

The Tabernacles Testimony of Shlomo ben Moshe

Shalom, shalom. My name is Shlomo ben Moshe and I am honoured to tell you the story of my very first Feast of Tabernacles, at least the first one I have ever seen. You see, I was born blind, totally blind eyes I had, but sight I did not. I grew up and abba, my father, would describe things to me, all sorts of things but still I had no idea what he was saying really. He would describe a fig tree to me, give me a delicious fig to eat, but still, I had no idea what a fig tree looked like. Abba took me to the priests at the temple in Jerusalem, but despite their prayers and anointing, still I could not see. Nothing ever helped. Sometimes after I went to bed I would hear abba praying and asking Adonai to give me the ability to see.

We had an olive grove and a vineyard near a small village called Bethany which is quite close to Jerusalem. As I grew older, I would walk into Jerusalem to beg for alms and one of my favourite places to sit was at the pool of Siloam. It always seemed so peaceful there and the people who came to spend time there always seemed to be pleasant and generous to me. It was here, at the pool of Siloam that one day my life completely changed, in a very dramatic way. I shall explain: I was sitting by the pool of Siloam, as I was accustomed to do and there was all the usual noise and people moving past. Suddenly there was an air of excitement and people were saying that the preacher from Galilee was coming towards the pool. I had heard about this preacher called Yeshua and I became very hopeful he might heal my sight but as he drew near I heard a voice asking him about me, whether my blindness was because of my sin or my parents. I was ashamed, I felt deeply embarrassed that whoever was speaking was doing so as if I was not even there. My heart sank and I quickly lost hope, but then the preacher replied;

“Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night is coming when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”

Then I heard him spit on the ground and a minute or so later he touched my face and rubbed mud that he made with his spit on my eyes and told me to go to the pool of Siloam and wash my face. It was very surreal and didn't seem to make much sense, but I obeyed and when I had washed my face I could see. I was healed, I was no longer blind. There is no way to describe how I felt at that moment. Truly, He is the light of the world.

When my neighbours saw me they were astonished. They said I should go to the temple and report the healing to the priests. So they took me to the temple, the first time I had ever seen it and oh, what a magnificent sight it was. Whereas I had only known black, now there were colours everywhere.....I couldn't stop looking at the sky, it was so beautiful. The priests asked me how I was healed of my blindness, so I told them what happened at the pool of Siloam with the preacher Yeshua. I was shocked when they became enraged, I just couldn't understand why they would be angry with my being healed by Yeshua. They kept asking me who I thought this Yeshua was and I told them I thought he must be a prophet because we know that God does not hear the prayers of sinners. Then they sent for my parents and they asked them about my being healed. Finally they yelled at me and told me I was altogether born in sin and knew nothing then they threw me out of the temple, it was shattering.

As I made my way back towards my favourite spot to sit at the pool of Siloam, a man approached me and introduced himself as Peter, a disciple of Yeshua. Peter said that he wanted to tell me something about Yeshua, of who he was. I was all ears, and as Peter relayed his account I became more and more astonished by the minute. Here is what he said:

Yeshua took James, his brother John and I up to a very secluded place on the top of a high mountain and when we reached that place Yeshua was transfigured before us: his face shone like the sun and his clothing became white as the shekinah light. As we looked at this indescribable scene, we also saw Moses and Elijah talking with him. As we watched on we were convinced that Yeshua was starting the Kingdom of God right then, so since like every other Jew, I know that the Feast of Tabernacles is the only feast we will observe in the Kingdom of God I said to Yeshua "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if you want us to, let us make here three tabernacles; one for you, and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Then, while I was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and a voice out of the cloud said; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When we heard that voice we all fell on our faces and were terrified. Then Yeshua came and touched us, and said; "Arise, and be not afraid." When we opened our eyes and looked we saw only Yeshua.

As I went on my way to the pool of Siloam to sit quietly and pray, all I could think of was what Peter had told me and I was both astonished and bewildered. When I reached the pool I had no sooner sat down and Yeshua came up to me with the most serene and welcoming smile on his face. He asked me "Shlomo, do you believe on the Son of God?" I replied "Who is He Lord that I might believe on Him?" and then Yeshua said "Shlomo, you are looking at Him and you are talking with Him." As the realisation dawned on me that I was standing in the presence of Adonai ha'Mashiach I cried out "I believe Lord" and I fell on my knees and worshipped Him.

