



Lent reflection for March 7, 2024

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Genesis 46:1-7; 28-34

When Israel set out on his journey with all that he had and came to Beer-sheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph’s own hand shall close your eyes.”

Then Jacob set out from Beer-sheba, and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They also took their livestock and the goods that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

Israel sent Judah ahead to Joseph to lead the way before him into Goshen. When they came to the land of Goshen, Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet his father Israel in Goshen. He presented himself to him, fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. Israel said to Joseph, “I can die now, having seen for myself that you are still alive.” Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.’ When Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our ancestors,’ in order that you may settle in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians.”

Today's Reflection is by Magda Hendrick

As I read and reread this passage I was struck and moved by this family reunification. Specifically, Joseph providing a home for his estranged brothers, and Joseph's emotional embrace of his father Jacob. As is usually the case with this sort of thing, it's complicated. Yet at least in this passage, it seems as though there is a force greater than all the complicated feelings, (maybe God?) that is driving this reunion.

I think about my own experience with family reunions, maybe even one in particular that coincidentally happened today. My own brother.

I should note here that my brother is 11 years my senior, and he established himself out here on the East Coast before I even left home for college. Before today, we had not seen each other in person in five years. This was partially attributable in part to the pandemic, and in another part to a rift that slowly began to grow between us after I had children.

Unlike Joseph, I was not sold into slavery by my brother (though he probably threatened to do something similar when I was a kid). Our separation has felt at times like a rejection of my life as it is and as I have happily chosen it to be. The distance has been painful. I prayed that today would "go smoothly", and also made up my mind to accept whatever happened. Believing, like Jacob, that God would help me through this journey. I'm glad that I did. Our greeting was not as beautiful and dramatic as that of Joseph and Jacob. But we did hug a little tighter for a little longer.



Magda lives in Park Slope with her husband Mike and two children, Sam and Daniel. She joined Holy Apostles in 2022. She enjoys reading short stories and poetry (because that's all she has time for at the moment) and listening to music before going to work every morning.