

Signed, Sealed, Delivered:

The Midwives Play

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Midwives Play

- Pharaoh
- Yuya: Pharaoh's Advisor
- Ahmes: Pharaoh's Scribe
- Shiphrah: A Midwife
- Puah: A Midwife
- Yocheved: Moses's Mom
- Pharaoh's Daughter: The Daughter of Pharaoh
- Nyla: Pharaoh's Daughter's Attendant
- Miriam: Moses's Sister

Yuya (*goes to center stage, talking to the congregation*): So, you think you want to work in the Pharaoh's palace. Well, it does have its perks, but you have to watch out for the Pharaoh. He can get really weird sometimes. (*pauses*) Oh, my name is Yuya and I'm one of the Pharaoh's advisors.

Pharaoh (*enters in a huff, sits on his throne, yelling*): I'm bored. How come everything is sooooo boring all the time?

Yuya (*still talking to the congregation*): One sec – a bored Pharaoh is a dangerous Pharaoh.

Pharaoh (*to Yuya*): Hey, you!

Yuya (*to Pharaoh*): Yuya.

Pharaoh: What are we, speaking German? Not me, you!

Yuya: Me.

Pharaoh: Yes, you!

Yuya: No, Yuya.

Pharaoh: You – yeah?

Yuya: Yeah.

Pharaoh: Okay, then, You!

Yuya (*getting frustrated*): Yuya!

Pharaoh: Yuya?

Yuya: Yuya.

Pharaoh: Whatever we call you – I'm bored! Entertain me.

Yuya: I'm your chief advisor.

Pharaoh: Uh-huh.

Yuya: That's kind of...not my job.

Pharaoh: Oh, no? Well, I advise you to entertain me before I make you swim in soup or lick linoleum or bathe in beetles!

Yuya: Oh, well, when you say it like that... check me out!

(Yuya does the removing your thumb trick. Pharaoh shakes his head. Yuya pats his head and rubs his tummy. Pharaoh crosses his arms and looks away. Yuya finds a coin behind Pharaoh's ear. Pharaoh laughs and claps giddily.)

Pharaoh: Now, Hey You (*Yuya rolls his eyes*), we've got a problem. There are Israelites just everywhere – everywhere I look. I don't like it. (*calls out*) My scribe, Ahmes!

Ahmes (*runs in with papyrus and brush*): Yes, Pharaoh

Pharaoh: I'm feeling a stroke of genius coming on and I need you here to write down my orders.

Ahmes: A STROKE?! Lie down, call the doctors, BRING IN THE LEECHES! (*tries to force the Pharaoh to lie down*)

Pharaoh: What are you doing? Get off me, silly person! (*to the congregation*) It's not easy being the smartest person in every room. (*to Ahmes and Yuya*) Now, because of my boundless wisdom, I have foreseen that the Israelites are a great threat to me just existing up there in their corner of Egypt.

Ahmes (*sits down with papyrus and brush, starts writing*): People shape, house shape, trap shape.

Yuya: The Hebrew people? They're just gentle shepherd people. They seem really nice.

Ahmes: Sheep shape, dancing shape.

Pharaoh: No, Ahmes! Just write down what *I* say

Ahmes: Oh! Sorry. (*scratches out previous line*)

Pharaoh: These Hebrew people are different from us and they don't worship our gods and I don't trust them.

Ahmes: Angry evil sparrow shape, eye shape.

Yuya: They've never done anything to us.

Pharaoh: Oh, no? You just wait for the day when they team up with the people I hate the most – those no good, fast flying sea people.

Yuya: The Syrians?

Pharaoh: The Syrians?

Yuya: Yeah, c-people.

Pharaoh: No, sea people – (*spells it out*) s-e-a. Like, the ones who come from the sea.

Yuya: Ooooooh.

Pharaoh: Also, Syria starts with an “s.” Hey You, aren’t you supposed to be my advisor?

Yuya: Yes! Umm, umm (*points off to the side*). What’s that?

Pharaoh: What? What?! I don’t see anything.

