

Proper 17
Cycle A RCL
Revised

Exodus 3:1-15

The meaning of the name of God revealed in this passage has been the subject of much discussion. The translation “I am” for Hebrew *'ehyeh* may be the best we can do in English, but the tense in Hebrew is imperfect and suggests ongoing activity, “I will be,” or the like. G. Landes has pointed out that this is the only place in the Bible where *'ehyeh* is used of God without an accompanying preposition of relationship (with, to, for, *etc.*), suggesting that the proper interpretation of the new name *'ehyeh* is one that describes God as being in relation to the world, to the nations, and to Israel. See, for instance, Exodus 3:12, 4:12, *etc.* The Septuagint (LXX), on the other hand, translates the new divine name with the static Greek expression *to on*, “being itself,” giving it a highly philosophical feel. The proper name for God in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh, like *'ehyeh*, also derives from the verb “to be,” and the Elohist writer (E) reminds us of this etymology before revealing God’s proper name, Yahweh, for the first time in the Elohist narrative. After this verse, the “name for God clue” students use to distinguish the Yahwist (J) from the Elohist (E) no longer works, and researchers usually settle for the combined expression JE to refer to the Pentateuch’s subsequent narrative material.

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c

This is a *hymn* sung during a national festival in the Jerusalem temple. Hymns most often deal with the Lord’s creation of and control of the natural world; but on occasions of national celebration, the hymns make reference to the saving events and personages of Israel’s history. The major historical event in this psalm is the Exodus from Egypt (verses 12-45a). Verses 1-11 are a call to worship before a long synopsis of the Exodus story. A mighty thanksgiving *hallelujah* concludes the recitation in verse 45c.

OR

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Jeremiah, a priest from Anathoth, just northwest of Jerusalem began his prophetic ministry in the year 627 BCE during the reign of King Josiah and continued it until forced into exile in Egypt some time after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. This is the second of five remarkable prayers of Jeremiah, sometimes called “Jeremiah’s confessions,” in which the prophet laments his calling to the office of prophet and begs for deliverance from and vengeance on his enemies.

Psalm 26:1-8

In times of trouble, people offered prayers of *lament* in the Temple. The worshiper would likely consult with a priest or Levite about the problem to determine which lament would be best suited to the difficulty. Some laments, like Psalm 51, acknowledge that the worshiper’s problems stem from the worshiper’s own sin against God; but others, like the present psalm, insist upon the worshiper’s innocence and ask for God’s vindication because of God’s *xesed* or “faithfulness” to the covenant (misleadingly translated “love” in verse 3 of the *BCP* version).

Romans 12:9-21

Many of these ethical injunctions come from Israel’s wisdom tradition. For instance, the injunction to give food and drink to enemies (12:20) comes from Proverbs 25:21-22 and the

instruction not to claim wisdom (12:16) reflects Proverbs 3:7. Paul in 12:21 shares the general Pharisaic belief that the good inclination (Hebrew: *yetser ha-tov*) has greater power than the evil inclination (*yetser ha-ra*) in a human being and so has the power to overcome evil.

Matthew 16:21-28

This first of four predictions of Jesus' suffering and death in Matthew derives almost word-for-word from Mark 8:31-33. The function of Satan in the Book of Job was to test Job to see whether he would remain faithful to God. Similarly, in the story of the testing of Jesus in the wilderness of Judea (Matthew 4:1-11) Satan tested Jesus to see whether he would remain faithful. Peter's protest was a "testing" like that of the wilderness, and as in the wilderness Jesus again proved himself worthy. The wilderness testing ended when Jesus dismissed Satan with the words "go away" (Greek: *hypage*, Matthew 4:10). Here, remarkably, Jesus adds "behind me" (*hypage opis_mou*) which is a formula for calling disciples! Is Jesus calling even Satan to be a follower? Support for this interpretation comes from the fact that the rebuke is followed by a definition of true discipleship in verses 24-26.

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