

Road to Shechem

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The bones of Joseph couple with the dust.
The bones never knew the dirt of Egypt
But waited in a box with handles.
The bones of Joseph waited on the promises.
Joseph had said to the children of Israel:
"God will surely visit you,
And you will bring up my bones from this land."
Many bones were buried in Egypt
Before the wanderers carried the bones of Joseph
Up and down the barren wadies of the wilderness.
For years, they beat up the box and rattled the bones
Looking for home.
Finally, the bones were buried at Shechem.
Maybe over there under the carcass of that car,
Or maybe the bones lie back there where the Arab mechanic
Teases a Mercedes under the spray-painted symbol.
The hope wrapped up in those bones brought me back to Shechem.
Abraham bloodied his fingers stacking up stones from Shechem.
Here he built the first altar in the land of promise.
He built this altar
Because the one who took him from the city to a tent
Promised blessing.
Did I stumble over the stones of this altar at Shechem?
Joshua brought the people to Shechem to recut the covenant.
He brought them to choose whom they would serve.
He set a stone marker to witness their choice.
I heard the stones cry silently at Shechem.
I tried to give my life away for a bowl-full of ashes.
I almost forgot the passion of the word.
But then I was surely visited.
I was put on the road to Shechem.
I was brought back to these stones to choose.
I chose whom I would serve.
And I pledged to serve the passion of the word.
I live in a time when people don't give a damn
About Joshua and Joseph and Abraham.
But I've got the dust of Shechem in my bones.