Well, that all happened during the spring festivals. It was an amazing, life changing experience and since being healed I have been able to work in our vineyard and olive grove. Summer has passed now, the harvest is complete and it is autumn in Israel. We have just had the feast of trumpets and Shavuot the Day of Atonement which, given my conversion to faith in the Son of God was very special to me this year, and now it is the 15th day of Tishri, the seventh month and therefore time for Sukkot, the feast of Tabernacles. I have always loved Sukkot as it acknowledges and celebrates the provision of God for us in our harvest and also reminds us of His provision for us as our forefathers traversed the desert for 40 years after leaving Egypt. It also draws us to look forward to that provision of God in the Kingdom that will come when Adonai ha'Maschiach will rule and reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem. At this time there is so much joy amongst my people It is a wonderful time of thanksgiving, a time of laughter, singing, dancing, people openly worshipping God, lots of famous Rabbi's teaching the scriptures to the people in the streets and many, many people in the city as this is one of the three feasts that it is mandatory for all Jewish men to attend, but it is customary for whole families to join in.

Sukkot begins and ends with a special Sabbath day of rest. During the days of the feast all Israelites build small shelters all over the city "to dwell in booths" to remind them that God delivered them out of the "land of Egypt" and to look forward to the coming of Adonai ha'Maschiach the Messiah, who would deliver His people from the bondage of sin. This feast, like all of the feasts of Israel, consistently reminds us that God has promised to deliver His people from the bondage of sin and deliver them from their enemies. Part of God's deliverance for the Israelites was His provision and protection during the 40 years they wandered in the wilderness, cut off from the Promised Land.

There is always such a huge crowd at Sukkot. I make a point of coming to the pool of Siloam on each of the days of Sukkot while it is still dark so I can enjoy the water drawing ceremony. Every morning of Sukkot at daybreak, a group of Levites and priests come down to the pool of Siloam to draw fresh water in golden jugs from the temple to be poured on the altar after the daily morning sacrifice. When they arrive at the Temple with the water there are loud trumpet blasts, people are singing and dancing and there is just so much happiness and rejoicing. There are two holes in the altar into which liquid is poured. One is for the wine which accompanies every sacrifice, and a second, smaller one is reserved for the Sukkot water. The purpose of the water ceremony is to thank God for the rains that produced the harvest and to petition Him for rains for the coming growing season.

Today I was watching one group of pilgrim worshippers who have come from a far land arrive at the steps up to the porch of the temple carrying their lulavs. The *lulav* is a combination of date palm, willow and myrtle branches, held together by a woven palm branch. The *etrog*, or citron, is a lemon-like fruit with a wonderful citrus smell. When reciting the blessing over the *lulav* and *etrog*, we wave them in six directions—north, south, east, west, up, and down to symbolize that God can be found in all directions, not only in one particular place. As I watched this group of pilgrim worshippers arrive at the temple they ascended the steps singing the traditional psalm of ascent as they approached the Levites who are playing instruments, singing and worshipping Elohim at the top of the steps to the porch of the temple. The words they are singing are

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;
As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

The nights of Sukkot are spent celebrating this once-a-year offering. The Priests kindle fires on great candelabra, lighting up Jerusalem as if it were the middle of the day. From all over the city and even up into the Judean hills the four seventy feet tall menorahs can be seen with huge flames coming out of their spouts. It is a spectacular sight as the whole city is lit up and seems so alive. Throughout the night pious men dance holding torches and Levites play music while the people watch with excitement. The Temple courtyard is specially furnished to accommodate this event, and a balcony is always erected for women so they too can observe the celebrations and revelry.

Throughout these days of this present Sukkot, when I can for the first time see all the activities I just don't want it to end. I am enjoying all the festivities so much but I am troubled by that I have not seen Yeshua, even though I know He would be here. Anyway, we have completed the seven days of Sukkot and come now to the special Sabbath that follows, the eighth day we call that last great day of the feast. In the late afternoon, with the crowd as dense around the temple as it has been all festival long and no further water ceremonies are to be done I see Yeshua ascending the steps to the porch of the Temple. As the crowd all begin to see Him they fall suddenly silent and all eyes are on Him. As He stands with His arms wide open, the crowd is silent attention He declares in a loud voice

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"

Shock at His words reverberated through the crowd. I don't quite know how you, my gentile friends understand His words, but to the Jewish mind, educated as we are in the Torah, Mishnah and Talmud, He was plainly identifying Himself with the prophecy of Ezekiel that relates to the outpouring of water from under the Temple in the Kingdom of God and Himself sitting on the Throne of our father David.