

# ***The Cambrian Peshar***

*A Voice of the Desposyni to the Dispersion*

Day of St. Stephen's,  
December 26,2021

## **The Cult of the Dead**

*Let no man beguile you [in]. . . worshipping of angels.*  
- Colossians 2:18

*And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.*  
- Acts 7:22

*The secret things belong to the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed  
belong unto us and to our children for ever,  
that we may do all the words of this law.*

- Deuteronomy 29:29

*There shall not be found among you any one that [is] a necromancer.*

- Deuteronomy 18:9-11

Beloved Friends:

### **The Trial of St. Stephen**

St. Stephen is introduced to us in the Sixth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. So is Saul of Tarsus, the first persecutor of the Church. It is Stephen's story which introduces us to Saul, who later becomes Paul the Apostle.

Stephen was appointed along with six other men to care for the widows of the Church. We have spent much time elsewhere explaining the unique status of these women as "The Daughters of Zion": See the *Peshar for Thanksgiving, 2020*, "Obedience to the House of Bethany," and *Hierogamy and the Married Messiah* (links found above). Stephen and his assistants were given charge over the Messianic succession.

The story as told to us by Acts is that Stephen had become a spiritual powerhouse and well on his way to becoming the foremost leader of whatever it was that could be called "Christianity" at the time. The chapter ends with him in debate with leading Jewish proselytes and finally being accused by them of blasphemy, resulting in a trial before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7.

## The Defense

It is important for us to come to an understanding of what St. Stephen meant in the text cited above in reference to the "wisdom of the Egyptians" during his defense in Acts 7. Granted, the account does not represent a dispassionate discourse. Stephen was on trial for his life. So, we may be tempted to overlook its significance, thinking that it is meaningless chatter in an emotionally charged situation.

But in the previous chapter, we learn that Stephen was in serious debates with Jews from North Africa, Egypt and Asia (Minor). In fact, these Jewish scholars, we are told, represented a "school" and no doubt were among the most competent intellectual leaders of the Diaspora of the 1st Century. It was they who, not being able to withstand Stephen's logical and forceful reasonings, brought the accusation which led to the trial of Acts 7. It is probable that the very same subject matter of those previous debates was now being reiterated as Stephen defended himself. In other words, he was not "flying by the seat of his pants." There was cogent relevancy as this brave man made his case. We should follow his words carefully for deliberate *nuance*.

For us today, separated by time and circumstance from the culture of those times, Acts 7 seems to be an unbearably long and boring rendition of Old Testament history - 53 long verses. We might ask, "What does any of this have to do with the issues of his trial and how can a reiteration of the lives of the Patriarchs do anything to help his defense?" That certainly is a ponderable.

It can be said that it was customary for loyal Jews to preface their legal arguments with an opening statement which assured the audience that the speaker was an informed and faithful follower of Moses. Look at it like a statement which establishes one's credentials. Such opening statements would restate the things which made the Jews, Jews.

Of course, Jesus Christ did not bother with a defense at His trial. He simply reminded the Sanhedrin that He taught daily at the Temple and that they already knew what His teachings were. He also sabotaged his own defense by offering an unnecessary declaration of His deity. See Jim Bishop's classic, *The Day Christ Died* for a blow-by-blow legal analysis of His trial. In other words, according to Bishop, when it became clear that the Sanhedrin did not have enough evidence to convict Jesus and it became apparent that the trial was on its way to an acquittal, Jesus unnecessarily opened His mouth and responded with a "guilty plea" of sorts at the High Priest's beckoning: "*I am the Son of man. . .*"

Obviously, Stephen was not so well known as was Jesus. Even though Stephen's ministry was burgeoning with wonderful miracles and power, he was still an unknown entity to the ruling class which made a more traditional defense a useful exercise. It is improbable that Stephen expected to carry the day and win over the leaders who were

sitting as his judges; half of the audience consisted of the mob who brought him before the Sanhedrin. But it remained to be seen what kind of punishment would be inflicted. As it turned out, there was no formal verdict, just the lynching of a raging mob.

### **Throwing the Trial**

Except, that Stephen makes an egregious error half-way in his presentation. He ascribes to Abraham a biographical detail which belongs to Jacob (7:16 cf. Joshua 24:32). How could he have made such a fundamental mistake?

Modern scholars believe that this "mistake" proves that the Book of Acts is a fraudulent document composed as historical fiction by someone in the 2nd Century who was not so well educated in the history of the Jews. In other words, to these scholars, it is more believable that the Book of Acts is a fraud than to believe that any good Jewish boy would be so illiterate as to make such an error. This is a problem, although Evangelicals gloss over it (e.g. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Gleason Archer, Zondervan, 1982) - and many of them are so ignorant of the Bible that they do not even know this problem exists.

But we believe that it was an intentional error on the part of Stephen (see Addendum below). Observing the reaction of his audience and knowing that **his destiny was predicted in Scripture** (See *The House of Bethany*, Stivers, 2007. Stephen was the "Antipas" of Revelation 2:13, see *Pesher of the Presentation*, 2022. Also Eusebius' *Histories* 2.1.1: [*he was stoned*] "by the murderers of the Lord, as if ordained specifically for this purpose"), it was at this point that he used this puzzling error to send a signal to the Christian brethren who might have been in the audience that he was "throwing the fight" and to get out before they got caught-up in the inevitable melee. In fact, according to the Patristic records, James the brother of Jesus was there at the trial and did in fact get attacked along with Stephen. You recall that Stephen was James' personal deacon and was destined to succeed him as the principal leader of the Jerusalem Church. According to the Patristic writings, James was beaten and left for dead but was retrieved by the "young men" who later also retrieved Stephen's body (Ref. Eisenman, *James the Brother of Jesus*, Viking Penguin, 1997). That part of the story is left out of Acts because the Book of Acts was written in the 1st Century while all of the actors, including James, were still alive. James was operating in the underground and did not make a public appearance again until the Jewish revolt in 63-70 AD. Acts obfuscates the identities and activities of many of these early disciples to protect them from attack and hostile interference. Acts would have been a book for general circulation among the churches and they could have been easily "doxed" by adversaries of the Church who would have been gathering "intelligence" on behalf of Roman and Jewish inquisitors.

