



Shemot- Names Exodus 1:1-6:1

Haftarah - Isa. 27:6-28:13

B'rit Hadashah- I Cor. 14:13-25

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Shifrah and Puah 2 Eishet Chayel- Woman of Valor

Parshah Overview:¹

The **children of Israel** multiply in Egypt. Threatened by their growing numbers, **Pharaoh** enslaves them and orders the Hebrew midwives, **Shifrah** and **Puah**, to kill all male babies at birth. When they do not comply, he commands his people to cast the Hebrew babies into the **Nile**.

A child is born to **Yocheved**, the daughter of Levi, and her husband, **Amram**, and placed in a basket on the river, while the baby's sister, **Miriam**, stands watch from afar. **Pharaoh's daughter** discovers the boy, raises him as her son, and names him **Moses**.

As a young man, Moses leaves the palace and discovers the **hardship** of his brethren. He sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, and **kills** the Egyptian. The next day he sees two Jews **fighting**; when he admonishes them, they reveal his deed of the previous day, and Moses is forced to flee to Midian. There he rescues Jethro's daughters, marries one of them (**Tziporah**), and becomes a **shepherd** of his father-in-law's flocks.

G-d appears to Moses in a **burning bush** at the foot of **Mount Sinai**, and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and demand: "**Let My people go, so that they may serve Me.**" Moses' brother, **Aaron**, is appointed to serve as his spokesman. In Egypt, Moses and Aaron assemble the elders of Israel to tell them that the time of their redemption has come. The people **believe**; but Pharaoh refuses to let them go, and even intensifies the suffering of Israel.

Moses returns to G-d to protest: "**Why have You done evil to this people?**" G-d promises that the **redemption** is close at hand.

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Shifra & Puah -2 Mighty Woman of Valour Eiseh Chayel

Here we have the Torah giving honor to 2 great Woman of Valor and Action who stood against the evil decree and risked their lives to save the lives of Hebrew babies. We see this same spirit at work with those who hid the Jews during the Holocaust even though it was a death sentence if they were caught. We see the same spirit in those who stand against Abortion trying to once again save the lives of the innocent.

Exo 1:1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household:

Exo 1:2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,

Exo 1:3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,

Exo 1:4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

Exo 1:5 All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt.

Exo 1:6 Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.

Exo 1:7 But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

Exo 1:8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Exo 1:9 And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

Exo 1:10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Exo 1:11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.

Exo 1:12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

Exo 1:13 So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves

Exo 1:14 and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

Exo 1:15 Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah,

Exo 1:16 "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live."

Exo 1:17 But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

Exo 1:18 So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?"

Exo 1:19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them."

Exo 1:20 So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.

Exo 1:21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.

Exo 1:22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

These were truly Woman of Valor/Eishet Chayel

Facts about Shifra and Puah:²

- They were midwives who attended the births of the Hebrew women (Exodus 1:15);
- They were brought before the Pharaoh who told them that when they went to deliver the baby of a Hebrew woman and saw them *"upon the stools"* (referring to birthing stools-- which I have more information on further down) they were to kill the baby if it was a boy but let it live if it was a girl (Exodus 1:16);
- Despite the Pharaoh's command they feared God and refused to kill the boy babies (Exodus 1:17);
- When Pharaoh found out that they were disobeying him and not killing the boy babies he called for them and asked why they were saving the boys alive (Exodus 1:18);
- They told Pharaoh that they were unable to kill the babies *"...Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them."* (Exodus 1:19);
- The Pharaoh believed their excuse and the people of Israel multiplied and grew stronger (Exodus 1:20);
- Because they feared God over man, God *"delt well"* with the midwives and blessed them with *"houses"* or in other words, posterity (Exodus 1:21).
- Puah means *"splendid"* in Hebrew and Shiphrah means *"brightness"*.

