

**Third Sunday in Lent**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Exodus 17:1-7**

Rephidim lies near Mt. Horeb (=Mt. Sinai, modern *Jebel Musa*) on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Moses gives Rephidim two names in 17:7: Massah (“testing”) and Meribah (“disputing”) because there Israel “disputed” with Yahweh and put the Lord to the test over the lack of water there (17:2). The story comes from the combined Yahwist/Elohists (JE) source, probably put together in the 7th century BCE. Another version of the same story occurs in Numbers 20:2-13 but locates the event in the Wilderness of Zin at Kadesh.

**Psalm 95**

The hymns normally make no reference to specific historical events, but Psalm 95 does, referring in verse 8 to the test and disputation at Meribah/Massah. (See above on Exodus 17:1-7) The psalmist has in mind the Exodus version of the story because we find the dual name, Meribah/Massah, in Exodus 17:7. The psalm accompanied an entrance liturgy into the Jerusalem temple, perhaps during the Festival of Booths.

**Romans 5:1-11**

The positive results of suffering enumerated in Romans 5:3 are difficult to render in English. Suffering produces “endurance” or “obedience.” Obedience produces “certification” or “character.” (The Greek *dokime* means “certified,” “tested,” or “proved.”) Having passed the test of obedience, the believer has hope of redemption. Reference to Christ dying at “the right time” (*kata kairon*, 5:6) corresponds to the general belief of apocalyptic Jews in the first century that they were living in the 70th week of years prophesied by Daniel 9:24, *i. e.* 490 years after the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem. This corresponds to 10 Jubilee cycles as defined in Leviticus 25. The messianic age was to be the tenth and last Jubilee. For Paul, the death of Jesus inaugurated this last Jubilee which would involve remission of all obligations, including those of sin.

**John 4:5-42**

According to Josephus, the Jewish historian of the end of the first century CE, the Samaritans descended from the foreign colonists from Cuthah mentioned in 2 Kings 17:24. He claims their temple on Mt. Gerizim, overlooking Shechem, came into existence at the time of the Greek conquest by renegade priests from Jerusalem. Jews in the time of Jesus tried to minimize their contacts with the Samaritans whom they considered heretics and normally took the route from Jerusalem to the Galilee that followed the Jordan River to avoid Samaritan territory. The Samaritans still continue their distinctive life and worship in the areas of Nablus (Shechem) and Haifa.