

Moses Monologue

Narrator: “Today we start a new sermon series on the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis. We’re calling our series ‘Ancient Answers to Life’s Oldest Questions.’ These first eleven chapters of Genesis are written to answer some of our oldest questions about life, about God, about our world. But a lot of people forget that Genesis was written thousands, perhaps even millions of years after the events we read about in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. You see, the book of Genesis is the product of Moses, that great leader from Hebrew history who led the people of Israel out of their slavery. Why did Moses write Genesis when he did? What was happening in ancient Israel to call for the book of Genesis, especially the first eleven chapters? What would happen if we could bring Moses back and ask him about Genesis?”

Moses walks onto stage, obviously old, using a staff. At first doesn’t notice the congregation, but then notices them.

MOSES:

“You’re probably wondering how I got here. I’m wondering that myself! I guess your pastor wanted me to come and talk about the book God led me to write. No, I’m not talking about my other books, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers or Deuteronomy. I’m talking about the first book. I think you call it “Genesis.” We always called it breshith, which is Hebrew for “in the beginning.” Back then we always just called our books by the first few words. No fancy titles or glossy pictures like you have now in your book stores. Just the first few words was enough. Well, while I’m here, I might as well tell you my story.

“You’ve probably heard about me. Your pastor tells me one of your movie makers did a story about my life a few years ago...what did he call it? Prince of Egypt! Yeah! Well I never felt much like a prince. Just a shepherd really. I was born at a terrible time in my people’s history. We were slaves in Egypt. It was a time of horrible suffering and unspeakable oppression. I was born to the Hebrew tribe of Levi, the tribe where all our priests came from. At that time in Egypt, all the boy babies were supposed to be killed, so my mom hid me for three months. Then through an amazing set of circumstances, I grew up as grandson of the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II. Even though I was safe though, my heart broke for my people, the Hebrew people, the people of Israel. Ramses was afraid of us. He feared one day we’d get organized and revolt. I guess that’s kind of what happened. But I get ahead of myself.

“After I grew up, I had to leave Egypt. You see I just couldn’t sit around and watch my people treated so badly, so I acted. In a fit of anger, I killed an Egyptian soldier. That’s why I had to run. I was a wanted felon. They even posted my picture up in the Egyptian post office.

“I ended up in the wilderness of Midian working as a shepherd. That’s where I met my wife Zipporah. She was so beautiful. She also worshipped the true God, the creator. It was love at first sight! My father-in-law Jethro was like the father I never had. But I always knew my destiny would be back with my people. Then one day, God spoke to

me. You've probably heard the story, the one about the burning bush. Well God told me to go back to Egypt to bring freedom to the Hebrews. I asked God what his name was, in case the people asked me for God's name. God told me, 'I AM THAT I AM. Tell the people of Israel the God I AM has sent you.'

"So I went back. With the help of my brother Aaron, I confronted the Ramses, telling him to let my people go. But he refused. So God sent plagues, darkness, even death to persuade Pharaoh to let my people go. Finally, after his own firstborn son died, Ramses let us go.

"From there, after crossing the Red Sea, we went to a special mountain. You call it Mt. Sinai. We simply called it "the mountain of God." On that mountaintop God revealed his law to me. God said, "I am the LORD God who has set you free from your slavery in Egypt." He gave us ten commands to live by. If we agreed to live by God's commands, we would be God's special, set free people. We all jumped up and down in excitement. To be part of God's work in the world. Us! Slaves from Egypt! Now to be God's servants. What a privilege. On that mountain we entered into a special relationship with God.

"Now while all this was happening, things were changing in the world around us. We were in what you call the late Bronze Age. Remember we're talking three thousand, five hundred years ago! No email, no cars, no malls, no cell phones. But we were in the midst of our own revolution: the revolution of writing. It started in Sumer as little pictures carved onto stone, but it quickly spread to Egypt and the rest of what you call the Near East. By my day entire languages had developed, and it revolutionized our lives. Merchants could now write out receipts for their sales. Husbands could write out marriage contracts. People could write out their wills. Nations could write out treaties. Life was changing for us.

"Anyways, more and more people are writing things down. Pretty soon many of the stories and legends that different tribes had been retelling for generations were written down too. That's when it happened. The thing that eventually led me to write breshith...er...I mean Genesis. One day I was walking through the camp of Israel while we were camping in the wilderness. I noticed that some of the Hebrew elders were reading a clay tablet. I was curious, so I asked, "What are you reading?" They got really quiet. They tried to hide the clay tablet, but I could see what it was. It was a writing that came out of Babylon. Something I think you call the Enuma Elish. Every new year's celebration the Babylonians would read it again, celebrating their belief in how the world was created.

