

**Proper 27**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25**

Instead of a farewell discourse, the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr) has chosen to give us the covenant-making dialogue between Joshua and Israel at Shechem. George Mendenhall has shown how this kind of covenant corresponds to the contemporary international treaties of the Near East, including a recitation of the history between the covenanting parties, prohibitions and commandments, and a cultic ceremony that enacts the treaty. The reference in 24:19 to God being unwilling to forgive Israel's sins and transgressions is important to the ensuing history Dtr writes: Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings. When Israel is faithful, God will protect the people and the land. When Israel deserts God for the gods of the land, God will break out in punishment. Some have referred to this major theme as the "optimism of Dtr."

**Psalm 78:1-7**

Psalms 78, 105, 106, and 136 are historical in content and were likely used during the great festivals in Jerusalem. Wisdom language abounds in the first two verses with mention of the psalmist's "teaching" (Hebrew: *torah*) and reference to the content as a "proverb" (*mashal*) or "riddles" (*xidot*), but the balance of the Psalm is a recitation of God's faithful activity in Israel's history compared with the faithlessness of Israel and so reads like a *hymn*.

or

**Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16**

Wisdom 6:12-20 is part of a long exhortation to rulers to seek wisdom in order to have a long reign (6:21) and to receive the gift of immortality that brings the king to God (6:18b-19). The Wisdom of Solomon is the only book of the Apocrypha originally composed in Greek and was part of the collection of Jewish works in the great library of Ptolemy in Alexandria. Not only is the language Greek, so is the conceptuality of wisdom (*sofia*) as the gateway to immortality of the soul and the divine kingdom that lies in wait there. The address to nobles or rulers was a commonplace of both Greek and Latin letters.

OR

**Amos 5:18-24**

Amos was a prophet from the southern kingdom of Judah whose prophetic activity occurred in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 BCE). In the preaching of the court prophets "the day of the Lord" was the day of triumph over God's enemies. Amos turned this concept around to suggest that the enemy is Israel and that the "day of the Lord" will be a day of destruction for Israel.

**Wisdom of Solomon 6:17-20**

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or

### **Psalm 70**

This brief *lament* also appears in Psalm 40:14-19 (*BCP*; Psalm 40:13-17 in other English versions). The psalmist's complaint in verse 5 that he is poor (*'ani*) and needy (*'evyon*) does not necessarily mean that he is destitute, for these words often occur in many contexts to refer to one's need for divine intervention. Sometimes the laments mention specific difficulties; and in the present instance, the problem is that of wicked enemies who seek the psalmist's downfall.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

This passage makes it clear that the immediate occasion for Paul's letter was the Thessalonians' misunderstanding of death and resurrection within their new faith. Some commentators have suggested that the death of one or more members of the congregation may have exposed the false belief that faith in Christ was supposed to protect one from death until Christ's return. Paul offers in opposition to this false belief his own Jewish and Pharisaic understanding of the resurrection of the body as interpreted through his Christianity. On the last day the dead in Christ will rise up out of their graves and precede those who are left to join Christ, descending from the heavens, to go with him to Jerusalem where both Jewish and Early Christian belief taught the final judgment would occur.

### **Matthew 25:1-13**

The small ceramic hand lamps envisioned here did not produce much light but served mainly to announce the presence of someone walking in the darkness. The maidens in this parable, however, went out together to create a kind of ceremonial way of lights for the bridegroom; but the effect was ruined when the bridegroom did not arrive at the anticipated time and some of the attendants forgot to bring additional oil with them. While the forgetful women went off to buy some olive oil, the bridegroom arrived; and the party started without them. This parable reiterates the apocalyptic theme of the necessity of being wise—or even canny—in preparation for the coming of the new age.

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