

Acts 25–26 notes

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All passages from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Acts 25:1–12

Paul appeared before Porcius Festus, the new procurator of Iudea and appealed his case to the Caesar in Rome at the prospect of another trial in Yerushalayim, where some leaders of Israel were plotting to kill Paul.

Acts 25:13–27

King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice, visited the new procurator. Festus asked what to do with Paul, a prisoner holdover from Felix, because there were no violations of Roman law to send with Paul on his appeal to Rome. Agrippa agreed to hear Paul's case to help Festus develop charges.

Acts 26:1–23

Paul presented his defense, recalling his education and life as a strict Pharisee, persecutor of believers of The Way, his encounter with Yeshua on the way to Damascus, mission to take the message of Messiah Yeshua to the nations and condemnation he received from Israel's authorities for doing so.

“ “get up and stand on your feet” ’ ” (Acts 26:16)

See Ezek. 2:1.

“ ‘declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance’ ” (Acts 26:20)

- What are “deeds appropriate to repentance”?

“ ‘stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that [literally, *if*] the Christ was to suffer [literally, *subject to suffering*], and that [if] by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.’ ” (Acts 26:22–23)

- Big objections to Yeshua as Messiah from Judaism include:
 - The Messiah would not suffer. Israel was the Suffering Servant foretold in Isaiah, suffering for the salvation of the world. That prophecy was fulfilled in the exiles and punishments of Israel throughout history, with healings coming when Israel was returned to the Land.¹
 - If Yeshua were God, He couldn't die.
 - Yeshua couldn't have been the Lamb of God, because the sacrifices God commanded from Israel were animals and not humans. The Torah forbids human sacrifice, specifically of children, which was the way Canaanites worshipped their deities.
- What do the Prophets and Moses say?:
 - Would the Messiah suffer?
 - “The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back. I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them.” (Isa. 50:4–9)
 - “Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.
Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we

¹ Ben Abraham, Isaac, of Troki. *Faith Strengthened* (חזוק אמונה). First published in Hebrew and Latin, 1681. Translated into English by Moses Mocatta, 1851. Corrected and digitized by the World Karaite Movement, starting in 1998. Accessed May 8, 2010 <www.faithstrengthened.org>. Part 1, chapter 22.

did not esteem Him.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.” (Isa. 52:13–53:12)

○ Would the Messiah die?

- “Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You. I said to the LORD, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good besides You.’ As for the saints who are in the earth, They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

“The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

“I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” (Psa. 16:1–11)

- It should be noted that Hebrew poetry frequently uses parallelism, in which a statement is amplified or contrasted with the next statement.
 - So “nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay” builds upon “You will not abandon my soul to Sheol.”
 - לֹא־תִתֶּן חַסִּידְךָ לְאֵתֶּן הַיָּם (Psa. 16:10) literally says the *hasid*, or “righteous one,” would not “see the pit.”
 - οὐδὲ δώσεις τὸν ὅσιόν σου ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν (Psa. 15:10) in the Septuagint translation interprets “see the pit” as “to see decay.”
 - ὅσιος *hosios* (Strong’s G3741) is how the Septuagint general translates ἁγιος *hagedios*.
 - “To see decay” is how Peter quoted this Psalm when he was in the temple on the Shavu’ot after the resurrection of Yeshua (Acts 2:27-31).
 - Paul in a Pisidian Antioch synagogue also used this Septuagint translation in his similar history of Israel in the context of Yeshua (Acts 13:35–38).
 - Both Peter and Paul referenced this Psalm to illustrate that the prophesied return of a Davidic Messiah (Jer. 30:9; Eze. 34:23; 37:23-26. Compare “righteous branch of David” in Jer. 23:5; 33:15.) was embodied first in Yeshua, because David went in the grave and did ultimately decay.

“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you: ‘Behold, you scoffers, and marvel, and perish; for I am accomplishing a work in your days, a work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.’ [Hab. 1:5]” (Paul in Acts 13:38–41)

 - Here, *freed* is translated from δικαιώω *dikaioo* (Strong’s G1344), which means “justified” or “declared to be righteous.”
 - That fits with *forgiveness* in this passage, which is translated from ἄφεσις *aphesis* (Strong’s G0859), which means “dismiss,” “release” or “pardon.”
 - Thus, the penalties of the Torah against sinners are discharged, or dropped, because of Yeshua’s death and resurrection.
 - Why is a Living Sacrifice better than a dead sacrifice?
 - Some assert that the “Holy One” — חַסִּידְךָ *hasidkha*, or “your compassionate one” or “your pious one” in Hebrew — in this passage refers to David and not Messiah, because David

trusted that God was “at [his] right hand” so his “flesh also [would] dwell securely.”

