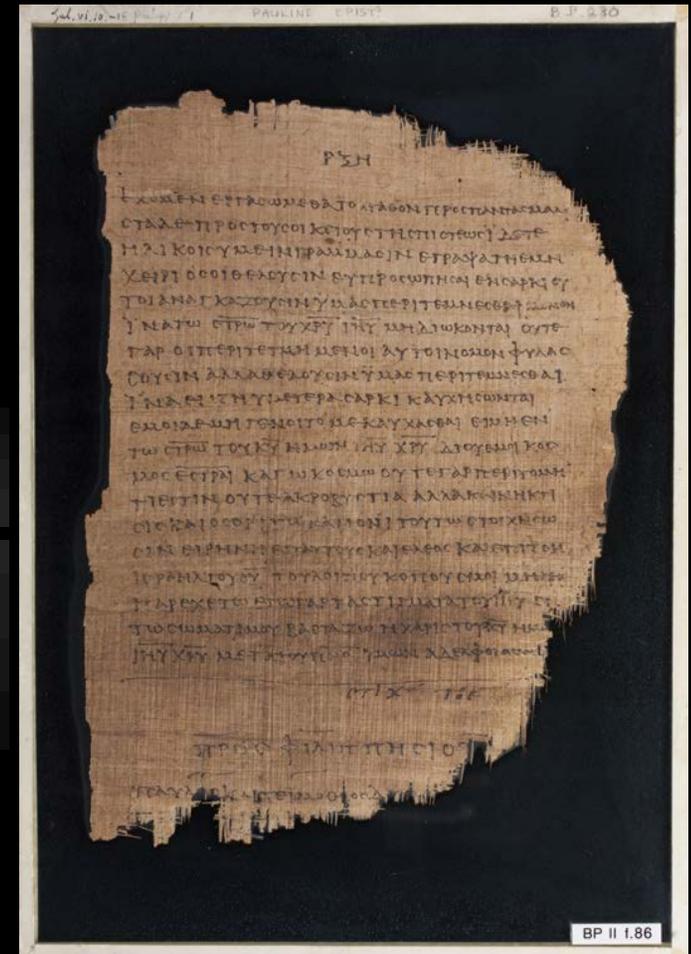
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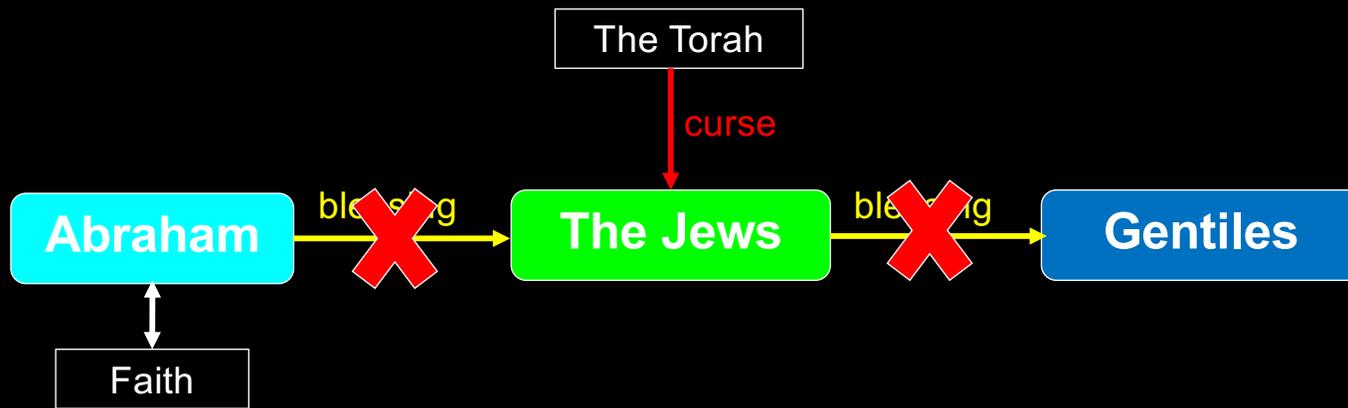
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# The Promise to Abraham



