

Struggling with Individuality and Identity

From Vayesheiv: Genesis 37:3-25 (JPS Translation)

³ Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic. ⁴ And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.

⁵ Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ There we were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright; then your sheaves gathered around and bowed low to my sheaf" ⁸ His brothers answered, "Do you mean to reign over us? Do you mean to rule over us?" And they hated him even more for his talk about his dreams.

⁹ He dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: And this time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing, down to me." ¹⁰ And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him. "What," he said to him, "is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?" So his brothers were wrought up at him, and his father kept the matter in mind.

¹² One time, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father's flock at Shechem, ¹³ Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing at Shechem. Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "I am ready." ¹⁴ And he said to him, "Go and see how your brothers are and how the flocks are faring, and bring me back word." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

When he reached Shechem, ¹⁵ a man came upon him wandering in the fields. The man asked him, "What are you looking for?" ¹⁶ He answered, "I am looking for my brothers. Could you tell me where they are pasturing?" ¹⁷ The man said, "They have gone from here, for I heard them say: Let us go to Dothan." So Joseph followed his brothers and found them at Dothan.

¹⁸ They saw him from afar, and before he came close to them they conspired to kill him.

¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes that dreamer! ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we can say, 'A savage beast devoured him.' We shall see what comes of his dreams!" ²¹ But when Reuben heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, "Let us not take his life." ²² And Reuben went on, "Shed no blood! Cast him into that pit out in the wilderness, but do not touch him yourselves" — intending to save him from them and restore him to his father. ²³ When Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the ornamented tunic that he was wearing, ²⁴ and took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵ Then they sat down to a meal.

From Sh'mot: Exodus 3-4

Chapter 3

¹ Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. ³ Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" ⁴ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." ⁵ And He said, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. ⁶ I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ And the Lord continued, "I have marked well the plight of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings. ⁸ I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the region of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt."

¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?" ¹² And He said, "I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain." ¹³ Moses said to God, "When I come to the Israelites and say to them 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh." He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ And God said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you:

This shall be My name forever,

This My appellation for all eternity. [skipping 3:16-4:9 where God declare some of the miracle he will do as proof]

Chapter 4

¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, "Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, "Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go, and I will be with you as you speak and will instruct you what to say." ¹³ But he said, "Please, O Lord, make someone else Your agent." The Lord became angry with Moses, and He said, "There is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know, speaks readily. Even now he is setting out to meet you, and he will be happy to see you. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words

in his mouth — I will be with you and with him as you speak, and tell both of you what to do — ¹⁶ and he shall speak for you to the people. Thus he shall serve as your spokesman, with you playing the role of God to him, ¹⁷ And take with you this rod, with which you shall perform the signs."

What are the symbols of individuality we see in these two stories?

What makes Joseph and Moses unique?

How are their identities challenged or put up for question?

None Of Them Are You

Brendan James

Black blue yellow white red striped scarred and bruised
Old young weak strong overconfident confused
He can run, she can jump, they can sing higher than you
Make you hurt, make you cry, make you forget the truth
Never gonna get it for yourself
If you keep your eyes on someone else

Nobody started from the place that you started from
And nobody hopes to go
Where you're hoping to go
And nobody out there wants the life you do
'Cause none of them are you
None of them are you

Look around in the crowd wish you could have some fun
Look at them how they win how they beat everyone
Blue skies in your eyes under the brightest sun
Still you hurt, still you cry, still you're the lonely one

Nobody started from the place that you started from
And nobody hopes to go
Where you're hoping to go
And nobody out there wants the life you do
'Cause none of them are you
None of them are you

The day will come, the year will pass
The way you feel it never last
You're treading water now and everybody else is swimming past
You walk a line, a line that no one else could ever find
A billion lines are crossing at a time
Ohhh

Nobody started from the place that you started from
And nobody hopes to go
Where you're hoping to go
And nobody out there wants the life you do
'Cause none of them are you
None of them are you
None of them are you