- That term, “Your Holy One,” is used only one other time in the Hebrew Scriptures, in a prophecy to the 12 tribes of Israel at the end of Moshe’s life:

“Of Levi he said, ‘Let Your Thummim and Your Urim *belong* to Your godly man, Whom You proved at Massah, With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah; Who said of his father and his mother, “I did not consider them”; And he did not acknowledge his brothers, Nor did he regard his own sons, For they observed Your word, And kept Your covenant. They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, And Your law to Israel. They shall put incense before You, And whole burnt offerings on Your altar. O LORD, bless his substance, And accept the work of his hands; Shatter the loins of those who rise up against him, And those who hate him, so that they will not rise *again*.’ ”

(Deut. 33:8–11)
- This seems to reference the life of the first high priest of Israel, Aharon.
 - Aharon was to wear the Urim and Thummim on the “breastplate of judgment” “over [his] heart” to bring judgment of Israel before the LORD (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8).
 - The account of Massah and Meribah was a recurring theme in Scripture (Ex. 17:1–7; Num. 20:13, 24; Deut. 6:16).
 - Massah מַסָּה (Strong’s H4532): “melt, dissolve, be liquefied”² i.e., “test.” The people were led to a place with bitter water, and the people “tested” the LORD, asking, “Is the LORD among us, or not?” (Ex. 17:7).
 - Meribah מֵרִיבָה (H4809): “place of strife”
 - Moshe feared the people would stone him (Ex. 17:4).
- This connection is not coincidental.
 - Peter called Yeshua the “Holy and Righteous One” in a second message in the Temple shortly after the Shavu’ot following Yeshua’s resurrection (Acts 3:14–15).
 - “Holy”: Strong’s G0040 ἅγιος *hagios*
 - “Righteous”: Strong’s G1342 δίκαιος *dikaios*
 - Paul in writing to believers in Corinth, paralleled Yeshua and the incident at Meribah.

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

“Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.” Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” (1st Cor. 10:1–13)

 - The prophet Nehemiah noted this connection between the bread from heaven and the water from a rock.

“You provided bread from heaven for them for their hunger, You brought forth water from a rock for them for their thirst, And You told them to enter in order to possess The land which You swore to give them.” (Neh. 9:15)
 - The “spiritual food” for Israel literally was the “bread from heaven” (Ex. 16:4).
 - The “spiritual food” was “everything that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut 8:3, cf. Matt 4:4; Luke 4:4).
 - The Word Who became flesh (John 1) said He was and is the “bread that came down from Heaven.”

“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.’” Iesous then said to them, “Truly, truly, I

² Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906.

say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.' ... Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, 'I am the bread that came down out of heaven.' ... 'This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh. ... This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.' " (John 6:31–33, 41, 50–51, 58)

- The author of the letter to the Hebrews draws the connection between Yeshua and the high priest of Israel.

"For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

"Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." (Heb 7:26–8:2)

- Here, *holy* is translated from *hosios*, or "righteous." Thayer's lexicon points out that *diakaios* is considered to be a generic term of righteous and *hosios* is a more specific use of the term for "undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure, holy, pious."³

- Other uses of *khasid* refer to pious people in general (Deut. 33:8; 1st Sam. 2:9; 2nd Sam. 22:26; Jer. 3:12; Mic. 7:2; Psa. 4:4; 12:2; 16:10; 18:26; 30:5; 31:24; 32:6; 37:28; 43:1; 50:5; 52:11; 79:2; 85:9; 86:2; 89:20; 97:10; 116:15; 132:9, 16; 145:10, 17; 148:14–149:1; 149:5, 9; Prov. 2:8; 2nd Chr. 6:41).

- Yob also expressed hope in God's resurrection of the dead.

"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!" (Job 19:25–27)

- The apostles quoted from Psalm 22 repeatedly when recording the events around the crucifixion of Yeshua. Note how David's experiences recorded here parallel those of Yeshua, such as when "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest. Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel. In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

"But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 'Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.'

"Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb; You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb.

"Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

"But You, O LORD, be not far off; O You my help, hasten to my assistance. Deliver my soul from the sword, My only life from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth; From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.

"I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. You who fear the LORD, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from him; But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.

"From You comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him. The afflicted will eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations will worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD's And He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth will eat and

3 Thayer, Joseph H. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004.

- worship, All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive. Posterity will serve Him; It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness To a people who will be born, that He has performed it” (Psa. 22:1–31)
- The Messiah would be resurrected?
 - See Isa. 52:13–53:12; Psa. 16:1–11; Psalm 22.
 - The Messiah’s resurrection would be instrumental in taking “light” to Israel and to the nations?
 - Was Messiah the “first” to proclaim this “light”?

Acts 26:24–32

Festus called Paul insane. Paul appealed to Agrippa’s knowledge of the Scriptures, and Agrippa said the suggestion was convincing. Agrippa also said Paul hadn’t done and wasn’t doing anything worthy of a death penalty for which the leaders of Israel were calling.

- Here are two reactions to hearing the good news of the Kingdom of God:
 1. Scoffing out of ignorant arrogance.

“While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.’” (Acts 26:24)
 2. Scoffing out of informed arrogance.

“‘King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.’ Agrippa *replied* to Paul, ‘In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.’ ... ‘This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment.’ And Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.’” (Acts 26:27–28, 31–32)