Yuya: Oh, I guess it was nothing.

Pharaoh: So, what were we talking about?

Yuya: Hmm...I don’t remember.

Pharaoh: Oh, yes, these Hebrew people. We have to be clever – I mean the smartest of the smart. We’re gonna get them before they get us. OH! I’ve got it. This is my best idea yet. We’ll enslave them. Of course, it’s so simple, but that’s what makes it so brilliant. If we push them down in the dirt and the mud, they’ll never get back up again.

Ahmes: Tired man shape, bowing down shape, fragile shape.

Yuya: Plus, they can build things for you.

Pharaoh: Now you’re talking, Hey You! They’ll dig the rocks to make the blocks to build the docks to store my box and boost my stocks. Because, after all, money talks.

Yuya: Umm...what?

Pharaoh: They’re going to build massive cities for me to store all my stuff! And they’re going to build them right next to the land of Goshen – right where all those Hebrew people live so they know who’s the man. I’m the man with the plan and the can –

Yuya (*interrupts*): Yes, sir. Right away, sir. (*to the congregation*) I think that’s enough of that.

Pharaoh: Go, Ahmes. Make my decree to all the land.

Ahmes: Man raising hands in praise shape! (*raises his hands and runs off*)

Pharaoh: I have got to find a scribe who can write without reading EVERYTHING out loud.
Sheesh.

Ahmes (*runs back in*): Sire! According to your orders we've set up taskmasters and enslaved all the Hebrew people.

Pharaoh: So my plan is working perfectly. How marvelous!

Ahmes: That's just it, sire. They're still growing and having children and taking up more space.

Pharaoh: What?! How can this be? Weren't the task masters cruel?

Ahmes: Yes, my king.

Pharaoh: Weren't they harsh and mean?

Ahmes: Yes, sire.

Pharaoh: Weren't they ruthless?

Ahmes: Umm...well, I wouldn't say ruthless.

Pharaoh: WHY NOT?!

Ahmes: Well, sire, they're Hebrews. I mean, some of them *are* named Ruth.

Pharaoh: GET OUT OF HERE! (*Ahmes exits*). (*Turns to Yuya*) For a guy name Ahmes, he is not too amazing. Yuya, fetch the Hebrew midwives. I have a new scheme

(*Yuya exits and shortly afterward Shiphrah and Puah enter*)

Shiphrah (*bowing*): Oh, mighty Pharaoh. Here are your servants.

Puah (*looking around, distracted*): Woah, what a neat palace!

Shiphrah (*still bowing*): We are but humble midwives at your service.

Puah (*pointing*): Is that pillar made of gold? It's so sparkly. (*walks over to the Pharaoh*) And look at your hat – it looks so soft (*reaches out hand to pet it*).

Shiphrah (*loud whisper to Puah*): Puah! Get over here and bow down before we get in trouble! (*looks at Pharaoh and laughs nervously as she pulls Puah beside her to bow*)

Puah: And check out these floors! Marble! It's so cool and smooth – much nicer than the dirt we have at home. (*Shiphrah glares at her*). Have you touched the floor? (*Puah starts to roll around on the floor and giggle*)

Shiphrah (*loud whisper to Puah*): Seriously, pull yourself together, Puah!

Pharaoh: Wait...is her name Puah? Seriously? Puah. (*laughs in her face*)

Shiphrah (*very serious*): It means shining.

Puah (*very proud of herself*): And splendid.

Pharaoh: Okay, Poo. We'll get you a honey pot and a red balloon in just a bit here.

Puah (*to Shiphrah*): Shiphrah, I think he's making fun of me.

Shiphrah (*to Puah*): I think you're right

Puah (*to Shiphrah*): You know what, though?

Shiphrah (*to Puah*): What?

Puah (*to Shiphrah*): I would loooove to have some honey and a balloon.

Shiphrah (*to Puah*): Well, maybe if you actually BOWED then he'll give it to you.

Puah: Right! (*bows*)

Pharaoh: Now, I know you two are the midwives to the Hebrew women and you are vital to my plan.

Shiphrah: Plan?