Hippolytus tells us that another of the seven deacons died with Stephen, for he says, of the "70 Apostles" that, "Nicanor died when Stephen was martyred." (*ANF*, vol. 5,

p. 255-256). We do not know how he died. Perhaps, he was beaten trying to protect Stephen, or perhaps, he was trampled by the mob. Regardless, we have here evidence that Acts does not tell us everything and certainly confirms that a larger dragnet was in operation by the Jewish leaders.

### **The Accusers**

Now, the city of Alexandria had been sanctuary for centuries for the Diasporic Jews, especially for the Essenes. It would have been the destination of choice for the Holy Family when they fled King Herod after Jesus' birth. At least one fourth of Jewry lived in North Africa, including Alexandria.

The city's namesake - Alexander the Great - had commanded the city to be built as a repository of knowledge with a library which would collect copies of all the writings of the world. Consider the implications of this order. Until then, the libraries of the world were sectarian and provincial. If Qumran represented a library of sorts, even it was a collection which narrowed its scope to books favored by its occupants. Alexandria on the other hand was intended to represent the knowledge of all nations and tongues. Anyone who lived in Alexandria during those centuries would have benefited from an access to knowledge unknown to the human race prior to and after the library's destruction, not again until the 20th Century AD.

Alexandrian Jews were among Stephen's accusers. It is hard to believe that the Essenes would have been among them (although one wing was radicalized after John's execution), but certainly Alexandria produced some of the greatest minds of the Diaspora (e.g. Philo and the translators of the Septuagint, and also Apollos later in the Acts narrative) and if they could not disprove Stephen's arguments - then it meant that Judaism was intellectually and ideologically at a dead-end. It meant that Judaism had no longer a viable message for the world without Jesus Christ as its logical fulfillment, morally and intellectually. The viability of Christianity - simply known as "the Way" at this point - was a doctrine to perfect Judaism. It was carrying the day, as attested to by Acts in the complaint of the religious leaders to the Apostles: "You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine," (Acts 5:28) and "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). The message of the Gospel was so successful that the authorities had to bring in zealotes from the Diaspora (*ala* Saul of Tarsus) to stamp it out - hence, the "suborned men" of Acts 6:11.

Stephen starts the Israelite story with Abraham, but he spends most of his defense relating Abraham's prophecy of the Egyptian captivity, the story of Joseph and then the better part on Moses. Since Stephen was accused of attacking Moses, the Law, and the Temple, it makes sense that he would have done so.

## The Star Child

But in introducing us to the infant story of Moses, he calls him "exceedingly fair," a Hebraism which means that he was conceived in holiness by his parents in a type of *syneisaktum*. Occidentals and Christians in general do not know the specific Semitic meaning of this expression. They mistakenly think it means he was a pretty boy. We have some clues as to its meaning in its etymology: *to theo* (exceedingly), which means "after a godly manner" and *asteios* (fair) which means "proper, well born, urbane." It is a sister word to *aster*: a star (cf. Hebrews 11:23 "beautiful to God").

With the help of the accounts of Noah's birth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Enoch, we can surmise that Stephen was a "star child" (with the "face of an angel" - 6:15) as was Moses who also "shown the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 3:13). The Essenes practiced strict sexual customs which were calculated to produce the Messiah and the Messianic race. This is a part of the "secret knowledge" referenced by Moses above or what we call the "esoteric tradition" which cannot be comprehended, let alone accepted by cultures contaminated with Gnostic beliefs, as is American Christianity today, for example. Only if a people can be humbled and disciplined by Torah can such knowledge become known because it is a knowledge which reveals itself as the Law is being practiced. **Praxis brings gnosis** (Hebrews 5:14). Of course, the Prophets could comprehend it on a conceptual level - and their revelations abounded with incomprehensible allusions for the unlearned. In this case, both Moses and Stephen were "beautiful to God" because their conceptions were achieved in holiness and free of Original Sin.

Evangelicals are antinomian, and so are the breast-beating Orthodox Jews, because as the Apostle says, "Their hearts are veiled" (2 Corinthians 3:14-16): Evangelicals because they reject the moral authority of the Old Testament outright, the Jews because they have rejected Christ who is the hermeneutical lynchpin which holds the Law together at a conceptual level. **The rules mean nothing in themselves. They exist to produce the Messianic kingdom** ("Christ is the end of the law" - Paul, Romans 10:4). They are teleological.

After establishing that Moses was a "star child" with the right to be a Divine spokesman (*aggelos*, angel), Stephen then says that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."

Historically, there has been much discussion as to what Stephen meant to convey in making this statement. What should it have mattered to anyone in that room to know that Moses had mastered Egyptian metaphysics? And what was this "wisdom" knowledge to which he refers?

Essentially - to summarize the voluminous commentary on this through the centuries (Renaissance and Reformation thinkers used this phrase to justify a secular education independent of the Established Church) - Moses, as Pharaoh's adopted son and trained to be useful to Egyptian institutions, would have had to learn statecraft and

priestcraft. Moses would have been taught the foundations of social order in Egyptian sorcery. We will come back to Moses shortly; but here, Stephen is anticipating what he will be saying at the conclusion of his defense: that the Israelites rejected Moses as their deliverer because they were under a magic spell induced by Egyptian sorcery, a lingering power over their minds which explains their persistent apostasies in the wilderness with the Golden Calf *et al* and also explains why it had to be their children - who had not lived under the power of that sorcery - who actually conquered the land of Canaan some forty years later.

