

Ancient Sources for Acts

Chapter 4

4:1–4

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.4 §16

But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent.

Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.8.14 §162

But then as to the two other orders at first mentioned: the Pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and introduce the first sect. These ascribe all to fate [or providence], and to God.

Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.1.8 §108

For although there are four tribes of priests, and each one of these tribes contains more than 5,000 men, they perform their duties in smaller units for a fixed period of days. When these are completed, other priests come to take over the sacrificial tasks. They assemble in the temple at midday and receive from their predecessors the keys of the temple and all the vessels, counted out, with nothing by way of food or drink being brought into the temple.

Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.8.14 §166

Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public; but the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild, and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews.

m. Sanh. 10.1

A. All Israelites have a share in the worlds to come,

B. as it is said, *Your people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified* (Is. 60:21).

C. And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come:

D. (1) He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching which does not derive from the Torah, (2) and the Torah does not come from Heaven; and (3) an Epicurean.

E. R. Aqiba says, “Also: He who reads heretical books,

F. “And he who whispers over a wound and says, *I will put none of the diseases upon you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you* (Ex. 15:26).”

G. Abba Saul says, “Also: he who pronounces the divine Name as it is spelled out.”

m. Sanh. 4.1

A. All the same are property cases and capital cases as to examination and interrogation [of witnesses],

B. as it is said, *You will have one law* (Lev. 24:22)

C. What is the difference between property cases and capital cases?

D. (1) Property cases [are tried] by three [judges], and capital cases by twenty-three.

E. (2) In property cases they begin [argument] with the case either for acquittal or for conviction, while in capital cases they begin only with the case for acquittal, and not with the case for conviction.

F. (3) In property cases they decide by a majority of one, whether for acquittal or for conviction, while in capital cases they decide by a majority of one for acquittal, but only with a majority of two [judges] for conviction.

G. (4) In property cases they reverse the decision whether in favor of acquittal or in favor of conviction, while in capital cases they reverse the decision in favor of acquittal, but they do not reverse the decision in favor of conviction.

H. (5) In property cases all [judges and even disciples] argue either for acquittal or conviction. In capital cases all argue for acquittal, but all do not argue for conviction.

I. (6) In property cases one who argues for conviction may argue for acquittal, and one who argues for acquittal may also argue for conviction. In capital cases the one who argues for conviction may argue for acquittal, but the one who argues for acquittal has not got the power to retract and to argue for conviction.

J. (7) In property cases they try the case by day and complete it by night. In capital cases, they try the case by day and complete it [by] day.

K. (8) In property cases they come to a final decision on the same day [as the trial itself], whether it is for acquittal or conviction. In capital cases they come to a final decision for acquittal on the same day, but on the following day for conviction.

L. (Therefore they do not judge [capital cases] either on the eve of the Sabbath or on the eve of a festival.)

4:5–7

m. Sanh. 1.1

- A. Property cases [are decided] by three [judges];
- B. (2) those concerning theft and damages, before three;
- C. (3) [cases involving] compensations for full damages, half-damages [Ex. 21:35], twofold restitution [Ex. 22:3], fourfold and fivefold restitution [Ex. 21:37], by three;
- D. (4) “[cases involving] him who rapes [Dt. 32:28–29], him who seduces [Ex. 22:15–16], and *him who brings forth an evil name* (Dt. 22:19), by three,” the words of R. Meir.
- E. And sages say, “He who brings forth an evil name is [tried] before twenty three,
- F. “for there may be a capital case.”

m. Sanh. 1.6

- A. The great Sanhedrin was [made up of] seventy-one members,
- B. and the small one was [made up of] twenty-three.
- C. And how do we know that the great Sanhedrin was to have seventy-one members?
- D. Since it is said, *Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel* (Num. 11:16).
- E. Since Moses was in addition to them, lo, there were seventy-one.
- F. R. Judah says, “It is seventy.”
- G. And how do we know that a small one is twenty-three?
- H. Since it is said, *The congregation shall judge*, and *The congregation shall deliver* (Num. 35:24, 25)—
- I. one congregation judges, and one congregation saves—thus there are twenty.
- J. And how do we know that a congregation is ten? Since it is said, *How long shall I bear with this evil congregation* [of ten spies] (Num. 14:27)—excluding Joshua and Caleb.
- K. And how do we know that we should add three more?
- L. From the implication of that which is said, *You shall not follow after the many to do evil* (Ex. 23:20), I derive the inference that I should be with them to do good.
- M. If so, why is it said, *After the many to do evil*?
- N. Your verdict of acquittal is not equivalent to your verdict of guilt.
- O. Your verdict of acquittal may be on the vote of a majority of one, but your vote of guilt must be by a majority of two.

