

Bible Heroes

Shiphrah
& Puah

Teachers
Story notes



Essential Teachers notes:

It's important to note the background of midwifery. Shiphrah and Puah probably got married as teenagers and wanted to have children. In a heartbreaking practice, their lack of ability to conceive or carry would mean they become midwives. These two, though failures in the eyes of society, are the very definition of a super hero: A powerful enemy, the lives of innocents at stake, and an evil plan to undo. There would be no Moses basket without these women.

Main Passage : Exodus 1

The Bible is full of Heroes. Some heroes are given a little bit of God's strength to do amazing things, others are given some of God's power to heal, some have amazing faith. But... God didn't give today's heroes anything special. No miraculous gifts, no messages, no powers, and they had to face and defeat an evil plan and save God's people. They were real life super heroes.

God's people, had moved to Egypt because there had been a famine. When the famine was over they decided to stay. As their family grew bigger the Pharaoh noticed and what he saw he didn't like. 'Look at all those Israelites' he thought 'There are so many of them living in our land, enjoying our resources, if they want to stay then they are going to have to work for us!' and so he made the Israelites, God's family, his slaves.

The Israelites worked hard and built some fantastic things, but they kept having babies and kept growing. Pharaoh realised the Israelites were taking up even more room, using even more water and food. The more the Israelites grew the worse it became and the harder they were forced to work. Life became very hard. The pharaoh decided he had to stop them growing and the best way would be to stop them having babies.

And now we meet our heroes. One is called Shiphrah and the other Puah! They were midwives. I wonder if you've ever met a midwife. Midwives help new babies and their mummies.

As the midwives who were working with the Israelite people Pharaoh's plan involved Shiphrah and Puah. They were called to meet the Pharaoh at his palace. Shiphrah and Puah had never been anywhere so impressive. The floor was covered in little patterned tiles and long rich fabrics hung on the walls by the windows. Benches with real gold decorations were along the walls and the pharaoh stood with a huge gold headpiece (crown) and a cloak made of leopard skin draped around his shoulders. Shiphrah and Puah were terrified. This was the most important man in the world and he wanted to talk to them!

After they had bowed, the pharaoh spoke

"When a baby is born, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live."

Shiphrah looked at Puah, Puah looked at Shiphrah, what should they do? If they said yes then the Pharaoh would kill them for disobedience, because nothing was going to make them kill the newest members of God's family. But nobody ever said no to a Pharaoh! Thankfully, the pharaoh didn't wait for an answer.

A few months later they were back at the palace and this time the Pharaoh was furious. He shouted and screamed at the two women "Why are their so many baby boys? Why didn't you kill them?"

So they did the only thing they could think of. They lied. They told the Pharaoh that the Israelites were not like the Egyptian women. They told the Pharaoh that the women had already had the babies by the time they reached the house. That they got there too late to take the baby way, that it had already been given to the mother and shown to the father. They stood in front of the most powerful man in the world and told him a huge load of lies.

Shiphrah and Puah held their breath... could an evil plan really be defeated by a simple lie? The Pharaoh didn't know anything about how babies are born, so he believed them! The babies of the Israelites were safe.

2 women had stopped the most powerful man in the world from his evil plan. Just like super heroes. God saw how brave they had been and he gave them the one thing they had wanted most in the world... children of their own.

The Pharaoh needed a new plan... But that's next weeks story!

Today's heroes are Shiphrah and Puah because they shows us the gift of real Super heroes