

***Study of Acts 7***  
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Here at the beginning of *Chapter 7* we have what should be called the height of hypocrisy. The high priest of the Temple asks Stephen, ***IF*** what these *false witnesses* are accusing him of, ***IS TRUE***. The High Priest and the leadership are the ones that recruited these *false witnesses* to begin with, and here in front of the multitude of people, the High Priest ***IS*** feigning disgust and asking Stephen, ***IF*** what he is accused of ***IS TRUE***. The High Priest knows full well that all of the accusations ***ARE FALSE***. When you ***KNOW THE TRUTH*** and nevertheless you suborn perjury, as these Pharisees did, that my friends, ***IS*** the highest form of hypocrisy possible.

How does Stephen answer? Stephen replies in the only way a person can when they are filled with the Spirit of our Heavenly Father. He answers them with love, compassion, understanding, and patience as he recounts Israel's journey, since its inception, from the time of our father Abraham.

Stephen goes through the history of Israel recounting the lives of Abraham, and his faithfulness. He speaks of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and how, Joseph, who is a picture of Messiah, was sold into slavery and by the hand of Elohim became a Saviour of Israel by saving them from famine and sure death. He continues on with the story of Moses and how at age 40 he tried to deliver his people and failed and spent 40 years in the wilderness, a time of testing and learning. Stephen also recounts Moses' meeting with YHVH at the burning bush and how YHVH instructed Moses to go into Egypt to deliver His people.

Now Stephen tells the people that this is the same Moses who said, *A prophet shall YHVH your Elohim raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; Him you shall hear, shemah (hear, listen, understand, believe, obey and DO).*

Now the next *verse* which Stephen quotes ***IS*** extremely important for he is setting the stage to show that Yeshua, whom they have crucified, rejected and murdered, ***IS*** the *ONE* that followed their forefathers in the wilderness, Messiah ***IS*** the head of assembly, the church, the *Qahal* and He is the One who spoke to Moses at the burning bush and on Mount Sinai and who received the lively oracles from Him to give to us.

Stephen continues on and makes a comparison with their fathers saying to whom our fathers would ***NOT*** obey (the same way that you have not obeyed Yeshua, who ***IS*** the same person that our fathers rejected in the wilderness.) But they thrust him from them and in their hearts they turned back again into Egypt, which ***IS*** exactly what you are doing here today by rejecting Yeshua as your Messiah; your hearts are returning to Egypt the same way that your father's hearts returned to Egypt.

Stephen continues with the comparison of the Sadducees and the Pharisees with their fathers that were in the wilderness forty years and how they made idols like the golden calf and worshipped the idols and the hosts of heaven and the gods of Egypt, Moloch and Remphan.

Stephen says, *Our fathers had the Tabernacle of witness, the Ark of the Covenant with them, the Ark that YHVH instructed Moses to construct according to the fashion that he had seen in heaven, and still they disobeyed.*

Joshua brought the Ark of the Covenant into the Promised Land and because of our father's disobedience the Ark fell into enemy hands. David found favour with YHVH and returned the Ark to Jerusalem and wanted to build a temple for YHVH, but it was his son, Solomon who built the temple.

Now Stephen makes a comment that has far reaching consequences which our Christian brothers have not understood. As you know most believers of today believe that the Holy Spirit was only given to the people in *Acts 2* after the death, resurrection and ascension of our Messiah. But here in *verse 51* Stephen says something that totally contradicts what our Christian brothers believe about the time that the Holy Spirit was given.

*Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.* How could their fathers who were in the wilderness resist the Holy Spirit, **IF** the Holy Spirit had not yet been given as our Christian brothers believe and teach?

This is the climax of Stephen's speech. First, Stephen accuses them of resisting the Holy Spirit, then he says that they are exactly like their fathers, for they also killed all the prophets which our Heavenly Father sent them, the same way that you have betrayed and murdered the **JUST ONE**, Yeshua the Messiah, whom the prophets that your fathers killed, prophesied of. You and your fathers **HAVE RECEIVED THE TORAH** by the disposition of angels and have **REJECTED IT** and have **NOT KEPT IT**, choosing instead to keep the traditions of your fathers who killed all the prophets that YHVH sent to them, and who spoke of the coming of Yeshua the Messiah.

