

## Shiphra and Puah's Story

By Caleb Yoder

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S: Puah! Puah! I haven't seen you in ages! Peace be with you!

P: (whisper) My dear sister Shiphra. It has been too long! If only the taskmaster wasn't expecting me over at the granary to help thresh wheat.

I always remember fondly those days when we were both the community midwives.

S: Yes, indeed, sister. It's hard work, but there is nothing like the joy after a successful labor of holding that little one in your arms. A fleeting wave of joy in a sea of sadness.

(Sigh) It's hard enough to hold a perfectly formed child with no breath. Or whisper, "it's OK" to mom, when you know she won't make it. More bitter still is to witness a healthy boy ruthlessly murdered. Oh, Puah, here I go again, and you must be on your way...

P: Don't worry about me! I'll find a good excuse. Have courage, sister! God will raise up our liberator. If God has blessed us so richly with families, we haven't seen the last of God's blessings. God used our humble efforts, so think what God will do when our liberator comes!

S: Do you mean when Pharaoh summoned us and ordered us to kill the baby boys? Like we could do such a heartless thing!

P: Yes, when he summoned us the second time, I'd swear they could see me shaking. I thought for sure we'd be executed. You were brilliant, Shiphrah! My mind just freezes in moments like that, but *you* spun the genius tale about how Hebrew women were so strong, the baby was born before we could get there. And he believed you! How good God was!

S: It bought us a little time, I suppose. Honestly, how would a man like Pharaoh have any idea how birth even works. I didn't tell a *complete* lie. Hebrew women *are* the strongest there are... just not *that* strong.

But, I don't know if it was the right thing to do. It only hardened the Pharaoh's heart even more. Now our enemies have no pity even for a year-old boy.

P: It *was* the right thing. I know God was with us. Sister, we had Pharaoh fooled for a season, even if not forever. Think of all the lives we saved. I see Tobiah helping his mother almost every day. He's six now, can you imagine? Toby was right after Pharaoh's first decree. To think we'd never see him or many others if we'd hadn't bought a little time.

S: True enough, but our people live in such terror. Mothers trying to not become too attached to their toddler boys, because once the soldiers spot them, they're tossed in the river. And once they learn to walk, how can you conceal them? They only want to explore! How bitter the burden of a mother!

And I can think of a burden even worse! Do you know about Jochebed, the wife of Amram the Levite?

P: Yes... She has a son Aaron, born before the terrible decree. And an older daughter Miriam.

S: And *another* son, too. That they *never* mention. Of course, I don't blame Jochebed. None of us know what to do. She was so scared the second son would be found and tossed in the Nile, like so many boys. So she put him in the Nile before they could do it for her.

P: What? Surely, she didn't kill her own son!?

S: No, no, you misunderstand. She placed him in a sealed basket, sent him floating down the river, she did. I don't think she thought about what would happen next. Just sent Miriam to look after him. And who should discover him, but one of the daughters of the Pharaoh!

P: *And?*

S: He was adopted into Pharaoh's family. For awhile Jochebed even went to the palace to work as a wet nurse. They didn't know she was actually the birth mother, after all.

P: So, the second son is alive, living in Pharaoh's house? A Hebrew raised as an Egyptian royal! You can't make this stuff up!

S: It's a *tragedy* if you ask me. Better a child lost than a Hebrew boy turned into our *enemy*.

P: But he's alive. And enemy or no, a mother *never* gives up on a child.

S: How I wish I had your faith, Puah! How long will our God delay in buying us back from our slavery? How long?