

Exodus 12:1-14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months;
it shall be the first month of the year for you.

³Tell the whole congregation of Israel
that on the tenth of this month
they are to take a lamb for each family,
a lamb for each household.

⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb,
it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one;
the lamb shall be divided
in proportion to the number of people who eat of it.

⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish,
a year-old male;
you may take it from the sheep
or from the goats.

⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month;
then the whole assembled congregation of Israel
shall slaughter it at twilight.

⁷They shall take some of the blood
and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel
of the houses in which they eat it.

⁸They shall eat the lamb that same night;
they shall eat it roasted over the fire
with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water,
but roasted over the fire,
with its head, legs, and inner organs.

¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until the morning;
anything that remains until the morning
you shall burn.

¹¹This is how you shall eat it:
your loins girded,
your sandals on your feet,
and your staff in your hand;
and you shall eat it hurriedly.

It is the passover of the LORD.

¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night,
and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt,
both human beings and animals;
on all the gods of Egypt
I will execute judgements:
I am the LORD.

¹³The blood shall be a sign for you
on the houses where you live:
when I see the blood,
I will pass over you,
and no plague shall destroy you
when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ This day shall be a day of remembrance for you.

You shall celebrate it
as a festival to the LORD;
throughout your generations
you shall observe it
as a perpetual ordinance.

Matthew 18:15-20

15 'If another member of the church
sins against you,
go and point out the fault
when the two of you are alone.

If the member listens to you,
you have regained that one.

16 But if you are not listened to,
take one or two others along with you,
so that every word may be confirmed
by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

17 If the member refuses to listen to them,
tell it to the church;
and if the offender refuses to listen
even to the church,
let such a one be to you
as a Gentile and a tax-collector.

18 Truly I tell you,
whatever you bind on earth
will be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth
will be loosed in heaven.

19 Again, truly I tell you,
if two of you agree on earth
about anything you ask,
it will be done for you
by my Father in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered
in my name,
I am there among them.

Reading Torah This Week

In another lectionary lurch and leap, we skip 9 plagues
to prepare for Passover, the 10th one,
framed as divine instruction to Moses and Aaron
anticipating priestly instruction ever since

This is one of several Torah summaries of Passover
tying an annual festival to an etiological legend
(‘Mommy’, why do we do this like this?)
next will come ‘unleavened bread’

Imagine a first Passover in Egypt –
selecting lambs, then slaughtering,
wiping the blood on doorposts,
then BBQ of it all.

Imagine over 3000 annual Passovers,
in varying conditions from pogrom to Holocaust
in urban settings, as minority people
what is the *sine qua non*, necessary bottom line?

If we understand Passover better, as event and festival,
we will ‘get’ Easter better, as event and festival
what happens – for Hebrews, and for Egyptians?
how will neighbours recognize each other?

What marks your home
to God or to neighbours
as likely Hebrew or Egyptian
with what consequences either way?

Reading Gospel This Week

We skip down the road from Galilee this week, too –
transfiguration past, passion predicted twice
conflict builds among disciples,
addressed through Matt c.18, without parallels

Is this in the mouth of Jesus, or in a latter 'Matthew' pen?
it's addressed to *adelphoi* in *ekklesia*
translated often as brothers or members in church
not universalized to citizens or neighbours

We get *adelphoi* but not yet *ekklesia* in vv15-16
NRSV translates 'member of the church'
check your other translations!
(and compare 'sins' – trespass, offend, hurt?)

We call it ADR – alternate dispute resolution – not state law
Speak with the person, then with witnesses, then publicly
and the consequence is exclusion from the group
It was added to our UCC Manual at the turn of the century

Part of the process is naming the offence –
often offence taken is not intended, and needs clarifying
a very Rogerian 'I hear you', or 'I feel heard'
and 'witnesses' are not adjudicators either

The text does not conclude with punishment
arguably, there is no remediation, only crude denunciation
the unreconciled one is excluded as *ethniokon* pagan, Gentile
or *telones* tax-collector (yet how does Jesus approach such?)

We return to now-familiar 'binding and loosing' talk –
what's the job of the church, now shared beyond Peter alone?
re-read 19-20 in its context – so what if 2 or 3 agree or gather
(*symphonesosin* or *synegmenoi*)? A divine vending machine?