Puah: What plan?

Pharaoh: We need to deal with these Hebrew people and you two are just the two to do it. You are midwives.

Shiphrah: We have a sacred task. We know mysteries no man may ever dare to know – to bring new life into this world through pain and struggle, miracles and wonder.

Puah: And the babies come out all slimy and squirmy and then we wash their faces and boop their noses until they giggle and yawn and snuggle all cute like. (*pauses*) Umm...sacred, but cute.

Pharaoh: Babies, babies, and more babies! That's the problem. I need you to deliver these babies.

Shiphrah: Uh-huh.

Pharaoh: See if it's a boy or a girl.

Puah: Sure.

Pharaoh: And if it's a boy, you should kill it!

Shiphrah and Puah: WHAT?!

Shiphrah (*to Puah*): He said, "kill," right? I didn't just lose my mind for a second there?

Puah (*to Shiphrah*): No, he definitely said, "kill"

Shiphrah and Puah (*look at each other for a second and then back at Pharaoh*): WHAT?!

Pharaoh: See, I've got it all figured out. Women are just...how should I put this... Women are just dumber than men. There's no two ways around this. So, if you kill all the boy children and leave all the girl children, the Hebrew people will get dumber and dumber and they'll never be a threat to me at all.

Puah: This plan – this is not a good plan.

Pharaoh: Ya know, I was afraid of this. You're both women. You're too stupid to see how clever this is.

Puah: We're too...we're too stupid to see that murdering infants is wrong? Why, I oughta (*lunges at Pharaoh*)

Shiphrah (*holds Puah back*): Easy, Puah. It's not worth it.

Pharaoh: There's honey and balloons in it for you if you just do what I ask.

Puah (*sadly*): Balloons?

(*Shiphrah and Puah go off to the side*)

Puah: What are we going to do?

Shiphrah: Well, we're not going to kill babies. That's one thing.

Puah: No, not as long as I live, I will NOT do that.

Shiphrah: But if we defy Pharaoh, he'll surely kill us.

Puah: Oh, yeah. I guess “as long as I live” won’t last too long if we don’t do what he says.

Shiphrah: These Hebrew ladies are so nice even when they’re giving birth.

Puah: They’ve always been so welcoming to us even though we’re Egyptian.

Shiphrah: Their God promised to be with them, to love them, and to teach them how to be good people.

Puah: It’s not like Pharaoh cares about us at all. Shiphrah, I think we need to trust the God of the Hebrews. Whatever happens to us, we can’t do such evil things.

Shiphrah: Come with me, I have an idea.

(Shiphrah and Puah exit. Yuya enters)

Yuya (*bows*): Pharaoh, I don’t know how to tell you this. (*Long pause. Pharaoh makes “hurry up” motions with his hands. Yuya tries to start several times*) The thing is ... I’ve noticed some brand new baby boy Hebrews.

Pharaoh: Brand new – alive baby boy Hebrews?

Yuya: Yeeeeeah.

Pharaoh: Call the midwives!

(Yuya exits, pulls Shiphrah and Puah onto the stage, gets behind them and pushes them toward Pharaoh. Yuya looks around fearfully, yelps)

Yuya (*to the congregation*): Boy, did you pick a bad day to start in the palace. (*Yuya runs off-stage*)

Pharaoh (*to Shiphrah and Puah*): Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live? Bow before me – I am Pharaoh.

(Shiphrah and Puah bow down)

Puah (*shaking, to Shiphrah*): Whatever your plan is, you better start it FAST.

Shiphrah (*standing*): Oh, wise and mighty Pharaoh. You’re looking especially handsome today.

Pharaoh (*growls at Shiphrah*): Stupid women – you think you can defy me and get away with it?

Shiphrah: No, no, no, my king! You misunderstand. How much do you know about childbirth?

Pharaoh (*calms down a little*): Well, yes, umm, I know there's a dewdrop in a cabbage patch and I think there's a stork with a delivery service and then they emerge from a cocoon just like a butterfly.

Puah (*to herself*): Wait, is that right?

