

# Beauty for Ashes



A Healing Path  
for Those Touched by Adoption

By Sherie Eldridge

# **Beauty for Ashes...**

**A Healing Path for those Touched by Adoption**

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release for the prisoners,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God—  
to comfort all who mourn,  
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—  
to bestow on them a crown a beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.

Isaiah 61:1b-3

# Before You Begin...

“We must look into one another’s eyes to be healed.”

-Connie Dawson, Ph.D., LPC

Dear friend,

Have you ever had trouble understanding the sentiments and perspective of another member of the adoption triad? Or have you ever sat in an adoption support group and felt your heart pacing, your anger surfacing and your blood boiling?

I certainly have.

For years, I couldn’t listen to the stories of other members of the triad—their pain or their joy. I needed an ICU for adoptees! I *couldn’t* hear nor did I *want* to hear the pain of others. I had enough of my own to deal with.

For example, as an adoptee, I used to fantasize that my birth mother thought about me on my birthday. When I was reunited with her a few years ago, I soon discovered that she didn’t even know the date of my birthday. I can’t begin to tell you how crushed and rejected I felt.

Later, after working through the majority of my adoption issues, I became interested in how other members of the adoption triad feel. I read everything I could get my hands on and soon discovered that the issues for each member of the triad are common even though the circumstances were different at the time of relinquishment and adoption.

Shame. Joy. Guilt. Rejection. Euphoria. Abandonment. Anger. Fear. Hate. Blessing. These are all common threads that run through the tapestry of adoption for each member of the adoption triad.

In the years that followed, as I studied about birth mothers and their particular pain, I realized that my birth mother didn’t *intentionally* forget my birthday. Instead, she was too traumatized by the untimely pregnancy and birth to remember the date. She blocked it out completely in order to survive. With this realization came the desire to “look her in the eyes” and forgive.

Not only does our pain cause us to be oblivious to the trauma of others, but it also twists our understanding of what other members of the triad may say.

For instance, when my birth mother screamed at me, “You don’t know how hard it is to give up a baby! I have thought of you every day of my life,” she was verbalizing her pain. My adoptee pain interpreted those words as “Because she said it was hard to give me up, she must have loved me!” When I responded, “That is the best news I’ve ever heard...I thought you forgot about me!” her pain translated my words as, “Now you’re happy that I’m sad.”

Even though interpretations were twisted, I believe basic love was still there. We all need to work hard at understanding what other triad members are saying, for when we do, healing will occur.

Exposure to the feelings and beliefs of other members of the triad is absolutely essential if we are to come to terms with our adoption experience.

That is what this book is all about. May it lead you gently on the path to healing.

Warmly,  
Sherrie Eldridge

# Introduction

## Adoption Shoes

Visualize a sunny Florida beach with a hot and sandy boardwalk leading down to the ocean. You slip on your sandals and walk the length of the boardwalk. As you near the end, you notice several empty pairs of shoes scattered along the boardwalk's edge.

Shoes of all sizes, styles and shapes.

Each unique. Each bearing the imprint of the owner and each with a story to tell.

As you think about the scene, you are reminded that you've never walked in another person's shoes. Never have. Never will.

The writer of Proverbs agrees: "Only the person involved can know his own bitterness or joy—no one else can really share it." (14: 10, Living Bible)

The same is true in adoption.

There are many adoption shoes setting at the end of the boardwalk. The adoptee's. The birth parent's. The adoptive parent's. The grandparent's.

Each is unique. Each has it's own adoption story to tell.

Like the sunbather realizing he will never wear another's shoes, those of us touched by adoption must respect the fact that we will never truly know another's adoption pain or joy.

An adoptee will never know the heart-wrenching decision of a birth mother in relinquishing her child or the secret sorrows of infertility that many adoptive parents experience. Adoptive and birth parents will never know the depths of abandonment the adoptee felt and continues to feel from the loss of his/her birth family.

On the other hand, the adoptive parent's joy is incomprehensible when holding their beloved child for the first time. The same could be said for a birth parent and adoptee when reunited after years of separation.

At times, those of us touched by adoption might be tempted to compare our losses or joys with one another. We may conclude our loss to be the worst, our joys the most magnificent.

We may develop a subtle pride and choose to associate only with those who have had the same experience or share similar perspectives. Other members of the adoption triad may be viewed as adversarial and someone to be avoided at all costs.

Thus, divisiveness among the adoption community grows and individual recovery is crippled.

We might do well instead, to lay down our shoes beside one another and walk together for a while. In time, we may be surprised to discover that those we thought were enemies were God's greatest gifts.

Adoptee, therapist and author, Connie Dawson, Ph.D., L.P.C., says, "We must look into one another's eyes in order to be healed."

True, we can never know the pain or joy of another. But by walking together instead of apart, we will grow in our capacity to love and be loved.

## Chapter One

### Conception amidst Chaos

“A special kind of lotus flower grows best in the mud.  
The thicker the mire, the more beautiful the blossom.”

-Jason Shepherd, *Moses... A Man of Selfless Dedication*

### The Story of Moses

Moses' parents, Jochebed and Amram, were Israelites—God's chosen people. Years before their third child was born, an atrocity happened to a 17-year-old Israelite young man named Joseph. He was the youngest and favored son of one of the great patriarchs of the faith, Jacob. One day his father asked him to take something to his older brothers who were tending their flocks near Shechem. When the brothers, who were jealous of Joseph's favor with their father, saw him coming from a distance, they plotted to kill him and throw him in a cistern. When some merchants passed by about the same time, they decided instead to sell him as a slave. They lied to their grief-stricken father, saying that some animal had killed Joseph.

In Egypt, Joseph was imprisoned and while there, he interpreted the dreams of two trouble prisoners. Everything he prophesized about them was fulfilled. When Pharaoh, the king of Egypt began having nightmares, the prisoners Joseph had helped told Pharaoh his ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh called for Joseph immediately and related his dreams to him. Joseph interpreted them as a prophecy-- there would be seven years of abundance in the land followed by seven years of famine.

With difficult days ahead, Pharaoh wanted a wise man to be in charge of his country. He could think of no one wiser than Joseph, for God had given him the ability to interpret dreams. Thus, Joseph was put in charge of Egypt and everything Joseph prophesized came to pass.

During the seven years of abundance, Joseph had grain stored throughout Egypt. Seven years later, when the famine struck, Israel, the place where his birth family lived, had no grain. Thus, Joseph's father, Jacob, sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain.

Even though the brothers didn't know it, the person they were requesting grain from was Joseph, the brother they despised and betrayed years ago.

Joseph recognized them from the beginning and knew that they had intended evil when they sold him into slavery. But Joseph trusted Jehovah to turn it for good, as he always does for his people (Genesis 50:20).

Ultimately, Joseph revealed his identity, forgave his brothers and issued an invitation to his elderly father and repentant brothers to live in the land of Egypt where they would be assured of proper provision.

In the years that followed, with Joseph as Pharaoh's right-hand man, the Israelites were fruitful and grew in number as Jehovah commanded.

Joseph and his family lived in Egypt for many years and after he died at the ripe old age of 110, a new Pharaoh came into power—a Pharaoh who didn't know Joseph.

This Pharaoh was an evil, insecure man who dealt shrewdly with the Israelites, treating them ruthlessly as slaves. Fearing that the flourishing people would overpower him flourishing lose their slave power, he oppressed them in the deepest way possible.

The meaner he got, the more they multiplied.

Finally, in a desperate attempt to keep them from multiplying, he declared that all Hebrew midwives kill every male Israelite baby at birth. However, because the midwives loved and obeyed Jehovah, the God of Israel, they let the babies live.

Since this plan didn't work and the Israelites continued to multiply, Pharaoh turned up the thermostat on the furnace of affliction by declaring that all male, newborn Israelite babies were to be thrown into the river.

When this edict was proclaimed, Jochebed realized she was pregnant for her third child.

1. How do you think Jochebed felt and thought when she anticipated telling her husband and children about the pregnancy?

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2. Where was God in all of this?

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# Experiences of Triad Members

## Adoptee

John and Paula Sanford say in *Healing the Wounded Spirit*, "Clues for Identification of In Utero Wounds"--A child conceived out of wedlock--having a deep sense of shame, lack of belonging."

## Birth Parent

Carol Schaefer says in *The Other Mother*, "The night I became pregnant was the second time Chris and I had made love and probably the hundredth time we had fought it in the two years we'd been going together... We parked in Chris's aqua Ford Galaxy in the lower parking lot of the Greenwood country club... Our feelings for each other just got too intense to be controlled." "I discovered I was pregnant when I was eighteen years old. I loved the father of my child and truly believed that somehow we would make it. His mother suggested an abortion. I flatly refused and that ended the relationship. I loved this man--I could not abort our child. I was very naïve and very much 'in love,' or so I thought. If I had know what lay ahead, I might very well have turned and run the other way," says Patricia L. Hanczar in the Fall 1996 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

## Adoptive Parent

"I remember one January morning at seven A.M.; my husband and I had driven separate cars through rush-hour traffic to the hospital where the clinic was located. At the ninth-floor clinic desk, we were given a plastic cup and directions to room 911, just next to the elevator. There, in our cozy cubicle, under buzzing white fluorescent lights, we had to perform: We didn't make love, we just made sperm... They never did find out why we couldn't conceive," says Jana Wolff, author of *Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother*.

