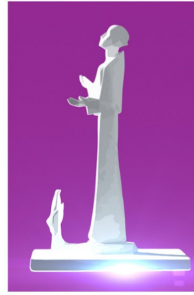


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Theme 3: Reading the Old Testament

Question 3a. What's your favourite Bible story?

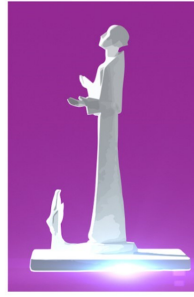
1. What appeals to you about hearing others tell about their favourite Bible story? What do you notice about the way they tell their story?
2. Identify a story or character from the Bible that made an impact on you. What was it about the story that made such an impact?
3. In what ways might you explore that story further? Consider exploring the context out of which the story was written, finding other versions of the story or just reading it several times over to revisit the characters and message.

Marie Louise Craig

It's Jonah, and not as a Sunday school story, but Jonah as the book itself and its partly because it's the most amazingly well-written book um of course you have to read it in Hebrew to get that, but it is all so I guess as a satire and I really enjoy the humour that's in that story. But it's the story I go back to you know when I'm having an argument with God about something which we all do um and I'm resisting and I think about Jonah sitting there, you know, being angry with God and and very disturbed by what God had asked him to do I go to that space and I think well I can have this argument with God because he is incredibly patient. I can have that discussion with God and be assured that it's okay to do that because He didn't wipe Jonah out when Jonah argued with him. So, that's why I like Jonah. It's good!

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Bp John Roundhill

My favourite story is in the Old Testament. I was trying to think through this question and was thinking at first about Genesis 1. I love Genesis 1. I love its massive opening. It's kind of like an anthem and I've seen it used in church services since childhood. But then I thought I wasn't being truly honest with myself. The story that really grabs me is the story of David and Saul and I've always been fascinated by that. David had been the hero, but he had behaved so appallingly, Saul being the anti-hero but I actually I understand and get him a lot of the time. I find that interplay fascinating.

Archbishop Phillip Aspinall

Again there are lots of favourite parts of the Old Testament. I'm fascinated by the creation stories in the opening pages of Genesis and the amount that's packed into those stories. The authors have taken a lot of the creation stories that were in the cultures that were around them at the time, written their own creation story which kind of 'corrects' those stories in the surrounding cultures. So there's a there's a great deal in there.

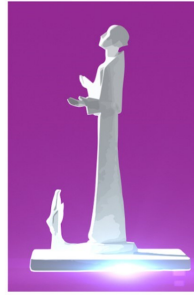
People sometimes wonder how God could have created light before he created the sun and that's 'correcting' a sun worshipping culture that was in the Ancient near east at the time so just little passing peculiarities like that have a lot of theology and meaning built into them when you start ah digging them out.

So I love the creation stories.

I love the Exodus story where the people of God really wrestle with a liberating God, a God who wants to free slaves and the historical struggle that's involved with that as well but I think probably one of my real favourites in the Old Testament is the Joseph saga which comes, you know the final 12 or 15 chapters of the Book of Genesis. Joseph's

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brothers are jealous of him and they sell him into slavery to get rid of this pest, ah a famine strikes the land, Joseph ends up in Egypt as a slave and works his way up through various means to be the head of the Pharaoh's household. He comes up with a plan to rescue the Egyptians in the middle of famine and then Joseph's brothers and his father end up coming to Egypt to get food. They don't recognise Joseph .so in the end it all comes together and the family is reunited but Joseph's brothers are worried that he will hold a grudge against them

The story finishes with a marvellous phrase which is kind of one of the main themes of Scripture. Joseph says to his brothers 'what you did to me you meant for evil, for harm, but God meant it for good.' And there's this idea that no matter what human beings do, no matter how nasty and destructive they become, God can work in all those circumstances to bring about good. That's a major theme in the Scriptures, so that's a favourite story.

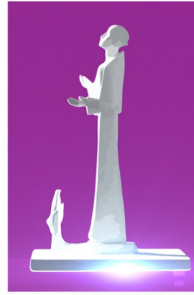
Bp Jonathan Holland

Oh I've got a lot of favourite Bible stories, but one from the Old Testament is the story of Jacob getting to the river Jabbok. He's returning to the promised land after many years absence and he's a bit frightened because he's going to meet his older brother Esau whom he has cheated out of a birth-right many years earlier. He divides his family and his flocks and birds into two camps and then he's on his own at the river Jabbok.

That night he has this vision or experience, a dream of fighting a divine figure say God and the fighting the wrestling goes on all night until daybreak when Jacob won't let the divine being go until he's been given a blessing. We're told that ever after that he always walks with a limp because of the injuries sustained in the wrestling. I've seen

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that a little bit as about what the Bible is, that somehow it's a little bit like the record of humanity's wrestling with God and trying to work out how God is blessing us.

So the Bible is a bit like the wrestling with God, the record of it. And I sometimes wonder too whether we all wrestle with God and sometimes that's part of the Christian faith and um that you wrestle with God until a blessing is given...that's one way of seeing our relationship with Him.