

THE TORAH OF LEADERSHIP

Subversive Leadership | Erica Brown | January 27, 2022



A fresco of the daughter of Pharaoh drawing Moses from the Nile, from the synagogue in Dura-Europos, Syria. Museum of Damascus.

Exodus 1:15-22

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמַיְלָדֹת הַעֵבְרָאִית אֲשֶׁר שָׁם הָאֵחָת שִׁפְרָה וְשֵׁם הַשְּׂנִית פּוּעָה:

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנַלְדָּכֶן אֶת־הַעֵבְרָאִית וּרְאִיתֶן עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אִם־בֵּן הוּא וְהַמְתֶּן אֹתוֹ וְאִם־בַּת הוּא וְנָקִיָּה:

וּתְיַרְאֵן הַמַּיְלָדֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶן מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַתַּסְיִינָן אֶת־הַיְלָדִים:

וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם לְמַיְלָדֹת וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן מְדוּעַ עֲשִׂיתֶן הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וַתַּסְיִינָן אֶת־הַיְלָדִים:

וַתֹּאמְרֵן הַמַּיְלָדֹת אֶל־פְּרֹעֹה כִּי לֹא כֹנָשִׁים הַמִּצְרָאִית הַעֵבְרָאִית כִּי־תִחַזְּקֶנָה הַבָּטָרִם תִּבְּוֹא אֲלֵהֶן הַמַּיְלָדֹת וְנִלְדוּ:

וַיִּטֹּב אֲלֵהֶם לְמַיְלָדֹת וַיִּרְבּוּ הָעָם וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ מְאֹד:

וַיִּהְיֶה כִּי־רָאוּ הַמַּיְלָדֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בְּתִיבִים:

וַיִּצְוּ פְּרֹעֹה לְכָל־עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כָּל־בֶּן־הַיְלֹד הַיִּזְאָרְהוּ תִשְׁלַכְהוּ וְכָל־בַּת־תִּסְיִינָן:

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The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, saying, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth." And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and increased greatly. And because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. Then Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, "Every boy that is born you shall throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

Reflective Question

Think of a time when you were subversive. Why and at what cost?

Leadership Question

When might an act of subversiveness in your leadership be more effective than playing by the rules? What are the dangers?