

Notes: December 24, 2016

Start: 10 AM

Order of service:

1. Meet and Greet
2. Introduction (if new people)
3. Ma Tovv
4. Open in Prayer for service
5. Liturgy – Sh'ma +
6. Announcements
7. Jeri - Drash
8. Praise and Worship Songs
9. Message
10. Aaronic Blessing
11. Kiddush
12. Oneg

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: You Can Be As Effective As Stephen

Two weeks ago, I had alluded to Stephen, one of seven men chosen by Yeshua's talmadim to assist in matters pertaining to the daily distribution of supplies amongst Hebrew speaking widows. In serving, as a Spirit filled believer, Adonai used Stephen in great ways...

Act 6:8 Now Stephen, full of grace and power, performed great miracles and signs among the people.

Things were happening. People's lives were being transformed. So much so, that opposition arose from those who did not accept what Stephen was saying.

Act 6:9 But opposition arose from members of the Synagogue of the Freed Slaves (as it was called), composed of Cyrenians, Alexandrians and people from Cilicia and the province of Asia. They argued with Stephen,

Act 6:10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke.

“They could not stand up to his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke”

We will see in a moment how Stephen spoke and how he was empowered by the Ruach ha Kodesh. But, keep in mind the combination. He didn't speak of his own wisdom and the Ruach wasn't operating in the absence of what Stephen believed. It was the combination of both that made Stephen effective.

So effective, that these people who did not agree with him were threatened and considered Stephen to be a significant threat.

Act 6:11 So they secretly persuaded some men to allege, "We heard him speak blasphemously against Moshe and against God."

Act 6:12 They stirred up the people, as well as the elders and the Torah-teachers; so they came and arrested him and led him before the Sanhedrin.

Act 6:13 There they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops speaking against this holy place and against the Torah;

Act 6:14 for we have heard him say that Yeshua from Natzeret will destroy this place and will change the customs Moshe handed down to us."

Act 6:15 Everyone sitting in the Sanhedrin stared at Stephen and saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

So significant a threat that they needed to stack the deck and create false testimony to make certain that he would be found guilty. Sound familiar?

Mat 26:59 The head cohanim and the whole Sanhedrin looked for some false evidence against Yeshua, so that they might put him to death.

Mat 26:60 But they didn't find any, even though many liars came forward to give testimony. At last, however, two people came forward and said,

Mat 26:61 "This man said, 'I can tear down God's Temple and build it again in three days.' "

Notice also, the charge made against Stephen and Yeshua...

Ultimately the concern wasn't the Temple, but rather the customs done at the Temple.

Mat 26:62 The cohen hagadol stood up and said, "Have you nothing to say to the accusation these men are making?"

Yeshua, remained silent as part of His mission, while Stephen didn't remain silent, as part of his mission:

Act 7:1 The cohen hagadol asked, "Are these accusations true?"

Act 7:2 and Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to Avraham avinu in Mesopotamia before he lived in Haran

Act 7:3 and said to him, 'Leave your land and your family, and go into the land that I will show you.'

I want you to notice where Stephen started his defense.

He started with Avraham. The same place others, such as Moshe and Matthew started as well:

Exo 32:11 Moshe pleaded with Adonai his God. He said, "Adonai, why must your anger blaze against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand?

Exo 32:12 Why let the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intentions that he led them out, to slaughter them in the hills and wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger! Relent! Don't bring such disaster on your people!

Exo 32:13 Remember Avraham, Yitz'chak and Isra'el, your servants, to whom you swore by your very self. You promised them, 'I will make your descendants as many as the stars in the sky; and I will give all this land I have spoken about to your descendants; and they will possess it forever.' "

Mat 1:1 This is the genealogy of Yeshua the Messiah, son of David, son of Avraham:

Mat 1:2 Avraham was the father of Yitz'chak, Yitz'chak was the father of Ya`akov, Ya`akov was the father of Y'hudah and his brothers,

Not to mention, it is the place where Adonai starts as well.

Exo 3:4 When Adonai saw that he had gone over to see, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moshe! Moshe!" He answered, "Here I am."

Exo 3:5 He said, "Don't come any closer! Take your sandals off your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground.

Exo 3:6 I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya`akov." Moshe covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The foundation of your faith, the point of origin starts in Genesis 12:1 – 3 with the covenant Adonai made with Avram.

Continuing on, Stephen calls his first witness Avram, and provides the sworn affidavit of Adonai's Torah as he recounts these events, establishing his defense.

