

**Proper 7**  
**Cycle B RCL**  
**Revised**

**1 Samuel 17:(1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49**

A *cubit* is the distance from the elbow to the end of the outstretched middle finger, and a *span* is the width of a hand. Goliath's height, therefore, was close to 3 meters or almost 10 feet. Gath was one of the five cities of the Philistine territory ceded to the Peoples of the Sea by Pharaoh Ramses III after he failed to defeat the invaders from Greece completely. Indeed, the word "Philistine" derives ultimately from the name of one of the tribes of the Sea Peoples, rendered in Egyptian as *plst*. Once settled, the Philistines adopted the ways and even language of their Canaanite neighbors but demonstrated a new military and political cohesiveness that made them more formidable than the individual Canaanite city-states. David's defeat of Goliath is another sign from the Deuteronomic Historian (Dtr) of the working of God in Israel's history through the impossibly small or weak person.

**Psalm 9:9-20**

In the Greek translation of the Psalms, Psalms 9-10 are a single psalm, and there is much to commend this arrangement, including the fact that Psalms 9-10 comprise an imperfect acrostic with every other line beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Hebrew letters *dalet*, *mem*, *nun samek*, and *tsade*, however, are missing from the acrostic scheme. Our Psalm 9 is an *individual thanksgiving*, whereas Psalm 10 is an *individual lament*. The acrostic scheme appears to have been the primary device by which the editor combined the two psalms into one.

**or**

**1 Samuel 17:57-18:5, 10-16**

What should have been David's most satisfying moment of glory, standing before Saul with the head of Goliath in his hand (17:57), inaugurates instead a series of events that will lead to the demise of Saul and the ascendancy of David to Israel's throne. Saul's jealousy of David is not completely unfounded since the women of Israel's cities celebrated David's victories as greater than those of King Saul (18:6-7). Nevertheless, the Deuteronomic Historian (Dtr) has pictured Saul not only as jealous but also as irrational, an irrationality bordering on madness that ultimately forced David to separate himself completely from King Saul at the bidding of his friend Jonathan, the Saul's son. David's complete loyalty to the Lord's anointed king is met only with jealousy and insanity on Saul's part. David too is the anointed of the Lord, but it is important to Dtr that David never revolted against the legitimate authority of the reigning monarch.

**Psalm 133**

This short psalm is difficult to fit into any of the usual categories. The venerable Hermann Gunkel considered Psalm 133 a wisdom psalm, but this is possible only if one ignores or explains away verse 3. So Gunkel accepted A. Jirku's suggestion that we should read "Ijon," located at the foot of Mt. Hermon, instead of "Zion." For the reading "Ijon," however, there exists not a shred of evidence. Perhaps Psalm 133 was part of a pilgrimage psalm, as its ancient title suggests. In any event, the various metaphors of the psalm all serve to support the single image of the blessed assembly of "brothers also in unity," as 133:1 asserts. Gathered for festival,

the people of the covenant will find on the hills of Zion a divine relief from the ancient disputes that once divided them.

**OR**

### **Job 38:1-11, 16-18**

The poetry of Job examines carefully the reasons why people are suffer troubles. Job's three friends contend that only the unrighteous suffer. In Job 3-31, however, Job answers each of their arguments, contending that he is not claiming to be perfectly righteous but that he has done nothing worthy of such great suffering as he presently experiences. A new friend, Elihu, makes an argument in 32-37 that agrees in part with the three friends but adds the proviso that one must have an intercessor in heaven for God to respond to human distress. Clearly, Job has no such intercessor. Instead of allowing Job to answer this, the author now has God make a statement. The divine argument is that Job has no right to call the Ruler of the Universe to account. Ironically, this pronouncement, unsatisfactory as it may seem, answers Job's oft-repeated plea that God hear and answer the complaint. Since this has happened, Job then repents (Job 42:1-6) and then offers God a sacrifice for his friends.

### **Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32**

This is a long liturgy of thanksgiving and should be classed with the *community thanksgivings*. Four different situations of distress are recounted: 4-5, 10-12, 17-18, 23-27, situations that go far beyond a single person's experience of deliverance. Some commentators have found verse 3 to refer to the Exile and would date this psalm to the 5th century BCE and the restored temple of Nehemiah.

### **2 Corinthians 6:1-13**

First and Second Corinthians chronicle disagreements Paul had with his congregation at Corinth over such weighty matters as resurrection, worship, sectarianism, and sexual morality. For the most part, the apostle was forced to resort to letters as the way of resolving these disputes, and now he is bringing to a conclusion his most persuasive argument (2 Corinthians 2:14-7:4), an argument sometimes called the *apologia*, that will win the day. Paul sets his final plea within the context of God's imminent salvation, using the words of Isaiah 49:8. The "acceptable time" translates the Hebrew "time of good pleasure." God's redemption is at hand. Paul does not seek to obstruct anyone's entrance into that new age, and his manifold witness through suffering is ample proof of that. By implication, the warring Corinthians need to adopt the same attitude.

### **Mark 4:35-41**

A principal theme of Mark's Gospel is that of Jesus' authority (Greek: *exousia*): authority over the demons and disease, authority over the Law, authority even over death. In 4:35-41 the author explores Jesus' authority over the forces of nature. Jesus' nonchalant sleeping in the boat during the storm reminds us of Jonah's similar indifference to a storm on his way to Tarshish. In both cases, the power involved was not merely wind and rain but the very power of God. For very different reasons, neither Jonah nor Jesus has any reason to fear that power.

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