

1. A question of Authority – Who has the ultimate authority?

- God v. Pharaoh, King of Egypt
- Who is King?

- Exodus begins with two examples of Civil Disobedience
 - The midwives
 - Pharaoh's Daughter.

2. Pharaoh -

- Is considered an incarnate god –
- Is thought to have power over **chaos** (*Isfet*) to bring **order** (*Ma'at*)
- Considered Judge and Law-Giver – no limits to his power.
- The Pharaoh of Exodus epitomized the aspects of a human totalitarian dictator.
 - Egypt was the most powerful nation in the ancient world

- One aspect of the Exodus narrative shows God as the ultimate judge over Pharaoh.

3. Pharaoh's Plans Backfire:

- Persecution of the Hebrews leads to an increase in number (Ex. 1:12)
- So often, the plans of a totalitarian dictator end up having the opposite effect
 - “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Ps. 118:22)
- Pharaoh's attempted genocide is met with civil disobedience

4. Exodus 1:15-22

5. Shiprah and Puah:

- In the book of “the Names” (Hb. *Shemot*), their names are enshrined because of their courage.

6. “Hebrew midwives?” or “Midwives to the Hebrews?”:

- The phrase is ambiguous and can be translated either way.

- Why would Pharaoh trust Hebrew women to murder their own?
- It seems more likely that Pharaoh would enlist Egyptian women to carry out his plan.

Josephus – *Antiquities*, Book 2, Chapter 9 (206-207)

“the **Egyptian mid-wives** should watch the labors of the Hebrew women, and observe what is born, (207) for those were the women who were enjoined to do the office of midwives to them; and by reason of their relation to the king, would not transgress his commands.

- Their moral character transcends their race – the fact that the text is ambiguous is deliberate.

7. **Exodus 1:17** – The Midwives Feared God

- The text here uses the term *Elohim* for God – not the name of God, YHVH.
 - Elohim – impersonal force of God.
 - YHVH – the relationship aspect of God

- The midwives’ consciences tell them there is a greater authority in the world that must be obeyed rather than a formal belief in the God of Israel (see Romans 2:14-15)

8. **God provided “Households for them”** -

- Midwives were often women who were not able to have their own children.
- If this is the case, then we have a Measure for Measure
 - Because they saved the male children
 - God gave them children of their own.

9. **Non-Violent Civil Disobedience:**

- God handles Pharaoh and Egypt. He does not want the Israelites to become violent.
- Disobedience comes when we know we are being directed to do something God does not want to happen. We act on God’s moral principles because we know there is a greater authority than human institutions.

10. **The Zealots and Jesus:**

- God will handle the Romans. Do not take matters into your own hands.
- The Zealots wanted to take the matter into their own hands.
- Jesus does not respond violently when persecuted. He maintains his humanity and trusts that God will handle those who unjustly persecuted him.