

**Proper 18**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Exodus 12:1-14**

Our reading comes from the latest writer in the Book of Exodus, the Priestly writer (P), who has completely reworked the old Passover tradition, which we can still find in verses 21-27. The old tradition concerned itself principally with the sacrifice of the lamb and the sprinkling of its blood on the doorposts as a talisman against the Angel of Death. Four centuries after the old narrative strand JE reduced this tradition to writing, P turned the emphasis toward the meal itself, emphasizing the readiness of the Israelites to leave the land of Egypt (verse 11) as well as the protective nature of the blood. Both JE and P agree that there should be a rite of remembrance, but only P gives directions for it.

**Psalm 149**

Psalms 146-150 are *hymns* that all begin and end with the expression *hallelu-jah*, "praise the LORD!" The present psalm's reference to the music and dance of the temple liturgy reminds us of the liturgy's joy and magnificence.

OR

**Ezekiel 33:7-11**

Ezekiel was a priest and prophet who went into exile with the Jews in 597 BCE and thereafter prophesied from his exile near the Babylonian city of Nippur. This passage repeats the warning of Ezekiel 3:16-21 that the prophet is like the guard on a city's wall who has the obligation to warn the populace of an enemy's approach. Chapter 33 begins the third major section of the book of Ezekiel (33:1-39:29) that contains oracles about Israel's restoration and oracles against foreign nations.

**Psalm 119:33-40**

In this long *acrostic wisdom psalm* each strophe of the poem begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The current selection contains all the verses for the Hebrew letter *he*. Wisdom psalms did not grow up in the Jerusalem Temple but in the wisdom schools of Jerusalem and later in the wisdom schools of the Babylonian Exile. Their function in the Jerusalem school was to help young courtiers learn the customs and values of the court, so their wisdom teachers designed them to facilitate memorization. In Babylon the same wisdom psalms came to represent the heritage of the whole people and to lay out a pattern of obedience for the future characterized by all Israel keeping God's law.

**Romans 13:8-14**

The commandment to love one's neighbor in 13:8 paraphrases of the commandment in Leviticus 19:18. It was not uncommon for rabbis to give summaries of the law as general heuristic principles for their students to apply to ambiguous situations. Jesus too gives a summary of the law in Mark 12:29-30 (parallels: Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28); but his summary is twofold, beginning with the command to love God, taken from the preface to the first commandment in Deuteronomy 6:4, and then to love the neighbor as oneself (Leviticus 19:18). Paul's summary of the law that love of neighbor fulfills sounds like a paraphrase of the laws of Noah that Jews believed applied to all human beings rather than a paraphrase of the ten

commandments that God gave Moses for Israel. The reader would not be far off the mark to find a parallel to Paul's famous passage on love in 1 Corinthians 13.

**Matthew 18:15-20**

Matthew not only serves as a record of the ministry of Jesus but also as a handbook for the operation of the church as it existed in Syria-Palestine in the first century of our era. Consistent with its Jewish origins, the Gospel has Jesus require that the whole assembly act as a court and that evidence of wrongdoing be substantiated only on the basis of two or three witnesses as mandated by the Torah. (See Deuteronomy 19:15.) Like a Rabbinic court (Hebrew: *bet din*), our author believed the church as a court had God's own authority to act (18:20).

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