

Anna's daily life – Part 2



Apart from the daily rituals, our faith, my faith has a yearly cycle of festivals which gather Jews from all the corners of the globe. I think my favourite is Sukkot. This is the festival which reminds us of the days when we were just a wandering people in the desert. We were not worthy to be the people of Yahweh, and he had to teach us some hard lessons. To remind us of those lessons we build ourselves temporary booths wherever we can, near to our own homes. I share one which will be built here in the Temple by one of the Temple servants. We live in them for the 7 days of the Festival. It is also the end of Harvest, so it makes it a double celebration for us. Farmers will make Sukkah out in the fields when they are harvesting, so that they do not have far to go to sleep. They make it out of any material, that they have lying around near to the fields they are working in. We try and replicate that here in the Temple

In the Temple for this festival we use the Songs of Ascent. In the Mishnah it says that:

“Pious and distinguished men would dance before them with torches, and they would recite hymns and words of exaltation before them. And the Levites accompanied them with harps, lyres, cymbals and musical instruments without number—on the fifteen steps that go down from the Court of Israel to the Court of Women, on which the Levites would stand and would recite in song” (Sukkot 5.4).

Over there on those steps where I live much of my life waiting, with fasting and prayers, for the presence of Yahweh to make known itself to me. There it is that on each of the 15 steps a Psalm is sung and all of the people will join in making a joyous noise to Yahweh. These are the Psalms numbered 120 to 134 which are labelled Shir Hama’aloth, the Psalms of Ascent.

“Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD. The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.” (Psalm 134)

All this makes me think of the Psalms which are so much a part of my life here. The ones I hear most and use most are the Hallel Psalms, numbers 113 to 118. When we bring a Sacrifice to the Priests we sing one of these Psalms in Praise of Yahweh and all he has done for us:

“Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the

rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised.”
(Psalm 113)

I could go on for ever about the beauty of the Psalms and how they are used in our worship. I could talk about how the Hallel Psalms are used at the Passover, how they are sung at the table when the family gather together to eat the Passover meal and tell the story of the love of Yahweh who brought us up out of Egypt, but I do not have a lifetime left to expand on how much they mean to me and to the people of Yahweh as we worship here in the Temple and go about our daily lives.

But my life is about watching and waiting. I am not the only one. Over there is Simeon who has spent his whole life waiting for the consolation of Israel. He looks and prays and hopes that Yahweh will grant him his wish before he dies. But look he is moving at speed towards a young couple with a baby. I guess it will be their first born son that they are bringing to redeem, as required by the law. Yes, the husband is carrying a cage with two turtle doves in it. I wonder why Simeon has picked them out for his attention over and above everyone else who is here. He looks so excited. I had better go over and see what is going on.