

Acts 7:57 – 8:40 notes – Zealots flip over the Heavenly ‘dip’

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Passages are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Summary: We meet Sha’ul, who would later become the mighty servant of God commonly called Paul. Here he is trying to destroy the Way he would walk for the rest of his life and to his death. What good news are these servants of God testifying to at the peril of their lives? The answer is blowing in the Wind — of God.

Acts 7:57 – 8:1 – Sha’ul at the stoning of Stephen

What was stoning like in the first century? Here’s a passage from the *Mishna*, a collection of rabbinical saying from the first few centuries A.D., on how to conduct execution by stoning:

“A. [When] the trial is over, [and the felon is convicted], they take him out to stone him. B. The place of stoning is well outside the court, as it is said, Bring forth him who cursed to a place outside the camp (Lev. 24:14). C. One person stands at the door of the courthouse, with flags [*sudarim* in Hebrew] in his hand, and a horseman is some distance from him, so that he is able to see him. D. [If] one of the judges said, ‘I have something to say in favor of acquittal,’ the one at the door waves the flags, and the horseman races off and stops [the execution]. E. And even if [the convicted party] says, ‘I have something to say in favor of my own acquittal,’ they bring him back, F. even four or five times, G. so long as there is substance in what he has to say. H. [If] they then found him innocent, they dismiss him. I. And if not, he goes out to be stoned. J. And a herald goes before him, crying out, ‘Mr. So-and-so, son of Mr. So-and-so, is going out to be stoned because he committed such-and-such a transgression, and Mr. So-and-so and Mr. So-and-so are the witnesses against him. Now anyone who knows grounds for acquittal-let him come and speak in his behalf!’ A. [When] he was ten cubits from the place of stoning, they say to him, ‘Confess,’ for it is usual for those about to be put to death to confess. B. For whoever confesses has a share in the world to come. C. For so we find concerning Achan, to whom Joshua said My son, I pray you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and confess to him, [and tell me now what you have done: hide it not from me.] And Achan answered Joshua and said, Truly have I sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and thus and thus I have done (Josh. 7:19). And how do we know that his confession achieved atonement for him? For it is said, And Joshua said, Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day (Josh. 7:25)—This day the Lord will trouble you, but you will not be troubled in the world to come. D. And if he does not know how to confess, they say to him, ‘Say as follows: “Let my death be atonement for all of my transgressions.”’ E. R. Judah says, ‘If he knew that he had been subjected to perjury, he says, “Let my death be atonement for all my sins, except for this particular sin [of which I have been convicted by false testimony]!’’ F. They said to him, ‘If so, then everyone is going to say that, so as to clear themselves.’ A. [When] he was four cubits from the place of stoning, they remove his clothes. B. ‘In the case of a man, they cover him up in front, and in the case of a woman, they cover her up in front and behind,’ the words of R. Judah. C. And sages say, ‘A man is stoned naked, but a woman is not stoned naked.’ A. The place of stoning was twice the height of a man. B. One of the witnesses pushes him over from the hips, so [hard] that he turned upward [in his fall]. C. He turns him over on his hips again [to see whether he had died]. D. [If] he had died thereby, that sufficed. E. If not, the second [witness] takes a stone and puts it on his heart. F. [If] he died thereby, it sufficed. G. And if not, stoning him is [the duty] of all Israelites, as it is said, The hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people (Dt. 17:7). H. ‘All those who are stoned are hanged on a tree [afterward],’ the words of R. Eliezer.” (Sanhedrin 6:1-4, Mishna)

This sounds a lot like what the crowd in Netzeret tried to do to Yeshua when He preached “the favorable year of the LORD” in the synagogue there (Luke 4:16-30).

Those the Sanhedrin condemned to death by stoning, burning, decapitation, or strangulation weren’t buried with everyone else:

“And they did not bury [the felon] in the burial grounds of his ancestors. But there were two graveyards made ready for the use of the court, one for those who were beheaded or strangled, and one for those who were stoned or burned.” (Sanh. 6:5)

Acts 7:58

It’s ironic that the Greek word for “witnesses” is *μάρτυρες* *martures*,¹ from which we get the word “martyr.” These evil men were witnessing the witness of the one of God’s great witnesses bearing witnesses about the witness of the other great witnesses in Israel’s history. The root word *martus* bears the basic meaning of “one who is mindful, heeds,” according to Thayer’s lexicon (Strong’s 3075).

