

Exodus 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive?

Analysis

And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? (וַיָּקֹרֶא מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם לְמַלְאֲכִים לְמִתְלָדָת, vayikra melekh Mitsrayim lameyaldot)—Pharaoh's interrogation reveals his realization that the genocide isn't occurring. The question **Why have ye done this thing?** suggests either suspicion of deliberate disobedience or confusion at the policy's failure. The king who commanded death is now forced to ask for explanation—a subtle reversal showing God beginning to frustrate Pharaoh's plans. The interrogation sets up the midwives' shrewd response (v. 19), which may be tactical deception or genuine observation of Hebrew women's vigor.

Historical Context

Royal summons to explain policy failures indicates serious governmental concern. That Pharaoh personally questions midwives (rather than executing them immediately) suggests either their social standing, the scale of the problem (widespread non-compliance), or divine restraint on his anger. This scene previews the confrontations between Moses and Pharaoh (Exodus 5-12).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you respond wisely when questioned by authorities about your obedience to God over human commands?
2. What does Pharaoh's need to question rather than simply execute reveal about God's protective hand on the faithful?

Interlinear Text

לְקֹדֶשׁ	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל	אָמַר	לְמַיְלָד	תְּמִצְבָּה	יְמִינָה	מִלְגָד	אֶלְעָגָל	וְלֹא	אָמַר	לְמַיְלָד	תְּמִצְבָּה	יְמִינָה	מִלְגָד	אֶלְעָגָל		
called	And the king	of Egypt	for the midwives	and said												H0
H7121	H4428	H4714	H3205	H559												
עַלְתָּםִים:	אֲתָּה	פְּנֵי	רְבִנָּה	עֲשֵׂיתִ	מִדְּעָתִ	וְעַ	עַלְתָּםִים:	אֲתָּה	פְּנֵי	רְבִנָּה	עֲשֵׂיתִ	מִדְּעָתִ	וְעַ	עַלְתָּםִים:	אֲתָּה	
unto them	Why	have ye done	this thing				unto them	Why	have ye done	this thing					the men children	H3206
H4069	H6213	H1697	H2088	H2421			H4069	H6213	H1697	H2088						

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 8:4 (Kingdom): Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?

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