### **Remphan or Rephaim?**

After quoting Moses' famous Messianic prophecy, v. 37 (which even Jews believe is Messianic, just that it does not apply to Jesus because they do not accept Him as their Messiah), Stephen forcefully argues that God "gave them up" to these satanic forces "to worship the host of heaven" - not the stars as such but the angelic powers which the stars represent. It was to *them* that in the ineffable NAME the Jews offered "slain beasts and sacrifices" and took up "the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship . . ." What is he talking about?

Here, he is quoting the Prophet Amos in the Septuagint, but in a peshet. Compare with the Received Text:

*But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and **Chiun** your images, the star of your god, which ye made for yourselves. (Amos 5:26)*

Because Stephen quoted the Septuagint elsewhere in this chapter, translators tend to follow it here, assuming that he is speaking to his audience in Greek. We cannot be sure because we do not know how close this trial was to the Temple precincts. Greek was considered a profane language and was forbidden in Jewish sacred spaces. If Stephen is the Antipas of Revelation 2 (see our *Peshet of the Presentation*, 2022), then the trial was indeed within the Temple precincts and only Aramaic would have been allowed to be spoken (but more below in the Addendum).

Regardless, it is a mistranslation in the Authorized Version (KJV); for the Septuagint actually reads "the star of your god Raiphan." The spelling and the association with the "star" is important.

While George Lamsa in his English translation of the *Peshitta* (the Aramaic Textus Receptus) follows the Authorized Version, Murdock's Aramaic rendering is thus:

*But ye bore the tabernacle of Malchum, and the star of the god **Rephon**, images which ye had made, that ye might bow down to them (see [www.dukhrana.com](http://www.dukhrana.com) for references here).*

The Aramaic drops the Hebrew letter *Mem* and Etheridge agrees, translating Remphan as "Raphan" - the Hebrew letters: *Resh, Phe, Nun* (RFN) - which would suggest a different Hebrew word "Repha": *the dead* (*pl. Rephaim* or *Raphaim*: RFM). The *Mem* at the end of *Rephaim* makes it plural; so the root consonents are *Resh* and *Phe* (RF) the same as "Rephon." It might be that this "Remphan" (found only here in the New Testament) or "**Rephon, Raphan**" (remember that the vowels were supplied much later by the Masoretes) **was an idol dedicated to the "Rephaim" as part of the Egyptian cult of the dead.** More below.

Contrast this reference to "the tabernacle (succoth) of your Moloch" (MLK: Hebrew consonant root for king and for angel) to Amos' prediction later in 9:11,12 in which God promises to "raise up the tabernacle (succoth) of David" to rival this "tabernacle of Moloch" and which also happens to be the text James quotes in Acts 15 as the foundation for his ruling on the Mosaic Law, circumcision and the admission of the Gentiles into the Church. Jesus, Stephen, and James were Davidians (i.e. Nazoreans) and were wresting the interpretive authority of the Torah from the Levites and Priests (who were appointed annually by Herod, the rogue king, son of Belial, and the Moloch condemned in the Damascus Document found among the Dead Sea Scroll corpus) and were appropriating that authority to the House of David (*the Bar Kochba*, "son of the star"). Also, remember that the worship of Moloch was associated with child sacrifice, a fact which should fully inform the reader as to the real significance of Herod's order to slaughter the infant boys of Bethlehem (remember Pharaoh's command to slay the baby boys of the Hebrews in Exodus 1).

The Book of Amos was written to the Northern Kingdom, which at the time was ruled by King Jeroboam, the rebellious contemporary of Solomon and his successor, Rehoboam, who founded the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam had made two Golden Calves, one in Bethel and one in Dan, to compete with the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. In predicting a future invasion and captivity, Amos was considered seditious (7:10-13) by Amaziah the apostate priest of Bethel who argued with Amos by asserting state sovereignty over religion: that Bethel is "the king's (MLK) chapel, and it is the king's (MLK) court" (v. 13). Amos' claim that God would "raise up the tabernacle of David" would have been particularly galling to the Israelites who had just rebelled against the Davidic Kingdom in Jerusalem, "What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel . . ." (1Kings 12:16).

### **Stephen's Prosecution of the Sanhedrin**

Notice, then, what Stephen has done in citing this incident in his defense: he turns the table on his accusers and **accuses them of following the apostasy of Jeroboam.** The Temple worship was a plaything of the Herodians and other apostate Jews - principally the Pharisees and Sadducees - who used it as Josephus shows, as a tool for world power through the head tax charged of the Diasporic pilgrims to Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Temple had become the "tabernacle" or "chapel" of their Moloch-king. To

Jesus and now Stephen, the Temple was a defiled place of worship and had become profane like Bethel because like the Northern Tribes under Jeroboam's apostasy, they had rejected Jesus, "the star child," of David's line (Numbers 24:17, cf. *Pesher for Thanksgiving*, 2020).

Star worship was not the astrology we know today. Rather, it was angel worship - or the veneration and appeasement of demons through the sacrificial system; hence, Paul's warning in the text above from Colossians 2:18. We mistakenly assume that Paul was ascribing the worship of angels as a problem among the Gentiles. But the context referencing the "ordinances" (v. 20) of the Temple clearly shows that he meant *the Jews* had this problem.

Here Stephen follows the Septuagint and calls the "Chiun" - "Remphan." But if it is a mistranslation, then the *Rephaim* as noted above, *the spirits of the dead* assume the role of the angelic or demonic powers.

