



Justice Needs Allies

Exodus 1:15-2:10

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Exodus 1:15-2:10

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?” The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.” So God was kind to the midwives

and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live." Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

"I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land."

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Exodus 1:10

“Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

“I think what changed, in the most incremental, boring way possible, is that at some point I had the sensation that these stories are not fabricated tales happening to other, possibly fictional, people: They are the underlying shape of reality. They are renditions of the recurring patterns of life. They are the scripts we repeat...We use the biblical stories to understand [our] dimension of aliveness...If there are no overarching stories, then life is meaningless. Life does not feel meaningless. These stories provide, in their simple yet endlessly complex ways, a living script. They provide the horizon of meaning in which we live our lives—not just our individual lives, but our lives together. These stories describe a great moral drama, which is not an individual drama but a shared drama. We are still a part of this drama, as Jayber Crow put it, created and being created still.”

- David Brooks, *The Second Mountain*

Exodus 1:16

“When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.”

Exodus 1:17-19

The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of

Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?” The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.”

What it means to be an ally is to transfer the benefits of your privilege, and even authority, to those who lack it.

1 John 3:18

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

“The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“There is no doubt that God is present but quite below the surface of the rhetoric. However, the narrator has wrought a powerful interface between the hiddenness of God and the daring visibility of women.”

- Walter Brueggemann, *New International Biblical Commentary*

Exodus 2:3-4

But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

Exodus 2:5

Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it.

Exodus 2:6

She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

"It is the women who have compassion – and justice without compassion is not justice. It is as if the Torah were telling us that Moses, the supreme embodiment of the passion for justice, is not enough. There must be, in Carol Gilligan's phrase, 'a different voice,' the voice of empathy, sympathy and attachment, the values that make us human, if we are to create a society in which justice has a human face."

- Jonathan Sacks, *Exodus: The Book of Redemption*