P. Since there cannot be a court of an even number of members [twenty-two], they add yet another –thus twenty.

R. One hundred and twenty.

S. R. Nehemiah says, “Two hundred and thirty, equivalent in number to the chiefs of groups of ten [Ex. 18:21].”

Josephus, *Ant 18.4.3* §95

But Vitellius put those garments into our own power, as in the days of our forefathers, and ordered the captain of the guard not to trouble himself to inquire where they were laid, or when they were to be used; and this he did as an act of kindness, to oblige the nation to him. Besides which, he also deprived Joseph, who was also called Caiaphas, of the high priesthood, and appointed Jonathan the son of Ananus, the former high priest, to succeed him. After which, he took his journey back to Antioch.

4:8–12

m. Sanh. 4.3

A. The Sanhedrin was [arranged] in the shape of a half of a round threshing floor [that is, as an amphitheater],

B. so that [the judges] should see one another.

C. And two judges’ clerks stand before them, one at the right and one at the left.

D. And they write down the arguments of those who vote to acquit and of those who vote to convict.

E. R. Judah says, “Three: one writes the opinion of those who vote to acquit, one writes the opinion of those who vote to convict, and the third writes the opinions both of those who vote to acquit and of those who vote to convict.”

CD 7:15–20

I will exile the tabernacle of your king and the bases of your statues from my tent to Damascus (Amos v, 26–7).

The Books of the Law are the *tabernacle* of the king; as God said, *I will raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen (Amos ix, 11)*. The *king* is the congregation; and the *bases of the statues* are the Books of the Prophets whose sayings Israel despised. The *star* is the interpreter of the Law who shall come to Damascus; as it is written, *A star shall come forth out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel (Num. xxiv, 17)*. The *scepter* is the Prince of the whole congregation, and when he comes *he shall smite all the children of Seth (Num. xxiv, 17)*.

b. Sotah 14a

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. 'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great'—it is possible [to think that his portion will be] with the [great of] later generations and not former generations; therefore there is a text to declare, 'And he shall divide with the strong', i.e. with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were strong in Torah and the commandments. 'Because he poured out his soul unto death'—because he surrendered himself to die, as it is said, 'And if not, blot me, I pray thee' etc. 'And was numbered with the transgressors'—because he was numbered with them who were condemned to die in the wilderness. 'Yet he bare the sins of many'—because he secured atonement for the making of the Golden Calf. 'And made intercession for the transgressors'—because he begged for mercy on behalf of the sinners in Israel that they should turn in penitence.

4:13–17

Celsus in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.27

Anyone who examines the subject will see that Jesus attempted and successfully accomplished works beyond the reach of human power. For although, from the very beginning, all things opposed the spread of His doctrine in the world—both the princes of the times, and their chief captains and generals, and all, to speak generally, who were possessed of the smallest influence, and in addition to these, the rulers of the different cities, and the soldiers, and the people,—yet it proved victorious, as being the Word of God, the nature of which is such that it cannot be hindered; and becoming more powerful than all such adversaries, it made itself master of the whole of Greece, and a considerable portion of Barbarian lands, and convened countless numbers of souls to His religion. And although, among the multitude of converts to Christianity, the simple and ignorant necessarily outnumbered the more intelligent, as the former class always does the latter, yet Celsus, unwilling to take note of this, thinks that this philanthropic doctrine, which reaches to every soul under the sun, is vulgar, and on account of its vulgarity and its want of reasoning power, obtained a hold only over the ignorant. And yet he himself admits that it was not the simple alone who were led by the doctrine of Jesus to adopt His religion; for he acknowledges that there were amongst them some persons of moderate intelligence, and gentle disposition, and possessed of understanding, and capable of comprehending allegories.

4:18–22

Plato, *Apology* 29D

If you should let me go on this condition which I have mentioned, I should say to you, “Men of Athens, I respect and love you, but I shall obey the god rather than you, and while I live and am able to continue, I shall never give up philosophy or stop exhorting you and pointing out the truth to any one of you whom I may meet, saying in my accustomed way: ‘Most excellent man, are you who are a citizen of Athens, the greatest of cities and the most famous for wisdom and power, not ashamed to care for the acquisition of wealth...’”

4:23–31

LXX

Genesis 15:2

²And Abram said, Master *and* Lord (δέσποτα), what wilt thou give me? Whereas I am departing without a child, but the son of Masek my home-born female slave, this Eliezer of Damascus *is mine heir*.