*Young's Analytical Concordance* tells us that these words refer to Saturn (Kronos), and *Strong's Greek and Hebrew Lexicon*, while not going as far as Young's translation, tells us that they refer to an unknown Egyptian idol. In any respect, we can say that Stephen was arguing that Jeroboam's apostasy was a return to the religion of Egypt with its sorcery and ancestor worship, and that Stephen's accusers were following that same apostasy. While it cannot be shown that Stephen's Jewish attackers practiced idolatry in terms of statuary and images, it was his accusation - **and I say this with emphasis - that the idolatry of the Jews consisted in the iconic worship of the architecture of the Temple structure itself.** They ascribed supernatural powers to both the place and the magnificence of the building. They embraced the ancient superstition about sacred spaces and the concentration of spiritual powers by the practice of the enclosure (as does Freemasonry and Wicca), which Stephen forcefully condemns:

*"The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? . . ."*  
7:48-49

If we consider this proposition, other incidents recorded in the Gospels and the Book of Acts take on a new significance. Even the disciples took pride in the magnificence of the Temple, such that in His Olivet Discourse, Jesus had to remind them that "not one stone will be left upon another." The Jews had drunk deeply of the wine of the Egyptian edifice complex and somehow equated spiritual power to the monument itself.

### **The Idolatry of the Mahuzzim**

Isaac Newton called attention to this worship of fortresses, citadels, and temples in his commentary on Daniel. He calls it the Mahuzzim heresy of the Antichrist - the God of Fortresses:



*Hitherto the "Roman" Empire continued entire; and under this dominion, the little horn of the He-Goat continued "mighty, but not by his own power." But now, by the building of "Constantinople", and endowing it with a Senate and other like privileges with "Rome", and by the division of the "Roman" Empire into the two Empires of the "Greeks" and the "Latins", headed by those two cities; a new scene the things commences, in which (Daniel 11:32,etc.) "a King", the Empire of the "Greeks, doth according to his will and" by setting his own laws above the laws of God, "exalts and magnifies himself above every God, and speaks marvelous things against the God of Gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished. - Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the "lawful" desire of women "in matrimony", nor any God, but shall magnify himself above all. And in his seat he shall honour "**Mahuzzims, that is strong guardians, the souls of the dead;**" even with a God whom his fathers knew not shall he honour them, "**in their Temples,**" with gold and silver, and with precious stones and valuable things. "All which relates to the overspreading of the" Greek" Empire with Monks and Nuns, who placed holiness in abstinence from marriage; and to the invocation of saints and veneration of their reliques, and such like superstitions, which these men introduced in the fourth and fifth centuries.*

- Emphasis added, the portions within quotation marks are Newton's commentary or interpolations

The Mahuzzim heresy was a revival of the Egyptian Cult of the Dead, with the haunting of enclosures, temples, and tombs: disembodied spirits which have been called "ghosts" or in our time "poltergeists." The Jews indulged the same superstitions involving reincarnation, demons, polishing tombs, and other fetishes. Even Christ's disciples, reflecting their upbringing, mistook Him on occasion for a ghost.

While Newton dwells on other aspects of this "God of Fortresses" (ghosts and haunted places) and does not develop the role of sacred architecture, we can turn to Alexander Hislop's *The Two Babylons* (19th Century classic, reprinted by Chick Publications, undated, ISBN 0-937958-57-3) to complete the description:

*In Daniel xi. 38, we read of a god called **Ala Mahozine\*---the "god of fortifications."** Who this god of fortifications could be, commentators have found themselves at a loss to determine. In the records of antiquity the existence of any god of fortifications has been commonly overlooked; and it must be confessed that no such god stands forth there with any prominence to the ordinary reader. But of the existence of a **goddess** of fortifications, every one knows that there is the amplest evidence. That goddess is Cybele [or Cybil:JS], who is universally represented with a mural or turreted crown, or with a fortification, on her head. Why was Rhea or Cybele thus represented? Ovid asks the question and answers it himself; and the answer is this: The reason he says, why the statue of Cybele wore a crown of towers was, "because she first erected them in cities." The first city in the world after the flood (from whence the commencement of the world itself was often dated) that had towers and*

*encompassing walls, was Babylon; and Ovid himself tells us that it was Semiramis, the first queen of that city, who was believed to have "surrounded Babylon with a wall of brick." Semiramis, then, the first deified queen of that city and tower whose top was intended to reach to heaven, must have been the prototype of the goddess who "first made towers in cities." When we look at the Ephesian Diana, we find evidence to the very same effect. In general, Diana was depicted as a virgin, and the patroness of virginity; but the Ephesian Diana was quite different. She was represented with all the attributes of the Mother of the gods and, as the Mother of the gods, she wore a turreted crown, such as no one can contemplate without being forcibly reminded of the tower of Babel. Now this tower-bearing Diana is by an ancient scholiast expressly identified with Semiramis. § When, therefore, we remember that Rhea or Cybele, the tower-bearing goddess, was, in point of fact, a Babylonian goddess, and that Semiramis, when deified, was **worshipped under the name of Rhea**, there will remain, I think no doubt as to the personal identity of the "goddess of fortifications."*

*\*In our version, Ala Mahozim is rendered alternatively "god of forces," or **"gods protectors."** To the latter interpretation, there is this insuperable objection that Ala is in the singular. Neither can the former be admitted; for Mahozim, or Mauzzim, does not signify "forces," or "armies," but "munitions," as it is also given in the margin—that is "fortifications." Stockius, in his Lexicon, gives us the definition of Mahoz in the singular, robur, arx, docus munitua, and in proof of the definition, the following examples:—Judges vi. 26, "And build an altar to the Lord thy God upon the top of **this rock**" (**Mahoz, in the margin "strong place"**); and Dan. xi. 19, "Then shall he turn his face to the fort (Mahoz) of his own land." See also Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 633.*

- Emphasis added (citation below)

The reader should consider the 19<sup>th</sup> Century meaning of the word, "munitions," not to be confused with "ammunition." Obviously, "ammunition" comes from the word "munition," which means to "fortify" or "make strong" and can refer to the bullets to "fortify" a modern firearm. But consulting Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary, he tells us of "munition" that,

*The primary sense is that which is set or fixed, or that which defends, drives back or hinders. . . 1. Fortification. . . 2. Ammunition. . . 3. Provisions of a garrison or fortress...*

Consequently, the interpreter ought to consider the militaristic implications of the term to mean that the ruler bases his right to rule through conquest and that society as a whole is organized according to a militaristic regimen.