We can also see that this mob was faithfully obeying the letter of the Torah in dragging Stephen outside the city (Deut. 17:2-7; Lev. 24:14,16,24). They truly were worshipping God with their “lips,” acting from rotely memorized verses, while their hearts were far from the Author of those words (Isa. 29:13).

“**laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul**” — Some (David H. Stern) speculate that

1 Thayer, Joseph Henry, D.D. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

Saul was an agent of the Sanhedrin and had the *sudarim* (Hebrew for “flags”) that was the signal for telling the court that the accused had more potentially exonerating testimony (Sanh. 6:1-4).

Acts 7:59

According to Adam Clarke,² the only quotation of this verse with the phrase “called on the Lord” (NASB) or “called on God” (KJV) is Chrysostom. Clarke claims this is a clear indication of Yeshua’s divinity.

Acts 7:60

“**Lord, do not hold this sin against them!**” (NASB) — Yeshua taught this in Matt. 5:44, to pray for our enemies and persecutors, and demonstrated it on the execution stake in Luke 23:34. Would I have a heart that would honestly pray for mercy upon those who had none for me? Stephen’s heart and lips were close to God indeed.

Acts 8:1

“**Saul was in hearty agreement** [“consenting to” KJV] **with putting him to death.**” This really belongs with Acts 7:58 as a part of the previous chapter. David Stern in *Jewish New Testament Commentary* asserts that Sha’ul was an agent of the Sanhedrin (Acts 9:1-2; Acts 23:1; Acts 26:10; Gal 1:14) and would have been bearer of the *sudarim*, with the authority to stop the execution.³

“**hearty agreement**” — More than just “consenting” as rendered in the KJV, the word *συνευδοκῶν* *suneudokon* has the meaning of giving pleasure to, according to Thayer’s lexicon.

“**the church in Jerusalem**” — The Greek phrase τὴν ἐκκλησίαν *ten ekklesian* for *the church* comes from ἐκκλησία *ekklesia* (1577), which derives from *ekkletos*, or “called out, called forth,” i.e. an assembly or gathering. Thayer’s lexicon said it’s understood as “gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place.” In classical Greek it meant a convening of a council in a public place for deliberation. *Ekklesia* is how the Septuagint renders *קהל qahal* in the Torah, Prophets and Writings nearly 100 times. About 200 times the LXX uses συναγωγή *sunagoge*, from which we get *synagogue*, for “assembly,” but it’s also used to render the Hebrew word *עדה edah*, from which is derived *מועד mo’ed* or “appointed time/place/meeting.” Thus, God calls out His people, making them an assembly, and sets them apart, or makes them holy. The Septuagint uses this Greek word to render *קהל qahal* for the assembly of Israel (Judg. 21:8; 1 Chr. 29:1; Deut. 31:30; Josh. 8:35) and in the Apostolic Writings when referring to that assembly (Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:12).

Dictionaries and lexicons list the derivation of church as *κυριακός kuriakos* (2960), which means “belonging to the Lord.”

- *New Oxford American Dictionary* for **church**: “ORIGIN Old English *cir(i)ce*, *cyr(i)ce*, related to Dutch *kerk* and German *Kirche*, based on medieval Greek *kurikon*, from Greek *kuriakon* (d?ma) ‘Lord’s (house),’ from *kurios* ‘master or lord.’ Compare with *kirk*.”
- *Ibid* for **kirk**: “ORIGIN Middle English : from Old Norse *kirkja*, from Old English *cirice* (see *church*).”
- *Ibid* for **circle**: “ORIGIN Old English , from Old French *cercle*, from Latin *circulus* ‘small ring,’ diminutive of *circus* ‘ring.’”

Acts 8:2

“**devout men**” — ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς *andres eulabeis* (Strong’s 2126), which means “careful” or “reverent” in classical Greek or “pious” or “religious” in passages such as Acts 2:5 referring to the pilgrims in Yerushalayim for Shavuot and Mic. 7:2 in the Septuagint.

