

Proper 10
Cycle B RCL
Revised

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

On the second day of the battle of Aphek (1 Samuel 4:1-11) the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. Since, as our passage tells us, the Israelites believed that God sat enthroned on the cherubim (winged sphinxes) of the ark, the text really means that God became a prisoner of the Philistines. Every attempt to lodge the ark in a principal city of the Philistines thereafter, though, led to some catastrophe for that city (1 Samuel 5), and the Philistines ended up returning the ark to the Israelites who lodged it at Kiriath-jearim (1 Samuel 6). David's decision to bring the ark into his new capital of Jerusalem was a calculated political move that showed that the king was the vizier of the nation's divinity. His dancing before the ark to which Michal objected so vehemently involved revealing his "nakedness" (the shame of nudity, as in Leviticus 18) to the crowd, thereby revealing Michal's nakedness. In our author's view, however, the big danger was that David might aspire to become a sacral king/priest like the kings of the nations.

Psalms 24

This reflects an entrance liturgy into Jerusalem's sanctuary both for the people (24:3-6) and for God (24:7-10). Some commentators believe this psalm to be part of a New Year's service in which Yahweh was enthroned as king over Israel for the ensuing year. Most recognize the existence of two or even three psalm fragments in the resulting composition.

OR

Amos 7:7-15

The first verse of the Book of Amos locates the prophet's career during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah (783-742 BCE) and Jeroboam II of Israel (786-746 BCE). Amos came from Tekoa in the Kingdom of Judah, but he prophesied in the northern Kingdom of Israel for reasons not disclosed in the book. Today's reading contains the only specific event in the life of Amos of which we have any knowledge. Although prophets in Judah had a certain independence to criticize the king, prophets in Israel were expected to support the king and his policies. (See 1 Kings 22:13-28.) Amos' claim not to be a prophet or a prophet's son (Amos 7:14) means that he was not trained in any of the prophetic schools and feels no constraint to act and preach like the court prophets of Jeroboam.

Psalms 85:8-13

This *community lament* may stem from the exile in Babylon and if so, would express the hope that God soon would rescue the captives and establish them again securely in their own land. Like the Second Isaiah, the psalmist expresses the belief that the divine judgment (exile) has brought Israel forgiveness of sin. All that remains for the exiles to do now is to call upon God for deliverance.

Ephesians 1:3-14

An unknown student or devotee of Paul wrote Ephesians shortly after the close of Paul's career as an expansion of the Epistle to the Colossians, whose authorship is also not Paul's. Remarkably, some manuscripts of Ephesians lack the words "in Ephesus" in Ephesians 1:1 and thereby leave the document without any indication of the identity of the recipients at all. This lack has led some interpreters like John Knox—the Episcopalian, not the Scottish reformer!—to believe that Ephesians was crafted as a general letter and never intended for a single church, as were the letters of Paul.

Mark 6:14-29

The Jewish historian Josephus tells the sordid story of Herod Antipas the Tetrarch (4 BCE-39 CE) and Herodias in his *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.1. According to this account, Herod the Tetrarch stayed with his half-brother Philip (4 BCE-33CE) in Rome and there became enamored of Philip's wife Herodias. Herodias accepted Herod's suit and agreed to marry him despite the fact that she was still married to Philip, asking only that Herod get rid of his present wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia (Petra). Both in Mark and in Josephus, the real outrage was over Herod's familial relationship to Philip, *i. e.* being his half-brother, not about Herod's chicanery in stealing Philip's wife. The ensuing paragraph of the *Antiquities* (18.5.2) tells about John the Baptist's objection to this marriage and informs us that Herod killed John to forestall a rebellion among his subjects. This paragraph, however, reads like a sidelight in a story that otherwise concerns the animosity between Aretas of Arabia (Petra) and Herod Antipas. Some investigators believe the paragraph to be a Christian interpolation into Josephus's story. Josephus does not narrate the dance of Herodias's daughter.