

Second Sunday in Lent
Cycle C RCL
Revised

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

This story blends two ancient historical sources, the Yahwist (J), a southern source from the 9th century BCE, whose account began in Genesis 2:4b, and the Elohist (E), an 8th century source from the northern kingdom of Israel, whose first words in Genesis occur here in verse 5. This blending is particularly evident from the difference between 15:5, which occurs during the night, and 15:12, which occurs at twilight. The ritual in 15:9-11 is designed to produce an oracle. E, on the other hand, has God put Abraham into a deep sleep to reveal the divine will (15:13-16). This revelatory sleep fits unevenly with the J account of the flaming pot and God's declaration of intention (15:17-18).

Psalm 27

Psalms of trust such as Psalms 11 and 27 are embellishments of that portion of a *lament* that expresses confidence in Yahweh's eventual vindication of the psalmist. Exactly what their liturgical use was is not clear, but their voice is individual rather than corporate and may be expressions of piety for pilgrims. Like the laments, this psalm contains petitions to God, in this case, having to do with continued access to the Lord through the temple cultus (27:4, 7-11).

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Paul established his first European church in Philippi near the middle of the first century CE (Acts 16:11-40) and continued his oversight of the church there through letters following his departure. Some interpreters believe the small work we call Philippians may, in fact, contain fragments of as many as four different letters.

The injunction to imitate Paul (3:17, see 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7) is reminiscent of the relationship between an ancient teacher and his students because students in the ancient world learned principally by imitation of their teachers. Paul warns his readers against a group in the church of Philippi that pretends to great spirituality but which in fact panders to human passions and sexual excesses.

Luke 13: 31-35

The lament over Jerusalem in 13:34-35 is the same as the one in Matthew 23:27-39 but is missing in Mark; so it derives from Q, the hypothetical written source common to Matthew and Luke. The warning about Herod Antipas in 13:31-33 is unique to Luke and serves as an introduction to the lament.

On the idea that Israel had killed the prophets, see also 11:47 and Acts 7:52. This idea about killing the prophets, however, does not correspond to anything we find in the Hebrew Scriptures. Finally, Luke reflects the usual Jewish apocalyptic understanding that the end of time will be one of judgment and disaster through which the righteous who persevere will find salvation.