Notice also Hislop's reference to "Rhea" is the phonetic equivalent of the Egyptian word "Ra" and the first syllable of "Rephaim" or "Raphaim." Continuing now with his account:

*Khons, the son of the great goddess-mother, seems to have been generally represented as a full-grown god.\* The Babylonian divinity was also represented very frequently in Egypt in the very same way as in the land of his nativity- i.e., as a child in his mother's arms. This was the way in which Osiris, "the son, the husband of his mother," was often exhibited, and what we learn of this god, equally as in the case of Khonso, shows that in his original he was none other than Nimrod. It is admitted that the secret system of **Free Masonry was originally founded on the Mysteries of the Egyptian Isis, the goddess-mother, or wife of Osiris. But what could have led to the union of a Masonic body with these Mysteries, had they not had particular reference to architecture, and had the god who was worshipped in them not been celebrated for his success in perfecting the arts of fortification and building? Now, if such were the case, considering the relation in which, as we have already seen, Egypt stood to Babylon, who would naturally be looked up to there as the great patron of the Masonic art? The strong presumption is that Nimrod must have been the man. He was the first that gained fame in this way. As the child of the Babylonian goddess-mother, he was worshipped, as we have seen, in the character of Ala mahozim, "The god of fortifications." Osiris, in like manner, the child of the Egyptian Madonna, was equally celebrated as "the strong chief of the buildings." §***

- Hislop, p. 30, 43

**Osiris was the Egyptian god of the dead and of the underworld and is also identified here as "the strong chief of the buildings."** Thus, in the Egyptian Mysteries, we see a convergence of both aspects of the Mahuzzim doctrine: *the worship of ghosts in the monuments built for the purposes of conjuring them.*

Notice, now, Hislop's connection of the "god of fortresses" to Freemasonry, which worships the mystical properties of architecture. The original masons were servants of this "goddess or god of fortresses" because they were the ones who engineered and constructed the various walls and towers which "encompassed" a city. Thus, there was an imputation of magical power to the enclosure in which the powers of a deity were manifested but also limited. According to this doctrine, the powers of a god or goddess were concentrated within the walls of a city but were less effective outside of them. This fact gives added nuance to the Masonic name for God as "the Great Architect of the Universe."

## The Heresy of Iconic Religions

We can ask why the Masoretic Text should call these *Rephaim* "Chiun," which appears only in Amos 5:26 and which Stephen is made to call "the star worhsip of Remphan." The RSV helps us here with a marginal note that translates it as "shrine" which, if true, supports our assertion that *Remphan* is a corrupted rendering for *Rephaim*. Because "shrines" are the haunts of the dead.

This interpretation is confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls. In Fragment 4Q560 - *An Exorcism* - the Scroll discusses "shrine spirits" and how to cast them out (ref. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Wise, et al, HarperSanFrancisco, p. 443-444). (See also, *The Cambrian Peshet* for "The Day of the Holy Cross," 2021 on the Celtic practice of "Saining").

So, combining Hislop's and Newton's descriptions above, we see that sacred buildings were built to conjure the presence of spiritual powers - with or without visual representations - be they called angels, demons, ghosts, saints or the mighty (godlike) guardians of the dead. It follows that in reference to an Egyptian god, Stephen meant to call attention to these superstitions which were rampant in Judaism. He was charging the Jews with perpetuating the Egyptian Cult of the Dead: "the star (or angel) of your mighty (elohim) dead" - ("Elohim" being a nuanced term as used here - which could be translated as "the star of your dead *gods*" - Stephen's sarcastic mockery is inescapable).

Newton's reference to the early medieval veneration of the saints and relics and shrines with the tombs and churches dedicated to them reminds us of the hope of medieval worshippers that such saints would answer their prayers, just as the ancients worshipped the souls of the dead and invoked their demons to lend them aid and assistance. These haunted places were resorted to for prayer and sacrifice and the Temple in Jerusalem had become just such a haunt.

Iconography is a visual aid in symbolic ritualism. The practice of "reenactments" of events is important to the Masonic institution and hearkens to the old Egyptian practice of "death, burial and resurrection" ritual ordeals to invoke the spirits of great men. The same is true of the role playing in Mormon Temples. Creating a sympathy of likenesses in the reenactment is thought to attract the spirits of powerful beings to recapture their spiritual power (cf. *Peshet for All Hallows*, 2020, "Demonic Possession." See link above.)

If Moses was learned in the "all the wisdom of the Egyptians," he evidently forsook it, as suggested in Hebrews 11:24-27. He condemned sorcery, magic spells, and necromancy (consulting the dead), as cited in our text from Deuteronomy above, which reads in full:

*When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.*

*There shall not be found among you any that maketh his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or*

*enchanter or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.*

- 18:9-11

It is ironic that the man who was perhaps the most powerful wizard in the world - Moses - should forbid its practice to the Israelites. But wizardry was the religion of Egypt and for the Israelites to be free of it; they must be delivered from it in their minds.

### **The Caduceus in the Wilderness**

With what has been described thus far, we are reminded of some strange biblical stories about Moses. Perhaps the strangest story in the Bible – in the midst of its condemnations of idolatry – we find that Moses constructed a pole and put a brazen serpent upon it for the healing of the people from a plague of venomous serpents (Numbers 21:9 *et al*). This almost bizarre account seems out of place in the Bible. The Israelites are condemned for worshipping a Golden Calf; yet, Moses makes this molten image of a serpent on a pole and commands the people to “gaze upon it” that they might be healed of the plague. The medical symbol of the caduceus comes from this biblical story. This story compels further examination.