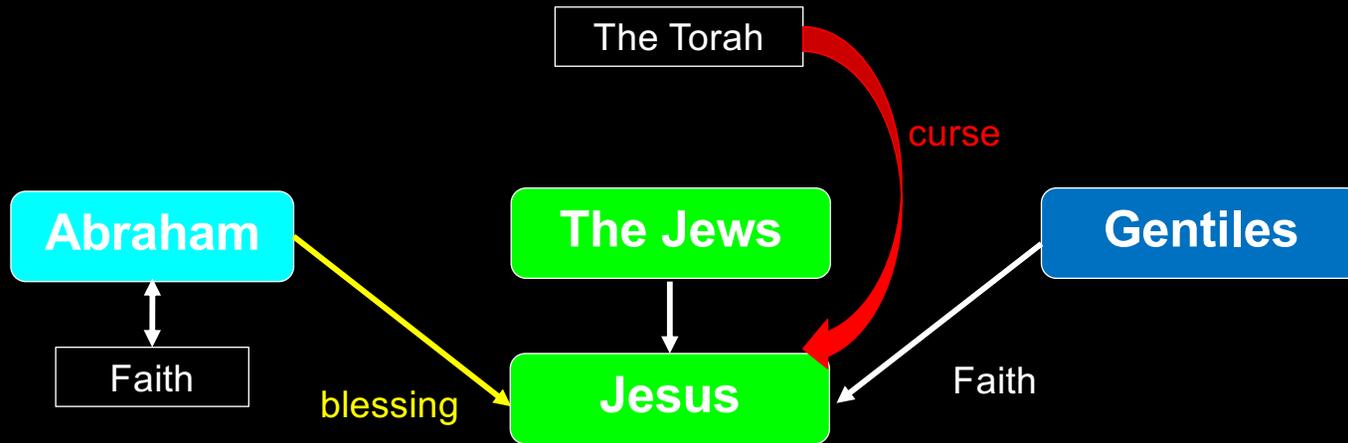
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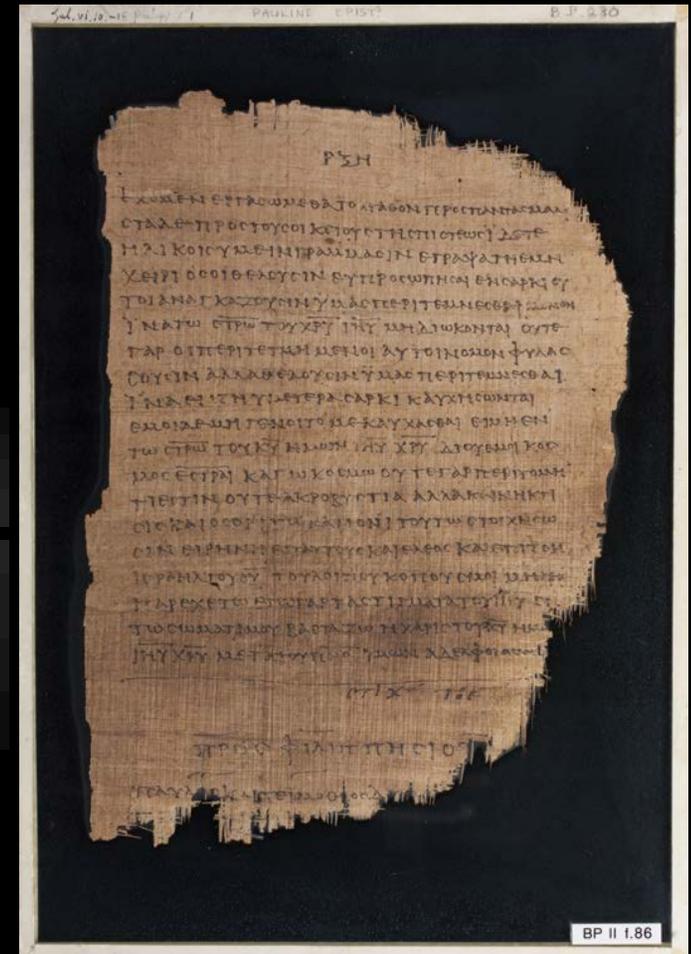
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