

~MIDWIFE (124)

[Hebrew, *ya ladh'*]

- The **Hebrew** term for midwife is a feminine participle of the verb *ya ladh'*, bear, give birth, and thus literally refers to **a woman who helps to bear or give birth to a child**.
- A midwife helps the mother during the ordeal of labor, and once the child is born she severs its navel cord and washes the infant. In ancient times she would also rub it with salt and swaddle it with cloth bands.
- And as regards your birth, on the day of your being born your navel string had not been cut, and in water you had not been washed for cleansing, and with salt you had not at all been rubbed, and by no means had you been swaddled. (**Ezekiel 16:4**)

See Also BIRTH

- Close friends or relatives and older women in the community sometimes served in this capacity, but because of the special knowledge, skill, and experience necessary, particularly when the delivery was difficult, **midwifery** was pursued as a profession by few.
- In the case of Benjamin's birth, when it was going hard with Rachel in making the delivery, the **midwife** was able to assure Rachel that she would have the son, though Rachel herself died.
- Then they pulled away from Bethel. And while there was yet a good stretch of land before coming to Ephrath, Rachel proceeded to give birth, and it was going hard with her in making the delivery. (**Genesis 35:16**)
- But so it was that while she had difficulty in making the delivery the **midwife** said to her; Do not be afraid, for you will have this son also. (**Genesis 35:17**)
- And the result was that as her soul was going out, because she died, she called his name Benoni, but his father called him Benjamin. (**Genesis 35:18**)
- Thus Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath, that is

to say; Bethlehem. (**Genesis 35:19**)

- During the complicated delivery of Tamar's twins, Perez and Zerah, the **midwife** was alert to identify the one she expected to be the firstborn.
- She quickly tied a scarlet piece on the extended hand of Zerah. However, the hand was drawn in and his brother emerged first, causing a perineal rupture of the mother.
- Now it developed that in the time of her giving birth, why, here there were twins in her belly. (**Genesis 38:27**)
- Further, it turned out that when she was giving birth one extended his hand, and the **midwife** at once took and tied a scarlet piece about his hand, saying; This one came out first. (**Genesis 38:28**)
- Finally it developed that as soon as he drew back his hand, why, here his brother came out, so that she exclaimed; What do you mean by this, that you have produced a perineal rupture for yourself? Hence his name was called Perez. (**Genesis 38:29**)
- And afterward his brother upon whose hand the scarlet piece was came out and his name came to be called Zerah. (**Genesis 38:30**)
- Midwives among the Israelites during their slavery in Egypt found themselves in a very critical and dangerous position. Pharaoh summoned two of them by name, Shiphrah and Puah, and commanded them to put to death every Hebrew male baby as soon as it was born.
- Probably these two women served as heads of the profession and were responsible to pass the orders of the king on to their associates. However, the **midwives** feared the true God, and they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they would preserve the male children alive.
- For this they were called to account by Pharaoh, who demanded; Why is it you have done this thing? Feigning that the matter was beyond their control, they insisted that the Hebrew women were **lively** and gave birth before the **midwife** could come in to them.
- Later on the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew **midwives**, the

name of one of whom was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah. (**Exodus 1:15**)

- Yes, he went so far as to say; When you help the Hebrew women to give birth and you do see them on the stool for childbirth, if it is a son, you must also put it to death, but if it is a daughter, it must also live. (**Exodus 1:16**)
- However, the **midwives** feared the true God, and they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they would preserve the male children alive. (**Exodus 1:17**)
- In time the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them; Why is it you have done this thing, in that you preserved the male children alive? (**Exodus 1:18**)
- In turn the **midwives** said to Pharaoh; Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. Because they are lively, they have already given birth before the **midwife** can come in to them. (**Exodus 1:19**)
- Because these **midwives** feared Yehowah and refused to practice infanticide, he blessed and rewarded them with families of their own.
- So God dealt well with the **midwives**, and the people kept growing more numerous and becoming very mighty. (**Exodus 1:20**)
- And it came about that because the **midwives** had feared the true God he later presented them with families. (**Exodus 1:21**)