

Proper 7
Cycle C RCL

1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a

The Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr) in these verses portrays Elijah as a second Moses by having the prophet make—loosely speaking—a reverse recapitulation of the Exodus. The long trip from Samaria to Beersheba is not described at all in this account save to mention that Beersheba belonged to Judah, not Israel (19:3). Here at the entrance to the desert called the Negev, Elijah, like the wandering Israelites of the Exodus, must receive food and drink from the Lord in order to be able to make the arduous 40-day journey into the Sinai desert and to Mt. Horeb (verses 4-9). The name Horeb is the favorite word in Deuteronomy for the mountain where Moses received God's revelation. There are nine instances of “Horeb” scattered about Deuteronomy as opposed to two instances (Deuteronomy 33:2,16) of “Sinai.” The beloved translation “still, small voice” of the KJV in 19:12 might best be rendered “sound of a tiny whisper.”

Psalms 42 and 43

Psalms 42-43 comprise a single *lament* psalm as is shown by its unifying thrice repeated refrain in 42:6-7, 14-15; 43:5. The poem stands here to introduce the second of the five books into which our Psalter is organized but it is not an editorial composition but a well crafted lament.. The psalmist's principal complaint is that he can no longer make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem because of wicked enemies. This has led to widely varying ideas about the setting of the psalm from Terrien's idea that it represents a literary lament out of the last century or so of Judah's existence to Gerstenberger's claim that it is a community expression from “earliest Judasm” (exile?) composed in the first person that complains of separation from the now defunct Jerusalem cultus.

or

Isaiah 65

This passage is from the so-called Third Isaiah (Isaiah 56-66) that addresses the situation of the Jews in Jerusalem after Cyrus II had ended their exile in 539 BCE. Despite the claims for a glorious salvation found in the Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55), those who returned found life far from idyllic and there seems to have been a desire to find religious comfort in the multitude of religious practices adopted by those who were not exiled. Chapter 65 is placed here as a reply to the complaint in the previous chapter that God continues to punish Israel long after its expiation should have been complete. In chapter 65 the Lord replies that Israel has shunned God's pleading that they once more be God's people. Specifically, they have returned to various kinds of strange worship (65:7b) and will continue to receive God's punishment. Yet this punishment will not be absolute. Some will be saved from it.

Psalms 22:18-27

The first verses of this long *lament* are very familiar to Christian readers as Jesus' cry of dereliction from the cross (Mark 15:34 and parallels). A full lament, however, consists of more than a cry of anguish (complaint) and deliverance but also promises an act of thanksgiving in the Temple if God fulfills the psalmist's request. Verses 18-20 comprise the plea for deliverance. Verses 21-27 are part of the promise: a general promise to offer a thanksgiving in the temple (verse 20) and the subject matter of that thanksgiving (verses 22-29a). The final promise that the

psalmist's descendants will continue to offer that thanksgiving (verses 29b-30) is unusual.

Galatians 3:23-29

Against those who would require of new Christian converts adherence to all or part of the Jewish Law, Paul likens the Law to a *paidagogos* (3:25; NRSV: "disciplinarian"), a household slave responsible for educating the children of the house. In Paul's view the death and resurrection of Jesus have inaugurated a new age in which the services of such a metaphorical servant are no longer needed. Faith, not Torah-obedience, is the mode of being appropriate to this new age.

Luke 8:26-39

This story derives from Mark 5:1-20.

The location of the miracle of the legion of demons in the "country of the Gerasenes" (Jerash in Jordan) is a problem because Jerash lies over thirty miles away from the Sea of Galilee. Many texts read "Gaderenes" (modern Umm Qais in Jordan) which is much nearer the Sea of Galilee than is Jerash. Rudolf Bultmann thought this story was a joke told among non-Christians about Jesus because he must trick them in going into the swine. Most other commentators have not followed him in this. Demons were neither the souls of the dead nor angels from the underworld. Jews thought of them as incomplete but natural creatures who inhabited unclean places like graveyards, ruined buildings, and deserts. Sending them into unclean animals like pigs is well within popular first-century ideas. The death of the pigs did not kill the demons, but one supposes that they returned to their unclean place of origin. Mark 5:10 has the demons beg Jesus not to send them "out of the country," which is much closer to the earthbound nature of demons as described in Rabbinic literature than the "abyss" in Luke 8:31.

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