Highlight the words or phrases that stand out to you in the previous section and then tell why you chose them.

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## How I Feel About the Triad

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## What Adoption Experts Say

Therapist Randolph W. Severson, Ph.D., says in *To Bless Him Unaware: The Adopted Child Conceived by Rape*, "To actually have a child, a child of your heart and kindness, who sleeps warm and secure in the blanket after you kiss him goodnight, and to know that this child's life began in horror and that you must tell him and watch his innocence be shattered, and know yourself to be the agent of that shattering, is a duty no one would wish upon another and that no one who does not bear that duty ought to be too confident about advising others how to do."



### Sharing Negative Background Information with Your Adopted Child

"You shouldn't ever tell him hurtful information." "He doesn't need to know about the negatives in his background." "Maybe...when he's 35."

So much for the "professional advice regarding potentially hurtful background information with an adoptee. These notions arise from the 'what you don't know won't hurt you' myth. It's just that—a myth.

When children are small, negative background information is an easy issue not to deal with because preschoolers don't commonly wonder whether their birth mothers used drugs/alcohol, if there is mental illness in their birth family history, were they the result of rape...Children in upper and middle school, however, typically want as much information as they can get. No, it's not a joyous time when your child wants to see all of his information and you're concerned that what he reads will hurt him. This is a time for honest, compassion, and relationship building.

So what do you do? (1) Give him HIS information. After all, it is his history. (2) Be there as he reads it to answer questions and offer support, but give your child a chance to absorb it in his own way. (3) Listen to any comments. This will give you a clue as to what part of the information may disturb him. Don't assume the items that distress you will bother him. (4) Watch for non-verbal cues like changes in facial expression, body movements, nervous gestures, etc. (5)

Be comfortable with the information yourself so you can deal with your child in a calm way. (6) Expect the information to be a reoccurring issue for your child. This is not a one-shot revelation. (7) Don't make it a bigger issue than your child wants it to be. (8) Remember, this is your child's private information. Don't discuss it with numerous people. Who knows (aside from medical and mental health professionals) should be your child's decision.

Is this easy? Of course not but it is the right thing to do. Hidden information and family secrets always surface at inappropriate times and can cause significant damage to relationships. By you demonstrating respect for your child and his heritage you reinforce your relationship and model an example of how to react to such information," says Jeanine Jones, MSW, CCSW in the Summer 1997 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

## **Digging Deep for Answers**

1. Read Psalm 139:13. Who created you?

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2. Were you ever alone? See Psalm 139:15.

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3. Who planned every day of your life before any one of them ever came to be? See Psalm 139:6.

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4. What do you think God thinks about your experience with adoption?

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5. What does Exodus 2:24 say about how God felt about the suffering of the Israelites?

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6. Who is the Creator of everything? Read John 1:3

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## **The Take-Away for Me**

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It is clear from scripture there are no mistakes in God's economy. Every life is planned by him no matter what the circumstances. Any two people can make love, but only God can create a life.

In the next chapter, we will discuss how an unplanned pregnancy can produce feelings of joy and fear and in both mother and unborn child.

## Chapter Two

### BITTERSWEET NEWS

“It doesn’t matter how great the pressure is; what really matters is where the pressure lies.  
Whether it comes between you and God or presses you nearer His heart.”

- Hudson Taylor, Hudson Taylor’s *Spiritual Secret*

### The Story of Moses

“Make those bricks! Slap that mortar! Get your own straw to make the bricks and make double the amount before you go home,” Pharaoh’s officers shouted at the Israelite slaves.

Meanwhile, Jochebed was tucking Miriam and Aaron into bed. “Oh Jehovah, please protect papa,” the children said as they folded their hands in prayer.

Jochebed dreaded the thought of breaking the news of her pregnancy to Amram. She was so elated to be pregnant but also filled with fear that her baby would die at the hands of Pharaoh.

Should she wait until morning when he wasn’t so tired?

Surely he wouldn’t want her upset and carrying a burden by herself.

“Amram?” she whispered as he ate his meal. “I’m pregnant.” As his eyes met hers, her body convulsed uncontrollably.

“What will we do? Pharaoh’s edict is a death sentence for our baby if it is a boy.”

Amram held Jochebed tenderly in his arms as hot tears streamed down her cheeks. “Now, now,” he said. “Jehovah is the one who created this life and if it is a boy, he will provide a way for it to be saved. We need to pray and ask him what to do.”

As they knelt together, Amram said, “Jehovah, God of our fathers, you have been faithful to us in the past just as we know you will be in the future. This is your child that is growing in Jochebed’s womb. Your creation. Please protect the life of this child as it develops in the womb and if it is a boy, please show us a way to preserve his life.”

After prayer, Amram said, “Come on, Jochebed, it’s time for bed. You need to take good care of yourself and our baby.”

1. Describe Amram's thoughts and emotions that evening.

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2. How do you think Jochebed felt and thought after talking and praying with her husband?

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## Experiences of Triad Members

### Adoptee

"My life is a mistake."

"I feel guilty for being alive."

### Birthparent

"I could sue you," he said, motionless in my living room rocking chair, his voice flat. I nodded in agreement.

"I know that."

Fifteen, she was fifteen."

"...We belonged to the same church, served on the same boards of Christian organizations and worked for political candidates who make family values their benchmark. An unplanned pregnancy was never supposed to happen to us or our children," says a birth grandfather in *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*, Fall 1998.

### Adoptive Parent

"Having children has changed my theology," says Bill Myers in an article appearing in the Fall 1998 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*, "I used to think that God was kind of waiting to jump on us when we fail. Now I understand that he's by our side, aching and weeping with us when we fail--because that's what I do with my children. So I understand what a father is now, from a father's perspective, which is astonishing--the love, the unconditional love."

"We received a call at 12:45 on a Friday and were told our baby girl would be placed in our arms at 3:00 that very day! I still don't believe it is true. Our hearts still ache for the birth parents. We asked the birth mother to choose our daughter's middle name. We feel so blessed with the whole experience and the wonderful birth parents and daughter that the Lord chose for us," says Jan Harris in "One Mother's Story," appearing in the Spring 1996 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

"At first I delayed looking into adoption. I feared that in adopting a baby I would be giving up my dream of bearing a child. I grieved for the baby that would not be biologically connected to

my husband or myself," says Yvonne Linton in an article titled "Letting Go" in the Summer 1998 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

## How I Feel About the Triad

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## What Adoption Experts Say

"This is why what a woman thinks about her child makes such an important difference. Her thoughts--her love or rejection, or ambivalence--begin defining and shaping his emotional life. What she creates are not specific traits such as extroversion or optimism or aggressiveness. These are largely adult words with adult meanings, too specific, too finely tuned to apply to the mind of a six-month-old unborn child. What is forming are broader, more deeply rooted tendencies--such as a sense of security or self-esteem," says Thomas Verny, M.D. in *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*.

## Digging Deep for Answers

1. What does Proverbs 28:1 say about being courageous?

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2. What does Proverbs 3:5-6 say we are to do?

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3. What does God do with your tears according to Psalm 56:8?

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4. What does Romans 8:28-29 say about life? How can you apply that to your experience with adoption? Who is the promise for?

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### **The Take-Away for Me**

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Joy and fear. These are constant companions for the birth mother experiencing an untimely pregnancy. Joy that there is new life living within her but terror because of what may happen to her child.

Whether the pregnancy is planned, such as in Jochebed's case, or unplanned, such as pregnancies out of wedlock today, great anxiety arises. We will talk about that next.

## Chapter Three

### Sleepless Nights

“Our call to suffer comes from a God tender beyond description. If we do not cling to this through life’s worst, we will misread everything and grow to hate him.”

-Joni Earekson Tada, *When God Weeps*

### The Story of Moses

Jochebed lay awake the entire night tossing and turning, her pillow wet with tears. Amram lay beside her, snoring. Her mind was racing, trying to think of ways to save her baby. “Maybe we could flee the country at night,” she thought.

As she turned over on her stomach, her tender breasts reminded her of the stark reality of the pregnancy. And every morning, she woke up nauseated.

“Amram says that God will provide a way,” Jochebed silently fumed. “Easy for him to say. He isn’t the one who has to carry this baby for nine months and keep it secret from the Egyptian soldiers. How can he sleep when we are facing the possibility of losing our beloved child?”

Why have you allowed this, God? You could have intervened and kept me from getting pregnant. I know you are the Creator of life, but why did you create a life that might be snuffed out so soon? I can’t bear the thought of losing my baby. You don’t seem like the loving God I knew in former days. You seem cold and far away. Sometimes I wonder if you really care about me.”

Just before daybreak, Jochebed drifted off to sleep. Amram rose to get ready for another day of hard labor at Pharaoh’s palace.

1. How do you think Jochebed felt as she listened to Amram sleep?

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2. Contrast the difference in reactions between the birth father and mother.

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## Experiences of Triad Members

### Adoptee

"I am crying on the inside, but there are no tears."

"I used to lay awake at night and wonder why she didn't keep me."