"Now the Enuma Elish is basic paganism. Pretty common stuff around the people of my generation. It's a story about how the world came into being. But it's a story that's almost totally wrong! You can't fault the old Babylonians. They really didn't know any better. But I was so troubled that night, because I realized that if all the Hebrews started reading the Enuma Elish, they might stop worshipping the I AM God, the God who created the heavens and the earth. The God of Israel.

“I couldn’t sleep at all that night. I tossed and turned. The next morning my wife Zipporah asked me, ‘What’s wrong?’ At first I didn’t want to talk about it, but she kept prodding. She’s like that, God bless her! Finally, I told her, ‘Some of the elders are reading the Babylonian creation story, and I’m afraid they’re going to lose their faith in God.’ Zipporah smiled, and said, ‘Maybe you should write down God’s creation story then, honey.’ I’d never thought of that. I wasn’t much of a writer. Remember I was just a shepherd. When God gave me the ten commandments, he wrote them himself. I was just the delivery boy. Zipporah asked me to pray about it, so I did. And guess what? God started to speak to me. Just like he spoke to me on the mountain. He told me to write down his story, the story of the beginning. I told God, ‘How can I write down your story? I wasn’t even there for the creation. Guys like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph....those guys are ancient history! [beat] How can I write their stories?’ But God told me, ‘I’ll lead you. I’ll give you the right word. You just start writing, and I’ll reveal what’s important.’ So that’s what I did.

“I knew I had to start with creation. I had to start there because the Enuma Elish starts there too. In fact, that’s where all the pagan stories start. With the beginning. If you’re wrong about the beginning, you’re going to be wrong about everything else. In the Enuma Elish, the world exists before anything else. The world is eternal. And out of the world the gods are created. In the Enuma Elish the gods decide to make people because the gods are hungry and they want the humans to bring them food. But eventually the gods get into a big argument, and one of the gods is murdered. Sounds like an episode from a soap opera doesn’t it? Well that’s what the creation stories were like in my day. And it didn’t matter where you went; the creation stories were similar throughout the world. Asia, Africa, the East.

“So I had to start my book in a way that demonstrated God as is the creator and sustainer of all that exists. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” I wrote. There are so many things in our world that people of my generation worship: the stars, the earth, the animals, the plants, even other people. I had to show my people that God created all those things. They’re not divine. They’re part of creation.

“I also had to show people why life was so hard. In the Enuma Elish, life is hard because the gods are always arguing and feuding with each other. The Hatfields and McCoys! But I knew that the real problem was sin. God created a good world, a world especially designed to sustain so we could serve and love our Creator. But we corrupted God’s good world. We disobeyed God and turned away from him. That’s why our families are so messed up. That’s why brothers kill brothers like Cain and Abel. That’s why different clans hate each other so much. That’s why nations rape and pillage other nations. We’ve turned sin loose in God’s good world, and it’s spread like a terrible disease.

“The book of breshith...I mean Genesis...was hard to write. I wanted to give up several times. But Zipporah kept encouraging me. And God kept guiding my pen. After the ink had dried, I brought the clay tablets to the elders of Israel. I told them that if we were truly going to be God’s people as we’d promised on Mt. Sinai, then we had to live as

God's people. That meant not just believing that the God had set us free from our slavery, but it also meant believing that God had created our world. Our God wasn't just our Savior, but he's also our Creator. If we're really God's people, we can't worship the things of this world like the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and the Sumerians. We couldn't blame all our problems on fueding gods who can't get along. If we were going to be part of God's plan to reclaim his creation, we had to believe in God as our creator and in God's story of the beginning. Then I laid out my book, breshith, Genesis. The elders read it. They believed it. And when they finally crossed over into the Jordan River into promised land while I watched from the top of a mountain, they took my book with them. I died on that mountain. But my book didn't die. Breshith became their guide, their story, their compass. And when God's Son was finally born into the world, He also pointed back to my book. Jesus quoted from breshith, and he retold its stories. And Jesus fulfilled the promises I wrote about. So as your pastor begins to teach you about the first eleven chapters of my book, know that when you read breshith, you're not just hearing my voice. Your hearing God's own voice."