

Seventh Sunday After Epiphany
Cycle C RCL

Genesis 45:3-11, 21-28

The story of Joseph and his brothers is largely the work of the Elohist writer (E) who composed his account of Israel's pre-history in the eighth century BC. For E God works indirectly in history through human beings who often find guidance in dreams and visions. Through his prowess in interpreting dreams Joseph has risen to the rank of the Pharaoh's vizier, and his brothers do not recognize him until he reveals his identity to them. We now learn that Joseph's betrayal and rise to power in Egypt has been the means by which God will save Israel and his children and thus fulfill his promises despite the coming hard times. The story seems to be set during the Hyksos Period in Egypt (*ca.* 1750-1520 BC) during which Palestinian princes dominated Egypt.

Psalms 37:1-12, 41-42

Although *wisdom songs* were not composed for the Temple, as were the other psalms, they came to be part of Israel's treasury of sacred songs during the exile in Babylon when the Temple stood in ruins. The promise that those who hope in/wait upon the LORD should possess the Land (of Israel, 37:10) must have been especially poignant to the Jews of Babylon. The salvation of the righteous ones promised in verses 41-42 would have taken on a new meaning in exile—a promise of restoration to the land of promise.

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

The Talmud too knows controversies as to just how the dead are raised, and the present discussion has some resemblance to a Rabbinic discussion about whether the dead will be raised naked or clothed. The notion of a "spiritual body" in 15:44 does not suggest an immaterial substance but, rather, a body that is fit for the coming age. Of all of the difficulties Paul had with his Gentile churches, perhaps helping them understand the Jewish apocalyptic idea of resurrection was the most difficult.

Luke 6:27-38

Verses 27-36 here in Luke's Sermon on the Plain correspond to Matthew 5:43-48 in the Sermon on the Mount, and verses 29-30 have their parallel in Matthew 5:38-42. Both Gospels have gotten their material from a common source of sayings unknown to Mark, a source scholars simply call as "Q," the first letter of the German word for "source" (*Quelle*). For Matthew, the blessings and woes represent advanced teaching, reserved for the disciples alone, whereas Luke directs them as general instruction to the large crowd that comes to Jesus from Judah, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon.

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