

Bible Background

The Book of Exodus in the Old Testament tells the story of God delivering God's people, the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt into a land God would provide for them. The journey to this Promised Land was long and began when God called a hero named Moses to lead the Israelites away. But Moses' story doesn't begin with his response to God's call—it began with some important women who saved Moses' life.

The Israelites had been in Egypt since the father of the people of Israel, Jacob, had moved with his family to find relief from famine. His family not only survived, but thrived, and their numbers continued to increase. They became so numerous, in fact, that after several generations of continued growth, the pharaoh in Egypt was worried that they would be a threat to his power.

In an attempt to eliminate this perceived threat, the pharaoh tried working the Israelites to death. But the Israelites became even more numerous, so the pharaoh ordered two midwives who assisted Hebrew mothers giving birth to kill any baby boy born to the Israelites. The two midwives charged with this task, Shiphrah and Puah, defied the pharaoh's order and refused to kill the Hebrew boys. They told the pharaoh that Hebrew women gave birth so quickly that no midwife could arrive in time to carry out the pharaoh's order!

These heroic women knew that their obedience lies ultimately with God—not Pharaoh. Without the cooperation of the midwives, Pharaoh turned to his own people to carry out his plan. He told them, "Throw every baby boy born to the Hebrews into the Nile River, but you can let all the girls live" (Exodus 1:22). But this time, even Pharaoh's own daughter disobeyed his order! An Israelite woman named Jochebed had hidden her son in a basket among some reeds in the river. Pharaoh's daughter heard the Hebrew child's cries and showed compassion, naming the child Moses and adopting him into Pharaoh's own household. And thanks to some quick ingenuity from the baby's sister, Pharaoh's daughter even paid Jochebed to nurse the boy, in stark contrast to the pharaoh's enslavement of the rest of the Israelites.

The Hebrew word used to describe the basket made by Jochebed is the same word used for the ark built by Noah in the Book of Genesis. In both instances, the word describes a vessel through which God provides deliverance. God delivers Moses from the pharaoh's decree, but in just a few years, God will use the boy who has been delivered to deliver all the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

God calls us to be helpers. Heroes answer the call and help others! These women—Shiphrah, Puah, Jochebed, the pharaoh's daughter, and Moses' sister—opposed Pharaoh's violence against God's people. God consistently works through people who are disregarded by those in power to subvert that same power. At Hero Hotline VBS, we will learn how helping others shows people how much they matter to God, and how much good we can do when we work to help others together!



Bible Story

Shiphrah, Puah, and
Miriam: God's Wonder
Women
Exodus 1:8–2:10

Hotline Verse

So let's strive for the
things that bring peace
and the things that build
each other up.
(Romans 14:19)

Hotline Tip

Heroes are called to...
Help Others!

Teacher Tip

This Bible Background
feature is a supplemental
aid provided for you,
the Storyteller, to give
context for each session's
story before you teach
on it. You may share this
information with your
Heroes, if desired, but it
is not a recommended
portion of the intended
lesson.