**Session 3: Week 2b**

**Start at 13:20**

***God of Deliverance***

**Exodus 1:15 – 2:10**

**29-30 August 2022**

**Being Shrewd, Part 2** – When Pharaoh’s first “solution” backfired on him, he went to two Hebrew midwives and told them to kill all the male babies. These two women were probably not the only two Hebrew midwives, but they may well have been “heads of the guild”, the ones who would deal with Pharaoh and be in charge of all the rest. So by Pharaoh giving Shiphrah and Puah this order, he was in effect telling *all* the Hebrew midwives to kill the male newborns.

**Fearing God vs Fearing “a god”** – Pharaoh was regarded as a god to his people, but Shiphrah and Puah did not fear him; rather they feared God, the Creator of heaven and earth. They lied to Pharaoh about the birth of the male babies because they desired to preserve the lives of the infants under their care. This incident is one of many throughout scripture of “woman versus the serpent.” In this case, they take the serpent’s weapon of deceit and turn it against him. Regardless of what we may think about their lies, it is clear that God *blessed* them because they feared Him: He gave them children of their own. *(We will look more at this issue of “lying for a higher cause” after watching the video.)*

**God’s Faithfulness Amidst Escalating Evil –** When Pharaoh sees that telling the midwives to handle the “situation” is not working, he then commands *everyone* to murder all male Hebrew newborns by drowning them in the Nile. This is evilly ironic: the Egyptians considered the Nile River to be the source of life, but Pharaoh turns it into an instrument of death. It is very interesting to note that the only two *names* given in this account are those of two lowly Hebrew midwives, while Pharaoh’s name is unrecorded. We have no idea who he was. God honors and memorializes those who fear Him, but the names of those who do not are blotted out. And because of the bravery of these two women, when the time comes years later for Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, there are 600,000 grown men among them. This means that 600,000 male babies did NOT die because Shiphrah and Puah put their own lives on the line to rescue them from death. These women were the Israelites’ first two deliverers, in every sense of the word!

**The Significance of Women** – Pharaoh seems to discount girl babies as being of any significance. He certainly did not consider them to be a threat to his plans. Yet in chapters one and two, it is women who continually foil him. In Exodus 2:1-10, there are 16 nouns that refer to women, words such as “daughter”, “sister”, “mother,” etc. Each woman mentioned plays a very important role in the account of what happened.

**The Basket –** We rarely think about the fact that it was an enormous act of courage for Amram and Jochebed to get married in the time and circumstances in which they lived. For them, getting married almost certainly meant that they would have children…and what would happen then? Sure enough, the very next verse following the account of their marriage tells us that Jochebed became pregnant and had a baby boy. When she couldn’t hide him any longer, she prepared a basket for him. The Hebrew word translated “basket” here is also used to talk about the *ark* of Noah’s day or a *casket*. Moses wrote both accounts (Noah’s ark and his own birth), and he wants us to make the connection between them. The ark passed through the waters of death, carrying the children of God safely to the other side. So Moses wants us to understand that God will also use the basket his mother prepared to carry him safely through the waters of death. She may have wept as she prepared the basket, thinking it would serve as his casket, but God used it as an ark of safety for him. It was Moses’ sister, not his mother, who stood close enough to where he had been put into the water to see what would happen to him, perhaps because Jochebed couldn’t bear to watch him die.

**Moses’ Name –** When Pharaoh’s daughter saw the infant, she immediately knew that it was a Hebrew boy, probably because he was circumcised, since the Egyptians did not circumcise their children. [Edie’s note: Another reason would be that his basket was in the Nile River: she was aware of the king’s edict about drowning the boy babies.] Later on she would give him the name “Moses,” a name that had meaning both in Egyptian and in Hebrew. The Hebrew meaning was “to draw out”, so she was making a play on the word. We, however, know that his name had a deeper meaning than she was aware of, since when he grew up, he would draw his people out of Egypt.

**Female Deliverers –** Pharaoh had the mistaken idea that daughters were of no consequence to him or his plans and yet five female deliverers are mentioned in the opening chapters of Exodus: the two midwives, Moses’ mother and sister, and even Pharaoh’s own daughter. All five played a crucial role in preserving Moses’ life so that he could preserve the nation. These women *see*, they *hear*, they *know*, and they *act*. Through them the Bible gives a compelling picture of what female bravery looks like. When we hear the word “deliverer”, we need to take it literally in Exodus 1 and 2: these women delivered the babies from certain death to certain life. They stood in the gap and said, “We fear God more than we fear Pharaoh.” Each of us has the opportunity to do just the same thing. Each of us will at some point be placed in a position where we will have to choose between doing what is asked of us and doing what is right.

**A Continuing Thread –** Moses had a definite purpose for structuring the book of Exodus the way he did. As we continue on through the book, we need to be looking for how the theme of deliverance that was introduced in the opening two chapters is carried out in the rest of the book.