

Oh Foolish Galatians

Email:

One question occurs to me: What were the "Judaizers" proposing that so riled up the Apostle Paul that he wondered whether they ought to go ahead all the way and castrate themselves? (so that their tribe would die out?)

Answer:

"Oh foolish Galatians,"

But, before we go there, let's go back to where these false teachers started. Acts 15:5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

That doesn't sound so bad, keeping the law of Moses. After all, if Jesus is Torah, then this should be alright. But this is being spoken by Pharisees and when they say 'law of Moses' they mean the Torah and everything that the Rabbis have added to the Torah. And when they say, be circumcised that means a full conversion to Judaism and therefore following every teaching of Judaism.

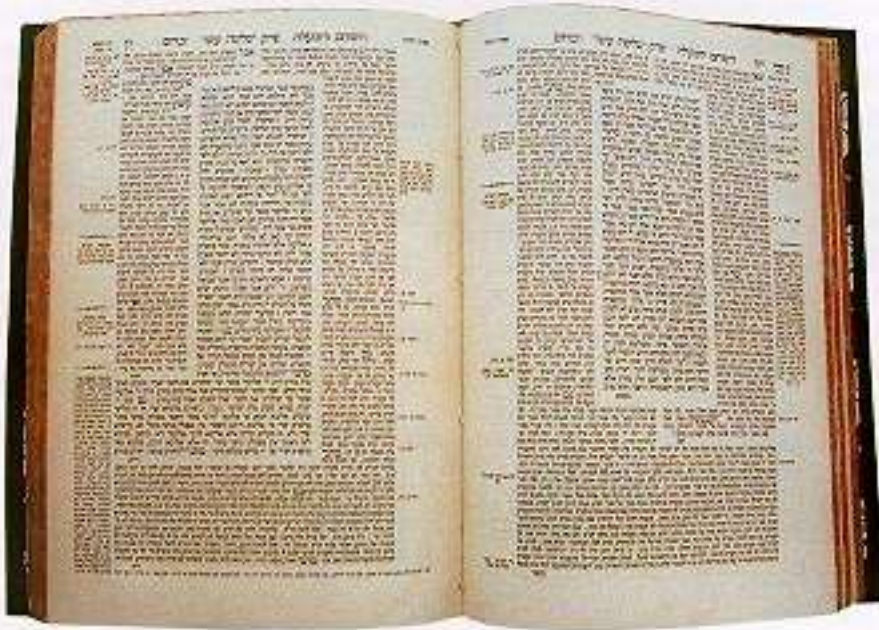
It is the same today. If you go to Jerusalem and walk into a Jewish bookstore, especially in or around the Old City and there are plenty around there which are Orthodox. And you ask the shopkeeper to see a Hebrew Torah, he will show you a beautiful book and when you open it you will see pages written in beautiful Hebrew all arranged very geometrically. A little box of Hebrew text in the middle of the page and then all around the center box of text is more text making a big square. The text in the center is what we know as the Torah. It is the writing of the Old Testament. And the text all around the margins we might think of as commentary. But these are writings of thoughts and teachings of Rabbi's dating back to 400 years before Christ. And if you took this book to a Rabbi, he would tell you that all of the text, the text in the middle and the text around the edges is Torah. Because that is their definition of Torah. They call the text around the edges, the fence around the Torah. These added laws of men keep you from stepping on the bigger laws of God's Torah. Because they add so many extra obligations that you can't get close to violating one of God's laws.

And so, it was in the New Testament with the Pharisees. Their definition of 'Law of Moses' included these same teachings that are still preserved in the Hebrew Torah.