Shiphrah: Oh, yeah, definitely. You're so wise, O Pharaoh, that I bet you know that Hebrew women aren't like Egyptian women. Their cabbages just blossom early.

Pharaoh: What?

Shiphrah: Their storks just cruise in on the jet streams.

Pharaoh: Come again?

Shiphrah: They burst out of their cocoons so fast it'll make your head spin.

Puah: Yeah, these Hebrew women are so lively, the babies are born before we even get there!

Pharaoh: Really?

Shiphrah: Definitely.

Puah: I've seen it with my own eyes!

Shiphrah: Puah!

Puah: Oh, right! I mean, I *haven't* seen it with my own eyes because it happens before we get there...which is how we know that it happens. Yes.

Pharaoh (*thinking it over*): Well, ummm, you could still kill them.

Puah: Well, who would have us over if everybody knew that?

Shiphrah (*to Puah*): Shh! (*to Pharaoh*) Great and Powerful Pharaoh, we are only skilled in the mystical ways of childbirth. We don't know anything about taking life. We're just dumb women after all (*winks to Puah*).

Pharaoh: Oh, of course. How silly of me! You, females are so limited. You may be gone from my sight and carry on with your meaningless little lives.

Shiphrah and Puah: (*grin at each other*) Woo-hoo! (*Shiphrah and Puah skip off stage together.*)

(*Ahmes enters.*)

Pharaoh: Ahmes, get word out to all the land. Every boy born to the Hebrews shall be thrown into the Nile, but every girl can live because they're dumb and stinky.

Ahmes (*writing, sadly*): baby bird shape, upside down guy shape, river ripple shape, mummy shape, sad eye shape.

(Ahmes exits)

Shiphrah (*offstage*): Push, Yocheved, push!

Puah (*offstage*): It's only a little while longer. Just think of the cuteness!

Yocheved (*offstage*): For everything I'm going through, this better be the cutest baby that has ever babied!

Shiphrah (*offstage*): Almost, almost!

Puah (*offstage*): Congratulations, it's a boy!

Shiphrah (*offstage*): Oh, no! A boy!

(Yocheved and Miriam enter. Yocheved is carrying a baby doll in a blanket)

Miriam: Mom, you've hidden that baby for three months now. How much longer do you think you can keep him safe?

Yocheved: But he's my little baby!

Miriam: I know, Mom.

Yocheved: And he has all these little fingers. *(Yocheved shows them to Miriam)*

Miriam: Yeah.

Yocheved: And all these little toes.

Miriam: You're right, Mom.

Yocheved: And he was worth every minute of labor – just like you, sweetie. *(Yocheved pats Miriam on the head.)*

Miriam: But how long do you think we can keep him quiet before the Egyptian guard finds out?

Yocheved: I've been thinking about this a lot, actually, and I have a plan. You know how your father works with bricks and mortar?

Miriam: Yeah, like just about every other Hebrew slave...

Yocheved: Well, I made this basket (*shows Miriam the basket*) and I'm gonna use the mortar to make it waterproof.

Miriam: I don't think I like where this is headed.

Yocheved: Have faith, Miriam! Our lives are in God's hands and that includes your little brother. I'm gonna put him in a basket and send it down the Nile. Maybe someone will see him and fall in love with his big brown eyes.

Miriam: Mom, it's the Nile! This is not a lazy river for tubing and getting a suntan. He could get trampled by a hippopotamus! Charged by a rhino! Heck, you're basically making a bite-size appetizer for a crocodile!

Yocheved: The Egyptians are just down the river. Surely one of them will find him. Just don't stop praying, Miriam.

(Yocheved places the basket on the steps on top of a blue blanket to symbolize the Nile. Yocheved and Miriam stay to watch the basket from a distance. Someone slowly pulls the blanket from the other end of the chancel so that it moves to the left. Miriam follows it slowly and hides behind a rock. Pharaoh's Daughter and Nyla enter from the left.)

Pharaoh's Daughter: What a great day for a river bath! Nyla, stay close on the shore to make sure no one comes spying on me.

