

Job 1:1; 2:1-10
Psalm 25
Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12
Mark 10:2-16

Notes on the Gospel Lesson

We tend to think of the Pharisees as one homogenous group. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There were many variations of teaching and practice within the umbrella of this tradition. The two largest groups, known as “schools”, within Pharisaism were the School of Hillel and the more conservative School of Shammai. (Hillel and Shammai were influential rabbis of the first century B.C.)

Many of Jesus’ teachings were similar to those of Hillel. (Hillel’s sayings of “What is hateful to thyself do not do to another. That is the whole Law, the rest is Commentary” and “He who wishes to raise his name lowers it,” have obvious parallels in Jesus’ teaching.) However, in this week’s Gospel Lesson Jesus is more closely aligned with the School of Shammai, who allowed divorce only for adultery, while the school of Hillel allowed divorce for any reason.

It should be noted that in the parallel passage in Matthew (Matt. 19: 1 - 9), Jesus adds an exception to his statement in Mark 10: 11 - 12. In Matthew, Jesus says, “whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity (translated as unfaithfulness or sexual immorality), and marries another commits adultery.”

Notes on the Old Testament Lesson

Just as modern English is different from the English in the Declaration of Independence and even more so than the English in Shakespeare’s plays, in the same way Hebrew changes over the centuries. By such a comparison, scholars see that the narrative section of Job, from which this week’s lesson is taken, is one of the oldest written sections of the Bible. In contrast, the beautiful poetry of Job 3 - 41 is of a much later composition.

The contest over Job between the LORD and Satan should not be seen as a dispute between opponents. In Old Testament Judaism, Satan or *ha-satan*, or “the Adversary”; had a specific role. Rather than being an enemy of God, the Satan was an angel of the Lord who served as “the Adversary”, rather like a modern District Attorney. It was the role of the Satan to call to God’s attention those who had sinned.