Interestingly, the related Greek word is εὐλάβεια *eulabeia* (2124), which carries meanings of “reverence,” “veneration” and “caution,” as in “fear” of God (Prov. 28:14 LXX).

Note the contrast between men who were giving lip service to God in executing a witness from God with trappings of Torah exactness (e.g., outside the gates, by stoning) without heed to the witness’ words (Heb. 4:2).

“**buried Stephen**” or “carried S~ to his burial” (KJV) — The Greek word *συνεκόμισαν* *sunekomisan* (4792) means *collecting and carrying*, as in carrying a body for burial. Adam Clarke notes that Jews considered it piety, charity and mercy to bury the dead, but those the Sanhedrin condemned weren’t (Sanh. 6:5 in the Mishna).

“**made loud lamentation for him**” — *κοπετός kopetos* (2870) means “*lamentation with beating of the breast* as a sign of grief” per Thayer’s. The Septuagint uses the word in Gen 50:10; Esth. 4:3; 1st Macc. 2:70; 4:39; 9:20; 13:26; 3rd Macc. 4:3; Psa. 29:12; Sir. 38:17; Amos 5:16-17; Mic. 1:8; Joel 2:12; Zech. 12:10-11; Isa. 22:12; Jer. 6:26; 9:9. Note the Messianic prophecy in Zechariah 12, in which the evil people were to look upon the One they had pierced and mourn over Him. Stephen’s demeanor at death mirrored his Master’s.

2 Clarke, Adam. *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Public domain.

3 Stern, David H. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., Clarksville, MD, 1996.

Acts 8:3

Saul — Σαούλος *Saoulos*, is the Greek transliteration of שׂאול *sha'ul*, which derives from שׂאל *sha'al* “to ask, inquire.”⁴ Saul was anointed king of Israel because the people rejected God and asked Him for a king to be like the other nations. The early believers in Yeshua asked God for relief from Saul and got, well, Saul.

“**ravaging**” (NASB) or “made havoc of” — ἐλυμαίνετο *elumaineto* comes from λυμαίνομαι *lumainomai* (Strong’s 3075), which means “to affix a stigma to, to dishonor, spot, defile” (used in this sense in the LXX in Ezek. 16:25; Prov. 23:8; 4th Macc. 18:8) or “to treat shamefully or with injury, to ravage, devastate, ruin.” Adam Clarke notes that this word “signifies the act of ferocious animals, such as bears, wolves, and the like, in seeking and devouring their prey.”

Acts 8:4

This is how Israelites who were scattered in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles were supposed to behave, spreading the knowledge of God to the nations where they were dispersed. Some did and sowed the seed of the Word of God for Paul and others to nurture to maturity.

“**preaching the word**” — εὐαγγελίζω *euangelizo* means “to bring good news” and used in the LXX for בָּשָׂר *basar* a root Hebrew word meaning “to be fresh,” i.e. “to be new” (1319) and בְּשׂוֹרָה *b’sorah* “tidings” or “news” (1309). Examples in the Hebrew Scriptures are 2nd Sam. 4:10, the news of King Sha’ul’s death and 2nd Sam. 18:20, word of Absalom’s death. What is the “fresh message” that these believers were bearing?

- In Acts 5:42, we saw the early believers in Yeshua were proclaiming the good news that He is the long-awaited Messiah.
- Peter told the elders in Yerushalayim in Acts 10:36, in the context of explaining how God’s Spirit was “blowing” among the believers of the nations too, said that God sent His word to Israel of *peace with Him through Messiah Yeshua*.
 - Yochanan the Immerser’s father, Zechariah, prophesied about the coming Messiah, quoting Isa. 9:2 and 59:8 that the Messiah would light up the path for people in darkness to see the way to peace.
 - In Rom. 5:1 while talking about the trust Abraham put in God, Who delivered Yitzkhak back to him from the altar by providing a substitute, Paul emphasizes that we can trust God’s Messiah took our death sentence for violating the Torah to death and allows us to have peace with God.
 - In Eph. 2:11-22, Paul speaks to believers in Messiah Yeshua from the nations, proclaiming how Yeshua brought peace with God not only to those “who were far away,” i.e. of the nations, but also for those “who were near,” or those from the tribes of Israel who remained faithful to God. God made both those “far” and “near” of one πολιτεία *politeia* (“administration, state, commonwealth”; Strong’s 4174) called Israel.

