



Near and Now

For Good – Shiphrah and Puah
By Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller

Warm-up Question

*Have you ever disagreed with or gone against a policy/rule that seemed wrong?
If so, give examples. If not, can you think of a scenario in which you would?*



Photo by Megan Stallings on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

The Midwives Feared God

Read [Exodus 1:15-21](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Shiphrah and Puah were caught in an impossible situation: the most powerful person in Egypt had just ordered them to participate in the genocide of the Hebrew people. In the beginning of Exodus, we learn that a new king has arisen to rule Egypt, and was distressed by the powerful presence of the Hebrew people. The king set to work enslaving the Israelites, but soon discovered their resilience as they continued to increase in number. The malicious king was set on destroying the people of Israel, and so enlisted the aid of the midwives in order to cut off the population growth. It is unclear whether Shiphrah and Puah were themselves Hebrew, or if they were Egyptians serving as midwives to the Hebrew people; regardless, their knowledge and fear of God gave them the courage they needed to defy the authority of the king and protect the children of the Israelites, even at great risk to their own lives.

As midwives, these women were trained to be stewards of life and protectors of women and children when they were at their most vulnerable. To participate in the murder of innocent children would be to go against every sacred responsibility entrusted to them as midwives; but to defy the king would endanger their own lives and futures. In deceiving Pharaoh, Shiphrah and Puah actually showed great integrity by refusing to betray the sacred calling of their profession, and by trusting that God would use them to enact good amongst God's people.

The story of Shiphrah and Puah shows us that in order to follow God and remain true to our vocational calling, we cannot blindly follow the orders of others – even when they are in a position of power. History has shown us over and over how easy it is for the powerful to become corrupt – which is why it is all the more important that we remain grounded in our faith in God, which calls us to strive for the good of all people in everything we do. Even when it seems as though we have no other choice than to go along with something we know to be wrong, Shiphrah and Puah show us that there is always another choice – and God will be with us whenever we courageously choose the path that leads to goodness and life.

Discussion Questions

1. Imagine yourself in the position of Shiphrah and Puah as they stood before the king as he commanded them to kill the Hebrew babies. What feelings do you notice?
2. Have you ever had to choose between following a rule/order or listening to your conscience? What are some similarities between your experience and that of Shiphrah and Puah?
3. How do you understand what it means to “fear God”? How does this show up in your life and your faith?
4. How do you think Shiphrah and Puah might have told their story?
5. Think of a time when you felt sure that God was with you as you made a difficult decision. How did you know you were making the right choice?
6. Who do you know that embodies the courage of Shiphrah and Puah?
7. How do you stay grounded in your faith and morals when you are facing external pressure?
8. Where do you feel God calling you to stand up for what is right in our world today?

Activity Suggestions

Write Shiphrah and Puah in the middle of a sheet of paper. Take two colored markers; with one, write out the hard feelings or thoughts the midwives must have had when the king ordered them to kill the Hebrew children – with the other, write out the positive feelings or thoughts they must have had when they were successful and rewarded with families of their own. Find a way to visually indicate that God is present with Shiphrah and Puah amidst all of this.

Think of someone who you view as a person of courage and integrity. Write them a note to let them know the ways in which they inspire you.

Have everyone think of something that would have been helpful for them to hear/remember when faced with a difficult decision. Put the pieces of paper in a container and pass it around the room for everyone to take one.

Prayer Concerns

For those midwives and those who protect birthing people and infants.
For those with the courage to do what is right even in the face of persecution.
For those who long for God's presence and protection.

Closing Prayer

Lead me to stand up for what is right, O God. Give me courage and protect me amid the challenges and dangers of doing so. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

