

Exodus 1:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.

Analysis

And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them (כִּי־חַיֹּת הֵנָּה, ki-chayot henah, "for they are vigorous/lively")—The midwives' answer emphasizes Hebrew women's vitality contrasting with Egyptian women's weakness. **Lively** (חַיֹּת, chayot) means "full of life/vigorous," suggesting the blessing of God manifesting in physical strength. Whether this is complete truth, partial truth, or tactical deception, it highlights the irony: Pharaoh's oppression couldn't weaken Israel—God's blessing made them strong even in bondage. The response satisfies Pharaoh (v. 20) and protects the midwives while allowing them to continue their work.

Historical Context

Some scholars debate whether this is righteous deception (like Rahab's in Joshua 2:4-5) or literal truth. Ancient sources do note differences in birthing experiences among populations. Regardless, the narrative presents the midwives' answer as successful protection of God's people, later validated by divine blessing (v. 20-21).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do you navigate tension between complete transparency and wise discretion when protecting the vulnerable?
2. What does Hebrew women's "liveliness" despite oppression teach about God's blessing overcoming adverse circumstances?

Interlinear Text

וַתֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה	וַיֵּלְדוּ:	אֶל	פַּרְעֹה הַ	כִּי	לֹא	כְנָשִׁים יִם
said	And the midwives	H413	unto Pharaoh	H3588	H3808	women
H559	H3205		H6547			H802
הַמִּצְרִי ת	הָעֵבְרִי ת	כִּי	חַיִּים וְ	הֵנָּה		
are not as the Egyptian women	Because the Hebrew	H3588	for they are lively	H2007		
H4713	H5680		H2422			
בָּטָרָם	תָּבֹא	אֵלֶיהָ	וַיֵּלְדוּ:	וַיֵּלְדוּ:		
ere	come in	H413	And the midwives	And the midwives		
H2962	H935		H3205	H3205		