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ‘And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near’ [Isa. 57:19]; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.” (verses 13–17)
- That God had sent His Messiah, who died in place of all guilty humanity and rose from the dead to take His place as humanity’s defense attorney before the Father.

Acts 8:5

“**city of Samaria**” — The city had been razed during the Seleucid period, but Herod was rebuilding it in the first century (Josephus, *Antiq.* 13:275-283). Shekhem, just to the east-southeast, near present-day Nablus, was the seat of Samaritan affairs. In a sense, as Adam Clarke noted, Phillip was going to the nations, because Assyria had brought the nations to Israel by importing Babylonians to intermarry with Israelites after the exile of the northern kingdom.

“**proclaiming Christ**” — ἐκήρυσσεν *ekerussen* comes from κηρύσσω *kerusso* (2784), which the Septuagint uses for the oft-used word קָרָא *qara* “to call out to” (7121), i.e. to be a herald. Observations about a herald:

- A herald isn’t subtle. A herald is supposed to get people’s attention.
- A herald often is a teacher (διδάσκαλος *didaskalos*; 1320), who explains the message heralded (1st Cor. 12:28-31; Eph. 4:11; Acts 13:1; Ja. 3:1, a warning for teachers).

4 Brown, F., S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.

We often see that the spirit of Eliyahu was to precede the coming of Messiah (Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14), and both Yokhanan and Yeshua *kerusso* the message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand [lit. *near, close by*]” (Matt 4:17; cf. Matt. 3:1-2).

In these “Days of Eliyahu,” are we prepared to “*kerusso* upon the housetops” (Matt. 10:27), to be ready when, “This *euggelion* of the kingdom shall be *kerusso* in the whole world as a *marturion* to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matt. 24:14)?

- Are we to follow the model of Judaistic conversion, by which a God-fearer is dissuaded from becoming a full member of the family of God and encouraged to become a Noachide believer instead? (A Noachide is a “righteous gentile” who follows the “seven laws of Noah,” many of which are found in Acts 15.)
- Are we prepared to be “ambassadors of Christ,” making God’s appeal of reconciliation to the world (2nd Cor. 5:20)?
- Are we prepared to be God’s “royal priesthood” (1st Pet. 2:1-12), recounting (ἐξαγγέλλω *exaggello*; 1804; LXX for פָּרַט *saphar*; “to count, relate”; 5608) for the world all that the LORD has done in reconciling us?

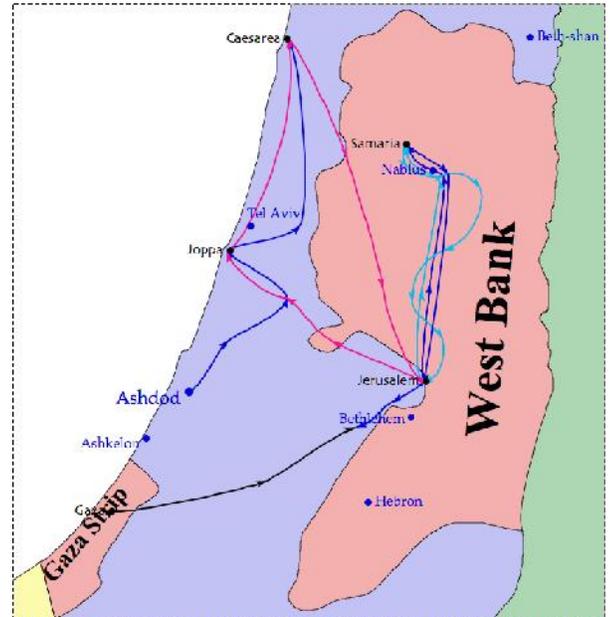


Illustration 1: Travels of Phillip (dark blue), Peter (fucia) and Peter and John (light blue). The eunuch's journey is in black.

Acts 8:12

Simon had dazzled the people with his magic, his “Great *Dunamis* [Power] of God.” Phillip upstaged him with not only signs and “great *dunamis*” (Acts 8:13; Strong’s 1411) but also good tidings about kingdom of God the people could believe.