"Sometimes I feel like a beached whale dumped on some isolated shore. What does life mean for me, a mid-life adopted adult? What am I to do with what life has put on my agenda?" Says Dr. Rev. Richard B. Gilbert in an article titled "When Adoption Leaves Us Tossed Up On Shore" from the fall 1997 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

### Adoptive Parent

"Like any would-be parents, we didn't know if this would be a healthy baby, but unlike those who give birth, we had the option of walking away. That option, meant to console anxious adoptive parents who have no control otherwise, was a disquieting one. It meant that my husband and I had to figure out in advance whether we would accept a baby with a birth defect, a deformity, or a disability. And if we would, how far on the continuum of ill-health would we go? Would we say yes to a cleft palate, but no to Down's syndrome? Could we live with a special-needs child?" says Jana Wolff in *Secret Thoughts of An Adoptive Mother*.

### Birth Parent

"I was scared. Real scared. It came to either I keep the baby or give him up for adoption. Steven asked me why and I told him, "The baby wouldn't have a future with me, wouldn't have a stable home, wouldn't have both parents." Steven agreed with me. He preferred adoption too because he couldn't be there as a full-time father for the baby. He wanted to avoid one parent raising the baby," says Elizabeth in *Why Didn't She Keep Me?* by Barbara Burlingham-Brown.

## How I Feel About the Triad

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## What Adoption Experts Say

LaVonne H. Stiffler, Ph.D., in a research article titled, "Adoption's Impact on Birthmothers: 'Can A Mother Forget Her Child?'" says, "The grief mothers who lose children through adoption has been socially unacknowledged. Parental loss of a child is a particularly devastating grief, no matter what the age or circumstances. It is unnatural, unexpected, and involves many complex issues...The reported incidence of birth mothers who suffer long after relinquishment appears to be low, and this is largely because of the 'conspiracy of silence' and the prevalent mythology surrounding birth mothers. Adoption legislation and practice have traditionally underplayed the role of the birth parent in the adoption process..."

## Digging Deep for Answers

1. Read I Peter 5: 7. Who are we to cast our cares upon and how could you do this in a practical way?

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2. What does Luke 12:25 say about the value of worry?

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3. What does Psalm 56:8 say that God does with your tears? What does this mean to you?

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4. What does Psalm 139: 7-12 promise about sleepless nights?

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## The Take-Away for Me

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Even though there may be many sleepless nights when thinking about all the possible ramifications of an untimely pregnancy, God promises to help birth mothers, fathers, and adoptees through the anxiety and redeem the pain for his glory.

It is often in the darkest times that God gives us a song in the night. He teaches us something precious and profound that we wouldn't ever experience had it not been for the darkness.

Secrets are lethal in adoption, but in Jochebed's and Amram's case, there had to be secrecy to keep their baby from death.

We'll talk about that next.

## Chapter Four

### A Gift Wrapped in Secrecy

“While some secrets can bring some people together by giving them a sense of intimacy and sharing, secrets can be destructive if they cause shame, prevent change, render one powerless, and hamper one's sense of reality.”

- Betty Jean Lifton, *Journey of the Adopted Self*

### The Story of Moses

Aaron and Miriam were up playing at the crack of dawn. Their frolicking voices filled the air as Jochebed lay in bed wondering how she could make it through the day. She was tired, sick and drained of hope that they would ever be a happy family again.

“How could this be happening?” she said to herself. “I feel like I’m having a nightmare but I can’t wake up.”

She pushed herself out of bed and made breakfast for the children. As they sat at the table together, warm tears stained her cheeks.

“What’s the matter, Mama?” the children asked.

“Tonight I will tell you when Papa gets home,” Jochebed replied. “Mama doesn’t feel very well right now.”

Jochebed busied herself throughout the day but her mind was in over-drive. “What if I can’t keep the baby a secret until it is born? What if those horrid soldiers are nearby when my baby is born and they hear it cry? What if they rush into our home and tear him out of my arms? What if I never see my baby again?”

That night when Amram arrived home, they sat down as a family. “Papa! Mama was crying this morning and said we would talk about it when you got home. What’s wrong, Papa?” the children said as they sat on his lap.

“Children, we have something very important to tell you,” Amram said after gathering them on his lap. “You are going to have a new baby brother or sister. Mama is expecting a baby.”

“A new baby! A new baby!” Miriam and Aaron said.

“But children,” Amram continued, “there is something that I need to tell you that will be hard for you to understand. The wicked king Pharaoh has declared that all boy Israelite babies will be

drowned in the Nile River. We don't know for sure whether our baby is a boy or girl, but we do know that we need to keep the news about the baby a secret.

And we need to pray together and ask God what to do. Amram got down on his knees, as did the children and Jochebed. "Jehovah, please show us what to do about our new baby. If it is a boy, please show us a way to save his life. We know that you created his life for a purpose and we will trust you to show us how to save his life. Amen!"

"I'm hungry," Miriam said. "What do we have to eat Mama?"

1. Do most birth fathers react in the same way today that Amram did? Explain.

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2. How do you think this little family kept a newborn quiet for three months?

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## **Experiences of Triad Members**

### **Adoptee**

"One day in July of 1991, a life-long friend of mine and my family invited me to lunch. During this time we were talking about our past and the influences that our parents had on our lives. She said she knew a deep, dark secret about me and that she was now free to divulge it since my mother was dead. It seems that at my Dad's funeral, she overheard a conversation between my Godfather and friends. They were saying that my brother and I were not biologically related to each other or the parents who raised us. Immediately, I told her she must be mistaken, for I looked just like my dad and grandmother. How could this be? It seems that my parents had taken this secret to their graves and had warned every member of our family never to tell us. At 50 years of age, I found out that my whole life was a lie. Who am I? Where did I come from? My life had been changed forever," says Bertie Hunt.

### **Birth Parents**

"The lies and secrecy were wearing me out. My whole summer was one lie after another. Out-of-wedlock pregnancies were an intriguing topic of conversation, but never discussed except in whispers and innuendos. To the whole community, as well as my parents, secrecy was easier. I did not feel 'unwed' or 'out of wedlock.' I felt pregnant with a baby for whom I already had a great deal of love," says renowned author Carol Schaefer in *The Other Mother: A Woman's Love for the Child she Gave Up for Adoption*.

### **Birth Grandparents**

"We've talked about it and decided to take her out of town for an abortion, just eliminate this mistake. A lifetime of the sanctity of life echoed in my head. As strange as it may seem, we prayed together to ask God to forgive us for what we were about to do. We spoke of secret decisions: what to tell our other children, how to make excuses at work and weave a conspiracy

of silence to keep the news from reaching friends at church and in the town where we live," says one birth grandfather in The Fall 1998 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

### **Adoptive Parents**

Gail Steniberg says in an article titled "When You Don't Fall in Love Right Away," Mothers (adoptive) frequently feel a loss when a baby is born. While post-partum depression is common, post-adoption depression is equally as common though rarely mentioned...Fear of losing your new baby if anyone found out how you feel may also cause you to hide your stress, enhancing a sense of isolation."

## **How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## **What Adoption Experts Say**

Betty Jean Lifton, Ph.D., author of *Journey of the Adopted Self* cites, "While some secrets can bring people together by giving them a sense of intimacy and sharing, secrets can be destructive if they cause shame and guilt, prevent change, render one powerless, and hamper one's sense of security. The conspiracy doesn't have to be agreed on verbally, but can be unconsciously communicated to members of a clan. A conspiracy holds family members together like a negative energy force, but it also keeps them apart...The secret in today's adoptive family is not that the child is adopted but *who* the child is. The adoptive parents often know things about the birth parents that they do not reveal. Once the child suspects that primal secrets are being kept from her, she may come to perceive her parents as adversaries who stand between her and her rightful parents."

## **Digging Deep for Answers**

1. What does Deuteronomy 29:29 say about secret things?

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2. Whose hands hold the secrets concerning your adoption experience? Is this comforting to you or does it anger you?

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3. Read Zechariah 2:7-9. What kind of protection does God give to his own?

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## **The Take-Away for Me**

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## Chapter Five

### Answered Prayer

“God gives us his light in an instant, allowing us all that we need to know.”

-Catherine of Genoa, *Life and Teachings*

### The Story of Moses

In the days ahead, Jochebed and Amram continued to pray that God would show them what to do.

One day when Jochebed was folding clothes, an idea came to mind. Perhaps I could make a special basket to put the baby in if it is a boy...a basket that I could cover with tar and pitch and put into the river so that it would be watertight. Maybe somehow, even though it seems impossible, God would provide a way for my baby to live.

As the months progressed, Jochebed’s belly protruded at an ever-increasing rate. “I will bind my stomach and keep my pregnancy a secret,” she decided.

One day when she was playing with the children, warm water gushed down her legs.

“What is that, mama?” the children asked.

“It is the warm sack where the baby lived in my tummy. The sack has broken and that means that it is time for the baby to be born,” Jochebed explained. “Go next door and tell Naomi that we need help. But don’t tell anyone else.”

Naomi beckoned the midwives and took Jochebed into the bedroom to make her as comfortable as possible. The children stood at the door, bewildered. Naomi took them out into the other room and read them a story by the fire.

“One more push!” the midwives said as the baby’s head crowned. “Here he is, Jochebed, your new baby boy!”

With that news, they put the baby on Jochebed’s breast and he began to suckle. Jochebed stroked his tiny little hands and cradled his head in her hands. “Oh precious one,” she said.

“Come and see your new baby brother!” the midwives said to Naomi and the children. Within seconds they were at the side of their mother, adoring the baby along with her.

“What are we going to do, mama? You said that if the baby was a boy, he would be killed by Pharaoh’s soldiers,” the children asked.

