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There are two myths circulating in the Christian community and in wider society. The first myth is that it is difficult to see God's presence in the world today. Newsmakers who hog the news and reporters who report the news, leave us with the question, *what has happened to the world God intended?*, which escalates to, *Can somebody fix this mess?*, and ends with the question, *Why doesn't God **DO** something?*, blaming God for creating an imperfect world, and disinterested in doing anything about a broken world.

The second myth is, *The Bible is written by men for men*, to which people add, *women are represented badly in the Bible*.

As we celebrate Women's World Day of Prayer today, it is right that we address both these myths which are interrelated, focussing on the latter about women in the Bible.

The book of Exodus begins by connecting the story of Joseph, whose father Jacob and his 11 sons migrated to Egypt, fleeing severe famine in the area now known as Southern Israel, where they *multiplied so greatly, they became extremely powerful and filled the land*.<sup>1</sup> A new Pharaoh comes to power who does not know Joseph, feels threatened by the increasing number of *Hebrew migrants*, and made slaves of them in order to control them.

Moses would not have lived to be the saviour of his people, were it not for five women. He would not have seen daylight were it not for two Egyptian midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, assigned to the Obstetrics-Gynaecology department of the Hebrew Maternity Hospital in the Nile Delta, with Pharaoh's specific instructions, *if the baby is a boy, kill him*. These two midwives, whose Egyptian names mean **Splendour** and **Beauty**,

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 1:7

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*feared God, they did not do as Pharaoh demanded, so he escalated his order, Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile river.*

Well before the time Moses came down the mountain with the law, one of which said, *You shall not kill*, two women who feared God more than the dreaded Pharaoh, had in their spirit, the desire to preserve life and not to kill, and Moses passed the first hurdle of life.

One of the lessons of the Bible is that a negative agenda very rarely succeeds, a Truth which still holds true. Pharaoh relied on two midwives to carry out his pogrom of infanticide, and lost.

Moses' biological mother<sup>2</sup> and her husband were descendants of the priestly clan of Levites, a couple whose life centred around prayer. It would have been this life of prayer which gave her spiritual insight to **see** Moses as a special child<sup>3</sup>; it would have been this life centred around prayer which gave her wisdom and strength to fear God more than fearing Pharaoh, who thought he had the power to kill her child! Imagine a mother's fear to hide her baby for three months in a close knit society.

It takes a special mother to create a safe, water-proof cocoon in which to hide her baby among the reeds on the river bank, making it look like the child was cast into the river as Pharaoh wanted, yet trusting God something would happen to save the infant.

Moses' mother's faith must have been legendary, repeated generation after generation as an example of true faith, because 1,500 years later, the writer of the New Testament book titled, **Hebrews** says, *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they*

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<sup>2</sup> named Jochebed see Exodus 21:1-3 and Numbers 26:59. cf. Hebrews 11:23

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 2:2

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*saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*<sup>4</sup>

That this woman's faith was talked about for 1,500 years and then brought into written history, speaks volumes about her faith!

Two midwives who helped in Moses' birth, Moses' mother, and then a Princess! Out for her ritual bath with her maids in attendance (how else will a princess bathe in public?!) this princess whose name is mentioned in the Bible, though not in Exodus<sup>5</sup>, sees a basket in the reeds, sends her maid to fetch the basket and finds a Hebrew baby boy crying.

There are two arguments: either she knew her Father's edict to kill all newborn Hebrew boys, or she was innocent of any knowledge of it.

If she knew her father's edict, the princess would have faced considerable difficulties persuading other members of the Egyptian royal family to accept the Hebrew child as her adopted son.

I tend to believe she was ignorant of the King's edict, and adopts a young boy as her own son.

In either case, Moses was raised in Egypt's royal palace where he received an excellent education as a student prince<sup>6</sup> which one day would be useful when Moses returned to face a very difficult and cunning Pharaoh to *Let my people go!*

Last week we discovered, God has placed worship in everyone's heart whether we know Him or not, and now we discovered four women: two midwives, a compassionate, doting mother, and a princess from the Royal

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 11:23

<sup>5</sup> In the Midrash, Jewish Rabbis have given her the new name of Bithiah (*bat-yah*) which literally means "the daughter of the LORD" and they say, "Moses was not your son, yet you called him your son; you are not My daughter, but I call you My daughter" (Lev. Rabbah 1:3; cf. **1 Chron. 4:18**). (Encyclopaedia of Jewish Women) Josephus, however, gives her name as Thermuthis. (Jewish Antiquities 2.9.5-7)

<sup>6</sup> Acts 7:21-22

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household, all moved by the compassionate heart of God, because they are responding to the spirit of worship God has placed in their hearts!

There is another woman who is pivotal to the Moses' story: his older sister, Miriam. Standing at a distance, and away from sight, she is bravely keeping watch, to make sure her little baby brother comes to no harm especially from the hungry crocodiles who lived in the Nile, but she is braver still as she approaches the Princess. She does not know the Princess' mood, but her question is significant: *Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby **for you**?* It takes courage to make this subtle suggestion ...**for you!**<sup>7</sup>

Five very brave women, who defied the odds, who placed their faith in the Living God and not in the edict of a mad king, gave birth and gave life to a man who would play a pivotal role in the history of God, about whom we read, *There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses whom the Lord knew face-to-face<sup>8</sup> ... whom the Lord Himself buried, but to this day no one knows the exact place.*<sup>9</sup>

We give birth to our children, we raise our children and teach our children, but in the end, each person must choose either life or death for themselves.

I believe all of us would like to have such faith, being children of God, and have the courage to be bold enough to act as the five women who protected and saved Moses' life.

Each woman's faith in God gave them strength and courage to save this child's life.

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<sup>7</sup> Exodus 2:6

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 34:10-12

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 34:6

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Do you see yourself in this story?

...As one of the midwives committed to saving someone who is on a path of self-destruction?

...As Moses' mother who helps someone re-born and shelter before being released into the world?

...As Pharaoh's daughter fighting injustice and wanting to help someone who needs to be rescued from chaotic waters and find calm waters in a spiritual home, a Church, where they can be nourished and grow in knowledge and wisdom of God and His plan of salvation.

...As Moses's sister whose role as a scout, connecting those who need guidance with those who can provide the help they need?

Or maybe you see yourself as the infant Moses, afloat on chaotic waters for too long, waiting for someone to pick you up, delight in who you are, and offer you hope to live.

We have no idea of God's plans for people around us, but if you are convinced God has a plan for everyone in the work of His kingdom, perhaps coming alongside someone you know, helping them understand the purpose of life of God in them, you never know... that may be the person whom God will use in some mighty way in their own lifetime, of perhaps generations down the line, because you helped them see God's love in your actions for them.

Five women each played their part to save a fledgeling infant, who was destined for an important task in God's Kingdom.

Will you take their example and work on it? God depends on your faithfulness to His plans and purposes. **AMEN.**