Act 7:4 So he left the land of the Kasdim and lived in Haran. After his father died, God made him move to this land where you are living now.

Act 7:5 He gave him no inheritance in it, not even space for one foot; yet he promised to give it to him as a possession and to his descendants after him, even though at the time he was childless.

Act 7:6 What God said to him was, 'Your descendants will be aliens in a foreign land, where they will be in slavery and oppressed for four hundred years.

Act 7:7 But I will judge the nation that enslaves them,' God said, 'and afterwards they will leave and worship me in this place.'

And conveying the continuation of the Covenant through Avraham's son Yitz'chak, then Ya'akov, then his sons...

Act 7:8 And he gave him b'rit-milah. So he became the father of Yitz'chak and did his b'rit-milah on the eighth day, and Yitz'chak became the father of Ya`akov, and Ya`akov became the father of the Twelve Patriarchs.

Then Stephen recounts Yosef and Israel's experience that led them into Egypt...

Act 7:9 "Now the Patriarchs grew jealous of Yosef and sold him into slavery in Egypt. But Adonai was with him;

Act 7:10 he rescued him from all his troubles and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him chief administrator over Egypt and over all his household.

Act 7:11 Now there came a famine that caused much suffering throughout Egypt and Kena`an

Act 7:12 But when Ya`akov heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers there the first time.

Act 7:13 The second time, Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers, and Yosef's family became known to Pharaoh.

Act 7:14 Yosef then sent for his father Ya`akov and all his relatives, seventy-five people.

Act 7:15 And Ya`akov went down to Egypt; there he died, as did our other ancestors.

Act 7:16 Their bodies were removed to Sh'khem and buried in the tomb Avraham had bought from the family of Hamor in Sh'khem for a certain sum of money.

Then Stephen would continue his defense with his next witness...Moshe

Act 7:17 "As the time drew near for the fulfillment of the promise God had made to Avraham, the number of our people in Egypt increased greatly,

Act 7:18 until there arose another king over Egypt who had no knowledge of Yosef.

Act 7:19 With cruel cunning this man forced our fathers to put their newborn babies outside their homes, so that they would not survive.

Act 7:20 "It was then that Moshe was born, and he was beautiful in God's sight. For three months he was reared in his father's house;

Act 7:21 and when he was put out of his home, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son.

Act 7:22 So Moshe was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and became both a powerful speaker and a man of action.

Act 7:23 "But when he was forty years old, the thought came to him to visit his brothers, the people of Isra'el.

Act 7:24 On seeing one of them being mistreated, he went to his defense and took revenge by striking down the Egyptian.

Act 7:25 **He supposed his brothers would understand that God was using him to rescue them, but they didn't understand.**

Act 7:26 When he appeared the next day, as they were fighting, and tried to make peace between them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers! Why do you want to hurt each other?'

Act 7:27 the one who was mistreating his fellow pushed Moshe away and said, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?'

Act 7:28 Do you want to kill me, the way you killed that Egyptian yesterday?'

Act 7:29 On hearing this, Moshe fled the country and became an exile in the land of Midyan, where he had two sons.

Act 7:30 "After forty more years, an angel appeared to him in the desert near Mount Sinai in the flames of a burning thorn bush.

Act 7:31 When Moshe saw this, he was amazed at the sight; and as he approached to get a better look, there came the voice of Adonai,

Act 7:32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya`akov.' But Moshe trembled with fear

and didn't dare to look.

Act 7:33 Adonai said to him, 'Take off your sandals, because the place where you are standing is holy ground.

Act 7:34 I have clearly seen how My people are being oppressed in Egypt, I have heard their cry, and I have come down to rescue them, and now I will send you to Egypt.'

Act 7:35 "This Moshe, whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and judge?' is the very one whom God sent as both ruler and ransom by means of the angel that appeared to him in the thorn bush.

Act 7:36 This man led them out, performing miracles and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

Act 7:37 This is the Moshe who said to the people of Isra'el, 'God will raise up a prophet like me from among your brothers'

Act 7:38 This is the man who was in the assembly in the wilderness, accompanied by the angel that had spoken to him at Mount Sinai and by our fathers, the man who was given living words to pass on to us.

These verses refute the charge that Stephen spoke against Moshe ([Act 6:11](#)). Here Stephen lauds him as **ruler**, **ransomer**, one who spoke with the angel, miracle-worker, prophet and receiver of **living words**.

If Stephen truly spoke against Moshe, why would he use him in his testimony in such a way as to honor and revere him?