Moses possessed a rod which had the power to turn into a serpent when cast to the ground. Moses was sent as “the messenger of God” to Pharaoh. We do not know if the caduceus represents one serpent in two phases (as a staff then as a serpent) or two serpents. The twin serpent motif seems to complicate our analysis, until we recall that Moses' brother, Aaron, also had a rod which would turn into a snake (Exodus 7). Since later we learn that Aaron's rod was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, it remains that Moses' rod should be our focus. We surmise, then, that the caduceus represents Moses' staff (for the teaching of the people) and the entwined serpent represents the healing of the people.

[The reader should revisit our *Pesher on Qumran* and the assertion by the early Church Fathers that "Jesus" and "Essene" are both derived from a word that means "healer."] [Also, see *Merlin, High Priest of the Holy Grail*, Stivers, 2011. The Caduceus of Mercury's wand was a pagan copycat of the story of Moses.]

From Rabbinic sources, we learn that this rod was alleged to have been created by God Himself and given to Adam when he was driven from Paradise. It was passed-down successively to Enoch, Shem, Abraham, Jacob and then finally Joseph. Upon Joseph's death, it was stolen by Egyptian nobles and ended up in the possession of Jethro, who planted the staff in his garden when he learned of its beneficent powers. After implanting it, no one was able to extract it or even to touch it lest he die - until Moses.

It was said to be a deadly artifact because the ineffable name of God was engraved upon it. We see similarities here to Excalibur and the story of Arthur; for only when Arthur withdrew it from the stone was his right to rule known.

There are other legends surrounding this rod. Both Christian and Jewish sources tell us that this sacred staff was given to Tamar by Judah as his "sign and signet" for her harlotry, which explains how Pharez got it. David used it to slay Goliath and according to Christian sources, it became the cross member upon which Christ was crucified, after Judas Iscariot had stolen it from James the Just. Reference "The Book of the Bee" (*Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Semitic Series, vol 1, pt.2). Obviously, not all of these stories can be true and probably none of them are.

Origen claims that "This rod of Moses, with which he subdued the Egyptians, is the *symbol* of the cross of Jesus, who conquered the world." At least, Origen valued the typology rather than trying to perpetuate these fantastical stories as authentic.

In John 3:14-15, Lazarus (the true author of *the Gospel of the Dove*) quotes Jesus as saying that the brazen serpent on the pole became the original and only Christian icon of Jesus dying upon the Cross. Jewish sources say the rod remains hidden within the lost Ark of the Covenant, which will be revealed at the coming of the Messiah (this is only true if we conflate Moses' rod with Aaron's), if we assume that it was this bronze caduceus. [But it was destroyed by King Hezekiah - 2 Kings 18:4]. They believe that the Messiah will use it to rule the nations. They claim it is made of sapphire, weighs over 10 pounds and bears the inscription, in Hebrew, the **initials of the Ten Plagues**. (See Wikipedia under "Aaron's Rod" or the "rod of Moses").

And of course Jesus said that it was a symbol of His impending Crucifixion: "And if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), as a specific reference to the caduceus:

*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.*

- John 3:14

Moses used the caduceus pole in the Wilderness to break the Egyptian spell over the Israelite mind. The reason why Jesus can "draw all men unto [him]" by being raised up in His Crucifixion is for the same reason: when a person "looks" at the Crucified Savior, it breaks Satan's spell of delusion and self-loathing in the sinner's mind. It is replaced with an image signifying God's love. The Crucifix - the sign of the Cross - is a very powerful symbol that affects the mind at a fundamentally subconscious level. However, it is the only visual symbol allowed in Christian doctrine.

## Martyrdom & the Prayer of Imprecation

*And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?***

*And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

- Revelation 6:9-11

*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

- Acts 7:59-60

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

- Romans 12:19-21 (cf. Proverbs 25:21-22; Matthew 5:44)

It is a settled matter that Christians are called upon to engage in spiritual battle through prayer, especially the prayer of forgiveness. A host of volumes on prayer written over the many centuries may be consulted for guidance. When it comes to the imprecatory prayer, however, there has not been much instruction, unfortunately. The imprecatory prayer calls down God's judgment upon the wicked who are oppressing the innocent and the saints.

It may, at first, seem difficult to resolve the discrepancy between Stephen's prayer of forgiveness (the same prayer offered by his father, Jesus, when He was Crucified), quoted above, with the prayer of the martyrs in the book of Revelation, also quoted above. The prayer of the martyrs is not one of forgiveness, but one of vengeance. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Romans, that the prayer of forgiveness also serves as a prayer for vengeance in the heaping of "coals of fire" upon the adversary. This is an interesting perspective and may reconcile both of these views.

But we are tempted to ask, "Does this mean that when we pray in forgiveness for our adversary, that we are to be consciously aware that it is also a prayer of vengeance?" Perhaps, so.

In another place Paul alleges to have "delivered unto Satan" certain men by name "that they learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:20) and argues for the role of a liturgy of malediction "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved . . ." (1 Corinthians 5:5). So, then, we seem to have a precedent to pray for bad things to happen to the wicked to lead them to repentance. But we must pray God's words.

### **The Martyrdom of Rob Skiba**

There have been many martyrs in the history of the Church. There are Christians who are dying for their faith as we speak in places hostile to Christianity. But what makes the death of Rob Skiba a true martyrdom is that he was a "witness" to his faith, which is the true meaning of the Greek word, "martus": "a witness in a judicial proceeding."

It has been alleged by his pro-vaccine detractors, that in a social media post he defended his anti-vaccine position with a self-maledictory oath: "Very soon, either you will be dead, or I will be dead" or something to that effect in reference to the covid pandemic. His detractors have seized upon his sudden demise with glee as "karma" for his "unscientific" anti-vaccine position.

