

February 25, 2021

Read Exodus 1

Key verse: Exodus 1:21

And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.

A Fear That Can Save Your Soul

The Bible is not a book for the meek. It contains accounts of horrible, atrocious acts that can make you cringe. The first chapter of Exodus tells us about a ruler who enslaves an entire class of people, then enacts a policy of killing male babies. This dreadful task is handed to the midwives who help the Hebrew women give birth.

But the midwives refuse to commit such a crime, and when Pharaoh discovers that his orders are not being followed, he summons the midwives, who concoct a great lie to keep them from getting killed by Pharaoh; they tell Pharaoh that the Hebrew women give birth before midwives arrive to help them.

And you can't blame the midwives for lying; to confess that they refused to carry out their orders would have meant their own death, or worse. But there were moral lines that these women refused to cross, even if their refusal put their own lives in jeopardy. Another way to say it, these women feared God more than they feared Pharaoh. And so God blessed them with families.

We become aware of our fear of God when we feel a strong compulsion to act against the will of God – like when someone threatens to kill you if you don't kill someone else. Our choices are usually not that stark, but we face moral dilemmas every day with regard to our treatment of the planet or treatment of our fellow human beings. To the extent that we ignore the needs of those around us we are failing to fear God. Fear of God is a soul-survival instinct; we need that fear if we hope to stay in relationship with him.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for guiding us in your ways, ways that lead to life, not death. Help us to fear you enough to think about our actions and the potential harm that those actions incur. Help us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, even as he leads us through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Amen.