

**Proper 7**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Genesis 21:8-21**

This is the Elohist's (E) version of the journey of Hagar into the wilderness of the Negev. We find the J account in Genesis 16:1-14. E interprets the flight of Sarah's handmaiden after the birth of Isaac as a result of Sarah's worry over who would inherit Abraham's wealth. J places the story before either the birth of Isaac or the birth of Ishmael and has it occur because of Hagar's arrogance toward her mistress. For E, Hagar's banishment endangers her survival and that of her son Ishmael, so the appearance of the angel of God to bring them water is an act of salvation. In J the angel of the Lord simply commands Hagar to return to her mistress. As is typical in J the angel and the Lord are indistinguishable and Hagar wonders aloud whether she has really seen the Lord. Both stories have the name of the place changed in what Martin Noth called a *hieros logos* or an etiological narrative that explains the origin of a cultic shrine.

**Psalms 86:1-10, 16-17**

This *personal lament* is unusual in that it does not state clearly the affliction suffered by the psalmist until very late (verse 14). It is a lament of innocence in that the psalmist does not admit any guilt before God that might have earned the present distress. Verses 8-10 read like a *hymn* and may, in fact, be quoted from a hymn unknown to us.

OR

**Jeremiah 20:7-13**

Jeremiah began his prophecy in the thirteenth year of King Josiah (627 BCE) and disappeared from view in exile in Egypt after 586 BCE. He was a priest from the farming community of Anathoth north of Jerusalem and learned prophecy from a school of prophets that took its inspiration from the northern prophet Hosea. A notable feature of the book is a block of seven laments (11:18-23; 12:1-6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; **20:7-13**; 20:14-18) in which Jeremiah complains about the Lord's failure or slowness to condemn the wicked who are leading the nation astray and the suffering Jeremiah must endure to deliver God's prophetic word. The shocking use here of the word "entice" (*pittani, va'eppat*, "seduce," 20:7) for the Lord's call to the prophet has evoked much comment from interpreters.

**Psalms 69:8-11, (12-17), 18-20**

This *lament* employs the common image of drowning as a figure of the personal danger which the psalmist experiences. (See also Psalms 32:6; 42:7; 88:7, 17; 124:4-5; 144:7; Jonah 2:3-5.) The petitioner admits that he has done wrong against the Lord (69:5) but points out that much of his distress derives from the zeal he has had for the Lord's temple and its cultus (69:7-12) and warns that failure to save him will bring shame not only to the petitioner but to others who are faithful to the Lord's command (69:6).

**Romans 6:3b-11**

Against his Gnostic opponents, Paul consistently interpreted baptism in terms of the death of Jesus and presented it as the death of the believer to this present evil age. This interpretation accorded with Paul's beliefs about the end of the age, for if we have died with Christ (through baptism), then we should also share in whatever resurrection Christ has experienced and thereby

be fit for the life of the new age.

**Matthew 10: 24-39**

This second of Matthew's five great discourses (5:1-7:27; **10:5-11:1**; 13:1-52; 18:1-35; 24:3-25:46), we sometimes call the "missionary discourse." *Beelzebul* is a Greek rendering of the ancient Canaanite formula *ba`al zavul*, "Baal is lord of ..." By Jesus' day Jews had taken the figure of the Canaanite god Baal to represent the greatest of the demons in the underworld or even Satan himself. The student-teacher relationship between Jesus and his disciples is used to remind his followers that even as their master will have to suffer for his teaching, so they too must expect similar sufferings. This suffering, however, is better than the suffering in "hell" or *Gehenna* reserved for the unrighteous. *Gehenna* is a Greek corruption of the Hebrew for "Valley of Hinnom," a valley south of Jerusalem's walls that served as a garbage dump where garbage was continually being burnt. It is often used in Jewish literature as a figure of final punishment for the wicked. The harsh sayings about rejecting family and kin are a quotation from Micah 7:6 and in this context predict that the last days will divide families into those who follow Christ and those who do not and will make allies of former enemies on both sides.

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