

# Acts 21:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

## Analysis

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Paul's gesture for silence and choice to speak 'in the Hebrew tongue' demonstrated cultural sensitivity and rhetorical skill. Speaking Hebrew (likely Aramaic, the common Jewish language) created immediate connection with his audience and showed he was no apostate. The resulting 'great silence' gave Paul opportunity to present his testimony, showing how God opens doors even in hostile circumstances.

## Historical Context

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The Hebrew language (or Aramaic) was the tongue of Jewish learning and devotion. Paul's use of it, rather than Greek, showed respect for his audience's heritage and created rapport by speaking their heart language.

## Related Passages

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. How can you adapt your communication style to connect with hostile or skeptical audiences?
2. What does Paul's example teach about using cultural knowledge and language skills for gospel witness?

## Interlinear Text

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ἐπιτρέψαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ὁ Παῦλος ἐστὼς ἐπὶ τῶν  
licence And him G3588 Paul stood on G3588  
G2010 G1161 G846 G3972 G2476 G1909

ἀναβαθμῶν κατέσεισεν τῇ χειρὶ τῷ λαῷ  
the stairs and beckoned with the hand unto the people  
G304 G2678 G5495 G3588 G2992

πολλῆς δὲ σιγῆς γενομένης προσεφώνησεν τῇ  
a great And silence when there was made he spake G3588  
G4183 G1161 G4602 G1096 G4377

Ἐβραῖδι διαλέκτῳ λέγων  
unto them in the Hebrew tongue saying  
G1446 G1258 G3004

## Additional Cross-References

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**Acts 12:17** (Parallel theme): But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

**Acts 22:2** (Parallel theme): (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

**Acts 26:14** (Parallel theme): And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

**John 5:2** (Parallel theme): Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

**Acts 21:35** (Parallel theme): And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

**Acts 19:33** (Creation): And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

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