

- A Study in Acts -

**Chapter Seven – Stephen’s Defense and Death.**

**ACTS 7:17-37:**

In our previous lesson, we introduced the first portion of Stephen’s defense. He has gone back to Abraham and then to the patriarchs to follow, establishing that everything in his defense before the council has been the work of God. It was in this first portion of Stephen’s defense that he would encompass the book of Genesis, from the promises of God to Abraham, to the fulfillment of the portion that would lead to his descendants in Egypt.

In this lesson, Stephen will now move forward to the work of Moses in the fulfillment of God’s words to Abraham (**Genesis 15**), to bring his descendants out of Egypt, judging both Egypt and the Canaanites in the process. In addition, in this portion, he will also answer the accusations of blasphemy against Moses and the Law.

**Text #1:**

**Vs. 17-43: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.**

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**Acts 7:17-22** “But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt <sup>18</sup> till another king arose who did not know Joseph. <sup>19</sup> This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live. <sup>20</sup> At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father’s house for three months. <sup>21</sup> But when he was set out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. <sup>22</sup> And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.”

Stephen has now completed the linear thread he had sown in the first portion of his defense. He began with the promise to Abraham concerning his descendants multiplying, but becoming slaves in Egypt, then bringing them out (**Genesis 15:12-21**).

It would be as God prepared to redeem His people through Abraham from their slavery that Moses would be born. The circumstances of his birth and what Stephen has rendered here can be read in the **first two chapters** of **Exodus**. Although a new Pharaoh would come up in Egypt who now does not care that Joseph saved his people before; but began a campaign of burdening the Hebrews due to a greater fear of the Hebrews and their numbers, they would continue to prosper. This would force the Egyptians to more drastic measures; harsher. It would be during the edicts of Pharaoh concerning putting the male children of the Hebrews to death that Moses would be born and spared. Due to special circumstances, he would be raised in the house of Pharaoh and trained in the wisdom of Egypt (He like the Apostle Paul would excel beyond his contemporaries; **vs.22; Galatians 1:14**).

## Text #2:

Acts 7:23-29 “Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup> For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. <sup>26</sup> And the next day he appeared to *two of them* as they were fighting, and *tried to* reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ <sup>27</sup> But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘**Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?**’ <sup>28</sup> **Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?**’ <sup>29</sup> Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.”

Highlighted passages are direct quotes from: **Exodus 2:14**.

**Forty Years Old:** In **verse 23**, we have the first of three forty-year periods to be mentioned (2<sup>nd</sup> in **vs.30**; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in **vs. 36**). This first one describes the first period in the history of Moses’, and the time of his coming of age in Egypt.

As Moses has now come of age, there is the realization that he is not Egyptian but Hebrew; however, going to his own people at this stage has not worked out well. He is forced to flee to Midian (An area mostly east of the Jordan River, paralleling the Dead Sea and extending south to the eastern portions of the Sinai Peninsula).

Along with this portion of Stephen’s defense, note the Hebrew writer’s words concerning this first portion of the history of Moses:

**Hebrews 11:23-27** “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup> esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

<sup>27</sup> By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

The portion in **verse 26**; “esteeming the reproach of Christ”, is a reference of to the rejection of Moses by his own people in the same fashion as Christ Jesus (see: **John 1:11**).

## Text #3:

Acts 7:30-36 “And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. <sup>31</sup> When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, <sup>32</sup> saying, ‘**I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the**

**God of Jacob.** And Moses trembled and dared not look. <sup>33</sup> *Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. <sup>34</sup> I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt."*

<sup>35</sup> "This Moses whom they rejected, saying, *'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'* is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. <sup>36</sup> He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years."

Highlighted passages are direct quotes from: **Exodus 3:5, 7, 8, 10; 2:14.**

**Forty Years had Passed:** An interesting thought should occur to you now that maybe you had not considered before; Moses is eighty years old when God is going to send him back to Egypt to bring the children of Israel out.

**The God of your Fathers:** As God would present Himself to Moses to establish Who it is that is sending him to redeem Israel; He states that He is the God of Moses' fathers, the same ones that Jesus would state demonstrates that He is the God of the living to the Sadducees (**Luke 20:37**).

**In the Wilderness Forty Years:** At the conclusion of this final text, we learn that an additional forty years of history is included after the Israelites come out of Egypt by the power of God; to include the wilderness wondering (which would see Moses to 120 years old).

The Hebrew writer also would commentate on this final portion in this text:

**Hebrews 11:28-29** "By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

<sup>29</sup> By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned."

### Summary

The importance of this history lesson by Stephen is first, to establish that God has made these things come about. Secondly to bring to the forefront this prophetic statement by Moses, note:

#### Text #4:

**Acts 7:37** "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, *'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'*"

See: **Deuteronomy 18:15-19.**

In establishing the history to this point as controlled by the mighty hand of God; how could Stephen speak blasphemy against Moses and the Law, when it was Moses who said that when the Prophet like him came from among them (one of their own, a redeemer, a lawgiver, and a prophet); He should be heard above Moses and the Law!!!

If this established truth is understood; it is they then that are blasphemous in rejecting this established Prophet of God, without even stating it!!!