“**preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Iesous Christos**” — He was heralding the truth about the kingdom of God and the name of Yeshua, God’s Anointed One. The truth was that God was opening reconciliation between man and Himself to the nations through forgiveness of the rebellion against Him by the death penalty executed against Yeshua. God was not enslaving the people via the Torah. Rather, He was freeing them from the penalty due them for rebelling against Him.

Name in this context is used throughout the Bible to convey “everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is roused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e. for one’s rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds, etc.” (Thayer on *onoma*).

- A note about **Χριστός christos** (5547), which is rendered Christ in English. The word comes from χρίσμα *chrisma* (5545), which means “anything smeared on, unguent, ointment.” The LXX *Chrisma* is used in Ex 29:7; 30:25; 35:19, 25; 40:9, 15 for מִשַׁח *mashakh* (4888) to refer to anointing the priesthood or the “anointed one,” i.e. the high priest. In Dan. 9:26 *chrisma* is how the LXX renders מָשִׁיחַ *mashiakh*, the “Anointed One” or Messiah.
- Priests and prophets were called מָשִׁיחַ *mashiakh* “anointed one” (4899). Iesous is both, plus He embodies *Yeshua* (3442), a short form of *Yehoshua* (3041), which is Hebrew for “YHWH is salvation, deliverance, prosperity, victory” (see Strong’s 3467 and 3468).
- Whom is proclaiming the “name of Iesous” or the “name of Christ” more accurately, one who accurately communicates the reputation, character, deeds and mission of God and His Anointed One or one who accurately pronounces the names in Hebrew, Greek, German, English, Korean, Spanish, etc.?

“**they were being baptized**” — βαπτίζω *baptizo* (907) means “to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge,” “to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water” or “to overwhelm.” The LXX uses the word in the well-known story of the foreign captain Naaman who טָבַל *tabal* (2881) “dipped” in the Yarden River seven times to be cleansed from leprosy (2nd Ki. 5:14).

There seems to be a connection between immersing and cleansing:

- The Hebrew word טָבַל *tabal* is used 16 times in the TaNaK and is often translated as *dip* in all but one place (*plunge*, Job 9:31):
 - Yosef’s tunic in blood (Gen. 37:31)
 - hyssop in blood for Pesakh (Ex. 12:22)
 - for offerings and cleansings (Lev. 4:6, 17; 9:9; 14:6, 16, 51; Num. 19:18)
 - other references: Deut. 33:24; Josh. 3:15; 1st Sam. 14:27; 2nd Kings 5:14; 8:15; Ruth 2:14

- The LXX uses μολύνω *moluno* “defile, stain” (3435) for לבט in Gen. 37:31 and βάπτω *bapto* (911), a form of *baptizo*, in Ex. 12:22 and all the other uses of לבט.
 - This sheds light on what Paul meant by “baptized into His death” (Rom. 6:2-7) and why forgiveness of sin often accompanied Yeshua’s healings.
- Yeshua said He would baptize with fire and the Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16).
 - Do we want both fire and Spirit baptism or just the latter? (See references to fire and God: Gen. 19:24, on Sodom *et al.*; Ex. 9:23, one of the 10 plagues, cf. the judgments in Revelation; Ex 19:18 and cf. 24:17, God upon Sinai; Num. 26:10, judgment on Korah; Deut 4:24, 33, 36 and 5:4-5, 22-26, the LORD consumes by and creates fear; numerous verses about consuming offerings by fire; Deut. 9:3, how the LORD destroys Israel’s enemies; Deut. 12:31 and 18:10 and 2nd Ki. 21:6 and 2nd Chr. 28:3, Canaanites and later Israel worshipped gods by sending their children through it; Deut. 32:1-43, song of Moshe about God’s anger at Israel’s apostasy; 1st Chr. 21:26 and 2nd Chr. 7:1 about David’s and Solomon’s offerings being consumed by it coming from Heaven; Psa. 11:6, it rains on the the wicked; Zech. 13:9, the righteous are refined by it, as metals are in a furnace, cf. ; Luke 3:17, God winnows His assembly for the wheat and consumes the chaff; John 15:6, unfaithful followers are like vine prunings that are consumed; Acts 2:3, the Spirit came on Shavu’ot appearing like fire; 1st Cor. 3:12-15, the quality of one’s life on the Day of the LORD is tested by it, consuming what isn’t eternal; Heb. 12:27-29, we revere and awe God because He redeems us from the flames of the Day of the LORD; 1st Pet. 1:3-9, our faith is refined with it on that Day; Rev. 20:14-15, a lake of it devours wickedness once and for all time.)