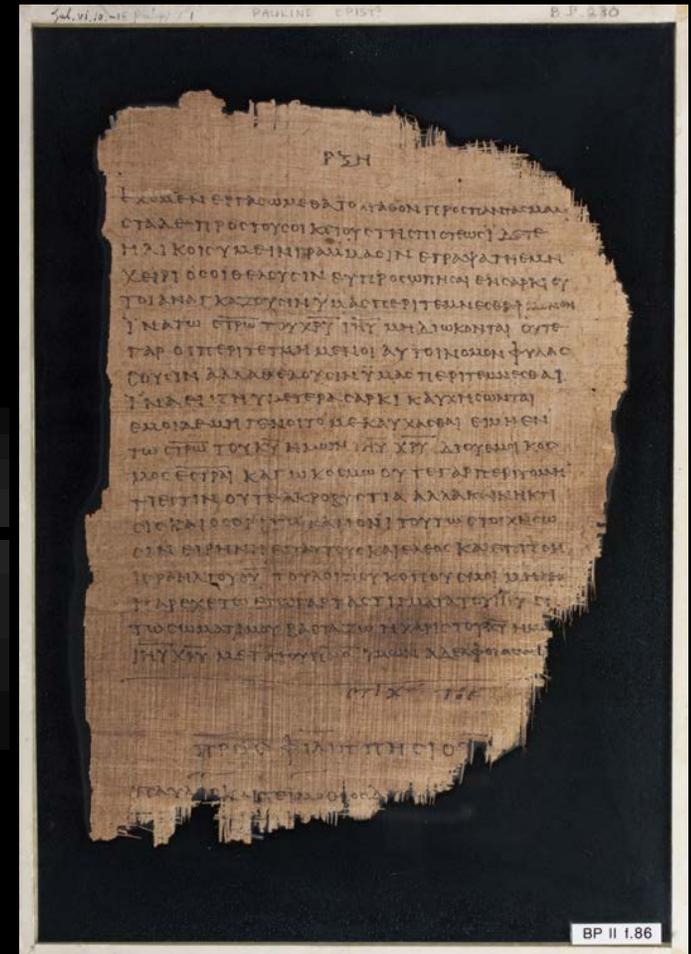
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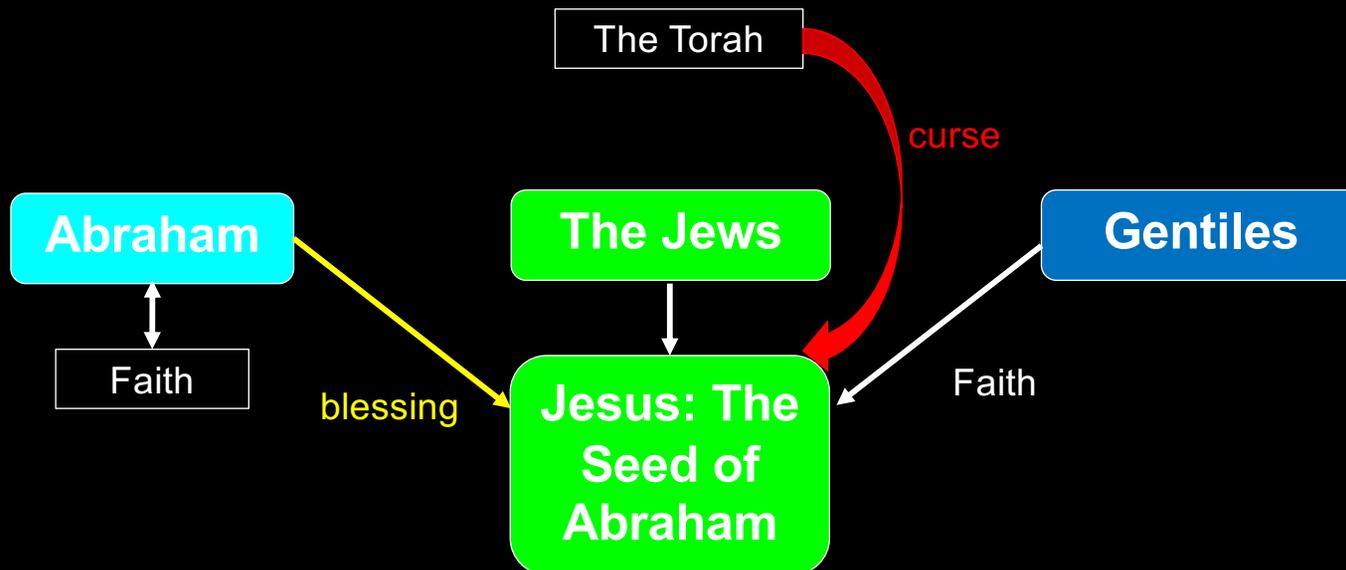
# Galatians 3:10-14