“We will keep him as quiet as possible, but don’t forget, this is our secret. No one else is to know about your new brother.”

Jochebed was able to keep the baby’s cries muffled for a few weeks, but when she could keep him quiet no longer, she began to put her plan into action. Amram found her a basket, somewhat like a little arc, that would accommodate an infant and that had a lid that could fit tightly on top.

Together at night, after the children were in bed, the two of them coated the basket with tar and pitch. During the previous weeks, Jochebed had been knitting a special blanket to lay the baby on in the basket.

The next day their plan would be carried out.

Jochebed held the baby in her arms all night, singing to him, feeling his soft little fingers grab hers. “Oh, how I love you, my son. I hope that you will not hate us for this; for I am doing what I think is best for you—what will save your life. I wish there were some way that I could indelibly write on your heart how cherished and loved you are to us.”

Night passed quickly by. The dreaded day arrived.

1. Where do you think Jochebed's idea for a special basket originated?

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2. Describe how the family may have felt the night before placing the baby in the river.

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## **Experiences of Triad Members**

### **Adoptee**

"My deepest fantasy is to be held in the arms of my birth mother."

### **Adoptive Parent**

Jan Harris says in "One Mother's Story," which appeared in *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News* Spring 1996 issue, "The first time I nursed our baby, I felt instantly connected to her. She prefers nursing over bottle feeding. I believe that the closeness has helped her to deal with her grief and loss by feeling that someone will always be there to welcome her, to hold her, to soothe her, to adore her. I pray that birth parents will understand that in doing this, I am not pretending to be her biological mother. I just want to lay down my life for her and give her everything that I believe will give her the best start in life."

**Birth Parent**

"The baby was coming quickly now. Just before I pushed him out, I heard the first cry of an infant in the next room. And then I heard my baby's cry. Ron was suddenly there and I asked him what the baby was. A boy, he said. They gave him to me and I held on for dear life," says Carol Schaefer in *The Other Mother*.

**How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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**What Adoption Experts Say**

"We believe that, if enough parents start praying for their unborn children, a gentle revolution will take place. The babies to be born will become a new, different generation--more disposed to love God, happier and more secure. Just as the unborn John the Baptist 'lept for joy' in Elizabeth's womb, when Mary's greeting reached her ears, so your little child can respond to you--and to God--when you pray. This can make a real difference in your child's health--physical and emotional...but even more important, your child will be blessed and filled with the life of God, to the limit of his infant capacity, from the moment his life begins," say Francis Macnutt and Judith Macnutt in *Praying for your Unborn Child*.

**Digging Deep for Answers**

1. Read Matthew 7:7. What are we to do when we have problems?

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2. What is God's promise when we fulfill the conditions?

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3. Who is praying for you right now? See John 17:9. How does this make you feel?

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4. What is a pre-requisite to answered prayer? See II Chronicles 7:14. What does this mean to you in practical terms?

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### **The Take-Away for Me**

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## Chapter Six

### The Last Lullaby

“After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety, but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had scorched her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live.”

- *National Geographic*

### The Story of Moses

Jochebed's heart pounded as she carried her beloved infant down to the Nile in a pitch-covered basket to place among the tall river reeds.

“Did I really hear God's answer to our dilemma? Am I really doing the right thing to place my baby in the alligator-infested Nile in order to prevent the wicked Pharaoh of Egypt from killing him? How can I live without my precious child and how can he live without me?”

With stark determination and faith, she instructed Miriam to accompany her and to see what happened. “Hide behind the bushes,” Jochebed said.

Jochebed hunched down through the reeds at the river's bank. The reeds were fragrant and the water on was warm as she stepped into the squishy sand.

“Here is a good place,” Jochebed thought. With the greatest of care, she placed the little basket among the reeds, trusting that God would send someone to rescue her baby. As she watched the basket, in the water, she sang this last lullaby:

“Hush now, my baby,  
Be still, love, don't cry.  
Sleep as you're rocked by the stream.  
Sleep and remember my last lullaby.  
So I'll be with you when you dream,  
River, O river,  
Flow gently for me  
Such precious cargo you bear.  
Do you know somewhere he can live free?  
River, deliver him there.”

(Excerpt from *Destiny and Deliverance*, Nelson Publishers, printed with permission).

The baby sent out heart-wrenching wails. Every scream felt like a knife going through Jochebed's heart. She buried her face in her hands, softly whimpering.

“Oh God, is this really what you want me to be doing?”

And the baby? Everything familiar suddenly disappeared. The touch of Jochebed's skin. The warm milk from her breasts. The soothing sound of her voice. It was stuffy and dark inside the basket. He wept bitterly and continually.

As Jochebed listened to him wail, her breasts engorged with milk and she was reminded in a vivid way of the intimacy with her baby that would be no more.

Meanwhile, Pharaoh's daughter, Hatesphut, along with her servants, came to the bank of the river.

“What is that sound?” Hatesphut asked her attendants. They followed the sound down toward the river bank and saw a basket floating in the river.

“It's a baby!” Hatesphut exclaimed. “I feel so sorry for him.” When the top was removed, she realized it was an Israelite baby boy. A baby her father wanted dead.

Hatesphut couldn't help but think what great lengths this baby's mother had gone to in order to save his life. The little ark was so carefully sealed that not even a drop of water reached the baby. And the blanket that he was wrapped in—what loving hands must have made it.

“What loving hands must have prepared this,” she said to her attendants.

As she lifted him from the little ark, an adoptive mother's heart was born. “I want to adopt him,” Hatesphut stated. “And his name will be Moses, for I drew him out of the water.”

“Quickly,” she said to her attendants. “Go find a wet nurse for him.”

Miriam, the baby's sister who was watching from a distance, ran forward saying, “I know someone who could nurse him for you!”

Miriam brought her mother to Pharaoh's daughter and they agreed that Jochebed would nurse him until the time of weaning, which was about four years of age. Then he would be officially adopted and live in the palace with her.

Thus, in an incredible turn of events, Jochebed once again held the child she cherished. It seemed impossible to grasp the fact that the daughter of the one who wanted the baby dead was the one who snatched him from the jaws of death.

Oh, how good it felt to put his little head on her shoulder and cuddle him! How soft was his skin and how familiar his cry. After all, he was bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. The

connection was there once again. The connection she believed would be severed forever. She put her index finger near his cherub face and he grabbed it with the surety that “this is my mama.”

Jochebed’s hot tears dripped from her face onto the baby’s blanket as she carried him home. These were tears of joy, but also tears of sorrow, for she knew her time with him was limited.

“Why did I doubt you, Jehovah?” Jochebed thought as she cradled Moses in her arms. “You have saved the life of my son.”

1. How do you think Jochebed felt as she carried her son to the river?

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2. Describe Jochebed's and Miriam's feelings and possible discussion as they took the baby back home with them.

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3. How do you think the adoptive mother felt, knowing that she wouldn't see her new son for four years?

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## Experiences of Triad Members

### Adoptee

"Something inside just doesn't feel right."

"Here we are, precious," my grandmother said. "This is your home and now we're going to go in and meet your new mommy and daddy. Leah pushed the front door open, cradling me in her arms. This moment became the basis of my adoption story, which my Dad recounted with delight until his dying day. 'I'll never forget when mother brought you home from the hospital,' he would say. 'It seems like yesterday when I saw her come through the front door. You were so tiny that she held you in the palm of her hand,'" says Sherrie Eldridge in *Mother's Have Angel's Wings*.

Dr. Richard B. Gilbert, in an article appearing in the Fall 1996 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News* says, “I am adopted! Someone didn’t want me. That became my story, my scar, my struggle. I ‘heard’ only that someone didn’t want me, that I was rejected somewhere, and that, somehow, I am now different. This became the driving force that kept me, motivated me and often controlled me on this lifetime course of anger, debate and stubborn determination to prove ‘they,’ whoever the natural parents were, were wrong to give me up.”

## **Adoptive Parents**

An announcement came over the Moscow airport's PA system. Our interpreter informed us that the final flight from Tblisi would be an hour late. After waiting so long for our daughter, an hour delay should have seemed minor. But my wife and I wanted to hold our child in our arms--now...We spotted Nino, clad in a denim jumpsuit with a pink Minnie Mouse shirt and black Velcro-strapped sneakers, walking next to her escort as they came through the glass doors adjoining the airport...Bobbie held her first and Nino seemed a bit awed by all the attention...Nino nestled quite peacefully and naturally into my embrace. Our daughter has continued to make the same smooth transition to her new surroundings," says Joe O'Loughlin in an article titled, "A Strange Delivery Room," in the Winter 1997 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

Adoptive mother, Mrs. J.L. Holcomb, in an article entitled "Dwight's Story" in the Winter 1998 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News* writes," As we sat in the adjoining 'adoption room; awaiting his arrival in our arms. We could hear soft crying from the room where his mother was dressing him and saying her last good-bye to this, her firstborn child. My heart was breaking for her as well as rejoicing in our blessing. It is almost impossible to describe such feelings, but one overwhelming thought was how much I loved her for her sacrifice and how I wanted so much to be able to let her know from time to time how her beautiful son was doing and that we were being faithful to her trust in placing her son with us."

