

Proper 6
Cycle A RCL
Revised

Genesis 18:1-15, (21:1-7)

"The Oaks of Mamre" probably refers to a shrine like the Oak of Moreh in Genesis 12:6 where Abram settled after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 13:18). Although three men appear to Abraham in 18:2, we are assured in 18:1 that there was only the Lord who visited him. This is typical of the way J handles the possibility of a plurality of divine beings. Even though the tradition J inherited said "three," J wants the reader to know that the single visitor is really the Lord. The absurdity of the promise to Abraham and Sarah made Sarah laugh (*vaticxaq*), prefiguring the name of the child *yicxaq* (laughter). In chapter 21 we have a very tight summary of the birth of Isaac from all three writers. Verse 6 derives from the Elohist writer (E), while 21:1-2a and 21:7 come from J. The rest is commentary from P who attests to Isaac's circumcision on the eighth day in accordance with the Law of Moses that had yet to be received on Sinai. P also wants us to know that Abraham was exactly 100 years old when this happened and that all these events occurred exactly in the time sequence God had ordained.

Psalm 116:1, 10-17

This is a *thanksgiving psalm*. When a Judahite experienced difficulties, that person would often go up to the Temple in Jerusalem to implore the Lord's aid. These prayers of entreaty, called "laments," often contained a promise to declare to the congregation the Lord's faithfulness and mercy in time of trouble. Thanksgivings are the prayers by which such vows were completed. In 116:3-4 there is a clear reference to the previous lament. The question "How shall I repay the Lord?" (116:10) is actually an introduction to the ways in which the psalmist intends to repay the Lord, namely by offering a public sacrifice of thanksgiving while witnessing to all present about God's faithfulness. Verse 13 in the *BCP* version contains the egregious mistranslation "servants" for "saints" or "faithful ones" (*xasidim*). The adjective *yaqar* means "dear, expensive, precious." Those who witness the sacrifice should know that God deeply values the lives of the saints and will not desert them in time of need.

OR

Exodus 19:2-8a

Both the location of Rephidim and that of Mt. Sinai are unknown. Tradition, however, places Mt. Sinai at *Jebel Musa* on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The present passage is unusual in Exodus because it includes terminology and ideas best known from Deuteronomy (e. g. "eagles' wings," Deuteronomy 32:11; "treasured possession," Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2). The role of a "priestly nation" (19:6) is that of offering sacrifices to God, Israel's peculiar calling.

Psalm 100

This is a short *liturgy of entrance* for pilgrims to Jerusalem's temple that features a dialogue between priest (choir?) and the congregation entering the temple. One might break out the various parts as Priest (Choir): 100:1-3a; Congregation: 100:3bc; Priest (Choir): 100:4; Congregation: 100:5. Despite the psalm heading "A Psalm of Thanksgiving," the psalm is a *hymn of praise* that celebrates God's creation of the pilgrims, and God's faithfulness to the covenant (*xesed*, mistranslated "mercy" in verse 4).

Romans 5:1-8

The positive results of suffering enumerated in 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 first century apocalyptic Jews 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.

Matthew 9:35-10:8 [9-23]

Our text includes the beginning of the second of five long discourses in Matthew (5:1-7:27; 10:5-42; 13:1-52; 18:1-35; and 24:3-25:46). Jesus’ instruction gave his students the ability to do great works like their teacher, including exorcisms, healings, and even raisings of the dead. The author removes the temporary ban on ministry to non-Jews (10:5) in Jesus’s last charge to his followers after his resurrection (28:16-20).

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