Stephen then goes on to convey the actions of the people against Moshe, his leadership and council:

Act 7:39 "But our fathers did not want to obey him. On the contrary, they rejected him and in their hearts turned to Egypt,

Act 7:40 saying to Aharon, 'Make us some gods to lead us; because this Moshe, who led us out of Egypt — we don't know what has become of him.'

Act 7:41 That was when they made an idol in the shape of a calf and offered a sacrifice to it and held a celebration in honor of what they had made with their own hands.

Act 7:42 So God turned away from them and gave them over to worship the stars — as has been written in the book of the prophets, 'People of Isra'el, it was not to me that you offered slaughtered animals and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness!

The book of the prophets, that is, the book of the twelve "minor prophets," regarded as a single book in Jewish reckoning of the *Tanakh*. Stephen's citation of Amos conforms closely to the Septuagint, which differs in details from the Masoretic text. However, "**beyond Babylon**" in place of "beyond Damascus" may be Stephen's *midrash* in pointing out that the penalty for turning away from the one true God will be worse than the Babylonian Exile.

Stephen continues on with the people's crimes against Adonai...

Act 7:43 No, you carried the tent of Molekh and the star of your god Reifan, the idols you made so that you could worship them. Therefore, I will send you into exile beyond Bavel.'

Stephen, in addition to being accused of speaking against Moshe, was accused of speaking against the Temple, for which he now addresses...

Act 7:44 "Our fathers had the Tent of Witness in the wilderness. It had been made just as God, who spoke to Moshe, had ordered it made, according to the pattern Moshe had seen.

Act 7:45 Later on, our fathers who had received it brought it in with Y'hoshua when they took the Land away from the nations that God drove out before them. "So it was until the days of David.

Act 7:46 He enjoyed God's favor and asked if he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Ya`akov

Act 7:47 and Shlomo did build him a house.

Act 7:48 But Ha`Elyon does not live in places made by hand! As the prophet says,

Act 7:49 'Heaven is my throne,' says Adonai, 'and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house could you build for me? What kind of place could you devise for my rest?

Act 7:50 Didn't I myself make all these things?'

Stephen refutes the final charge, that he has spoken improperly against the Temple ([Act 6:13-14](#)), by showing that it was the people, not God, who wanted a **dwelling place** or **house** more substantial than the **Tent of Witness** or "Tabernacle" originally authorized in the *Torah*. The establishment has tended toward "Temple-olatry" (instead of adopting God's attitude.) He cites Isaiah 66:1 in support of his criticism.

Now Stephen directs his defense to his accusers...

[Act 7:51](#) "Stiffnecked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You continually oppose the Ruach HaKodesh! You do the same things your fathers did!

[Act 7:52](#) Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who told in advance about the coming of the Tzaddik, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers! —

[Act 7:53](#) you! — who receive the Torah as having been delivered by angels — but do not keep it!"

[Act 7:54](#) On hearing these things, they were cut to their hearts and ground their teeth at him.

[Act 7:55](#) But he, full of the Ruach HaKodesh, looked up to heaven and saw God's Sh'khinah, with Yeshua standing at the right hand of God.

[Act 7:56](#) "Look!" he exclaimed, "I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

[Act 7:57](#) At this, they began yelling at the top of their voices, so that they wouldn't have to hear him; and with one accord, they rushed at him,

[Act 7:58](#) threw him outside the city and began stoning him. And the witnesses laid down their coats at the feet of a young man named Sha'ul.

[Act 7:59](#) As they were stoning him, Stephen called out to God, "Lord Yeshua! Receive my spirit!"

[Act 7:60](#) Then he kneeled down and shouted out, "Lord! Don't hold this sin against them!" With that, he died;

Pay attention to what the charges were against Stephen

Pay attention to how he responded to the charges

I believe at the beginning of his defense, Stephen intended to open their minds, because he likely heard from Yeshua's talmadim about the 40 days Yeshua taught them...

[Luk 24:44](#) Yeshua said to them, "This is what I meant when I was still with you and told you that everything written about me in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled."

[Luk 24:45](#) Then he opened their minds, so that they could understand the Tanakh,

Conveying a subtle yet profound relationship to Moshe -

[Act 7:25](#) He supposed his brothers would understand that God was using him to rescue them, but they didn't understand.

Hoping to open their minds to the reality of Yeshua.

Allow the Ruach ha Kodesh to guide you...remember Stephen was full of grace and power, in other words the Ruach ha Kodesh resided in him and poured out of him as he was directed.

Stephen knew what he believed