## **Birth Parents**

"From the minute I found out I was pregnant, I prayed. I prayed for God's strength, wisdom, and knowledge to know what to do. I knew that was the right choice, but I also ask myself often, 'This is my child. How can I do such a thing?' It's such a hard decision. It's one of the hardest decisions anyone can make. You feel guilty no matter what you do. So I prayed that God would give me peace about my decision. I don't feel guilty now. I know she has wonderful Christian parents and I know that God will always be watching out for her for me," said a birth mother in the premier issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

Nancy Kolte Leach, in an article entitled, "My Story" writes: "I am a birth mother. In 1960, when I was 15, I gave birth to a son. As was common in those days, on the advice of our family doctor, my parents decided it was best that my son be relinquished for adoption. They contacted an agency and set the wheels in motion. So, for all intents and purposes, I lost my baby even before he arrived, and completed my pregnancy carrying 'someone else's child.' When he was born, he was whisked out of the womb and out of the room so quickly that I didn't even hear him cry. But even though I never saw him or touched him, I never forgot him—nor did I ever stop loving him.

## **How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## What Adoption Experts Say

"Trauma differs from ordinary stress in childhood in several ways. First, it generally occurs suddenly, leaving a child no opportunity mentally or physically to prepare for it. Moreover, the events are unusual, unpredictable, and outside the range of the child's typical experience. A hallmark characteristic of trauma, for both child and adult victims, is the extreme feeling of helplessness aroused. Avenues for coping and making the situation better are not evident or available. The suddenness, unpredictability, and overwhelming nature of the experience combine to create an emotion of terror," says Cynthia Monahan in *Children and Trauma*.

Jana Wolff says in *The Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother*, "From behind the baby's clear bassinet in the newborn nursery, I looked across a large observation window into the corridor and saw a family of strangers--each intent on taking in the sight of the same infant...Their transfixed eyes were dulled with exhaustion and gave no hint of the swirling emotions that, I know, inflicted us all."

## Digging Deep for Answers

1. Read Psalm 127:3. Who do children really belong to and what does this mean to you?

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2. Read Genesis 22:1-18 tells of another parent who had to let go of his child in obedience to God. Who were the father and on and what was the outcome of letting go?

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## The Take-Away for Me

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Looking back to the account of Moses, we see that he is being returned to the arms of his birth mother. What joy Jochebed must have felt!

Birth mothers today may feel that same joy when they hold their newborns or welcome an older child into their home.

But how did Hatesphut, the adoptive mother, feel?

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## Chapter Seven

### Gut-Wrenching Loss

“There are losses we'll have to sustain, though they may be balanced by our gains, as we move away from the body and being of our mother. But if our mother leaves us--when we are too young, too unprepared, too scared, too helpless--the cost of this leaving, the cost of this loss, the cost of this separation may be too high...For the presence of mother--our mother--stands for safety. Fear of her loss is the earliest terror we know.”

-Judith Viorst, *Necessary Losses*

### The Story of Moses

Jochebed's heart was brimming with joy. Joy that her prayer was answered. Joy that her baby wasn't eaten by crocodiles. Joy that God kept his promise. But joy, especially, that she and the family would be able to have further bonding time with him as well as teach him the ways of the God of Israel.

Jochebed was convinced that God had a very special plan for her baby's life. After all, look at the lengths he went to in saving the infant from death. She also knew that Hatesphut, her baby's adoptive mother, probably believed that the baby was a gift to her from Hapi, the Nile god. With this in mind, Jochebed knew how important it was to instill the spiritual foundation of the God of her fathers, Jehovah. Jochebed would tell her son about the God of Israel every time an opportunity presented itself.

And so, life began anew. It was a wonderful new beginning, yet there was a dark cloud hanging above, reminding everyone in the family that their time with Moses was limited.

Miriam and Aaron were little helpers to Jochebed. They loved playing with him as the years progressed.

The years flew by so quickly and it was time for Moses to be weaned.

Before they knew it, the day they had dreaded for four years had arrived. The heart-wrenching day when they would have to say good-bye to Moses forever.

As Jochebed dressed her little boy for the last time, tears flowed.  
“What's the matter, mama?” Moses asked.

Amram was in the other room silently rehearsing a child-like explanation of the upcoming event for his son. “Where should I begin? How can a four-year-old child possibly understand that we are doing this to save his life? What if my son wonders if we are giving him to Hatshepsut because something is wrong with him or because we don't love him?”

As Amram explained the upcoming event to his son, the boy buried his face in Amram's lap. "No, papa! Me stay here with you and mama!"

And so, in silence and with heavy hearts the little family gathered his belongings and walked together to Pharaoh's palace.

Hatshepsut eagerly awaited their arrival.

The boy clung to Jochebed as they approached the palace doors. Jochebed lifted him up and carried him inside as he tucked his head beneath her chin. It was hard to believe her son was already four.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

A servant dressed in Egyptian finery opened the palace door and ushered them in. What a contrast the shiny, marble floors, tall pillars and statues of the Egyptian gods were to Moses' simple family abode.

With flowing silk robes and a high hat covered with jewels, Hatesphut greeted them with outstretched arms. "I thought this day would never arrive," she said. "I am so glad to see you, son!"

After a few minutes of awkward pleasantries, Amram and Jochebed said, "We have to go now, son. You will be staying here from now on. We love you and will never forget you."

As Jochebed placed her son in Hatshepsut's arms, he screamed, "Mama, papa, don't go! Miriam! Aaron!"

They gave him one last hug as he cried, "Mama, papa, please don't leave!"

Even though Jochebed and Amram's hearts were breaking, they were confident that God had saved him for a specific role in history—he was adopted for a purpose. And so they left, broken-hearted, but putting their trust in God.

Again, Moses lost all that was familiar. His family. His home. His heritage. His people.

He tightened his little body and pushed Hatesphut away. Deep in his heart, Moses didn't feel like he belonged to anyone. His birth parents abandoned him and his adoptive mother was a complete stranger. He clung to the little blanket Jochebed had wrapped him in while floating on the river. That was his only tie to the past.

1. List words that would describe the feelings of:
  - a. Amram and Jochebed

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b. Miriam, the sister

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c. Aaron, the older brother

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d. Moses

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e. Hatesphut, the adoptive mother

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## **Experiences of Triad Members**

### **Adoptee**

Marcy Wineman Axness in an article for *Chain of Life* titled, "Betrayal," says, "Betrayal curls through my soul like the sunken steel mesh that buttresses skyscrapers. I can't quite see it, but it's what I'm built on. It wrinkles my life, and bristles in me at inopportune moments, in inappropriate ways."

A four-year-old child says in *Talking with Young Children about Adoption*, by Susan Fisher and Mary Watkins, "Why would a woman who grew a baby give that baby away? Why would a mother give up a baby? But I want to know why."

### **Adoptive Parents**

Sunny Marantz-Greenberg, Ph.D., and Herbert M. Greenberg, Ph.D. say in an article titled "Adoptive Parents Have Rights Too," "In late October, Cheryl summoned us to her side when she had an emergency C-section. That night and throughout the next day, we held, fed, and cuddled the newborn baby boy. The next morning Cheryl told our attorney that she had changed her mind and was keeping the baby. He asked her how she expected him to break it to us. 'Go get drunk,' she advised him. Words cannot describe our heartbreak."

### **Birth Parents**

"At certain times of the year, it's as if I can still feel her inside of me. It's at those times that I feel lonely. My body remembers what I was going through--it's really weird. It's a memory when your body goes through a trauma like that," says a birth mother in an article titled, "From the Heart of A Birth Mother" in *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

### **Birth Grandparents**

A Letter to my Granddaughter

Although I consider myself a literate and learned man, I confess that these are the hardest words I have ever written in my nearly fifty years.

Do you see that before you ever came into this world you were loved and special? You were also early, two months to be exact, crying and wiggling, flush with life and defiant of the odds which are accorded babies like yourself. All of us wept and said good-bye to you several times: at your birth, at the regional hospital and finally at the critical care unit. You are so tiny to have changed us forever.

I am giving this letter to an intermediary who is helping handle this adoption. I have told him to let your mother and father read it, and they can show it to you when they feel the time is right. I may be gone from this world when you reach adulthood and want to know more about why you are the way you are. I cannot tell you who I am, but records will be available to allow you to find out more when the time is right. In the meanwhile, remember these words which are a consecration of your birth. "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life and he will give you many years in the land" (Deuteronomy 30: 19-20).

### **How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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### **What Adoption Experts Say**

LaVonne H. Stiffler, Ph.D., in a research article titled, "Adoption's Impact on Birthmothers: 'Can A Mother Forget Her Child?'" says, "The grief mothers who lose children through adoption has been socially unacknowledged...Parental loss of a child is a particularly devastating grief, no matter what the age or circumstances...In its complexity, she has lost not only an infant, but a preschooler, a teenager, a young adult, and her grandchildren. It is unnatural, unexpected, and involves many complex issues...The reported incidence of birth mothers who suffer long after relinquishment appears to be low, and this is largely because of the 'conspiracy of silence' and the prevalent mythology surrounding birth mothers. Adoption legislation and practice have traditionally underplayed the role of the birth parent in the adoption process..."

"What I discovered is what I call the primal wound, a wound which is physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual, a wound which causes pain so profound as to have been described as cellular by those adoptees who allowed themselves to go that deeply into their pain," says Nancy Verrier, MSW, acclaimed author of the groundbreaking book *The Primal Wound*.

