

The Spiritual Significance of Ancient Hebrew Baby Dedications

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived

with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. (Luke 2:22-39)

Have you ever sat in church and seen a beaming couple stand up front and dedicate their chubby little blessing to the Lord? Something like that happened to the baby Jesus.

According to the customs prescribed in the Old Testament, Mary and Joseph brought their son, Jesus, to the temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated. The child was still very young at the time, perhaps about six weeks old or so.

As part of the journey, at the base of the temple there would have been places for ceremonial cleansing and washing, all foreshadowing work that Jesus would eventually accomplish on the cross, cleansing us from unrighteousness and washing away our sins. To show that they desired this atoning sacrifice, pilgrims to Jerusalem would wear white. They would not talk about “going” to the temple but “ascending” to the temple. As they were physically climbing the steps, spiritually they were to lift their soul in praise and adoration and thanksgiving to God. Often, they would even sing the Psalms of ascent in the Bible meant for pilgrims as they went to meet with God.

This is the process that Joseph and Mary undertook with their newborn child. They would have been traveling from Nazareth to Jerusalem, about 140 miles. This would have taken them roughly one week, so we know that this is a very serious, devout family that greatly loves God. Luke tells us that they did “according to what is said in the Law of the Lord” (Luke 2:24). When this phrase appears in Luke it emphasizes a deep

devotion to God.

Joseph and Mary took great pains to travel to Jerusalem, make a sacrifice, and dedicate Jesus at the temple. They did so out of loving obedience to God, not religious obligation. When it comes to giving, serving, and attending church, how is your heart? {eoa}

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