Now, we must remember that "karma" is a pagan doctrine of retribution. It is a term used far too much by Christians, who are supposed to believe in a contrary view of "public justice" which is enforced by a beneficent Creator. In other words, the notion of "karma" presupposes a cosmic impersonalism, while Christianity embraces a cosmic personalism in a sovereign and merciful God - a God who can suspend natural law in the interests of His moral government. We believe in Providence, not Karma.

We must also remember that "sorcery" in the New Testament is the Greek word, *pharmakeia*, from which we get the word "pharmaceutical." Now, we do not judge modern medicine from the etymology of words, but we do know that historically sorcery has relied upon the use of drugs. In some respects the outright dependence upon drugs by modern medicine instead of nutritional therapies does represent an apostasy of sorts. Modern medicine is teetering toward a superstitious veneration of drug protocols instead of healthy living. Certainly, in its state enforced vaccination program, this veneration has become the penultimate dogma of our time.

It can be argued that Skiba's remark was an intemperate figure of speech, but if it was, it was a fatal mistake, much like Moses' intemperate decision to "strike the rock" instead of "speaking to the rock" - in the famous account which decided that his life would be cut short and that he would not be allowed to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Leadership requires circumspection that many chatter-happy evangelists do not seem to grasp. As we are warned in the Epistle of James:



*My brethren, be not many masters [didaskalos: teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*

- 3:1

Skiba's death should be received with foreboding. He was a witness in the courtroom of heaven; his detractors do not believe in such a courtroom. They believe in karma. They are in grave danger:

*Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*

- Jesus. Matthew 18:7

Stephen's martyrdom was a harbinger which sealed the fate of Jerusalem. Likewise, Skiba's death - and those who have died because of similar religious convictions - may have sealed the fate of the West. The apostasy has ripened.

A Servant of Jesus,

James

### **Collect for the Day**

*We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to your Son Jesus Christ, who stands at your right hand; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.*

\**Cambrian Peshier* is the pastoral epistle of the Cambrian Episcopal Church of the Grail, a fellowship and abbey adhering to a spiritual tradition from ancient Wales. We use the Authorized Version of the Bible (King James Version) as our default translation and the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church for liturgical guidance. We are not an affiliate of any denomination.

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(addendum below)

## Addendum: A Critical Analysis of St. Stephen's Defense

Before beginning this analysis of Stephen's defense in Acts chapter 7, it is important to understand that Jewry has never been monolithic. Rabbinic Judaism - which is the old Pharisee sect - has the ascendancy today, but other factions, such as Zionism, are powerful groups within Judaism. Zionism is merely a continuation of the old Zealots' nationalistic cause of Jesus' time. Secular Jews are a continuation of the sect of the Sadducees. The Essenes morphed into Ebionism and then today into "Messianic-Torah Keeping" Christianity. Modern Herodians might be the Hollywood crowd, decadent and self-righteous.

As noted above, Stephen was haled before the *High Priest* (Acts 7:1) by Diasporic Jews on the charge of blasphemy. In doing so, it is probable that Stephen spoke in his defense in Hebrew/Aramaic, not in Greek. The High Priest's quarters adjoined the Temple grounds where profane languages - such as Greek - were not allowed. Diasporic worshippers had to be escorted by local priests.

Many years later, the Apostle Paul would command silence in the Temple precincts because he, too, would speak to the mob in the "Hebrew tongue" (22:2). It should be noted that this mob of Jewish purists in Acts 22 gave leave for Paul to speak, and then erupted in rage when he invoked the name of Stephen:

*And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when **the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed**, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.*

*And he said unto me, "Depart for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."*

*And they gave him audience unto his word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."*

- Acts 22:19-22

Even after over twenty years, Stephen's heresy was fresh on the minds of these violent partisans, so much so that Paul's mere mention of his martyrdom aroused their fury. The "false witnesses" at Stephen's trial would allege that he spoke against "Moses . . . this holy place, and the law" (Acts 6: 11, 13). They would charge Paul with the same crime of blasphemy.

Scholars have been confused on this point as to whether Stephen gave his defense in Greek or in Aramaic because he quotes the Septuagint throughout his speech. How could he be quoting the Septuagint and not be speaking Greek in the Temple precincts? This fact is important. The answer is that Stephen spoke in Aramaic, **but he also**

**quoted the Greek Septuagint in Aramaic. He translated the Greek back into Aramaic.** Why would he do this?

We must remember that there were competing Old Testament canons during the 1st Century. There was **the "Jerusalem Canon"** or the Tanakh which was preserved in the Aramaic and would be limited to the 39 books common to our Bibles today. This Jerusalem Canon would provide the Masoretes of the medieval period the texts from which later Protestant Bibles would copy as a source for translating the Hebrew Old Testament.

Then, there was **the Samaritan Pentateuch**. The Samaritans were, in Jewish eyes, the mongrel descendants of Israelite peasants from the Northern Kingdom. In retaliation for this racist chauvinism, the Northern Tribes rejected anything having to do with the Davidic monarchy and all the prophets from the Southern Kingdom. Their Canon began and ended with the Pentateuch, the writings of Moses. The Histories, the Psalms and Proverbs, and the Prophets were not viewed as canonical. **For them, Jerusalem was not a sacred place.** Other places in the Northern Territory recorded in Genesis and Deuteronomy, such as Shechem (where both Abraham and Jacob would build altars), would become their memorials to the Abrahamic Covenant. Obviously, they opposed the Temple, as the Gospel of John recounts in Christ's encounter with the Woman at the Well:

*Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar [Shechem], near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, "Give me drink. . ."*

*Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. . .*

*The woman saith unto him, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship . . ."*

*Jesus saith unto her, "Woman believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father . . ."*

*The woman saith unto him, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ, when he is come, he will tell us all things."*

*Jesus saith unto her, "I that speak unto thee am he."*

- John 4:5-7, 9, 19-21, 25-26

[It would be useful to consider - at some other time - how it was that the Northern Tribes (the Samaritans) had a Messianic doctrine, a set of prophecies which foretold of the Messiah. Since they rejected the prophets from the Southern Kingdom, they would have had to rely only upon prophecies found in the Pentateuch concerning a non-Davidic Messiah.]

