

UNRAVELLED

SEEKING GOD WHEN OUR PLANS FALL APART

What happens when our world falls apart? How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose ends? What do we become when our identity—or the path we’re on—comes undone? What if all this is not the end we fear it will be?

In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope—with a new beginning we couldn’t have imagined. Sometimes we need God to unravel us, for we long to be changed. Throughout this summer we will explore biblical stories of unraveled shame, identity, fear, grief, dreams, and expectations. These are stories where God meets us in the spiraling, unraveling of our plans—and us—into something new.

August 18, 2019 (NRSV) – Exodus 1:22-2:10 **Moses’ Mother Gives Him Up: Risk, Vulnerability & New Life**

²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every boy that is born to the Hebrews^[a] you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.”

² Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. ³ When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. “This must be one of the Hebrews’ children,” she said. ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” ⁸ Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Yes.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother. ⁹ Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will

give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰ When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses,^[b] “because,” she said, “I drew him out^[c] of the water.”

Footnotes:

- a. [Exodus 1:22](#) Sam Gk Tg: Heb lacks *to the Hebrews*
- b. [Exodus 2:10](#) Heb *Mosheh*
- c. [Exodus 2:10](#) Heb *mashah*

Romans 12:2

² Do not be conformed to this world,^[a] but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.^[b]

Footnotes:

- a. [Romans 12:2](#) Gk *age*
- b. [Romans 12:2](#) Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

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Theme Connections

Moses is born into a world of violence and genocide. The Egyptian Pharaoh, anxious to retain his power and fearful of the growing number of Israelites slaves he must struggle to control, decreed that all male babies born to the Israelites must be killed. Moses is born into a world where it was decreed that his life should end as swiftly as it began. But his mother and sister plot a plan for his survival, placing him in the river near Pharaoh’s daughter. Their plan succeeds, as Pharaoh’s daughter has mercy on the child and unknowingly returns him to his mother to be nursed. When Moses grows up, his mother returns him to Pharaoh’s daughter to be adopted. Moses’ mother unravels her hopes and dreams as a mother, enduring great sacrifice in order for her child to live. And yet, Pharaoh’s daughter unravels her own father’s plans by adopting Moses as her own.



From the Artist – Lisle Gwynn Garrity reflects on her painting, “An Imperfect Ally: Pharaoh’s Daughter Adopts Moses”

The artist reflects on the story of Moses' birth and rescue from the perspective of Pharaoh’s daughter. She writes:

Moses’s mother and Miriam plot a clever plan, but it’s far from foolproof. The risks far outweigh their chances for success. What if the basket they place him in leaks, drowning him instead of keeping baby Moses afloat? What if the current gets too strong, or the winds pick up, or he gets stuck in a tangle of reeds? What if the wrong person finds him and fulfills Pharaoh’s command? What if Pharaoh’s daughter is moved with disgust when she sees what floats into her provide bathing quarters? Even if Pharaoh’s daughter decides to keep the child as her own, what will keep Pharaoh from killing Moses when she’s not looking?

Their plan is too perilous, too fraught with danger for any infant to endure. And yet, we know of mothers who risk desert heat, fatigue, illness, dehydration, criminalized border crossings, and much more to pursue the slight chance—the mere hope—of survival for their child. Why would they do this? Because to stay home and succumb to the sure threats of genocide—or gang violence, or civil war—is far more dangerous.

In this image, I gave the viewer the vantage point Pharaoh’s daughter might have had. What melts her heart with mercy when she sees this Hebrew child float downstream? Was a well of rebellion rising up within her, making her eager to subvert her father’s orders? Was she poisoned like most Egyptians with bias against the Israelites, but did the innocence and vulnerability of an infant shift her heart toward love? Had she desperately wanted a child of her own? Regardless of her motives, Pharaoh’s daughter uses her power and privilege to act as an ally to Moses and his family in their worst unravelling. It is not a perfect solution, but God doesn’t need perfection to achieve liberation.

Guiding Questions

- What has unraveled and/or is unraveling in this story? For Moses’ mother and her hopes and dreams for her newborn son? For Pharaoh’s plan to preserve his power? For Pharaoh’s daughter?
- Imagine this story from the perspective of each character—Pharaoh, Moses’ mother, Moses’ sister, Pharaoh’s daughter. Why does each character do what s/he does?
- What causes Pharaoh’s daughter’s heart to soften when she finds Moses in the river? What does she choose to nurture and adopt Moses as her own? What can we learn from her actions?
- Consider the role of risk and vulnerability in this story. Moses’ mother’s vulnerability to Pharaoh’s commands forces her to hatch as desperate, creative plan. Moses’ vulnerability as a helpless child softens Pharaoh’s daughter’s heart. What role might risk and vulnerability play in the midst of our unraveling—in being “transformed” and “renewed” so that we may “discern” the will of God (Rom. 2:12)?

Prayer *O God, when necessary, unravel my attachment to power and control, so that I may take the risk of placing my trust in you and your will and may be led into your freedom through Jesus Christ, your Son and my Lord. Amen.*