Epistle
Philippians 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I will say, Rejoice.

5Let your gentleness
be known to everyone.

The Lord is near.

6Do not worry about anything,
but in everything
by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made known to God.

7And the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved,
whatever is true,
whatever is honourable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is pleasing,
whatever is commendable,

if there is any excellence
and if there is anything
worthy of praise,
think about these things.

9Keep on doing the things
that you have learned and received
and heard and seen in me,
and the God of peace
will be with you.

Reading the Epistle This Week

It's ironic that this text about 'peace'
floats free as a fragment, v7,
Disconnected from its roots in conflict

Paul maybe wrote this to Philippi from jail,
In Ephesus, or later in Rome
He got flack in Philippi (1 Thess 2:2)
But they supported his work with money
Sent Epaphroditus to help him

They had fights, like between Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-5)
They lost members back to synagogues (3:2-16)
They fought with 'libertines' (3:17-20)

Who knows peace-making, except from conflict?
What peace-making advice to you hear here?

Attitudes: rejoicing, gentleness…
Aspirations: true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing,
commendable, excellence, worthy of praise…
Persistent in virtue and duty

One fancy word is 'paraenetic' – moral advice
Another is 'eirenic' – peaceful
This is what people expect to find in scripture

Is this really 'don't worry, be happy' stuff?
Is it 'happily ever after, God bless'
c.3 is all about 'not yet' stuff –
the opponents were the complacent ones!

What do you make of 5(b)
Is that 'Jesus is coming – look busy'?
Is that 'Jesus is cuddly close'?

Torah
Deuteronomy 26:1-11

When you have come into the land
that the Lord your God is giving you
as an inheritance to possess,
and you possess it,
and settle in it,

2 you shall take some of the first
of all the fruit of the ground,
which you harvest from the land
that the Lord your God is giving you,

and you shall put it in a basket
and go to the place
that the Lord your God will choose
as a dwelling for his name.

3 You shall go to the priest
who is in office at that time,
and say to him,

'Today I declare
to the Lord your God
that I have come into the land
that the Lord swore
to our ancestors
to give us.'

4 When the priest
takes the basket from your hand
and sets it down
before the altar
of the Lord your God,

5 you shall make this response
before the Lord your God:

'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor;
he went down into Egypt
and lived there as an alien,
few in number,
and there he became a great nation,
mighty and populous.

6 When the Egyptians treated us harshly
and afflicted us,
by imposing hard labour on us,

7 we cried to the Lord,
the God of our ancestors;
the Lord heard our voice
and saw our affliction,
our toil, and our oppression.

8 The Lord brought us out of Egypt
with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,
with a terrifying display of power,
and with signs and wonders;
9 and he brought us into this place
and gave us this land,
a land flowing with milk and honey.

10 So now I bring
the first of the fruit of the ground
that you, O Lord, have given me.'

You shall set it down before the Lord your God
and bow down before the Lord your God.

11 Then you,
together with the Levites
and the aliens who reside among you,
shall celebrate with all the bounty
that the Lord your God has given
to you and to your house.

Reading Torah this Week

Deuteronomy – 'second law' – restates
The voice is post-exile –
The life of the Second Temple

The literary conceit:
A long speech by Moses at Jericho
At the end of Exodus, before Joshua's conquest
As if before Jerusalem, Solomon's Temple
Anticipating the 'rise and fall' national stories

This chapter is a text for Succoth
The harvest in-gathering
Week in middle of High Holidays
After Yom Kippur
Before Shimini Azerat/Simchat Torah

Live in booths, huts for a week
Remember we were once vulnerable migrants
Even though we now have plenty
So we share from that bounty

What's your origin story
Your practice of gift to the commonwealth
Your migration, settler roots
Your empathy for others?

When you have arrived
What's your story of 'got it made'?

My father was a wandering Aramean
What's your story of an immigrant ancestor?

God brought us out of Egypt
What's your liberation story?

Whose acts of generosity are se blind to see?
Whose stories are we deaf to hear?