<sup>15</sup> Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. <sup>16</sup> The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. <sup>17</sup> What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. <sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.



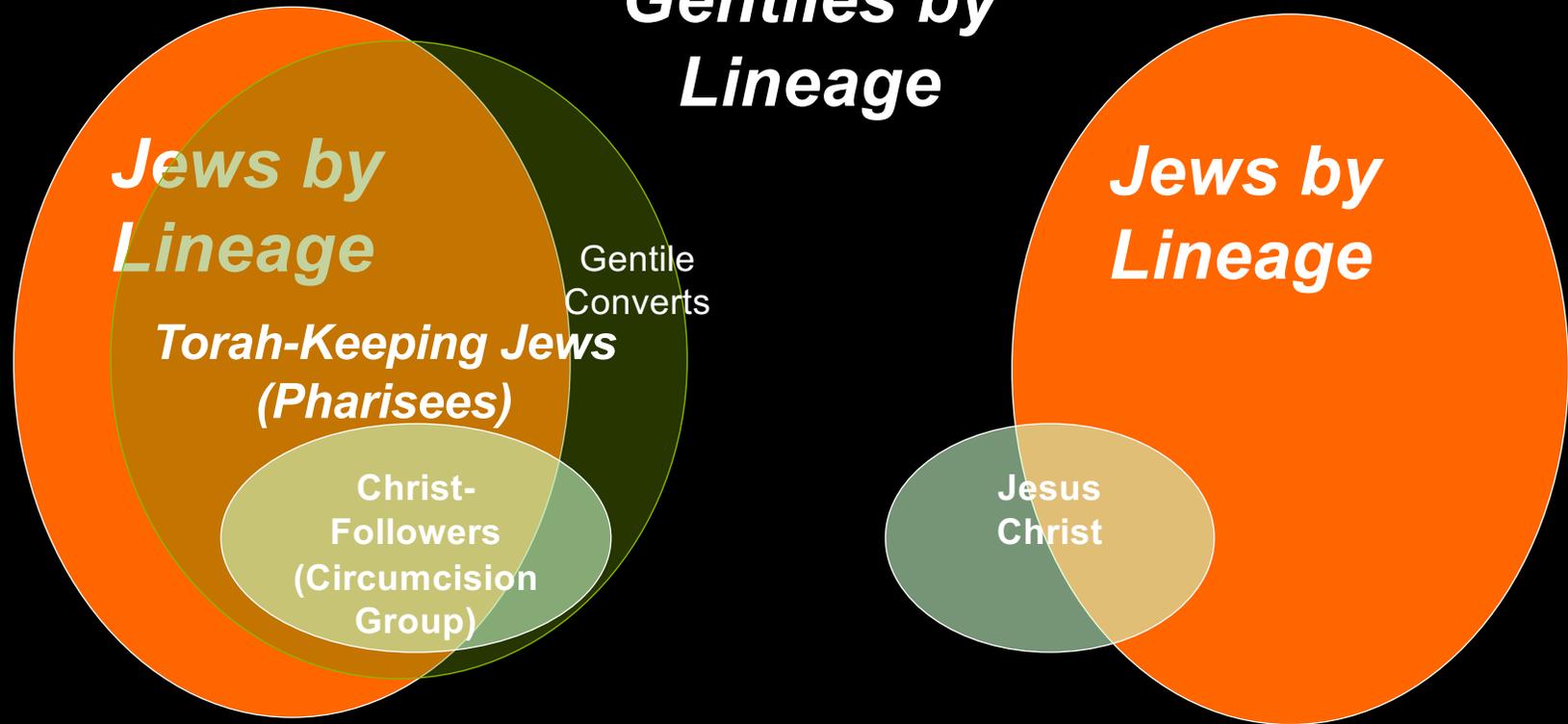
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# Gentiles by Lineage



