

ABRAHAM

Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" And Stephen replied: "Men, **brothers** and **fathers**, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to **our father** Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Leave your **earth** and your relatives and go to the **earth** that I will show you.' Then he left the **earth** of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his **father** died, God had him move from there to this **earth** in which you are now living. He did not give him any of it as a heritage, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as his possession and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child. And God spoke in these terms, that his descendants would be resident aliens in an **earth** belonging to others, who would enslave them and mistreat them during four hundred years. 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the **father** of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the **father** of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve **patriarchs**.

JOSEPH

"The **patriarchs**, jealous of **Joseph**, gave him into **Egypt**; but God was with him, and rescued him from all his distress, and gave him grace and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of **Egypt**, who appointed him ruler over **Egypt** and over all his household. Now there came a famine throughout **Egypt** and Canaan, and great distress, and **our fathers** could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in **Egypt**, he sent **our fathers** there first. And in the second **Joseph** made himself known to his **brothers**, and **Joseph's** family was revealed to Pharaoh. Then **Joseph** sent and invited his **father** Jacob and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five in all; so Jacob went down to **Egypt**. He himself died there as well as **our fathers**, and were brought back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

MOSES

"But as the time drew near for the promise that God had confessed to Abraham, **our** people in **Egypt** increased and multiplied until another king who had not known **Joseph** stood up over **Egypt**. He dealt craftily with **our** family and forced **our fathers** to expose their infants so that they would die. At this time **Moses** was born, and he was beautiful before God. For three months he was brought up in his **father's house**; and when he was abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. So **Moses** was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds.

"When forty years were fulfilled, it came into his heart to visit his **brothers**, the sons of Israel. When he saw one of them **being treated unjustly**, he defended the oppressed man and **avenged** him by striking down the Egyptian. He supposed that his **brothers** would understand that God through him was giving them salvation, but they did not understand. The next day he appeared to some of them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them into peace, saying, 'Men, you are **brothers**; why do **you treat each other unjustly**?' But the man who was **treating his neighbor unjustly** pushed **Moses** aside, saying, 'Who appointed you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' When he heard this, **Moses** fled and became a resident alien in the **earth** of Midian where he became the **father** of two sons.

"Now when forty years had been fulfilled, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush.

When **Moses** saw it, he was amazed at the sight; and as he approached to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 'I am the God of your **fathers**, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' **Moses** began to tremble and did not dare to look. Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy **earth**. Seeing I have seen the mistreatment of my people who are in **Egypt** and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to rescue them. Come now, I will send you to **Egypt**.' "It was **this Moses** whom they rejected when they said, 'Who appointed you a ruler and a judge?' and whom God now sent as both ruler and liberator through the **angel** who appeared to him in the bush. **This** one led them out, having performed wonders and signs in **earth-Egypt**, at the Red Sea, and in the **wilderness** for **forty years**. **This** is the **Moses** who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up a prophet for you from your own **brothers** as he raised me up.'

This is the one who was in the congregation in the **wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai**, and with **our fathers**; and he received living oracles to give to us.

IDOLATRY IN THE DESERT

Our fathers were unwilling to obey him; instead, they pushed him aside, and in their hearts they turned back to **Egypt**, saying to Aaron, 'Make gods for us who will lead the way for us; as for this **Moses** who led us out from the **earth** of **Egypt**, we do not know what has happened to him.' At that time they made a calf, offered a sacrifice to the idol, and reveled in the works of their **hands**. But God turned away from them and handed them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: 'Did you offer to me slain victims and sacrifices **forty years** in the **wilderness**, O **house** of Israel? You took along the tent of Moloch, and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; so I will remove you beyond Babylon.'

TENT AND HOUSE FOR GOD

"**Our fathers** had the tent of testimony in the **wilderness**, ordering **Moses** to make it according to the images he had seen. **Our fathers** in turn brought it in with Joshua in the taking of the nations that God drove out before **our fathers**. And it was there until the days of David, who found favor with God and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a **house** for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human **hands**; as the prophet says, 'Heaven is my throne, and the **earth** is my footstool. What kind of **house** will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my **hand** make all these things?'

STEPHEN'S AUDIENCE

"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your **fathers** used to do. Which of the prophets did your **fathers** not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it."

When they heard these things, they were sawn through their hearts and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right **hand** of God. "Behold!" he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Human One standing at the right **hand** of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they threw him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he called on and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.