

Exodus 2 – 4 The Hebrew Midwives — Teaching Outline

I. Historical Setting

- **New Pharaoh** (Ex 1:8) – a ruler “who knew not Joseph,” unaware of Israel’s former service to Egypt.
 - **Egypt’s Fear** (Ex 1:9-10) – concern that Israel’s rising numbers could ally with enemies and “*get them up out of the land.*”
 - Plan: “*deal wisely*” → suppress growth before war breaks out.
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II. Egypt’s Oppressive Strategy

1. **Forced-labor slavery** (Ex 1:11)
 - Taskmasters imposed *hard service in mortar and brick.*
 - Contrast with other forms:
 - Chattel slavery - ownership of persons
 - Indentured servitude - fixed-term debt labor
 - Conscription/forced military service
 - **Forced labor** – Israel’s likely condition: exploit strength yet keep people weak enough to prevent revolt.
 2. **Genocidal decree** (Ex 1:15-16)
 - Pharaoh orders Hebrew midwives to kill every newborn **male** and spare the females.
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III. The Hebrew Midwives

Name	Meaning	Significance
Shiphrah	“Fair / Beautiful”	One of few women named in Exodus
Puah	“Fragrant” or “Cry out”	Highlights importance of their testimony

- **Identity** – Nearly all modern scholars read them as **Hebrew**, not Egyptian.
 - **Sacred calling**
 - Midwifery aided fulfillment of **Abrahamic covenant** to multiply descendants (Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:2-6).
 - “*Stools*” (Ex 1:16, Heb. *’ăḇnāyim* = “two stones”) – traditional birthing seat still used in some cultures.
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IV. Fear of God & Civil Disobedience

1. **Midwives’ choice** – “*feared God and did not as the king commanded*” (Ex 1:17).
 2. **Biblical definition of fearing God** – Deut 10:12-13 → loving, serving, **keeping His commandments**.
 3. **Explanation to Pharaoh** (Ex 1:18-19)
 - Hebrew women are “**lively**” (Heb. *ḥayyōt* – vigorous, blessed) and deliver before help arrives.
 - Pharaoh’s prejudice makes the excuse plausible.
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V. Divine Reward

- **God’s response** (Ex 1:20-21) – dealt well with the midwives; “*He made them houses*” (households, lineages).

- Patrilineal society would normally overlook women's lines—here God establishes and remembers them.

VI. Prophetic / Theological Parallels

Passage	Theme	Connection
Daniel 3	Obedience vs. state-imposed idolatry	Hebrews refuse king's command
Revelation 13	End-time civil power enforces false worship	Parallel to Pharaoh's decree
Revelation 14:6-7	First angel: " <i>Fear God ...</i> "	Echo of Deut 10; call to universal obedience

Lesson: Decide *ahead of crisis* to honor God's absolute authority, even when civil laws conflict.

VII. Key Takeaways

1. **Covenant faithfulness** – God advances His promise despite oppression.
 2. **Sacredness of vocations** – Everyday roles (midwifery) become instruments of salvation history.
 3. **True fear of God = active obedience** in faith
 4. **Blessing follows faithfulness**
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Scripture References (quick list)

- Exodus 1:8-22 (core passage)
- Genesis 12:2; 15:5; 17:2-6 – covenant promise of multiplication
- Deuteronomy 10:12-13 – fear of the Lord defined

- Daniel 3 – ‘fiery furnace’ narrative
 - Revelation 13 – coercive end-time civil/religious power
 - Revelation 14:6-7 – first angel’s message
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