

Can You Recognize God?

Acts 7

Listen for God's Still Small Voice

*Don't let your religious traditions keep you
from hearing God*

²This was Stephen's reply: Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran.

³God told him, 'Leave your native land and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.'

⁴So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live.

Acts 7:2-4 ^{NLT}

⁵But God gave him no inheritance here, not even one square foot of land. God did promise, however, that eventually the whole land would belong to Abraham and his descendants—even though he had no children yet. ⁶God also told him that his descendants would live in a foreign land, where they would be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ⁷‘But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,’ God said, ‘and in the end they will come out and worship me here in this place.’

Acts 7:5- 7 ^{NLT}

¹²And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them. ¹³All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.

Hebrews 11:12, 13 ^{NLT}

⁹These patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him from all his troubles. And God gave him favor before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God also gave Joseph unusual wisdom, so that Pharaoh appointed him governor over all of Egypt and put him in charge of the palace.

Acts 7:9, 10^{NLT}

¹¹But a famine came upon Egypt and Canaan. There was great misery, and our ancestors ran out of food. ¹²Jacob heard that there was still grain in Egypt, so he sent his sons—our ancestors—to buy some. ¹³The second time they went, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, and they were introduced to Pharaoh.

Acts 7:11-13 ^{NLT}

*¹⁴Then Joseph sent for his father, Jacob,
and all his relatives to come to Egypt, seventy-five
persons in all. ¹⁵So Jacob went to Egypt.
He died there, as did our ancestors.*

Acts 7:14, 15 ^{NLT}

³⁵So God sent back the same man his people had previously rejected when they demanded, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?' Through the angel who appeared to him in the burning bush, God sent Moses to be their ruler and savior.

³⁶And by means of many wonders and miraculous signs, he led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness for forty years.

Acts 7:35, 36 ^{NLT}

⁹There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the LORD said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰Elijah replied, “I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”

I Kings 19:9, 10 ^{NLT}

¹¹Go out and stand before me on the mountain, the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹²And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire.

1 Kings 19:11, 12a^{NLT}

*And after the fire
there was the sound of a gentle whisper.
13When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his
cloak and went out and stood at the entrance
of the cave. And a voice said,
“What are you doing here, Elijah?”*

I Kings 19:12b, 13 ^{NLT}

*“Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout the world.”*

Psalm 46:10^{NLT}

*The moment you wake up each morning,
all your wishes and hopes for the day
rush at you like wild animals.
And the first job each morning
consists in shoving it all back;
in listening to that other voice,
taking that other point of view,
letting that other, larger, stronger,
quieter life come flowing in.*

C. S. Lewis

Never Box God In

Don't let your religious traditions
keep you from seeing how God works

^{2b}Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran.

³God told him, 'Leave your native land and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.'

⁴So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live.

Acts 7:2b-4 ^{NLT}

⁹These patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him from all his troubles. And God gave him favor before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God also gave Joseph unusual wisdom, so that Pharaoh appointed him governor over all of Egypt and put him in charge of the palace.

Acts 7:9, 10

²⁹ When Moses heard that, he fled the country and lived as a foreigner in the land of Midian. There his two sons were born. ³⁰Forty years later, in the desert near Mount Sinai, an angel appeared to Moses in the flame of a burning bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he went to take a closer look, the voice of the LORD called out to him,

Acts 7:29-31 ^{NLT}

³²‘I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses shook with terror and did not dare to look. ³³Then the LORD said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ³⁴I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groans and have come down to rescue them. Now go, for I am sending you back to Egypt.’

Acts 7:32-34^{NLT}

*Moses was with our ancestors,
the assembly of God's people in the wilderness,
when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai. And there
Moses received life-giving words to pass on to us.*

Acts 7:38^{NLT}

⁴⁴Our ancestors carried the Tabernacle with them through the wilderness. It was constructed according to the plan God had shown to Moses. ⁴⁵Years later, when Joshua led our ancestors in battle against the nations that God drove out of this land, the Tabernacle was taken with them into their new territory. And it stayed there until the time of King David.

Acts 7:44, 45 ^{NLT}

⁴⁶David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who actually built it. ⁴⁸However, the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says, ⁴⁹'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that?' asks the LORD. 'Could you build me such a resting place? ⁵⁰Didn't my hands make both heaven and earth?'

Acts 7:46-50 ^{NLT}

Distinguish the Difference Between Dead Faith
and God's Heart

Don't let your religious traditions keep you from
following God's heart

*³⁹But our ancestors refused to listen to Moses.
They rejected him and wanted to return to Egypt.
⁴⁰They told Aaron, ‘Make us some gods who can lead
us, for we don’t know what has become of this Moses,
who brought us out of Egypt.’ ⁴¹So they made an idol
shaped like a calf, and they sacrificed to it and
celebrated over this thing they had made.*

Acts 7:39-41 ^{NLT}

42Then God turned away from them and abandoned them to serve the stars of heaven as their gods! In the book of the prophets it is written, 'Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during those forty years in the wilderness, Israel? 43No, you carried your pagan gods—the shrine of Molech, the star of your god Rephan, and the images you made to worship them. So I will send you into exile as far away as Babylon.'

Acts 7:42, 43 ^{NLT}