

Proper 8
Cycle B RCL
Revised

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27

The Book of Jashar is a historical chronicle also cited by the Deuteronomic Historian (Dtr) in Joshua 10:13. There are significant difficulties in the text of the song in verses 18-27, but it stands here as Dtr's poetic summary of the events that led David to leadership, making clear that David was loyal to Saul throughout Saul's reign. This claim is challenged by mention of Ziklag in verse 1. Achish, the Philistine king, had given this Philistine city to David, thus making David a minor Philistine king (1 Samuel 27:6).

Psalm 130

The *laments* were prayed by pilgrims to Jerusalem who had come there to ask God for relief of suffering. Such suffering could be caused by sin against God, sin against the neighbor, or for other reasons over which the pilgrim had no control. Sins against the neighbor would have to be worked out with the neighbor, not through the atonement rituals of the temple, but the Psalms contain the idea that God might afflict wrongdoers until they had made proper restitution for their sins against others. Suffering that resulted from sins against God were addressed in the *laments* of guilt, and suffering from unknown causes through the *laments of innocence*. Psalm 130 is a *lament* of guilt. The psalmist admits that he has wronged God but reminds God that the only way such a wrong could be made right would be for God to forgive the debt incurred by the sin.

OR

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24

The Wisdom of Solomon addresses the first-century Jews of Alexandria in Egypt, encouraging them to hold fast to their faith in times of misunderstanding and persecution. Composed in Greek, this work is an attempt to express Jewish thought in terms of contemporary Greek and Roman ideas and is related in spirit to the philosophical work of the Alexandrian Jewish scholar Philo (20 BCE – 50 CE). One of the new ideas this book champions is that of the immortality of the soul, and the current passage argues that failure to believe in immortality and divine rewards and punishments after death results in the persecution of the righteous.

Lamentations 3:21-33

In its Hebrew text Lamentations does not claim to be the work of Jeremiah. We first meet this claim in the Greek (Septuagint) translation of Lamentations. In the rabbinic Bible, Lamentations occurs among the Writings. It is, then, an anonymous book that laments the conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and belongs to the near eastern tradition of laments over cities after defeat with the Sumerian 11-song Lament Over Ur as our oldest example. Lamentations contains five songs corresponding to the five chapters of our modern editions. Songs 1, 2, and 4 are acrostic songs in which each verse begins with a successive letter of the 22-letter long Hebrew alphabet. The last song has 22 stanzas, but they do not occur in alphabetic order. Chapter three has 66 verses because each sequence of three verses begins with the same successive letter of the alphabet.

or

Psalm 30

In verses 8-10, this *thanksgiving* psalm recapitulates the original lament that the psalmist prayed to ask for deliverance. The danger from which he asked relief was the danger of death, expressed here in terms of descent into the underworld, Sheol. The deepest part of Sheol is called “the Pit” (*Abaddon*). Having been saved from death, the psalmist returns to the Temple to offer the promised sacrifice and public acclamation of God’s faithfulness.

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

On his so-called “third missionary journey” Paul made a collection for the struggling church in Jerusalem. Evidently, the church in Jerusalem practiced a kind of communal living not generally practiced by other Christians in the first century. Paul wanted to support this symbolic experiment and wrote to urge the Corinthians to look beyond their own squabbles to the welfare of their co-religionists in the holy city.

Mark 5:21-43

The story of the woman with the flow of blood is sandwiched in between segments of the story of healing Jairus’s daughter. When Jesus told the mourners in Jairus’s house that the little girl was not dead (verse 39), he was reflecting the ancient near eastern belief that it took three days for the soul to descend to the underworld and so a person could not be really considered dead until the third day after the cessation of life functions. Consequently, this is not a resurrection story but a healing story and represents the last of the three great miracles of healing in Mark 5. It also represents a further demonstration of Jesus’s “power” or “authority” (*exousia*) over disease. The included story of the woman who touched Jesus (24b-34) is a story of the woman’s great courage that Mark associates with faith, a quality Jesus’ students often lack. Contrary to popular misconceptions, the woman would not have communicated any uncleanness to Jesus by touching his robe; and even if she had, it would have been susceptible to washing away. Rudolf Bultmann sees a movement in the tradition from stress on the miraculous power of Jesus to sense the woman’s touch in a great crowd to a celebration of the woman’s faith that drew forth that power.

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