

Harmonization of Stephen's Speech and Its Old Testament References

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Acts 7	Alleged O.T. Discrepancy	Resolution of the Texts
7:2-4 Appearance/revelation of God to Abraham in Ur (Gen. 15:7; Neh. 9:7).	Appearance/revelation of God to Abram in Haran (Gen. 12:1-3).	(1) Many hold that God indeed spoke to Abram twice, both in Ur and Haran, thus the accounts are complementary. (2) More probably, Gen. 11:27-32 is a parenthetical/background to 12:1-3, and the call did indeed come in Ur.
7:3 Abraham must leave his family and country.	Abram must leave his country, his relatives and <i>his father's house</i> (Gen. 11:31-12:11).	Stephen simply gives a more abbreviated account.
7:4 Abraham leaves Haran after the death of his father.	Abram leaves Haran 60 years before the death of his father (Gen. 11:26, 32; 12:4).	Because Abram is listed first in Gen. 11:26, some assume he was the firstborn. However, it is more probable that he is mentioned first because of his prominence in salvation history, not because of his priority in time (note Gen. 5:32 and 10:1, where the first son listed is clearly not the eldest). Therefore, there is no indication of Terah's age when Abram was born.
7:6 400 years in a foreign country (also Gen. 15:13).	430 years in Egypt (Ex. 12:40).	(Note also the 450 years of Acts 13:19, 20.) Both Acts reckonings (and Gen. 15:13) are simply examples of rounding off numbers. 430 is precise, 400 and 450 are accurate approximations.
7:7 Is "this place" (word to Abraham in Gen. 15:13) Mt. Gerizim or Mt. Horeb? [Note that neither Mt. Gerizim nor Mt. Horeb is actually named.]	"This mountain" (word to Moses in Ex. 3:12) is Mt. Horeb.	Stephen apparently conflates or "telescopes" two separate texts (later in v. 16, he will telescope or conflate two separate incidents). This was a popular method of recounting history in Stephen's day. The statement is true as we recognize that in one breath Stephen alludes to two different texts. Further, the fact is that they did worship God both in "this place" (Canaan, Gen. 15:13-15) and on Mt. Horeb (Ex. 3:12).
7:14 75 people went to Egypt.	70 people went to Egypt (Gen. 46:27; Ex. 1:5; Deut. 10:22).	The LXX was the text Stephen followed, and at Gen. 46:20 it adds <i>two</i> sons of Manasseh, <i>two</i> sons of Ephraim, and <i>one</i> grandson of Ephraim, making the total 75.
7:16 Abraham bought a tomb in Shechem.	Abraham bought a tomb in Machpelah (cave/field) near Mamre, which is Hebron; Jacob bought a field in Shechem (Gen. 23:17, 18; 33:19; Josh. 24:32).	Though this is possibly the most difficult of the alleged discrepancies, a proper understanding of the recounting of tradition by the Semitic people is the <i>key</i> . (1) Some would argue that Jacob bought the Shechem burial ground <i>in the name of Abraham</i> . (2) The use of the plural in Acts 7:16 ("they") tips us off that Stephen is conflating or telescoping several familiar accounts into a summary statement. Though admittedly strange by our standards, this would have been well understood and accepted by Stephen's hearers as an accurate statement.
7:16 Jacob and his sons (including Joseph) were buried in Shechem, but nothing is said about the burial of Abraham.	Abraham and Jacob were buried in Hebron; Joseph was buried in Shechem, but nothing is said about the burial of Jacob's other sons (Gen. 23:9-20; 25:8-10; 33:19; 49:30, 31; 50:13; Josh. 24:32).	See above, resolution (2). That argument holds for this point also, though the complementary nature of the accounts, and the possibility of Stephen's utilizing extrabiblical tradition, is clearly evident. Interestingly, Josephus informs us of a tradition that says the brothers of Joseph were buried at Hebron.

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7:22 Moses "a man mighty in words."	Moses a man "not eloquent" in speech (Ex. 4:10-16).	Exodus 4 reveals Moses' self-evaluation early in his ministry. With the help of Aaron, and ultimately, through training on the job, Moses became a man "mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22).
7:26 Moses tried to make peace between two Israelites who were fighting.	Moses took the side of one of the quarreling parties (Ex. 2:13).	Exodus 2:13 gives a more detailed analysis. That Moses sided with one in no way negates his attempt to make peace between the two. Thus, both statements are true, Stephen again providing a general or summary statement.
7:29 Moses fled because he was rejected by his people.	Moses fled because of the king of Egypt (Ex. 2:15).	Both are correct and again complementary; Ex. 2:15ff. also affirms that Moses fled for fear and because of the rejection of his people.
7:32, 33 God reveals Himself to Moses before He tells him to take off his sandals.	God reveals Himself to Moses after He tells him to take off his sandals (Ex. 3:5, 6).	Stephen simply reverses the chronological order out of theological/topical concerns, so that the initial emphasis is that it is the God of Moses' ancestors (i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) who is revealing Himself. This is in keeping with Stephen's overall purpose in his speech. Furthermore, the opening phrase of Acts 7:33 ( <i>eipen de</i> , Gk., "and" or "but he said") does not require temporal or chronological sequence.
7:38 An angel speaks to Moses (see also Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2).	YAHWEH/the Lord/God speaks to Moses (Ex. 19).	Two solutions are possible: (1) Stephen simply supplements the Exodus account, noting that the means whereby God spoke to Moses was an angel. (2) Numerous biblical students note that "the angel of YAHWEH" may very well be God Himself via a Christophany, i.e., a preincarnate appearance of the Son of God.
7:42, 43 Israel's time in the wilderness was one of <i>apostasy</i> .	Israel's time in the wilderness is <i>exemplary</i> (Amos 5:25).	Some misread or misinterpret the Amos text. Amos is also denouncing Israel.
7:43 "tabernacle... Moloch... Remphan."	"Sikkuth your king and Chiun" (Amos 5:26, see notes in center column there).	Stephen follows the LXX, which has paraphrased a very difficult Hebrew reading. This particular difficulty is best resolved by understanding that Stephen is following the LXX in its paraphrase of the Hebrew text of Amos 5:25-27, giving the text a different emphasis or application. The complexity of these texts really goes beyond the limits of these study notes.
7:43 "away beyond Babylon"	"captivity beyond Damascus" (Amos 5:27).	Stephen, wishing to show that idolatry and disobedience to the Lord brought both Israel (by the Assyrians, capital Damascus) and Judah (by the Babylonians, capital Babylon) into captivity, broadens or expands upon the prophecy of Amos to include both exiles. This was a purposeful change to include all in the Exile(s). His audience would have clearly understood his application of the Amos text, though they no doubt did not appreciate it!

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