

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

Jacob settled in the land
where his father had lived as an alien,
the land of Canaan.

²This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old,
was shepherding the flock with his brothers;
he was a helper
to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah,
his father's wives;
and Joseph
brought a bad report of them
to their father.

³Now Israel loved Joseph
more than any other of his children,
because he was the son of his old age;
and he had made him a long robe
with sleeves.

⁴But when his brothers saw
that their father loved him more
than all his brothers,
they hated him,
and could not speak peaceably to him.

¹² Now his brothers went
to pasture their father's flock
near Shechem.

¹³And Israel said to Joseph,
'Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem?
Come, I will send you to them.'

He answered,
'Here I am.'

¹⁴So he said to him,
'Go now,
see if it is well with your brothers
and with the flock;
and bring word back to me.'

So he sent him
from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem,
¹⁵and a man found him
wandering in the fields;
the man asked him,
'What are you seeking?'

¹⁶'I am seeking my brothers,'
he said;
'tell me, please,
where they are pasturing the flock.'

¹⁷The man said,
'They have gone away,
for I heard them say,
"Let us go to Dothan." '

So Joseph went after his brothers,
and found them at Dothan.

¹⁸They saw him from a distance,
and before he came near to them,
they conspired to kill him.

¹⁹They said to one another,
'Here comes this dreamer.

²⁰Come now,
let us kill him
and throw him
into one of the pits;
then we shall say
that a wild animal
has devoured him,
and we shall see
what will become
of his dreams.'

²¹But when Reuben heard it,
he delivered him
out of their hands,
saying,
'Let us not take his life.'

²²Reuben said to them,
'Shed no blood;
throw him into this pit
here in the wilderness,
but lay no hand on him'—
that he might rescue him
out of their hand
and restore him
to his father.

²³So when Joseph came
to his brothers,
they stripped him
of his robe,
the long robe with sleeves
that he wore;

²⁴and they took him
and threw him into a pit.

The pit was empty;
there was no water in it.

²⁵ Then they sat down to eat;
and looking up
they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites
coming from Gilead,
with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin,
on their way to carry it down to Egypt.

²⁶ Then Judah said
to his brothers,
'What profit is there
if we kill our brother
and conceal his blood?

²⁷ Come,
let us sell him
to the Ishmaelites,
and not lay our hands on him,
for he is our brother,
our own flesh.'

And his brothers agreed.

²⁸ When some Midianite traders passed by,
they drew Joseph up,
lifting him out of the pit,
and sold him to the Ishmaelites
for twenty pieces of silver.

And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Matthew 14:22-33

22 Immediately
he made the disciples get into the boat
and go on ahead
to the other side,
while he
dismissed the crowds.

23 And after he had dismissed the crowds,
he went up the mountain
by himself
to pray.

When evening came,
he was there alone,
24 but by this time the boat,
battered by the waves,
was far from the land,
for the wind was against them.

25 And early in the morning
he came walking towards them
on the lake.

26 But when the disciples saw him
walking on the lake,
they were terrified,
saying,
'It is a ghost!'

And they cried out in fear.

27 But immediately
Jesus spoke to them
and said,
'Take heart, it is I;
do not be afraid.'

28 Peter answered him,
'Lord, if it is you,
command me
to come to you
on the water.'

29 He said,
'Come.'

So Peter got out of the boat,
started walking
on the water,
and came
towards Jesus.

30 But when he noticed
the strong wind,
he became frightened,
and beginning to sink,

he cried out,
'Lord, save me!'

31 Jesus immediately
reached out his hand
and caught him,

saying to him,
'You of little faith,
why did you doubt?'

Reading Torah This Week

We jump ahead into the Joseph cycle today
the legend of brothers selling Joseph into slavery
deceptively familiar to us from its Disneyfication

If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob each settled in Canaan,
how did we end up slaves in Egypt, needing an Exodus?
How did the patriarchal tribal brotherhood fail?

The personification of peoples as individuals helps us talk:
the young favourite son of Rachel, coated, privileged
abusing his power to rat out the slave wives' sons

The brothers, herding near Shechem,
(the site of the 'rape of Dinah' legend in c.33)
get the next oversight visit, Joseph sent north from Hebron

Fratricide is the initial plan, blaming predators
Reuben's compromise is 'lock him up' to buy time for release
Judah's solution: 'sell him out', via Ishmaelites to Egypt

The characters offer great movies – adult ones, not cartoons
this is corporate or political conflict and betrayal –
Reuben and Judah, Leah's elder sons, fail the test

The motivations are human and venal, pride and envy
The outcome of the fraternal bickering is tragic and familiar
Hear it as a descendant in each of the tribes

It's more than a moral tale of leadership failure
it's a legend personifying our peoples as individuals
our patterns of blaming, or selling each other out

Which tribe are we?

Reading Gospel This Week

We pick up from feeding of 5,000 in Galilee
heading toward 'walking on water'
don't rush past 'how did we get from there to here?'
see Mark 6:45-52, John 6:15-21 – but no Luke parallel?

Jesus 'immediately' sends the disciples 'ahead' in a boat
they to 'the other side', he to 'dismiss the crowds'
how's that for disciples or crowd members?
Jesus just withdraws to the mountain to pray.

The disciples spend the whole night in stormy peril
while Jesus serenely lingers, then walks on water
impervious to the chaotic elements below and above
their reaction is more panic and fear

Peter breaks the pattern, asks for a call
then steps out toward Jesus
till he notices the elements again,
and starts to sink
(all this only in Matthew)

Peter asks again for Jesus to save him
who holds out his hand and does,
while chiding his little faith/trust
Do you identify with Peter,
or the others in the boat?

Is church a safe sanctuary, a lifeboat for us,
or a place of crisis, panic and fear amid chaos?
Is Jesus sending us into the storm?
Is the best response to step out of the boat like Peter?

What about the other disciples?