

Holy Name
January 1
Cycles ABC RCL
Revised

Numbers 6:22-27

Verses 24-26 comprise the historic blessing now called in the synagogue *nesiat kapayim* ("lifting of hands") or *birkat kohanim* ("priests' blessing") from the post-exilic Priestly source (P) of the Pentateuch. Two silver-leaf scroll amulets from the Hinnom Valley, dating to the 7th or 6th century BCE, however, show texts of a blessing that closely resembles verses 24-26. As a consequence, we would not be far wrong to imagine that the priestly author has used here a traditional, pre-exilic blessing..

Psalms 8

This *hymn* contains a very high view of human nature. In verse 5 the author marvels that human beings have been made only a little less than the *elohim*, a reference to the heavenly beings. Like the Priestly Writer of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, our author believes human beings are almost like the gods and have dominion over all of the earthly realm even as the gods have dominion over the heavenly realm.

Galatians 4:4-7

In this angry letter, Paul complains that the Galatian Christians have replaced the Gospel he brought to them with "another gospel" (Galatians 1:6). This other gospel was an esoteric teaching that combined elements of the Jewish Law, such as circumcision, with elements of astrology ("elemental spirits of the universe," 4:3, Greek: *stoicheia*). Some find in this esoteric teaching a precursor to what later came to be called Gnosticism. The Aramaic word *Abba*, used in reference to God in 4:6, was likely not a familiar term of endearment ("Daddy!"), as it is in modern Hebrew, but was an Aramaic "emphatic," that would be reasonably formal ("O Father!").

or

Philippians 2:9-13

This reading contains the last three verses of the "Christ Hymn" of 2:6-11, a hymn Paul quoted from the living worship of this church, changing them only by adding the words "even death on a cross" (2:8). Verses 12-13, on the other hand, show us Paul's application of the hymn to Christian life in Philippi. Since the Christ Hymn deals with Christ's humility and obedience, the injunction to "work through your own salvation with fear and trembling" in 2:12 amounts to a plea for continued circumspection on the part of the readers in imitation of Christ's great humility. Paul draws a strong contrast with opponents he often accuses of boasting about their superior religious insight.

Luke 2:15-21

The circumcision of Jesus would normally take place eight days after his birth (Genesis 21:4, Leviticus 12:3). The single verse in the Bible that tells us about Jesus' circumcision, Luke 2:15, shows how the parents of Jesus fulfilled the command of the angel to Mary in Luke 1:31 to name the child "Jesus." Unlike the commandment to Joseph in Matthew 1:21, which makes a play on the meaning of the name "Jesus" (Hebrew: *Yehoshua*, "the Lord is salvation"), Luke's Gospel shows no interest in the name's etymology.

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