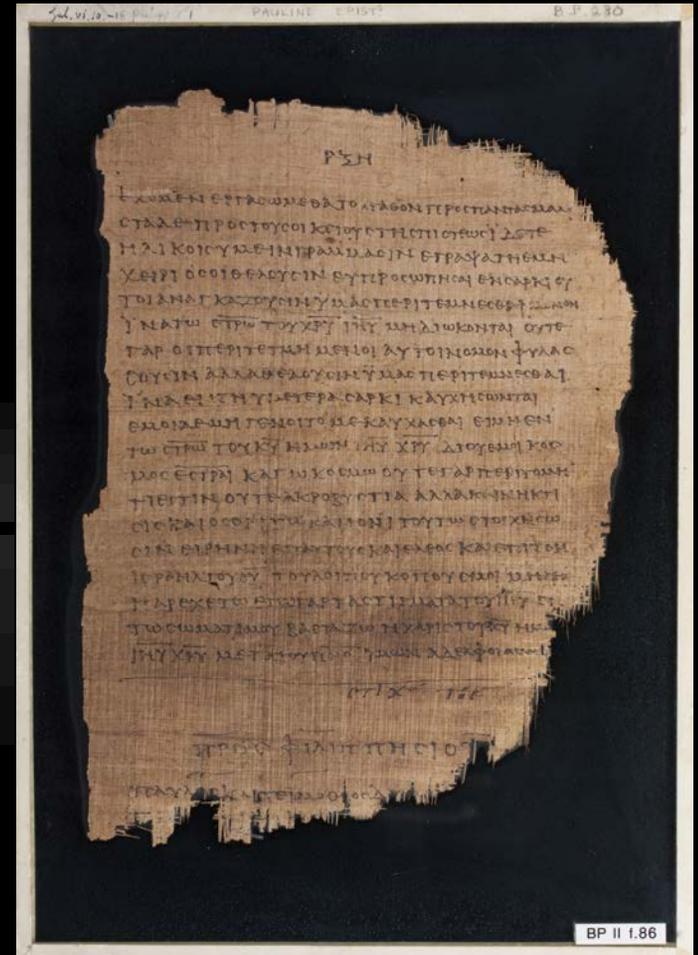
Gal. 2:12-14 Pauline Epist. B.P. 230

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# A Conversation (Gal. 3:1-18)

Paul: Are you stupid? You already got the Holy Spirit. You already got the blessings of Abraham. You have the proof that you have been justified (made right). You got it through faith not by following the Torah!