Jim Gritter, MSW, author of *The Spirit of Open Adoption* says, "The pain associated with adoption is miserable stuff. It's the birth father in the hospital corridor curled up in a fetal ball of self-blame. It's the doctor saying, 'You're pregnant.' It's the 80-year-old birth mother rocking and mumbling, 'They shouldn't have done that to me, they shouldn't have done that to me, they shouldn't have...' It's the eight-year-old sobbing, 'I wish I had started in your tummy.' It's the dazed birth mother standing alone on the sidewalk as the adoptive family drives away with her two-day-old daughter. It's the hopeful couple driving away with their two-day-old daughter, leaving their child's birth mother standing alone on the sidewalk. It's the 21 year-old being told he has no right to his original name. It's finding out for the first time from falling-down drunk Uncle Charlie at the family reunion that you're adopted. The permutations of adoption pain are endless."

### **Digging Deep for Answers**

1. Isaiah 42:3 gives a promise for those who are traumatized.  
What is the promise and what does it mean to you?

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2. Psalm 68:19 tells who bears our burdens. How would that be done, who does it, and what burdens are you carrying right now?

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3. II Corinthians 12:9 tells what gives us the strength to walk through difficult times. What is it and how has it shown up in your life in regard to adoption pain?

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### **The Take-Away for Me**

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## Chapter 8

### Misplaced Anger

“I am convinced Moses was doing more than grandstanding. I believe he was absolutely sincere. He didn’t see himself as murdering a cruel slave-driver as much as courageously striking a blow for God’s people.”

-Charles Swindoll, *Moses...A Man of Selfless Dedication*

### The Story of Moses

Moses’ adoptive mother placed him in the finest of Egyptian schools and taught him the customs of the land.

Word had it that as a kid, he had a short fuse. Word had it that as a kid he had a short fuse. Temper tantrums in the palace were common, accompanied by deep hostility toward Hatshepsut, his adoptive mother.

From where did this anger come? And why was his adoptive mother usually the brunt of it?

One day when Moses was a young adult his anger hit an all-time high when he witnessed an Egyptian brutally abusing a Hebrew slave. As he watched the man being ruthlessly kicked and beaten, he snuck up from behind and grabbed the Egyptian by the neck. He began punching him mercilessly, first in the face, then in the stomach. Within seconds, the Egyptian was dead. The other Hebrew man who was there fled, as Moses looked frantically from left to right, to see if anyone else had witnessed the murder. He fell to the ground, and with sweat running from his brow, he furiously shoveled huge handfuls of sand to make a hole big enough to bury the body.

The following day, he intervened in yet another dispute-- this time between two Hebrew men. “What are you arguing about? Can I help?” he might have asked.

When one of them asked if he was a self-appointed judge like he had been the day before, adrenaline pumped through Moses’ veins at an all-time high. With teeth clenched and body stiffened, he fled as fast as he could in the opposite direction toward the backside of the desert.

Perhaps there he would be safe from his life crime-stained life. Perhaps there he could begin life anew.

Hatshepsut learned quickly about the murder and this time it was she, instead of Jochebed, who feared for her son’s life. She would not see him for many years and often wondered, “Did I do something wrong in bringing him up? Where did this behavior come from? There never was the closeness with her son that she had hoped for. What went askew?”

1. Why do you think Moses had such a problem with anger?

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2. Why do you think Moses' anger came out at this specific time?

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## **Experiences of Triad Members**

### **Adoptee**

"My anger comes out at the strangest times."

"When is it ever going to go away (anger)?"

### **Adoptive Parent**

Jana Wolff, in *Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother* admits her true feelings: "Dear birth mother: Screw you. Do you think I want to beg a complete stranger for a kid whose mother doesn't want him? You messed up and now you sit in judgment of the perfect parents for your baby...Who are you, anyhow? What kind of person would get herself knocked up by a scummy guy who runs away when he hears the news?"

### **Birth Parent**

"In 1967, society dictated that an unmarried mother was not worthy or capable of raising a child without a father. I accepted this 'wisdom' provided by my social worker and well-meaning mother," says Barbara Wolfson.

## **How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## What Adoption Experts Say

"What are adoptees angry about? Lots of things. They're angry with people like me because we gave them away. They need an explanation or an apology. Of course they can't get one because we're nowhere to be found, which frustrates them and makes them mad as hell. They're angry at adoptive parents because they can't explore the subject of adoption openly. Why? Because it makes you cringe," says Carol Kimissaroff in an article titled "The Angry Adoptee" in *Kinquest Newsletter*.

## Digging Deep for Answers

1. Read Ephesians 4: 26. What does God say about anger?

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2. Put Ephesians 4: 26 in your own words.

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3. What does Ephesians 4: 26-27 say will happen if we don't deal with anger on a daily basis?

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4. Depression is anger turned inward. What is God's promise to those who are depressed in Matthew 12:20?

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5. What does God promise in Psalm 18:28?

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## The Take-Away for Me

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## Chapter Nine

### Surprised by Mercy

“Give me the love that leads the way,  
The faith that nothing can dismay,  
The hope of no disappointments tire,  
The passion that will burn like fire,  
Let me not sin to be a clod:  
Make me thy fuel, flame of God.”

-Amy Carmichael, *Toward Jerusalem*

### The Story of Moses

#### (Exodus 3)

On his way to the backside of the desert to a place called Midian,

Moses met and then married a woman named Zipporah. She bore him a son, and Moses named him Gershom, which means, “I have become an alien in a foreign land” (v. 22).

In this new life as a married man and father, Moses became a shepherd for his father-in-law, Jethro. Needless to say, it was a cultural shock going from a pampered life in a palace to tending sheep in the hills of Midian.

While tending sheep, he could slip away into a state of fantasy. At times he would imagine himself being rescued and loved by a strong, compassionate person. At other times, he envisioned himself as a member of a happy family gathered around the fireside, laughing and singing.

Sooner or later, however, the euphoria from the fantasies turned into disappointment, frustration and anger. Even though the happy family and nurturing person were within sight through fantasy, they were just out of reach in real life.

Jochebed had fantasies too. Every time she saw an Israelite boy who would be the age of her son, she envisioned what Moses might be like. Hatesphut did the same.

Moses had no idea that he was subconsciously grieving for the family he lost at adoption.

One evening when Moses was deep in thought, bright orange flames illuminated the sky. For the first time in his life, his attention was drawn away from the fantasy to a power greater than his pain.

“There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a blazing bush” (v.2). Moses stopped dead in his tracks with his eyes fixed on the burning bush. “Why is it so bright? Why doesn’t the scraggly little thing burn up? Why don’t the shooting flames extinguish?” he may have asked himself.

“I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up” Moses said to himself (v.3).

When the Lord saw that he was coming to check it out, he called to him from within the bush, “Moses. Moses”(v.4)!

“Here I am,” Moses said, wondering where the voice was coming from (v.4b).

“Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place you are standing is holy ground” (v.5).

“Holy ground?” Moses may have said, furrowing his brows. “WHAT is holy ground?”

“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (v.6).

“The God of my father?” Moses may have said. “Which father? My birth father or my adoptive father? I get so confused whenever family heritage is discussed.”

“...Moses hid his face because he was too afraid to look at God” (3:6b).

“Since this God knows my nationality and my name, what else does he know about me?” Moses might have thought. “Does he know that I killed an Egyptian and buried him in the sand?”

Moses fully expected God’s bar of justice to come down on him hard. It seemed certain that God would declare him guilty for killing the Egyptian and therefore worthy only of rejection.

Moses’ fear of rejection came from guilt—true guilt, for he had sinned when he murdered. In fact, he pursued a sinful lifestyle because he hadn’t loved God with his whole being every moment of every day.

Much to Moses’ surprise, God revealed a specific plan for his life. A plan that would relieve the suffering of the Israelites and give them freedom. “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt” (v.10).

“*Could* it be? *Could* it *really* be that God *could* and *would* use me to help accomplish his will?” Moses may have said to himself.

All of a sudden Moses’ mind flooded with fear.

1. Describe what you think one of Moses' fantasies might have been.

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2. What does this scenario teach you about God?

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## **Experiences of the Adoption Triad**

### **Adoptee**

#### **My Fantasy** -Amy van der Vleit

The non-identifying information fact sheet  
tells me,  
as I scan it for the millionth time  
for the answers to my questions,  
that reading, golf, and water-skiing  
were their hobbies.  
The irony of it,  
for they are mine as well.  
Wouldn't it be lovely to share  
just one  
sun-soaked afternoon on the lake  
with my knight in shining armor,  
and the woman whose face  
I search for in a crowd?

### **Adoptive Parent**

"We dreamed of the child whose face would mirror ours."

### **Birth Parent**

"Over the years, I often thought about my daughter. Is she happy, safe and doing well? Did I do the right thing giving her up so she could have a real home with two loving parents?"

## How I Feel About the Triad

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## What Adoption Experts Say

Jack Hayford, senior pastor of The Church on the Way, eloquently says in *Destiny and Deliverance*:

"The story of Israel's slavery in Egypt,  
The revelation of God's heart of agony over their pain,  
The summons of God to call and capacitate a deliverer--  
These reveal God's heart.

The record of God's miracles of power,  
The numerous offers of divine mercy if Pharaoh would yield,  
The salvation God gave through the Passover lamb---  
These reveal God's heart.

The determination of a boy to forsake a status and convenience,  
The indignation of a privileged prince over the inequity and injustice surrounding him,  
The refusal of a man to deny his identity  
Though it disadvantaged him--  
These reveal God's heart overtaking a person.