Nyla: Of course, my lady! Should I let you know if I see a crocodile?

Pharaoh's Daughter: What do *you* think?

Nyla: Umm....ummm....I'm gonna say...no?

Pharaoh's Daughter: What, really, Nyla? Of course I want you to let me know if there's a crocodile.

Nyla: They do have REALLY big teeth and super strong tails.

Pharaoh's Daughter: Definitely not the bath toy I'm looking for.

Nyla: Ooh, I have a rubber duckie! (*squeezes it so that it squeaks*)

Pharaoh's Daughter: Perfect! Say, what's that thing in the water?

Nyla: What? Where?

Pharaoh's Daughter (*pointing*): Over there – it looks like a basket.

Nyla (*to herself*): Hey, who's taking a bath today you or me?

Pharaoh's Daughter: What was that?

Nyla (*to Pharaoh's Daughter*): Nothing, my lady! I will get it for you.

(Nyla brings the basket to Pharaoh's Daughter)

Pharaoh's Daughter: Oh, my goodness! It's a baby!

(Crying noises off-stage)

Nyla: That baby is not happy.

Pharaoh's Daughter: Poor little fella. He looks so pitiful! And he's got such a cute face! I bet he belongs to one of the Hebrew women.

Nyla: Oh no!

Pharaoh's Daughter: You know what, Nyla? My dad wants to go around killing all these poor babies, but that's not right. I'm gonna keep this little guy and there's nothing he can do to stop me.

Miriam (*moving closer to Pharaoh's Daughter*): My lady, he's such a little guy – do you want me to go and get a nurse for you? I think I know just the Hebrew woman for the job!

(Miriam runs back over to the right where Yocheved is)

Yocheved: Miriam, what is it? Did something terrible happen to my poor, sweet baby?

Miriam: No, it's unbelievable, Mom. You'll never guess who found him! (*Miriam waits for Yocheved to guess. Yocheved will not guess and she makes gestures for her to get on with it*) Fine! Pharaoh's Daughter found him and you were right – it's like she's fallen in love with him!

Pharaoh's Daughter (*singing and spinning with the baby*): You're the most wonderful baby of all! You've got ten tiny toes and beautiful noses so cute and so small! You're the most wonderful baby of all.

Miriam: Come on, Mom!

(Miriam and Yocheved go over to Pharaoh's Daughter and Nyla)

Pharaoh's Daughter: Take this sweet, amazing, adorable, cute, cute, cute child for me and nurse it and I will give you wages.

Yocheved: You wanna pay me?

Pharaoh's Daughter: Of course.

Yocheved: For nursing this baby.....that I've never seen before today.

Pharaoh's Daughter: Yes, please, would you? Just hold him!

(Pharaoh's Daughter hands the baby to Yocheved and Yocheved grins and cuddles him close)

Nyla: Look at how happy that baby is!

Miriam: He couldn't be happier if she were his own mother!

Yocheved *(to Miriam)*: I can't believe they're going to pay me to nurse my own child. God is good.

Miriam *(to Yocheved)*: All the time.

Pharaoh's Daughter: You can keep this darling little child until he's done nursing. I promise you I will raise him well and I will love him like my own son. He will be safe from the Pharaoh and he will do great things. I will make sure that he knows that he would not be here without the wisdom of women.

Yocheved: And we pray that one day he will find God again.

Pharaoh's Daughter: I will call him Moses because I drew him out of the water.

(Yocheved and Miriam go off to the side)

Miriam: If I hadn't seen it, I wouldn't have believed it.

Yocheved: You don't have to be a superhero to stand up to a bully or to decide not to do a bad thing.

Miriam: Where would we be without regular people standing up for good?

Yocheved: Where would we be without God working through women and men to carry us forward into the future?

Miriam: Mom?

Yocheved: Yeah, Miriam?

Miriam: That Pharaoh is really not a smart guy.

Yocheved: No, dear, he is not.

(Full cast comes onto the stage)

Miriam: Thank God that together we can do amazing things – in love and in hope.

All: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Amen.