

**Proper 5**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Genesis 12:1-9**

The Yahwist writer (J), who in the 9<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE composed a history of Israel's origins, is responsible for this account which stands in stark contrast to J's story of the ziggurat (temple tower) of Babylon (Babel) in Genesis 11:1-9. In contrast to the arrogance of the Babylonians who determined to build a tower into heaven, Abram, through his obedience to God's command, became the father of a great nation in Palestine. The travelogue in these verses has Abram and his entourage pass through the ancient city of Shechem where so much of Israel's history would be played out. Yet he stopped there only long enough to receive an oracle from the Lord at the Oak of Moreh, a sacred grove. In response to the oracle's promise that his descendents would receive the land, Abram paused long enough to build a shrine between the ancient Canaanite city of Bethel (House/Temple of El) and Ai. The continued journey to the southern desert (verse 8), suggests that the land of promise would consist of far more than the central highlands of Palestine.

**Psalms 33:1-12**

The *hymns* were sung in the Jerusalem temple as part of the worship of God. Most hymns celebrate God as creator and ruler of the earth as does the first part of this hymn (1-11). To Christian ears it may feel uncomfortable for the psalmist to invite the "righteous" whom the psalmist calls to worship along with the "upright" (badly mistranslated in the BCP as "the just") because of our idea of universal sin. This idea was not, however, shared by the writers of the Hebrew Bible, and to be diligent about the law of God made one righteous or upright. The appeal may also be to heavenly beings along with the humans who enter the temple to sing praises. In verse 8 the Hebrew uses "fear" in both halves of the verse. To fear God always means just one thing in the Bible: to do the commandments.

OR

**Hosea 5:15-6:6**

Hosea was a prophet from the northern state of Israel during the last years of King Jeroboam II (786-746 BC) and during the troubled years following before the fall of Samaria. Unlike his older contemporary, Amos, the prophet Hosea believed that Israel might still repent of its sins against God and avoid God's threatened punishment. In the present passage the Lord proposes to withdraw to the heavenly court and wait upon the repentance of the Israelites. This repentance will involve a recovery of faithfulness to the covenant (*xesed*, mistranslated "love" in 6:4 and "steadfast love" in 6:6) and "knowledge" (*da'at*) of God, a specialized term in Hosea that indicates an effective knowledge of God's requirements for faithful life.

**Psalms 50:7-15**

This psalm contains a liturgy of prophetic reproof and judgment that does not fit easily into the standard typologies. The categories of wrongdoers are those who do not pay their vows to make public thanksgiving after making public lament (50:14), those who do not call upon the Lord in times of trouble (50:15), and those who attend the public worship of God while ignoring God's "discipline" (*musar*, 50:17). The psalm reminds the worshipers of a peculiar belief of the Hebrews that their God does not actually eat the flesh of the sacrifices and, therefore, does not need them (50:12-13). This difference from the cults of the nations is the basis for the much later story of Bel and the Dragon in the Greek version of the Book of Daniel.

**Romans 4:13-25**

Converts to Judaism have no genealogy from Israel. Therefore, Pharisaic teaching gave them an artificial genealogy as children of Abraham, the first "convert" to the faith. In the present chapter

Paul has just argued (4:1-12) that Abraham received God's justification because of his faith (Genesis 15:6) before he received the command to be circumcised (Genesis 17:10). Thus faith came before the command (law). The way in which the Gentiles share in the lineage of Abraham, therefore, is through faith, not through circumcision. In verses 23-25 Paul draws attention to the fact that Abraham, who lived before the law was given, was still able to gain righteousness through faith. As the father of the converts, who also do not have the Law of Moses, their father's ability to gain righteousness through faith is also possible for the offspring.

### **Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26**

Tax collecting in the Roman world was a legal system of graft in which the tax collector paid the taxes for his district and then received authority to raise whatever he could from the populace to recompense himself. The present story comes from Mark 2:13-17 with the invitation to "follow" Jesus representing an invitation to become Jesus's student. Such an invitation shocked the Pharisees because the Pharisees considered tax collectors to be the worst kind of collaborators with the Roman occupiers. Unlike the Pharisaic teachers, however, Jesus did not recruit his students from among those who were Torah-observant but, rather, from among the sinners and "people of the land" (*am ha-arets*) who most needed his instruction.

Matthew 9:18-26 retells Mark's stories of the healing of Jarius' daughter and that of the woman with a flow of blood (Mark 5:21-43) with certain interesting differences. In Matthew, the ruler Jarius is unnamed (verse 18), and he reports that his daughter has died, asking Jesus to lay his hand on her despite her death in hopes of a cure. In Mark, the news of the child's death comes while Jesus is *en route* to her house (Mark 5:35). The woman who touched Jesus clothing in Mark 5:24b-34 with the result that Jesus asks who touched him, does nothing of the sort in Matthew. Instead, the woman believes that she would be healed if she could touch his garment, and Jesus turns only to pronounce her cured (verse 22). Finally, in Mark, Jesus cured Jarius's daughter by means of the Aramaic words *talitha cumi* (Mark 5:41), but in Matthew these possibly magic words are omitted.

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