Peter told the crowds in the temple on Shavu’ot that they must, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38). μετανοέω *metanoëo* (3340), which is translated often as *repent*, means “to change one’s mind.” We are to *shuv*, “turn (back),” to God after that change of mind.

Acts 8:14-15

“receive the Holy Spirit” – What is the difference between receiving the word of God and receiving the Holy Spirit? What good are words without the “breath” to utter them?

Yeshua “breathed” the Set-Apart Wind of God (i.e., Holy Spirit) on the 12 and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

Paul in Ephesus came across a dozen men who had Yokhanan’s baptism of repentance but not the baptism into the name of Yeshua and the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:4-6). This two-phase repentance and baptism could be to dissuade some from thinking that baptism in and of itself does something, but it is the LORD Who does the restoring (*shuv*) and renewing (שׁדח *khadash*) (Lam. 5:21-22).

λαμβάνω *lambano* (Strong’s 2983) in this sense means “to receive (what is given); to gain, get, obtain.” The word is used in John 7:37-39 in the context of Hoshana Rabbah, the Great Salvation, the last day of Sukkot, in which Yeshua explained that the “living water” flowing out from the innermost being of a person was the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

In his Shavuot message in the temple, Peter told the crowd that their rejection of Messiah Yeshua in the face of the testimony of Israel’s prophets called for a three-step remedy: “Repent, and each of you be baptized [“buried” or washed] in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” (Acts 2:38-39)

Acts 8:17

“laying their hands on them” – What is the significance of someone putting his hands on (ἐπιθήμι χεῖρ *epitithemi cheir* in Greek and the LXX) someone or something else to receive the Holy Spirit? In the Bible, “laying on of hands” was done receive atonement with God and cleansing (Leviticus 14), confess (accept guilt and punishment) the sins, transgressions and iniquities of the congregation on the goat for Azazel (Lev. 16:21), condemn a blasphemer (Lev. 24:14), bless the Levites (Num. 8:10,12) and heal people.

Laying hands upon an animal or person dedicated for a certain purpose was sort of an extension God’s reach of in the physical realm. The LXX uses epitithemi mainly for *samakh*, *natan* and *akhaz* in Hebrew The placing of hands on the head of an animal offering was שׁמח *samakh* (5564), which means to “lean” or “support” one’s hand on the head. That word was used with the condemnation of the blasphemer as well as with the consecration of Yehoshua (Num. 27:18, 27:23, Deut. 34:9) and the Levites (Num. 8:10).

The word also is used in the sense of “putting full weight upon” for the wrath of God (Psa. 88:8) and of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege on Yerushalayim (Eze. 24:2). Indeed, we still use the phrases “lean on” and “throw your weight around” in the same sense.

The word *samakh* also is used to mean:

- “uphold,” “maintain” or “sustain” in David’s penitent prayer (Psa. 51:14)

- “brace” as in Samson’s leaning on the pillars (Judg. 16:29)
- “rely” (2nd Ki. 18:21; Isa. 36:6; 2nd Chr. 32:8; and on God in Isa. 48:2; Psa. 71:6)

This lends light on these statements by Yeshua in John 3:

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’ ... ‘For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure’ ” (John 3:5-6, 34).

And these words from Messiah in John 14:

“ I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.’ ... ‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:16-17, 26).

- How have you “leaned on” and “sustained” you?
- How have you “leaned on” and “relied on” God’s Messiah and His Spirit?

Acts 8:18-20

“bestowed” ... “give this authority” ... “obtain the gift of God” — God is acting through man as agents for the spreading of His power in the world. God does act in the world — through His people. The Spirit of God came down on the elders of Israel on the mountain, and the Spirit filled various leaders of Israel.