The discovery of a man who missed his first chance  
That there was a God who hadn't forgotten him,  
The surprise of a man who found a second chance  
Could be found at the feet of God.  
The surrender of a man who stepped out of fear and uncertainty  
To serve God's will in caring for others--  
These reveal God's heart possessing a person,  
Bringing him beyond feeling God's heart  
To being paced by His heartbeat."

## **Digging Deep for Answers**

1. Read Jeremiah 29:11. What does this promise and do you believe it? Why or why not?

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2. Read John 3:16-17. What is your concept of God? Do you see him as a big fly swatter in the sky, or a God of mercy? Explain how this relates to you're adoption experience.

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3. Read Zechariah 3: 17-18. How does God feel about you and how does this make you feel?

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## **The Take-Away for Me**

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## Chapter 10

### Crippling Inferiority

“If you want to be mightily used by God, you will always walk with a limp.”  
- Rick Warren, “The Strength of Weakness”

“God seems to *prefer* using people with broken pinions.”  
-Charles Swindoll, *Moses...A Man of Selfless Dedication*

### The Story of Moses

(Exodus 3-5)

Moses was becoming painfully aware of his vulnerability. When God revealed his life calling, Moses thought of every excuse in the book why he shouldn't take the job.

Lack of self-esteem was the first. “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt” (3:11)?

Unbeknown to him, his birth and adoptive mothers struggled with the same issue. Jochebed kept saying to herself, “What kind of mother would give her baby to a stranger?” And Hatesphut said, “What must I be like to have raised a son who committed murder and then left my life and home without a word?”

God answered by giving Moses a promise: “I will be with you” (3:12).

Excuse number two was that he had no message. Nothing to say. “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them” (3:13)?

God answered by giving him a message. “I am who I am. This is what you are to tell the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (3:14).

Next Moses tried the “no authority” line. “Well, what if they don't believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you’” (4:1)?

God countered, “What is that in your hand” (4:2)?

“A staff,” Moses replied.

“What does that have to do with anything?” Moses might have wondered.

The Lord said, “Throw it on the ground” (4:3).

So Moses threw it on the ground and it became a hissing snake. Moses jumped back in sheer terror.

“Reach out your hand and take it by the tail,” God said.

“You’ve got to be kidding! Pick up a snake by the tail?” Moses was probably thinking. “Nevertheless, Moses reached out and took hold of the snake’s tail and it immediately turned back into a staff in his hand” (4:1-4).

Then came excuse number three—I’m not a public speaker! “I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (4:10).

God replied with questions about creation and then gave a tender promise. “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb: Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say” (4:13).

“I’m just a big chicken, Lord,” Moses might have thought. “... *please* send someone else” (4:13, emphasis mine).

At that point, God stopped nudging Moses toward his life calling. But he didn’t give up on him. Instead, he tried “plan B.”

1. After all the training Moses had been given in Egypt, why do you think he felt so inferior?

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2. What is the most important answer God gave Moses to his fears?

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## **Experiences of Triad Members**

### **Adoptee**

"I feel like a loser most of the time."

"I have a deep need to justify myself."

"I look at others and wish I could be as confident as them."

"Sometimes I pretend I am someone else."

"No one even suspected. I was an NFL player, tough and mean, built up like a marble statue, cavalier and confident, a man's man. I guess I was those things, but at the same time, of course, I was still the boy who would cry himself to sleep over the tragic ending of a book," says Tim Green in *A Man and His Mother: An Adopted Son's Search*.

### **Adoptive Parent**

"I am afraid my child will favor the birth parents over us."

"I feel like a second-class parent because we couldn't conceive."

"When my child says, 'You're not my *real* mother, it is hard to not take it personally."

### **Birth Parent**

"Sometimes I ask myself, 'What kind of parent would give their child away?'"

"I think the main issue in my life is guilt. It just won't go away."

"At times I do feel guilty for not raising her, but I know I would feel even more guilty for raising her myself," one birth mother said in the Fall 1995 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*.

## **How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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## **Digging Deep for Answers**

1. When Moses said, "I'm not able," what did God say in Philippians 4: 13?

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2. When Moses said, "I've got nothing to say," what did God say in I Corinthians 15:3-4?

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3. What does God say to those who, like Moses, say they have no authority? See Matthew 28:18-20.

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4. What does God say about Moses' fear of public speaking? See Philippians 2:13.

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5. What does God say when Moses said "I'm chicken?" See Philippians 2:13.

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### **What Adoption Experts Say**

Betty Jean Lifton says in *Journey of the Adopted Self*, "A perceptive therapist can help the adoptee....during this time when it seems that there is no self in charge, the adoptee may despair that the emotional chaos will ever end. 'I feel like a battle is going on between the outside me, who is trying to change by expressing her feelings,' says Robin. 'The inside me feels trapped.' Through therapy, she is learning that it is all right to express her anger. 'I'm starting to let the storm exist outside of me so that it is not so intense on the inside. But the outside me says no, that will offend and push people away.'

"Nave (1989) found that many birth mothers who had gone to their churches for advice and support during pregnancy were counseled in a manner they now regard as antithetical to Christianity: shame-based rather than love-based. The results were feelings of demoralization, lowered self-esteem, and estrangement from the church," says LaVonne Stiffler in her research article, "Adoption's Impact on Birth Mothers."

### **The Take-Away for Me**

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## Chapter 11

### Blessed Reunion

“There are at least 80,000 generations behind us and we are incapable of blessings ourselves or giving blessing to others until we are first able to bless our origins.”

-Carlyle Marney, *Achieving Family Togetherness*

### The Story of Moses

#### (Exodus 5)

“What about your brother, Aaron, the Levite? I know he can speak well. Aaron will be your spokesman before Pharaoh” (5:14).

“Whew!” Moses must have muttered beneath his breath. But then he thought, “My brother? I hardly remember him. He is just a shadowy figure from my past. I am relieved that somebody else is going to do the job, but why did God reach way back into my past and choose somebody from my birth family to do it? I am terrified that Aaron will reject me.”

“He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you,” God said (4:14).

“What will I say?” “How will I act?” “Will I laugh or cry?” both Aaron and Moses may have wondered.

As Moses crossed the desert and neared the mountain of God, his heart felt like it was going to beat out of his chest. Flashbacks of his parents and brother and sister turning their backs on him on adoption day were mixed with warm memories of his big brother taking care of him when he was a small child.

As he neared the mountain of God, a tall, slim figure came into view.

“Moses!” Aaron shouted, running toward him, arms outstretched.

“It’s so wonderful to see you!” they echoed, kissing one another, first on one cheek and then the other.

“Do you remember when we used to play together when you were little?” Aaron might have asked as they sat by the fireside that evening. “How are mother and father?” Moses probably said. “Are they still living?”

As they talked, Moses experienced feelings he had never known before. Feelings of completeness. Of peace. Of connection.

“Then Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say, and also about the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform” (v. 27-28).

Following this sweet time of fellowship with his long-lost brother, Moses returned to his father-in-law, Jethro, expressing his desire to return to Egypt to see if his people, the Israelites (which included his birth family) were still alive.

One can't help but wonder if a dual-theme began at this point in Moses' life, where his life calling became intricately woven together with his adoption experiences. Not only was he to fulfill the divine command by demanding that Pharaoh release the Israelites, but in a personal, adoption-related way, he was about to face his cruel adoptive grandfather, Pharaoh. He also had the joyful anticipation of seeing both his birth and adoptive mothers.

“I am being stretched into a leadership role that is forcing me to face my greatest fears—rejection by Pharaoh and rejection by the people he would be leading,

God warned that when Aaron demanded release of the Israelites, Pharaoh would refuse to listen ten times. The result would be specific plagues upon the Egyptians. Water would change into blood. Frogs. Gnats. Flies. The livestock would be plagued. Boils. Hail. Locusts. Darkness. The Passover. The death of the firstborn.

Moses watched as Aaron spoke to Pharaoh eight times, but on the ninth confrontation, during the plague of darkness, Moses spoke alone before Pharaoh.

1. What do you think it would have been like for Moses to see his birth mother, Jochebed, after all these years?

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2. Do you think he saw his adoptive mother again? What would that have been like for both of them?

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3. Who planted the idea of an adoption reunion in Moses' mind?

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How interesting. It is often in our darkest hours that we embrace God's strength and grace. Moses was proving that those with the deepest fears have the greatest capacity for faith. *Finally*, he was living out his life calling!

Perhaps during this return to Egypt, there were two adoption reunions—one with his birth mother and another with his adoptive mother.

“What could be better,” Jochebed might have said, “than to see the spiritual foundation I laid take fruition! Moses has chosen Jehovah as his God and has stepped into his life calling! Not in my wildest dreams would I have seen my son become a mighty leader and lead our people out of slavery in Egypt and into the promised land. How faithful is our God!”

## **Experiences of Triad Members**

### **Adoptee**

"To see oneself incarnate after searching for so long...to touch the hair that before was only your own...to feel the texture of the skin that no one else in your life had ever possessed...to see the same nervous twitch in the corner of your eye...to sense the staccato inhalation of breath before speaking words full of emotion...to grasp hands that were shaped in the way of your own, just as strong, just as caring...are the things that most people can never know....So for me, it was as if I had lived my life in darkness and could suddenly see," says Tim Green in *A Man and His Mother: An Adopted Son's Search*.

