

**Proper 16**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Exodus 1:8-2:10**

Most of this account comes from the Elohist writer (E), but the narrative introduction in 1:8-12 is from the Yahwist (J). We recognize the humor of E as the Hebrew midwives outwit the Pharaoh so as to save the male infants of the Hebrews (1:17-19). The story of Moses' mother hiding the baby by making a basket for him and setting it afloat in the Nile resembles the Legend of Sargon of Agade whose mother gave birth and put her son in a boat of rushes and bitumen. E's account owes something to that legend. The Pharaoh "who did not know Joseph" would have to be Ramses II (1279-1213) for the reference to the store cities of Pithom and Ramses in Exodus 1:11 to be accurate. In other ways, however, including the manner of Ramses' death (not from drowning, as an examination of his mummy has shown), the Egyptian record diverges significantly from the Bible's if Ramses II is to be understood as the pharaoh of the Exodus.

**Psalm 124**

We used to classify Psalm 124 with the *community thanksgivings*, but the fact that the psalm nowhere refers us to a previous *lament* casts doubt upon that classification. The fact that the psalm was used in the temple liturgy, however, is assured by the liturgical direction, "Let Israel say now" in 124:1. (See Psalm 129:1 and the similar construction in Psalm 118:2 for parallels.) For this reason, Psalm 124 cannot be a "didactic poem" as H.-J. Kraus suggests. The "if...then" construction of verses 1-3 suggests the prophetic construction in Isaiah 1:9, and on balance some kind of *hymn* of praise is probably the best way to understand this composition. There are some linguistic suggestions in the psalm of a late origin for this psalm, perhaps a time after the Exile.

OR

**Isaiah 51:1-6**

Characteristic of the so-called "Second Isaiah" (Isaiah 40-55) are lavish prophecies of deliverance for the Jewish exiles in Babylon that foresee not only redemption for Israel but also redemption for the whole earth. The vision of verse 6, in which even the heavens and the earth are said to disappear, sound at first like the apocalyptic visions of a much later time; but the author is only engaging in hyperbole to make the point that God's salvation is more dependable than the very cosmos itself.

**Psalm 138**

A *lament* is a cry to God for help in time of trouble. (See Psalms 6, 22, 51, *etc.*) Frequently, laments promise that if God grants the singer's petition the singer will tell of God's faithfulness to the congregation so as to encourage others to bring their burdens to the Lord. Singing *thanksgivings* like today's psalm in the Temple was the liturgical way in which the singer kept such a promise to God. Thanksgivings always contain specific reference to God's answer to the singer's plea (Psalm 138:3).

**Romans 12:1-8**

In Romans 12:1-15:13 Paul gives his readers ethical instructions for their Christian lives in the Empire's capital city. Verses 1-2 represent a summary of all that is to follow in this section: a

giving up of life in the present age in favor of the life of the age to come. The first exhortations comprise a call to unity (verses 3-8) that remind us of Paul's earlier call to the Corinthians to be one body in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-30).

### **Matthew 16:13-20**

Matthew has taken this story from Mark 8:27-33 but has added the commendation of Simon in 16:17-19, thus modifying the story into a kind of succession narrative. Caesarea Philippi (not to be confused with the seaside Roman capital city of Caesarea Maritima) was a Greek city in the Upper Galilee at the headwaters of the Jordan River (modern Banyas). Excavations there have revealed in this large pagan city caves dedicated to the worship of the Greek god Pan (hence the Arabic name "B[P]anyas)." The Gospels stop short of saying that Jesus actually entered such a pagan city, but Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi had worldwide implications that it might not have had in a Jewish city.

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