Genesis 15:8

⁸And he said, Master *and* Lord (δέσποτα), how shall I know that I shall inherit it?

Joshua 5:14

¹⁴And he said to him, I am now come, the chief captain of the host of the Lord. And Joshua fell on his face upon the earth, and said to him, Lord (δέσποτα), what commandest thou thy servant?

Jeremiah 1:6

⁶And I said, O Lord (δέσποτα), thou that art supreme Lord, behold, I know not *how* to speak, for I am a child.

Jeremiah 4:10

¹⁰ And I said, O sovereign Lord (δέσποτα), verily thou hast deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, There shall be peace; whereas behold, the sword has reached even to their soul.

Jeremiah 15:11

¹¹Be it so, Lord (δέσποτα), in their prosperity; surely I stood before thee in the time of their calamities, and in the time of their affliction, for *their* good against the enemy.

Daniel 9:8

8 In thee, O Lord (δέσποτα), is our righteousness, and to us *belongs* confusion of faced, and to our kings, and to our princes, and to our fathers, forasmuch as we have sinned.

Daniel 9:15–19

¹⁵And now, O Lord (δέσποτα) our God, who broughtest thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and madest to thyself a name, as *at* this day; we have sinned, we have transgressed.

¹⁶ O Lord (δέσποτα), thy mercy is over all: let, I pray thee, thy wrath turn away, and thine anger from thy city Jerusalem, *even* thy holy mountain: for we have sinned, and because of our iniquities, and those of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach among all that are round about us. ¹⁷And now, O lord (δέσποτα) our God, hearken to the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine on thy desolate sanctuary, for thine *own* sake, O Lord (δέσποτα). ¹⁸Incline thine ear, O my God, and hear; open thine eyes and behold our desolation, and that of thy city on which thy name is called: for we do not bring our pitiful case before thee on *the ground* of our righteousness, but on *the ground* of thy manifold compassions, O Lord. ¹⁹Hearken, O

Lord; be propitious, O Lord; attend, O Lord; delay not, O my God (δέσποτα), for thine own sake: for thy name is called upon thy city and upon thy people.

Jonah 4:3

And now, O LORD(δέσποτα), please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.

Judith 9:12

¹²I pray thee, I pray thee, O God of my father, and God of the inheritance of Israel, Lord (δέσποτα) of the heavens and earth, Creator of the waters, king of every creature, hear thou my prayer

Tobit 8:17

¹⁷Thou art to be praised because thou hast had mercy of two that were the only begotten children of their fathers: grant them mercy, O Lord (δέσποτα), and finish their life in health with joy and mercy.

2 Macccebes 15:22

²²Therefore in his prayer he said after this manner; O Lord (δέσποτα), thou didst send thine angel in the time of Ezekias king of Judea, and didst slay in the host of Sennacherib an hundred fourscore and five thousand:

Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.18.6 §272–73

²⁷²And suspecting no malicious act, he dined and turned to blessings and invocation of God, saying, “Lord of all time and creator of the totality of all things, since you set before my father great abundance of good things and deemed me worthy of what I have and promised to those descended from me that you would be benevolent and grantor of ever greater benefits, ²⁷³therefore, confirm these things also and do not disregard me because of my present weakness, because of which I happen to need you even more, and be kindly to this, my child, and preserve and protect him from every evil, and grant him a happy life and the possession of good things, as many as you have the power to supply, making him a terror to his enemies and esteemed and pleasant to his friends.”

Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.3.2 §40–50

⁴⁰He, on coming near, lifted up his hands to heaven and cried out with a rather loud voice so that it might be audible to all the multitude, “O Lord,” he said, “of what is in heaven and earth and sea, for You are a most worthy witness of what has been done by me, that all things are done in accordance with Your will, and that You contrived a device for their enterprises, taking pity on the Hebrews in all their dreadful circumstances, come and be a listener of these words of mine.

⁴¹For neither action nor thought escapes Your notice, so that You will not begrudge me the truth, placing before it the ingratitude of these men. Now You know more precisely the events prior to my birth, not by learning of them through hearsay but through seeing them and being present at them at the time when they occurred; but as for the events after this, which, although they know them clearly, these men unjustly suspect, be my witness of them.

⁴²After establishing a life free of cares through my manly virtue and through Your will, and this [life] that my father-in-law Ragouelos left to me, I then abandoned the enjoyment of those good things and devoted myself to the hardships on behalf of these people. I then underwent great toils first for their freedom, and now for their salvation, ranging my enthusiasm against every dread.