Midrashic interpretations

The 11th century Jewish rabbi Rashi's Talmud commentary on the passage from Exodus identifies Shiphrah with Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and Puah with Miriam, Moses' sister, making the two midwives mother and daughter respectively.^[1]

Woman In Judaism³ Leah Kohn

Our Sages tell us that the midwives Shifrah and Puah were none other than Jochebed and Miriam, the mother and sister of the yet to be born Moses. Rashi (R' Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105, the preeminent Torah commentator) tells us that the name Shifra comes from a Hebrew root that means, "the capacity to make something better, or to improve its quality." In keeping with this characteristic, and contrary to Pharaoh's orders, Shifrah did everything she could to assist the Jewish women in childbirth and to care for their infants after delivery. The name Puah, comes from a Hebrew root that implies a particular gift of speech. Rashi comments that Puah was able to soothe a crying baby to sleep with her special way of talking. Shifrah and Puah's response to Pharaoh's ordination is surprising. We might have expected them to either:

² Woman In The Scriptures

³ Torah.org

1. **Outright refuse to participate with Pharaoh**, in keeping with the Torah mandate that a Jew who is ordered to kill another Jew under threat of his own death, should sacrifice his/her own life first, or...

2. **Comply with his orders out of fear for their own lives.**

Shifrah and Puah were on a very high spiritual level – obviously the type of women who would not hesitate to follow the way of the Torah, and to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of other Jews. Instead, they accept their mission from Pharaoh, and then do exactly the opposite of what he commands. Why this rather convoluted strategy? Considering Shifrah and Puah were not afraid of being put to death by Pharaoh for going against his orders, why did they not tell him, “no” to his face? Given their spiritual greatness, the approach they chose was definitely not an act of cowardice, but instead something more premeditated.

Shifrah and Puah’s greatness does not lie only in the fact that they did not kill their fellow Jews. This we expect from every Jewish woman. Rather, what is extraordinary is that, under the circumstances, they had the cool and the ability to think and come up with an original solution. They knew that saying “no” to Pharaoh and losing their lives would only result in the appointment of another two Jewish midwives for the task. These two might be spiritually weaker and willing to give in to Pharaoh’s demand, with the resulting termination of the Jewish Nation. So they say “yes” to Pharaoh while, to themselves they said, “we’ll find a way to get out of this, but we won’t give Pharaoh the option to approach other midwives, because we don’t know who those others will be.”

In contriving his plan of infanticide, Pharaoh did not reckon with Shifrah and Puah’s fear of God. The Torah tells us, “the midwives feared God and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them” The text continues, “and they caused the boys to live” (Shemos, 1:17). In other words, the midwives’ commitment to God included a commitment to the promulgation of the Jewish people, which they expressed not only by saving the lives of Jewish-born infants, but by doing everything in their power to care for them after birth. Further, the Midrash tells us that they prayed to God to preserve even the babies who were to die of natural causes, in order to avoid giving Pharaoh the impression that they were in fact abiding by his decree.

Pharaoh eventually summons Shifrah and Puah, and asks them, “How is it that you are not doing my job, whatever I told you to do?” They respond, “the Hebrew women are unlike the Egyptian women, for they are experts; before the midwife comes to them, they have given birth” (Shemos 1:19). The two midwives contend that there is only the afterbirth left by the time they arrive, and that to kill the newly born infants at this point would be to reveal their role as Pharaoh’s secret agents. This, Shifrah and Puah argue, would only cause the Jewish women to further deceive them, by giving later due dates, in which case they would never know when a birth was taking place. Shifrah and Puah convinced Pharaoh to continue using their services, which enabled them to continue to preserve the Jewish people.

Subsequently, the Torah text tells us, “God benefited the midwives” and that, “the people increased and became very strong” (Exodus 1:19). Why are these two ideas placed together? And why are they followed by, “And it was because the midwives feared God that He made them houses” (Exodus 1:21). This last statement seems as though it should follow, “God

benefited the midwives,” as an explanation of the type of reward God gave them for their commitment.

The Or HaChaim (R' Chaim ben Attar, 1696-1743) explains that this seeming interruption – that the Jewish nation multiplied and got very strong – is part of the reward, in two ways. In one way, every baby that was born and remained alive was credited to Shifrah and Puah. Essentially, the Jewish people prospered in the merit of these two women. Even more beautiful, perhaps, is the second explanation that implies they sought no reward from God, but wanted only to serve Him as instruments for the survival of the Jewish people.

