

Shiphrah's name means Beautiful, and Pu'ah's means Splendid.

Q: Why might their names be recorded in Scripture, but not Paharoah's.

Q: St Andrew's Mission Partner, Jane Knoop says: 'We should be the Gospel change we want.' How might you be a Gospel-change-agent in your work/family/community?

Prayer Suggestions

For people who are oppressed

For people who are enslaved today

For people who feel victimised because they are different

For people struggling to work ethically

For our witness at work/college/among friends and family—that we might be Gospel-change-agents.

That God might speak through His Word as we study Exodus.

St Andrew's Goldsworth Park
Sunday May 15 2016
Kate Wyles

study notes

Exodus 1.1-22

Oppression

Oppression

- Exodus 1.1-22

Opener

Have you ever had benefits included as part of your employment package? For example: health insurance, subsidised canteen, fridge with free Coca Cola (at Microsoft!). Can you share what they were? What do you think they aim to achieve?

The Hebrew midwives (verses 15-19) are in the pay of Pharaoh. What are the benefits of that? What are the drawbacks?

Background

In Hebrew the first word of Exodus is 'and'. 'And' links the books of Genesis and Exodus together encouraging the reader to see that this is a story that continues from the beginning of time.

Look at the first five verses of Chapter One. They look back at what went on in Egypt for Jacob's family, as told in Genesis.

Q: Together see what can you remember of the family's arrival in Egypt?

Around 400 years has lapsed since the end of Genesis, and Jacob's descendants the Hebrews now have a very different relationship with Pharaoh.

Q: What has changed? Why has this affected the relationship? How is Pharaoh going to manage the situation? (Verses 7-14)

God has used this time of peace to grow Jacob's descendants and to fulfil his promise in Genesis to Abraham, or Abram as he was then known. See Genesis 12.1-3.

A swarm of blessing

The Hebrew of verse 7 is striking:

'The Israelites became fruitful and **swarmed**... they increased in number and became exceedingly strong.'

The Hebrew word echo the words God uses to bless the earth through creation in Genesis. The birds of the air, the fish of the sea multiply - they *swarm*. The earth becomes a place that teems with life - and in the same way Joseph's descendants multiply.

Q: Think back to Genesis 12. Why did God want the Hebrew's to *swarm*? (God meant the swarms for good - to bless the nations.)

Quote from David Cameron 2015: "You have got a **swarm** of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life, wanting to come to Britain because Britain has got jobs, because it's an incredible place to live."

Q: How does the use of the word *swarm* here differ from God's intention of the Hebrew-swarm?

Quote from the sermon: 'Used in this way 'swarm' is the language of separation and fear. The swarm is not meant for good and blessing. It is the language of them and us used throughout time whether to describe refugees, or benefit scroungers, or Jews, or Muslims... words that blame another group for the ills of our time, take the focus away from our own problems and reinforce the attitude that all that we have is ours and ours alone rather than a blessing from God.'

Q: Do you agree? Are there times when we should be afraid of the 'swarm' as Pharaoh was? Can you offer examples when welcoming people who are 'different' from the majority has been good for a community/nation/church?

Pharaoh is afraid of the *other* - his attempts to control the Hebrew's through slavery fail so he calls the midwives. However, they do not follow his commands them to murder the Hebrew baby boys. Notice the careful way that they explain their actions using language that reinforces his prejudice, and reduces their personal risk.

Q: The midwives action has been described as a the first Biblical act of civil disobedience. Have there been times when you have had to stand-up to an authority figure? Can you share how that felt? What are some of the things that might prevent us from not following orders at work/in society?

Pharaoh believes that he is in control but the text reveals that there is a greater power at work. Shiphrah and Pu'ah, the Hebrew midwives put their trust in that greater power, and fear God not Pharaoh. They remind us that God works through us human beings - and especially through his people for the blessing of others.