

Proper 26
Cycle A RCL

Joshua 3:7-17

This story parallels the story of the parting of the Sea of Reeds in Exodus 14:21-24 but lacks the drama of Egyptians in pursuit or a massive body of water to traverse. The Jordan at Adam would be no particular challenge to cross these days even when the runoff from the mountains of the Lebanon has swelled it beyond its banks. Perhaps the breadth and depth of the river was greater in the Late Bronze Age than it is now, but not enough for the Jordan to be compared in any meaningful way to the Yam Suf (Sea of Reeds). That said, the crossing is just as miraculous if not as dramatic as the earlier event. The Ark of the Covenant was a portable throne for the God Yahweh and represented God's presence among God's people.

Psalms 107:1-7, 33-37

This is a liturgy of thanksgiving that must be classified with the *community thanksgivings*. Four different situations of distress are recounted: 4-5, 10-12, 17-18, 23-27. This psalm goes far beyond a single person's experience of deliverance; rather, the entire nation gives thanks. Some commentators have found verse 3 to refer to the Exile and would date this psalm to the 5th century and the restored Temple of Nehemiah.

OR

Micah 3:5-12

Micah, a younger contemporary of Isaiah, was from Moresheth-gath (*Tell el-Judeideh*), a small town on Judah's border with Philistia. Throughout the book that bears his name, Micah's prophecies demonstrate a surprising sophistication from one of his rural origins. The present passage reflects Hezekiah's (715-687 BCE) extensive building activities (3:10) in Jerusalem during his reign and maintains that God will destroy Jerusalem because of the corruption of its judges, priests, and prophets (3:11). A century later the prophet Jeremiah quoted the description of that destruction in Micah 3:12 as part of his defense before the officials of King Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 26:18).

Psalms 43

Psalms 43 is a continuation of Psalm 42 as shown by repetition in 43:5-6 of the refrain found twice in the previous psalm at 42:6-7 and 42:14-15. The whole psalm (42-43) is a *lament* used to introduce the second of the five books into which our Psalter is organized.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13

Paul supported himself by the profession of tent-making (Acts 18:3) in accordance with the general Pharisaic sentiment that teachers of Torah should earn livelihood through a trade instead of dependence on students to pay them for their teaching. Often the teachers would take students into their own homes as apprentices of their teachers' worldly trade while they continued their studies.

Matthew 23:1-12

Matthew has taken Mark's warning about the pretentiousness of the scribes (Mark 12:38-40) and turned it into a full-blown condemnation of the Pharisaic party and their supporters, the scribes.

Because scribes wrote legal documents for their customers, they had to function as legal experts much as lawyers do in our society. The legal piety of the Pharisees appealed to the scribes much more than the temple piety of the Sadducees or the end-of-the-world apocalyptic of the Essenes. This passage makes it clear that there will be no successor to Jesus: no caliph, no rabbi of his school to take his place. He will always be *the* teacher of his followers, an assertion that anticipates his resurrection and continuing presence with his students.

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