### **Adoptive Parents**

"We quickly assured her that she should investigate if she wanted to and if in any way we could be of assistance, we were eager to do what we could. That was the politically correct answer to give, but the truth was that we both felt as if we had been hit in the stomach with a sledgehammer," says Marilyn Meberg in *I'd Rather Be Laughing*.

### **Birth Parents**

Marilou Russell's mother says in an article in *Whole Life Times*: "Not having an education or any job skills, I thought it would be the best thing for her to be raised by a family with love and means to provide the things she would need. I often thought of searching for her, but not knowing if she'd been told she was adopted, I would talk myself into thinking it was best for her just to leave things alone. When she called, I was in a wheelchair, using a leg brace (I have multiple sclerosis). Now I don't even use a cane to walk. I started improving the day she called. Isn't it strange what your subconscious can do? I stopped searching for faces in crowds the day she called. It is so nice to have such a beautiful thing back in my life."

Robin Grant, in an article titled "A Birth Mother's Acceptance," appearing in the Fall 1998 issue of *Jewel Among Jewels Adoption News*, says, "I have no desire to ever meet my daughter. I hope she is happy and has a full life too. I am proud of the woman I have become, but do not feel the need to mother anyone. Not every birth mother wishes to enter the life of their children."

## **How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parents' experience?

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### **What Adoption Experts Say**

David Brodzinsky, Ph.D. and Marshall D. Schechter, M.D., say in *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*, "We are often asked, 'What percentage of adoptees search for their birth parents?' And our answer surprises people: 'One hundred percent.' In our experience, all adoptees engage in a search process. It may not be a literal search, but it is a meaningful search nonetheless. It begins when the child first asks, 'Why did it happen?' 'Who are they?' 'Where are they now?'"

### **Digging Deep for Answers**

1. What does Ecclesiastes 3:6 say about searching?

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2. Who prompted Moses about searching? See Exodus 4: 14. What did God assure Moses of?

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3. What do you think the greatest fear is when contemplating reunion? How interesting that God addressed that directly with Moses! What is *your* greatest fear?

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### **The Take-Away for Me**

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## Chapter Twelve

### Seeing the Missing Face

I've heard the call to climb—  
To heights that have no limit  
In heav'nly realms sublime.

I'm heading for the summit,  
I see the prize held high;  
I'm pressing on to win it,  
Whether I live or die.

I'm heading for the summit,  
To see my Savior's face;  
And in the Holy Spirit—  
Exclaim: "I'm saved by grace!"

### The Story of Moses

Moses lived a long and fruitful life as a key instrument in the hand of his loving God. God molded and pruned him and taught him that the most important thing in life is intimacy with him.

The time of Moses' death was fast approaching. He was at the ripe old age of 120.

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given the sons of Israel. When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people'" (Numbers 27:12-13).

Moses must have wept as he stood with the people on the banks of the Jordan River, looking across to the Promised Land.

How dear they had become to him! He had carried them "as a nurse carries a nursing infant" right up to the border of the land which they had spent a lifetime searching for (Numbers 11:12).

Standing together on the riverbank, he gave his final blessing. Adoption themes are woven throughout.

One sentence in particular revealed his perception of adoption. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

As he said these words, it was as if his life passed before him. Looking all the way back to his birth, he saw the arms of Jochebed, his birth mother, holding and nursing him. He saw the arms of his adoptive mother, Hatshepsut, rescuing him from death, caring for him and loving him. But

beneath all those arms, he saw another set of arms holding him securely—the everlasting arms of God.

Even though his heart was breaking, he took every opportunity to minister to the needs of God’s people.

First he reminded them of their position with God. He said, “Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders” (Deuteronomy 33:12).

Secondly, he reiterated God’s opinion of them. “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands” (Deuteronomy 7:6-9).

Afterwards, he climbed to the highest part of the mountain where he could see a spectacular view of the Promised Land. The faithfulness and goodness of God were the last things he saw before he took his last breath.

Afterwards, the same arms that carried him throughout life became the arms that carried his body to the grave. God was taking such intimate care of his own, for “no man knows his burial place to this day” (Deuteronomy 34:6).

Moses, the adoptee, had been the object of God’s special care from birth until death. He had now received the ultimate healing—death. He was finally at home, face to face with the Lord he adored.

1. Do you think Moses was afraid of death? Why or why not?

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2. Read John 8:51. What will each Christian see at the time of death?

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## **Experiences of Triad Members**

### **Adoptee**

"An adoptee searches for a face in a crowd that resembles her own. A birth mother watches children about the same age as the one she relinquished, wondering what he looks like now. An adoptive parent gazes at a newborn infant, silently grieving for the child whose face would mirror his.

Silent longing for the missing face.

Many of us touched by adoption believe if we could only see the face of the lost loved one, the hurt would magically disappear. The grief would be resolved. The life-long repercussions would evaporate.

True, those who have found the missing face of a loved one through reunion have experienced much healing. What a joy for an adoptee to finally see someone who looks like her, or a birth mother to discover the physical and temperamental similarities of her grown child. Yes, seeing that missing face brings validation and healing.

But there is more!

Ask any of those who have found the missing face if the healing is complete. Does the past pain of a birth mother vanish at reunion? Does a reunited adoptee no longer struggle with fears of rejection after reunion? Does the sadness of never seeing the face of a biological child ever disappear from the hearts of adoptive parents? More than likely, the answer is no, not completely.

Why?

Because the face we are ultimately searching for is not the face of our birth mother or our biological child or grandchild or the child relinquished at birth.

Though we may search, reunite and even rejoice together, there is still another face that is missing. It is the face of the One in whose image we were created. The face of the One who loved us so much that he died for us. The face of Jesus Christ.

The moment we see him face to face in heaven, every need will be satisfied and every tear wiped away. The healing will be complete, the validation unimaginable. Perhaps David was referring to this when he penned the words of Psalm 17:15: "And I – in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness."

Exodus 33:11 says there was only one person in the course of history who didn't have to wait until heaven to see God face to face. How interesting that person was Moses, the adoptee.

- Sherrie Eldridge

### **Adoptive Parent**

"I began telling of this event (reunion) by saying the experience was and continues to be one of loss for me as well as one that has enlarged my interior landscape. It is a loss because I now share Beth as a daughter, and that had never been my expectation nor had it been my desire. Beth is eager that I know she will always consider me her mother, and no one could ever change that deep bond," says Marilyn Meberg in *I'd Rather Be Laughing*.

### **Birth Parent**

Carol Schaefer says in *The Other Mother*, "Months passed. No formal invitation was extended to meet my son. I was tired of being obsessive, of waiting. I wanted my life back. I wanted to be normal like everyone else, to be able to say, "I have three sons," without feeling guilty saying it."

### **How I Feel About the Triad**

1. How do you feel about adoptees after reading this?

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2. How do you feel about adoptive parents right now?

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3. How do you feel about the birth parent's experience?

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### **What Adoption Experts Say**

"Adopted older adults may feel disconnected from their adoptive families as well as from their birth families. By this time, no doubt, both sets of parents have died, as well as many of their birth and adoptive siblings. So one last time, the adoptee will metaphorically climb the stairs, open the closet door, and take down the box to deal with his 'issue'--the fact of being adopted. This time, what happens will be a final understanding of what being adopted has really meant," say Brodzinsky and Schecter in *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*.

### **Digging Deep for Answers**

1. God has been WITH you all of your life, from eternity past to conception to birth to now. He loves you so much that he wants to come IN you--to dwell in your heart and give you comfort and love that you never knew was possible? Don't believe me? Read John 14:17b and find the words "with" and "in." Why not find a quiet place, get down on your knees and ask him to come in?

"Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I have not loved you with my whole heart and soul and mind. I have been angry with you about my pain from adoption. Please forgive me, cleanse me with your blood shed on the cross and send your Holy Spirit to live within me forever."

2. What is the secret for coming to terms with unanswered adoption questions?  
Read Philippians 4:11-12.
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3. Meditate on these thoughts from *Destiny and Deliverance*: (Printed with permission of Zondervan Publishing).

"A single thread in a tapestry  
Though its color brightly shine  
Can never see its purpose  
In the pattern of the grand design.

And the stone that sits on the very top  
Of the mountain's mighty face,  
Does it think it's more important  
Than the stones that form the base?

So how can you see what your life is worth?  
Or where your value lies?  
You can never see through the eyes of man.  
You must look at your life,  
Look at your life through heaven's eyes."

## The Take-Away for Me

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# Beauty for Ashes...

## A Healing Journey for Those Touched by Adoption

**Presents Perspectives of Entire Triad  
Brings Understanding  
Validates Triad Feelings  
Based on Life of Moses & Families  
The Final Step toward Peace about Adoption**

**Suitable for:  
Individuals  
Counselor/Client  
Support Groups**



**Sherrie Eldridge**, a reunited adoptee, is a woman gifted with a unique ability to wrap words around feelings that adopted children, teens, and adults often feel but are unable or afraid to verbalize. With transparency and candor, she speaks from both a personal and professional point of view. She is the author of the highly acclaimed *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew* (Dell, 1999, 2004) and *Twenty Life-Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make*, both available at any bookstore or online.

She welcomes correspondence via the internet at [www.adoptionjewels.org](http://www.adoptionjewels.org) or [www.SherrieEldridge.com](http://www.SherrieEldridge.com)