The bestowing of some of the spirit of Eliyahu, whose name means “My God is the LORD,” on Elisha, whose name means “My God is Salvation,” is an example of some of this authority to pass on God’s Spirit. First, Eliyahu draped his coat on him (1st Ki. 19:19). Finally, a final double portion of the spirit that was upon Eliyahu (2nd Ki. 2:9-14) came upon Elisha.

Acts 8:21

“You have no part (μερίς *meris* 3310) or portion (κληρος *klēros* 2819) in this matter [lit., *word*]” — *Klēros* is from what we get *clergy*, which literally means “chosen by lot.” *Klēros* is used in the LXX to refer to lot-casting, as in the choosing of the goat for Azazel and the “allotments” of territories in Israel among the tribes.

Some have struggled with the concept called “predesitnation” (προορίζω *proorizō* 4309), seen in passages such as with “predestined us for adoption” (from Eph. 1:3-14) and “predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29).

- Literally, this is speaking of God’s deciding beforehand what would be picked by lot, using items that appear indistinguishable from each other.
 - What are the implications of the idea that Israel was “better looking” than all the other nations?
 - Wouldn’t that mean that human achievements (might, piety, etc.) merit God’s mercy for the original and ongoing rebellion of humanity?
 - What made Israel the best choice among the lots, the nations (Abraham, see Romans 4)?
- God picked Israel as His “allotment,” and grafts us into it, not because of how holy Israel. He keeps His promise to set apart Israel as His people (Ex. 19:4-6; 31:13; Lev. 20:8; 21:8; 22:9; Ezek. 36:22-36).
- The gift of the Spirit of God is a sign of who is part of His people:
 - “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel [good news] of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance [κληρονομία *klēronomia* 2817, “establishment by lot”], with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:13-14).

“your heart is not right before God” — This is the heart of the matter, so to speak. One cannot receive true communion with God if one’s heart isn’t really turned toward God.

- How does this speak to claims that God doesn’t care what we think, rather what we do?
- What about mystical assertions that various incantations, prayers, rites, etc. can wield the power of the Universe?
- How does this speak to the what the corrupt priesthood, leadership and people of Israel were doing in violating God’s instructions in areas such as justice and loyalty while carrying out His instructions regarding festivals, sacrifices and maintenance of His temple?

Acts 8:23

“in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity” — πικρία *pikria* (4088), translated *bitterness*, is used in Deut. 29:18 LXX to refer to “a bitter root producing bitter fruit,” i.e. wickedness. σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας *sundesmon adikias*, literally means the “ligament/joint of unrighteousness.”

Acts 8:26-27

Αἰθίοπων *Aithiopoun* (0128) comes from *aitho* for “burnt” and *ops* for “face.” *Kandake* was a term for a queen of Ethiopia. A eunuch was a court official who may or may not have been castrated. This eunuch was the Kandake’s treasurer. He was reading aloud from an LXX version of Isa. 53:7-8 while the chariot or carriage was going along

the road.

The eunuch's question about the identity of the servant is one that Jews and followers of Messiah Yeshua have fought over for nearly 2,000 years. Four passages in Isaiah (Isa. 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-11, 52:13-53:12) refer to the "servant." Early sages have connected these passages with Messiah, but modern Jewish commentators note this refers to Israel, with the "suffering servant" in Isaiah 52-53 pointing toward the Jews who endured the pogroms and the Holocaust.

Stern notes that Messiah was so connected with Israel that prophecies that refer to Israel in the *p'shat* (literal) sense, such as God's "son" being called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1), are more fully realized in Messiah. For example, Stern questions how the servant, Israel, can lift up Israel in Isa. 49:1-6, yet both Israel and Messiah are a "light to the nations." This corporate connection is seen in the concepts of being "baptized into His death" (Rom. 6:3).

Philip, who was part of Israel, related the good news about Messiah Yeshua starting from Isaiah.

Clarke notes that "who will proclaim his generation" from Isa. 53:8 could refer to what was supposed to happen in capital-crime trials — a calling for character witnesses. That didn't happen in Yeshua's nor Stephen's trial.