⁴³Now, therefore, when I am suspected of doing wrong by men whose survival is due to my exertions, it is fitting that You Yourself—who showed me that fire at Sinai and at that time caused me to be a listener to Your voice and an observer of as many miracles as that place permitted me to see; who instructed me to set out to Egypt and to reveal Your will to these people;

⁴⁴who unsettled the prosperity of the Egyptians and offered us flight from slavery to them, and rendered the leadership of Pharaohes inferior to mine; who made the sea into dry land for us who were uninformed about the routes; who caused the sea, beaten back, to rise in waves for the destruction of the Egyptians; who generously granted to men who were naked the security of weapons;

⁴⁵who caused spoiled springs to flow so as to be drinkable, and devised drink to come for us from rocks when we were utterly without means; who, when we were at a loss for fruits from the earth, preserved us with food from the sea; who also sent down from heaven food that had not previously been reported; who proposed to us a conception of laws and an arrangement of a constitution—

⁴⁶come, Master of everything, be my judge and unbribable witness, that I have neither accepted a gift from any one of the Hebrews, approving of a perversion of justice, nor [persuaded by] wealth have I condemned poverty that deserved to win, nor have I, by enacting policies to harm the commonwealth, arrived at conceptions that were utterly alien to my habitual way of life, so as to give the priesthood to Aaron not through Your urging but through my favoritism.

⁴⁷Demonstrate now also that all things are governed by Your providence and that nothing happens by itself and that they come to their goal through Your directed will, that You care for those who will assist the Hebrews, by executing vengeance on Abirames and Dathames, who reproach Your insensibility as if You are overcome by my craft.

⁴⁸You will make Your judgment clear against those who have raged madly against Your dignity by removing them from life in no common way, nor should they die as appearing to have departed from life according to the law of humanity; but let there gape open around them, together with their family and their resources, the ground on which they tread.

⁴⁹For this would be to all a demonstration of Your power and instruction in moderation so that those who have impious opinions about You may fear that they will suffer the same result. For thus I would be found a good servant of what You decree.

⁵⁰But if they have made true accusations against me, may You guard them unharmed from all misfortune, and may You inflict this destruction upon me that I have imprecated upon them. And having inflicted punishment upon the one who wished to do injustice to your people, henceforth granting harmony and peace, save the multitude that follows Your ordinances, protecting them unscathed and without a share in punishment of those who have sinned. For You Yourself know that it is not just that in payment for their crime all Israelites together should pay the penalty.”

⁸⁹When the messenger had delivered this his message, Izates replied that he knew the king of Parthia's power was much greater than his own; but that he knew also that God was much more powerful than all men. And when he had returned him this answer, he betook himself to make supplication to God, and threw himself upon the ground, and put ashes upon his head, in testimony of his confusion, and fasted, together with his wives and children. ⁹⁰Then he called upon God, and said, "O Lord and Governor, if I have not in vain committed myself to thy goodness, but have justly determined that thou only art the Lord and principal of all beings, come now to my assistance, and defend me from my enemies, not only on my own account, but on account of their insolent behavior with regard to thy power, while they have not feared to lift up their proud and arrogant tongue against thee." ⁹¹Thus did he lament and bemoan himself, with tears in his eyes; whereupon God heard his prayer. And immediately that very night Vologases received letters, the contents of which were these, that a great band of Dahe and Sacse, despising him, now he was gone so long a journey from home, had made an expedition, and laid Parthis waste; so that he [was forced to] retire back, without doing anything. And thus it was that Izates escaped the threatenings of the Parthians, by the providence of God.

Testament of Levi 18.6–8

⁶The heavens shall be opened, And From the temple of glory shall come upon him sanctification, With the Father's voice as from Abraham to Isaac. ⁷And the glory of the Most High shall be uttered over him, And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water]. ⁸For he shall give the majesty of the Lord to His sons in truth forevermore; And there shall none succeed him for all generations forever.

4:32–35

m. Berakot 9.5

- A. A man is obligated to recite a blessing over evil just as he recites a blessing over good.
- B. As it is said, *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might* (Dt. 6:5).
- C. *With all your heart*—[this means] with both of your inclinations, with the good inclination and with the evil inclination.
- D. *And with all your soul*—even if He takes your soul.
- E. *And with all your might*—with all of your money.
- F. Another matter: *With all your might*—with each and every measure that he measures out for you, thank him much.
- G. One should not act silly while facing the Eastern Gate [of the Temple in Jerusalem] for it faces toward the Chamber of the Holy of Holies.

H. One should not enter the Temple mount with his walking stick, his overshoes, his money bag, or with dust on his feet.

I. And one should not use [the Temple mount] for a shortcut.

J. And spitting [there likewise is forbidden, as is proven by an argument] *a minori ad majus* [if you may not use it for a shortcut you obviously may not spit there].