Finally, there was **the Septuagint**. The Septuagint was the Old Testament translated into Greek during the 2nd Century BC by Alexandrian Jews. It was based upon Hebrew manuscripts that differed from the Tanakh. There is evidence that the Dead Sea Scrolls relied upon these manuscripts.

This was a troublesome event to the traditional Jews of Judea because not only were some of the renderings different, it contained an expanded Canon which included the 14~ Apocryphal books. These books contained some of the most explicit Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament which were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Obviously, Christians would favor the Septuagint for this reason - and the Jewish authorities would resist it as a spurious Canon.

It should be noted that the Apocrypha found its way into the Christian Canon through Jerome's Latin Vulgate and remained in the Christian Bible, including the King James Version, until 1828, when it was decided by the American Bible Society to drop it.

Stephen's insistence upon quoting the Septuagint at his trial - even translating it back into Aramaic - could have meant only one thing: he was sending a clear message of defiance to the Jewish authorities that he was rejecting the Jerusalem Canon and was embracing the Septuagint Canon.

He demonstrates this in the instances where his critics claim he was in error:

**First**, from the beginning of his defense in 7:2-4, critics claim a contradiction with Genesis 11:26, 32; 12:4. Stephen states that Abraham dwelt in Haran until his father (Terah) died, and then moved to Canaan. In Genesis, the math does not add up and creates a 60-year gap. But our Genesis is based upon the Masoretic Texts. Stephen was relying either upon an oral tradition or upon the Samaritan Pentateuch. He clearly does not accept the chronology of the Jerusalem Canon.

**Second**, and more egregiously as stated above, Stephen cites Shechem as the burial ground for "Jacob and our fathers" (v. 16). Skeptics and modern Rabbis snicker at this imagined error because of their partisan bias. Rabbinic Jews want us to believe that all of the Patriarchs were buried with Sarah in Hebron - in Judah. Jewish partisans use this and other inconsistencies to prey on illiterate Evangelicals and hide their duplicity in altering the biblical texts to support their cause.

While Evangelical apologists do well in glossing over this perceived error with plausible explanations, their reasonings are called "glosses" because they fail to identify Stephen's *purpose* in stating this version of Israelite history: he was wresting interpretative authority from the Jewish authorities and taking sides with the Samaritans

who claimed Shechem was a sacred burial ground. Much like in American jurisprudence, a prosecutor might cite a statute to justify bringing the accused to trial, but the accused might cite the Constitution to declare the statute null and void. In this case, Stephen denies that the High Priest or the Sanhedrin has the authority to pass judgment against his Messianic faith.

**Third**, Stephen follows the Septuagint and numbers the Patriarchal migratory troop to Egypt at 75, instead of the Masoretes who number it at 70. The Septuagint adds Joseph's *grandsons* to the list because Manasseh and Ephraim were adopted by Jacob as sons *equal* to his other sons. Consequently, even though Joseph's sons and grandsons were born in Egypt, they were counted with this first census. This was also clearly an argument in support of the Samaritan cause, as the Northern Kingdom was often called "The House of Ephraim" by the Old Testament prophets.

And then **fourth**, as discussed at length above, Stephen cites the Septuagint in quoting Amos 5 about "the star god Remphan," which does not need to be repeated here.

We might wonder why Stephen felt compelled to take sides with the Samaritans, even while condemning the Temple authorities with following in Jeroboam's apostasy. It may have been in anticipation of what happened next in Acts chapter 8: his fellow-deacon, Philip, went to Samaria and evangelized the city. It might be that Stephen's speech was taken as "marching orders" for those who survived him.

Stephen's "dig" at Sanhedrin authority also became a warning to sympathizers in the crowd: he wasn't pulling any punches in the hopes of an acquittal. Stephen was attacking the economic foundation of Temple Jewry and Herodian revenue. Like the uproar caused by Paul at Ephesus many years later, a lot of money was made from religion and Stephen's anti-temple stance threatened the legitimacy of Judaism and the livelihoods of all those who depended upon it. Jesus did not seal His death sentence until He overthrew the moneychangers in the Temple. The polemic of Stephen's defense left no doubt of the outcome.

Revisiting Stephen's reference to Shechem, the capital of Ephraim, it was an unnecessary factoid were he not trying to communicate a peshet to his fellow believers. After emphasizing "the covenant of circumcision" in citing the reference to Shechem, it would have reminded the listeners of how Jewish ancestors treated Gentile proselytes: they were treacherously murdered. The story of Shechem's seduction of Jacob's daughter - Dinah - would have come to mind here (v. 16). Shechem and his whole village agreed to adopt the Abrahamic Covenant sign of circumcision as a dowry. Shechem and most of the village were slaughtered by Levi and Simon. Stephen's implied peshet is that the treachery of Levitical priests finds its origin in their patriarchal ancestry. Expect it now.

The peshet continues, "Jacob went *down* into Egypt." In the book of Revelation, "Egypt" was code for "Jerusalem." "Jacob went *down* to Egypt, and *died* . . ." Stephen is

saying that he has gone "down" into Jerusalem and will "die."

**Finally**, Stephen ends his speech with a clear charge of apostasy against the Temple authorities. He lived out the true meaning of the Greek New Testament word "martus" as a testimony against his accusers. It was not he who was on trial, but rather the Temple authorities, which is why Stephen saw the heavens opened, and the "Son of man standing at the right hand of the Father." The apostasy had ripened; Jerusalem's fate was sealed.

- JWS, December 25, 2021