Jewish Woman Archives⁴ Midrash and Aggadah

However, according to one unique tradition, Shiphrah and Puah were non-Jewish midwives, who were said to be pious women and true converts (*Midrash Tadshe, Ozar ha-Midrashim* [Eisenstein], p. 474). This tradition would read the phrase “the Hebrew midwives” as “the midwives of the Hebrew women.”

Most of the Rabbinic traditions identify Shiphrah with Jochebed; she was called “Shiphrah” because she would cleanse (*meshaperet*) the newborn by washing it and cleaning it after birth; another etymological explanation is that the Israelites were fruitful [*she-paru*] and multiplied in her time because of her or that she herself was fruitful and multiplied (*Sifrei on Numbers*, para. 78). According to another tradition, she *shiprah* her actions before God (i.e., performed good deeds that were pleasing to the Lord). Another midrash relates that she smoothed over (*shiprah*) her daughter’s words: Puah had spoken impudently to Pharaoh, who sought to kill her in his anger. Shiphrah placated him, saying: “Do you pay attention to such a one as her? She is a witless baby.” Another tradition bases its explanation on Job 26:13: “By his wind the heavens were calmed [*shifrah*].” The verse describes the heavens that were created by God for Israel, and it was Shiphrah who returned Israel to their Father in heaven (*Eccl. Rabbah* 7:3; *Ex. Rabbah* 1:13).

Who Are Woman of Valor?

Gods Aishet Chayel has Wisdom and Virtue

⁴ <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/shiphrah-midrash-and-aggadah>

Proverbs 11:16 – A woman of honor

Proverbs 12:4 – Hebrew/Chayel – a strength of mind or body, a morally strong woman is a crown to her husband, but the weakling contracts and communicates such diseases as being rottenness to the bones.

Crown – Hebrew/Atarah – an emblem of honor

Proverbs 14:1 – The wise woman through proper management increases the property, furniture, food and raiment of the household, but the thrifless woman causes the blessings to depart.

Ruth 3:11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

The Aishet Chayel Ministry in the Word

Matthew 27:55-56 – To their honor, these woman showed more courage and affectionate concern for their Lord than the men who had promised to die with Him. They ministered to Him out of their substance.

Woman in the New Testament did preach, pray and prophesy

Romans 16:9 – Phoebe called to minister

Acts 18:1-18, 26, Romans 16:3, 1 Cor. 16:19 – Priscilla and Aquilla ministered with Apollos

Romans 16:7 – Junia

Philippians 4:2-3 – Eusodious and Syntyche

Acts 21:8-9 – Phillips four daughters prophesied

John 4:29-30 – Woman at the well

Mark 5:30-34 – Woman with issue of blood

Matthew 28:1,10 – Woman at the tomb

Acts 8:3-4 – Woman preaching persecuted by Saul

Acts 1:14, 2:4 – Jewish woman in the upper room

How to live and minister as Gods Aishet Chayel/Woman of Valour

Galatians 6:2 – Sympathize, show mercy and love and do not browbeat a fallen brother/sister

Galatians 6:10 – Do good to all men, friends and enemies

Matthew 10:42 – Attitude toward new believers and children, the minutest details of goodness will not go unrewarded.

Deuteronomy 10:12 – Love and serve God, Spirit, Soul and Body

Ephesians 6:7-8 – Serve as unto the Lord who sees all

Hebrews 12:28 – Serve God with fear (reverence, godly fear)

John 12:26 – The Father honors those who serve Yeshua

1 Cor. 7:22 – The Lords servant is a freeman, not one in bondage

Colossians 3:24 – Your reward is from the Lord

Psalm 40:8 – We should delight in serving God

Psalm 126:5-6 – The law of sowing and reaping. Even though at times there is hurt, tears, discouragement and pain, if you keep your eyes on Yeshua/Jesus you will reap with joy.

May we go forward as God's Aishet chayel-Woman Of Valor
Shining Forth as Menorah's Of Light For Messiah Yeshua