

Epistle of Ya'akov (James) ~ 1:1

Greetings

From: Ya'akov, a slave of God and of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

Ya'akov was not only the half-brother of Yeshua and by now *a slave of God and of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah* and the leader of the **Kehillah** in **Yerushalayim**. We learn in Acts 15:13 ff. that he was also instrumental in sending a letter to the **Goyim** throughout **Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia**, instructing them *to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will be doing the right thing.*

To: The Twelve Tribes in the Diaspora:

Shalom!

Now in his epistle, he turns his attention to **Messianic Jewish Believers**. *The Twelve Tribes* refers to **Jews** and is not merely a metaphor for **Christians**, as some **Christian** commentators maintain. This is clear from the style of the letter generally, particularly from the fact that they had synagogues, as we will see in chapter 2. Not that **Gentile Believers** were excluded from reading it, but that the leader of the **Messianic Jewish** community in **Yerushalayim** is addressing fellow **Jewish Believers in the Diaspora**, outside Israel.

The **Diaspora** became a technical term referring to **Jews** living outside the land of Israel. Besides the expulsions from the land by the **Assyrians** (2Ki 17; 1Ch 5) and **Babylonians** (2Ki 24, 25; 2Ch 36), many **Jews** were taken to **Rome** as slaves when the **Romans** conquered them around 63 BCE.

Shalom!

Yeshua instructs us: ¹² *When you enter someone's household, say, 'Shalom aleikhem!'* ¹³ *If the home deserves it, let your shalom rest on it; if not, let your shalom return to you* ~ Matthew 10:12-13 (CJB). The word *shalom* means not only peace but also tranquility, safety, well-being, welfare, health, contentment, success, comfort, wholeness, and integrity. *Shalom aleikhem* means "Peace be upon you" and is a standard greeting, as is "*Shalom!*" Therefore, there is a deeper meaning to Yeshua's instruction in v. 13 on when to give or withhold *shalom*, for He refers not only to the greeting but to the whole complex of peace/wholeness/well-being that the **Messiah** offers through His **talmidim** and similarly at many places in the **Brit Hadashah**. ¹

We will learn a little more about **Ya'akov** as we dig into what he says about the **Testing of Our Faith**.

¹ Stern, D. H. (1996). **Jewish New Testament Commentary** .