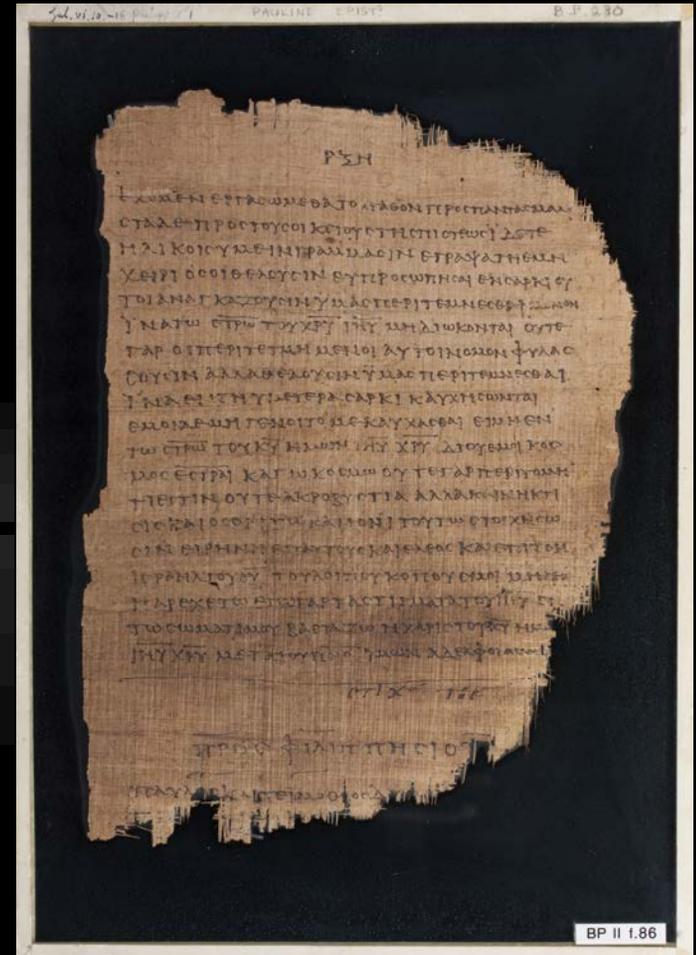
Galatians: But Paul, Abraham's children got circumcised. They followed the Torah. You know that!



# A Conversation (Gal. 3:1-18)

Paul: This is where you're wrong. You're not reading the story right. Abraham wasn't defined by following the Torah. Abraham was defined by faith. He believed.

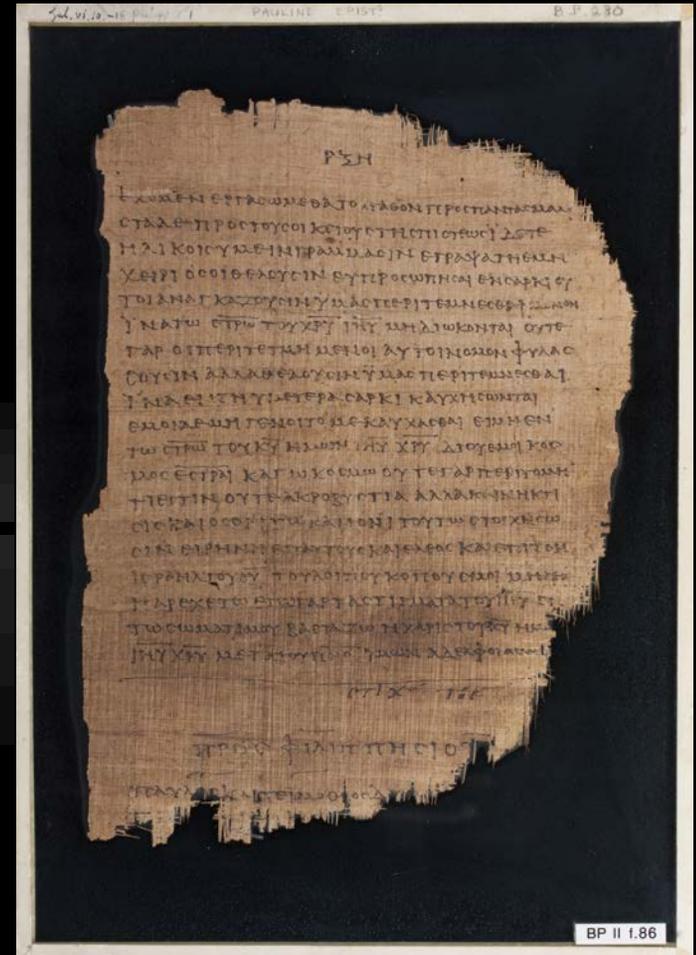
Not to mention, God's call to Abraham was always intended to create a multicultural Kingdom of God with faith being the only requirement. That was God's plan all along.



