

# ***A Lamenter, a Dreamer, and Two Pretty Good Leaders***

*Rachel, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua*

**Fall 2020**

Rachel: The Lament of Life

Genesis 29:1 – 30:24

What do we know and think about Rachel?

## History and Background

- Genesis 29:1-20
  - Jacob and Rachel were first cousins. Why did they desire to be married?
  - Leah and Rachel's father purposely deceived Jacob. Why? Was that okay?
  - Why is this one of only a few places where romantic love is referenced in the Bible?
  - What other incidents of sibling rivalry mentioned in the Bible can you think of?

## Context

- Genesis 29:21 – 30:2
  - What is a lament?
    - One third of the Psalms are laments. Read and discuss Psalm 142 and imagine Rachel praying it as her lament.
    - Raising of Lazarus. Read and discuss John 11:1-3, 17-22
      - When have you been angry at God or felt that God wasn't there?
      - Can you think of ways or even songs in which modern laments happen?
        - What song might Rachel have chosen as a lament?
- Genesis 30:3-24
  - The sisters battle for children and attention from their husband.
    - Psalm 55:1-14. How does it relate to this?
  - Does God want to hear our lament?
    - Are there others in your life to whom you can lament?
  - How do the sisters characterize God in 29:32-33 and 30:23?
  - The 12 children between the four mothers become the Twelve Tribes of Israel.
    - What do you think about the names that were chosen for each?

## Joseph: God Meant it For Good

Genesis 37:12-35; 41:1-45; 42:1-26; 45:1-15; 50:15-20

### History and Background

- Probably took place between 1600 – 1500 B. C.
- Explains how the Israelites ended up in Egypt in the first place.
- Helps us understand how God might work to bring good outcomes from bad behavior

### Context

- Genesis 50:20
  - Think of a time you experienced something difficult but then later were able to see God's activity or maybe even purpose.
- Genesis 37:1-35
  - What is most troubling about this chapter?
  - What surprises you?
  - What kind of a father is Jacob?
  - Could Joseph have done anything to stop his brothers from doing what they did?
- Genesis 41:1-45
  - What is the nature of dreams? Are they useful?
    - Can you remember any of your dreams? Do you have recurring dreams?
    - Has a dream ever helped you solve a problem?
    - Have you ever had a dream that came true later on? A premonition?
  - Think about the economic theory implied in vv. 33-36
    - What can we learn from this today?
  - Reflect on this saying: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."
  - Vv. 38-44 describe how Joseph became Pharaoh's right-hand man.
    - Can we call him "vizier"?
- Genesis 42:1-26
  - How do you feel about the belief that those who do bad will "get what's comin' to 'em."
    - Why do so many family-friendly movies reflect this thought?
  - Was Joseph justified in the way he treated his brothers?
    - What are some other ways he could have responded?
  - In vv. 21-22 the brothers seem to connect their treatment to their crime.
    - Why do we tend to link misfortune to punishment for wrongdoing?
- Genesis 45:1-15; 50:15-21
  - Reflect on 50:20
    - What do you think about God intending or allowing bad things to happen in order for good to result?
    - Joseph never says "I forgive you." Why not?
    - Consider the differences between forgiveness and reconciliation.

Moses: God Hears, God Calls, God Delivers  
Exodus 3:1-15; 7:1-13; 14:1-31; 16:1-21; 19: 16 – 20:21

### History and Background

- Have you seen the 1956 Cecil B. DeMille film *The Ten Commandments*?
- Moses lived during the 15<sup>th</sup> C. BC. The story is set centuries after the Joseph story regardless of what the actual dates are.
- Were the bricks they were making used to build the Pyramids?

### Context

- Exodus 7:16
  - What title best describes Moses: Freedom fighter, deliverer, law giver, miracle worker, complainer, priest, prophet, ...
- Exodus 3:1-15
  - In the OT the name often describes something about the person. Moses' name is based on the word "to draw" because he was drawn out of the water.
  - God's name is revealed to Moses from the burning bush.
    - אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֵלֶיךָ
    - יְהוָה
  - How does Moses respond when he figures out that God is asking him to do something?
  - Do you know of a place that is referred to as "holy ground" or "sacred space" in your life?
- Exodus 7:1-13
  - Can you name the 10 plagues?
    - They were considered "unnatural natural disasters". Can you name natural ones?
    - Aaron is Moses' brother. God asks him to be his helper. Has any family member helped you meet the challenges of life?
    - Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart when he could have simply softened it?
    - Does God still inflict "plagues" upon his people? Tsunamis, Hurricane Katrina?
- Exodus 14:1-31
  - Compare these words to the "Flood Prayer" in the Baptismal liturgy. Compare Romans 6:3-5.
  - What do you like about the parting of the Red Sea story? Is there anything you do not like?
  - What would you say to Moses if you were caught between the sea and the chariots? A rock and a hard place? The devil and the deep blue sea?
  - Red Sea or Sea of Reeds?
- Exodus 16:1-21
  - Compare John 6
  - Can you relate to Moses in this story? Ever had to feed a large group of whining people?
  - Have you experienced any "wilderness wanderings" in your life?
  - How does the wandering compare to communal or personal narratives in our own lives?
  - Do we link the Manna from Heaven with Holy Communion?
- Exodus 19:16 – 20:21
  - Why don't the people want to listen to God anymore?
  - Is Moses merely a law transmitter?
  - In light of this how do you think God works among people today who find themselves living in captivity in one form or another?

## Joshua: Filling Some Big Shoes

Joshua 1:1 – 3:17; 5:13 – 6:27; 24:1-33

### Historical and Background

- Experts think that the Exodus occurred in 1280 BC which would put the entry into the Promised Land at 1240 BC.
- Joshua had to fill in for a pretty important leader, Moses, after his death. Think of a time when you have had to fill in or replace someone who was “a tough act to follow.”

### Context

- Joshua 5:15
  - Familiar. What advice would you give Joshua as he begins to lead now that Moses is gone?
- Joshua 1:1-18
  - In verses 6, 7, 9, and 18 Joshua is told to be “strong and courageous”. What does it mean in this context?
  - How does “the world’s view” differ from “God’s view”?
  - What famous people in the last 200 years have had the “toughest acts to follow”?
- Joshua 6:1-25
  - These people go to war with a band and song, not weapons. What do you make of this?
  - Ephesians 5:18b-19. What song or songs give you the most courage in your faith like? If they made a movie of your life what song would be the theme song?
  - Verses 13-14. God is not on one side or the other. How do you feel about that in light of today’s vision of war?
  - What does it mean to “take off our sandals” and conform our wills to God’s will?
  - Not everyone who entered the Promised Land was a Hebrew. Some were Egyptians and some were locals. What difference does this make?
- Joshua 24:1-28
  - If you could receive wisdom from a past generation what would it be? What might you pass down to the next generation?
  - This is a farewell speech. There are others in the Bible: Moses in Deuteronomy 34; Samuel in I Samuel 12; Solomon in I Kings 8. These speeches look back at what God has done and then look forward to coming challenges. What lessons are learned from Joshua’s speech?
  - 24:15. What does he mean by “household”? Do we still see it this same way?
  - Compare this speech to what Jesus says in Matthew 28:16-20. How does our mission look the same or different?
  - Why does Joshua say that they cannot serve the Lord in verses 18b-19?