Now these people listening to Stephen are very mad and it says they were *cut to the heart*. Stephen has just accused them of murdering the Messiah for whom they have waited for, and for whom they had been praying to come for the past fifteen hundred years. But instead of listening and digesting Stephen's words and searching their hearts for **THE TRUTH** and turning to Elohim in prayer for enlightenment, they relied on their own understanding and their own feelings and stoned Stephen to death.

Now let us look at how Stephen handled the situation being faced with sure death, what does he do? *Verse 55* tells us what he did and it should be an example to all of us when we face adversity. Stephen who was filled with the Spirit of YHVH *looked up*. He looked up steadfastly to Heaven and he was rewarded.

If I close my eyes, I can just imagine what it must have been like, and I am awe struck by it. Just imagine how Stephen felt. He actually saw it, he saw heaven open up to receive him.

*Verse 58* tells us that they stoned Stephen and that a witness laid down his clothes at the young man's feet, whose name was Saul, later called Paul.

Verse 60 shows us that Stephen was a picture of our selfless Messiah who forgave those that crucified Him from the very cross on which they crucified Him. Here Stephen kneels down and cries with a loud voice unto YHVH, from the depth of his heart and soul and says, *YHVH, LAY NOT THIS SIN TO THEIR CHARGE*. While they were stoning him, *HE FORGAVE THEM*. Can anyone of you even imagine themselves doing that? I must admit that I cannot imagine myself at this stage of my faith walk, forgiving people as they are murdering me. That simply tells me that *I have a long way to go to be able to claim that I am walking in the footsteps of Messiah*. I still get offended at small things, but I am a work in progress and by the grace of Elohim, I truly believe that I will one day be more like Messiah, *IF* I continue to persevere till the end.

The very last sentence of this chapter shows me the incredible grace, mercy and compassion of our Elohim. It says, *And when he had said this, he fell asleep*. The man was being stoned to death, one of the most painful deaths imaginable and yet the Scriptures say *HE FELL ASLEEP*. That indicates to me that he had or felt little to no pain, but that he felt the peace of the Father, the peace that all who obey and persevere will feel one day, the peace that passes all understanding.

This life that Stephen led *IS* the kind of life we should all strive to accomplish. A life of complete surrender to the Father's will. A life filled with the Spirit of Elohim indwelling us. A life where we can truly say and believe that although we walk in the flesh, we do not war against the flesh, and it is only through our Heavenly Father that we receive the ability to fight the battle, *for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through Elohim to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of YHVH and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Messiah*.

Stephen recognized that the battle he was fighting was not against flesh and blood but *against principalities, against powers against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places* and because he recognized that, he was able, through the Holy Spirit to bring every thought he had into captivity to the obedience of the Word of YHVH, the Living Word, and therefore was able to forgive those that were stoning him, in the same manner that Yeshua who had totally surrendered His Spirit and His thoughts to our Heavenly Father, forgave those that crucified Him as He was dying on the cross.

The lesson for us *IS* very, very clear. To walk as Messiah walked we must learn to take our thoughts and bring each and every one of them under or into total obedience to the Word of our Heavenly Father, His Living Torah, our Saviour, for in doing so it will be life everlasting for us. This is by no means an easy task, but according to Messiah, *IT IS POSSIBLE* for all of the children of Elohim. Scripture tells us in *Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Messiah who strengthens me*.

Be encouraged and fill yourself with the Word of Elohim, you and the world will be much better because of it. Amein.

*Studying and keeping Torah together as a community.*

*Have a great Elohim blessed week and may Yahweh bless your every thought, and your every deed. Until we meet again, שְׁלוֹם עִלְיֵיכֶם, Shalom Aleykem. Amein*