# A Conversation (Gal. 3:1-18)

Paul: Following the Torah just gets you cursed. Have you not read the Torah? The last chapters in Deuteronomy? The Torah comes with a curse, the curse of exile. Look at the Jewish people. They are in exile. Do you want to live under that curse?

The amazing thing is, Jesus, as the faithful Jewish Messiah, lived out the mission of Israel. He bore the curse on the cross. He is now the New Israel. He's the "one seed" of Abraham, through whom we become children of Abraham.

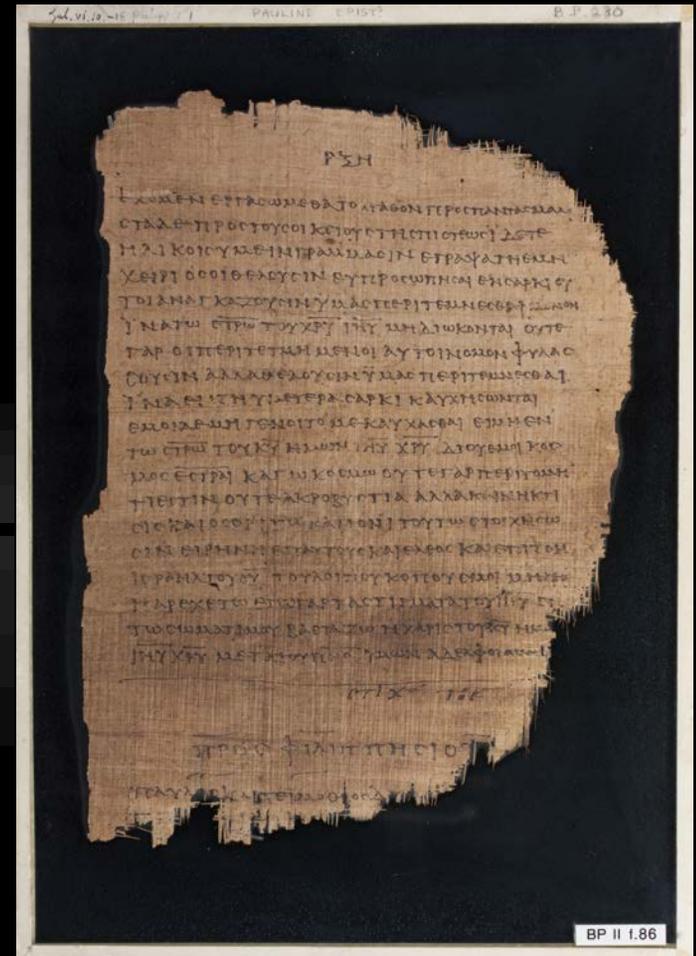




# A Conversation (Gal. 3:19-4:11)

Galatians: OK. I see that. But that just raises a huge problem. What is the Torah for? If all it does is curse people, why did God give it in the first place? What's the point?

Paul: The Torah served the purpose as the guardian of the people of God when they had not yet come of age. During this guardianship, the Torah revealed God's standards and values, but it had no power to actually transform God's people. The coming of the gospel of Jesus ends this guardianship.



# A Conversation (Gal. 3:19-4:11)

Paul: In other words, Jewish ethnicity as entrance requirement to the Kingdom was always meant to be a temporary thing. In this new age, all peoples are invited to join into Christ and become adopted as children of God without becoming Jewish (i.e. go under the guardianship of the Torah).

That includes you Galatians. In fact, you all were under a guardianship of pagan gods and superstitions. Same thing there. They kept you under lock and key. So why would you go back? What's wrong with you?