K. [At one time] all blessings in the Temple concluded with “forever.”

L. When the heretics corrupted [the practice] and said, “There is but one world [but no world to come],”

M. they ordained that they should say, “forever and ever” [thus suggesting the existence of a world to come].

N. they ordained that an individual should greet his fellow with [God’s] name,

O. in accordance with what is said, *And behold Boaz came from Bethlehem; and he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, The Lord bless you”* (Ruth 2:4).

P. And it says, *The Lord is with you you mighty man of valor* (Judges 6:12).

Q. And it says, *Do not despise your mother when she is old* (Prov. 23:22).

R. And it says, *It is the time of the Lord to act, for thy law has been broken* (Ps. 119:126).

Didache 4:8

Thou shalt not turn away from him that is in need, but shalt share with thy brother in all things, and shalt not say that things are thine own; for if ye are partners in what is immortal, how much more in what is mortal?

Barn 9.8a

He who placed within us the innate gift of His covenant knoweth; no man hath ever learnt from me a more genuine word; but I know that ye are worthy.

Josephus Jewish Wars 2.8.3 §122

¹²²These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, - insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions; and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren.

1QS 5.1–3

And this is the Rule for the men of the Community who have freely pledged themselves to be converted from all evil and to cling to all His commandments according to his will.

The shall separate from the congregation of the men of injustice and shall unite, with respect to the Law of possessions, under the authority of the sons of Zadok, the Priests who keep the Covenant, and of the multitude of the men of the community who hold fast to the Covenant. Every decision concerning doctrine, property, and justice shall be determined by them.

1QS 9.3–11

When these become members of the Community in Israel according to all these rules, they shall establish the spirit of holiness according to everlasting truth. They shall atone for guilty rebellion and for sins of unfaithfulness, that they may obtain loving-kindness for the Land without the flesh of holocausts and the fat of sacrifice. And prayer rightly offered shall be as an acceptable fragrance of righteousness, and perfection of way as a delectable free-will offering. At that time, the men of the community shall set apart a House of Holiness in order that it may be united to the most holy things and a House of Community for Israel, for those who talk in perfection. The sons of Aaron alone shall command in matters of justice and property, and every rule concerning the men of the Community shall be determined according to their word.

As for the property of the men of holiness who walk in perfection, it shall not be merged with that of the men of injustice who have not purified their life by separating themselves from iniquity and walking in the way of perfection. They shall depart from none of the counsels of the Law to walk in all the stubbornness of their hearts, but shall be ruled by the primitive precepts in which the men of the Community were first instructed until there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.

Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.4–9

⁴And a proof of this is to be found in their life of perfect freedom; no one among them ventures at all to acquire any property whatever of his own, neither house, nor slave, nor farm, nor flocks and herds, nor anything of any sort which can be looked upon as the fountain or provision of riches; but they bring them together into the middle as a common stock, and enjoy one common general benefit from it all. ⁵And they all dwell in the same place, making clubs, and societies, and combinations, and unions with one another, and doing everything throughout their whole lives with reference to the general advantage; ⁶but the different members of this body have different employments in which they occupy themselves, and labor without hesitation and without cessation, making no mention of either cold, or heat, or any changes of weather or temperature as an excuse for desisting from their tasks. But before the sun rises they betake themselves to their daily work, and they do not quit it till some time after it has set, when they return home rejoicing no less than those who have been exercising themselves in gymnastic contests; ⁷for they imagine that whatever they devote themselves to as a practice is a sort of gymnastic exercise of more advantage to life, and more pleasant both to soul and body, and of more enduring benefit and equability, than mere athletic labors, inasmuch as such toil does not cease to be practiced with delight when the age of vigor of body is passed; ⁸for there are some of them who are devoted to the practice of agriculture, being skilful in such things as pertain to the sowing and cultivation of lands; others again are

shepherds, or cowherds, and experienced in the management of every kind of animal; some are cunning in what relates to swarms of bees; ⁹others again are artisans and handicraftsmen, in order to guard against suffering from the want of anything of which there is at times an actual need; and these men omit and delay nothing, which is requisite for the innocent supply of the necessities of life.

Acts 4:36–37

Josephus, *Life* 76 §422

When Titus had brought an end to the disturbances in Judea, figuring that the properties I held in the environs of Jerusalem would become unprofitable to me on account of the Roman patrol that was about to go into quarters there, he gave me a different area in the plain. And when he was about to depart for Rome, he welcomed me as his sailing companion, assigning me every honor.