

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAISE

LESSON SEVEN: PRAISE IN THE TEMPLE

by Sandy Harber

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High."

Psalm 92:1

David was the master at praising the Lord. He used his extraordinary musical talent to honor the God he served by composing and performing songs of praise. His repertoire became the basis for Israel's hymnbook, the Book of Psalms. Certain psalms in that hymnbook were sung daily in the Temple by Levitical choirs appointed by David himself. They were accompanied by designated musicians playing on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets, etc. (Ps. 150:3-5). David invented a ten-stringed instrument called a nevel or lute, which the appointed musicians played in the Temple worship (Amos 6:5; I Chron. 23:5).

David appointed certain Levites as singers and musicians (I Chron. 15:16). Initially, the singers and musicians were tasked with performing continuously before the ark of the covenant, which David had brought into Jerusalem (I Chron. 16:4-6). This practice continued until his son, Solomon, built the Temple and the ark was transferred there. Then the appointed singers and musicians continued their ministry in the courts of the Temple (I Chron. 6:31-32).

The singers and musicians ministered daily in the Temple at the morning and evening sacrifices. After the sacrifice was slain and laid on the fire as prescribed by law, the High Priest's meat offering was presented and the drink offering was poured out. Then, the Levitical choir, standing on the 15 steps which led from the Court of Israel to the Court of Priests, where the sacrifices were slain, sang the psalm of the day accompanied by instruments. The designated psalm of the day was as follows: Psalm 24 (Sunday), Psalm 48 (Monday), Psalm 82 (Tuesday), Psalm 94 (Wednesday), Psalm 81 (Thursday), Psalm 93 (Friday), and Psalm 92 (Saturday). The psalm of the day was sung in three sections and at the close of each section priests would make three blasts on their silver trumpets and the people would bow down and worship. On the Sabbath an additional sacrifice was made, after which the Levitical singers sang the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. The Song of Moses was divided into six parts, one of which was sung each Sabbath for six weeks. Each part was divided into three sections. Between each section the priests would make three blasts on their silver trumpets and the people would worship.

During the Feast of Passover, when the paschal lambs were slain the priests blew a threefold blast on their silver trumpets. Then the Levitical singers led the people in a solemn responsive hymn of praise while two rows of priests took turns passing silver and gold bowls filled with the blood of the lambs to the priest standing beside the Brazen Altar. The priest poured out the blood at the base of the altar while the worshippers sang the Hallel (Psalms 113-118).

At the Feast of Tabernacles, a priest took a golden pitcher to the Pool of Siloam where he filled it with water. He was accompanied by a joyous musical procession. He, then, returned by way of the Water Gate and, at the threefold blast from the priests' silver trumpets, poured out the water and the wine of the drink offering. Immediately, the Temple music began with the Levitical Choir leading the people in singing Psalms 113-118, the Hallel. The singers were accompanied by flutes.

At the close of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacle worshippers gathered in the Court of Women for a joyous musical celebration. The Levitical Choir stood on the 15 steps that led to the Court of Israel and sang hymns, including the Songs of Degrees (Songs of Ascent), Psalms 120-134. The "men of Deed" danced with flaming torches in their hands and sang songs of praise. The musicians played on harps, lutes, cymbals, and trumpets.

It's clear that music and praise were important elements in the Old Testament sacrificial system. The Temple was filled with praises for the God of Israel. I've just given a few examples of how the book of Psalms, the Levitical Choirs, the Levite musicians, and the people combined to praise and worship the Lord in the courts of His Temple.

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness." Psalm 48:1