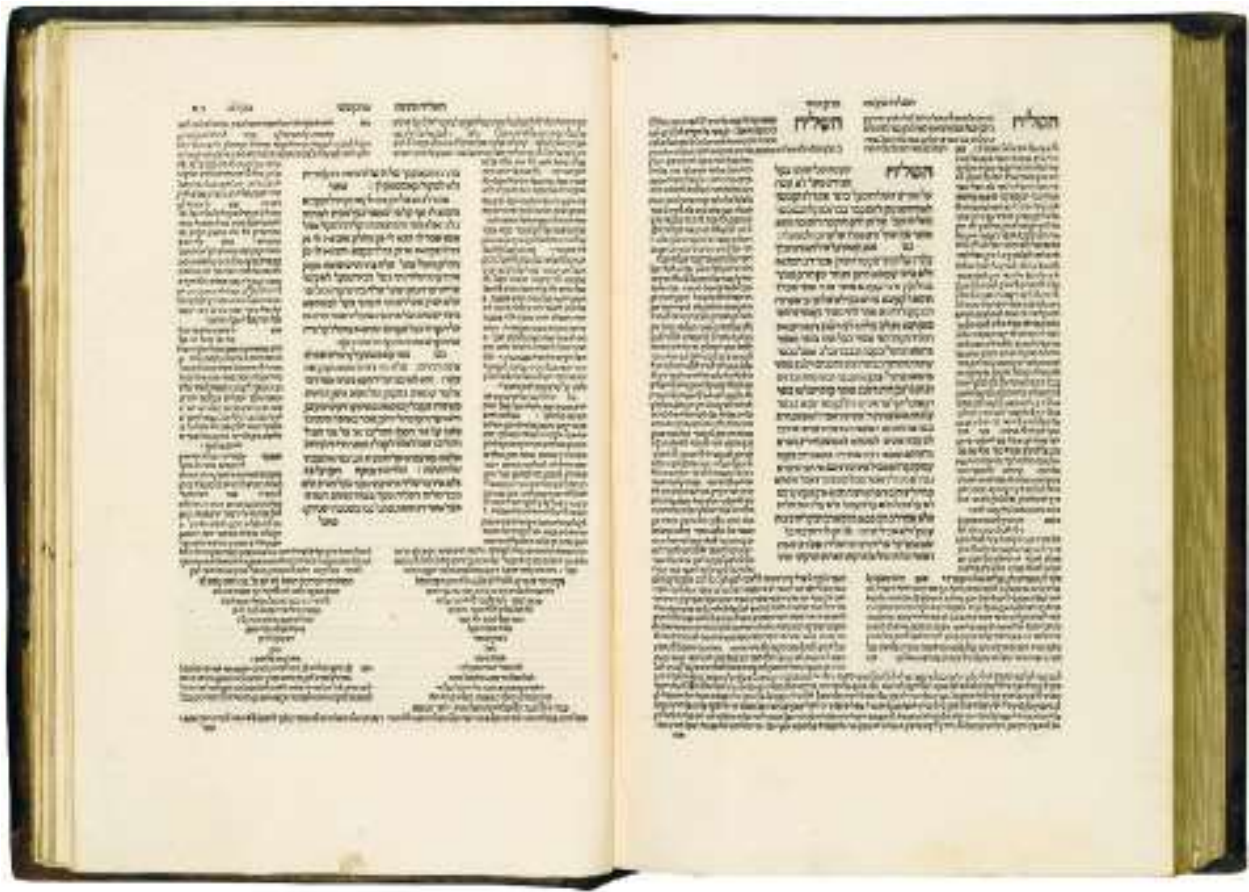
Now back to Paul and his Galatians. These Pharisees that preached that the Christian Gentiles needed to be circumcised are bewitching his young Christians (Galatians 3:1). And what he is infuriated with is the idea of Gentile Christians becoming converted to Judaism where they will be obligated to obey not just the Torah that is now written in their hearts by Christ Jesus, but the whole Sanhedrin Law of the day.

Galatians 5:3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

And so, he tells those Pharisees that if they are so anxious to circumcise someone then they should finish what was started on themselves and cut the rest off. (Galatians 5:12) He did not imply that this was to be done to the Jewish nation only to those agitators who were bothering his young Christians.



Example #1



Example #2