



North Suburban Synagogue  
Beth El  
בית מוסת בית אל

## Leader's Guide

### Text Study Shifra and Pua

What motivates the courageous midwives Shifra and Pua to save the Jewish boys?

Exodus 1:15-21 (translation NJPS)

I. The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shifra and the other Pua, 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 G-d, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live.

#### Rabbi Freedman's notes:

- Pharaoh was concerned about the Israelite military threat, so he targeted the future soldiers - males.
- "Fear of G-d" here may be the Torah's way of saying this crime against humanity went against their moral compass. It need not mean a belief in the G-d of Israel.

II. 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."

#### Rabbi Freedman's notes:

- The phrase "Hebrew midwives" can mean "midwives who are Hebrew," in which case they were Jewish. Or it can mean "midwives for the Hebrews," in which case they were Egyptian.
- The women lied to Pharaoh to save their lives. They knew at the outset that if they were caught, they would be killed.

III. G-d dealt well with the midwives; and the [Israelite] people multiplied and increased greatly. And because the midwives feared G-d, He established households for them.

#### Rabbi Freedman's notes

- There is beautiful justice in their reward: just as they enabled other families to have children, here they were finally able to have children of their own.
- Without Shifra and Pua's heroism, Moses could not take the stage.

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## Seder Numbers Trivia!

Feel free to offer snacks or first dessert to those who answer correctly.

### 1. Where in the Haggadah does the number four appear?

>> (4 cups of wine, 4 questions, 4 sons, 4 expressions of redemption)

### 2. How many times does the name of Moses appear in the Hebrew text?

>> (1: see the Midrash of the 50 plagues at the sea)

### 3. How many times does the Haggadah instruct we dip food?

>> (2: Karpas in salt water, and Maror in Charoset)

### 4. How many Haggadah texts are in Aramaic, the ancient vernacular, instead of Hebrew?

>> (2: *Ha Lachma Anya*, and *Chad Gadya*)

### 5. How many drops of wine do we spill from our cups?

>> (16: the ten plagues, three before, and three after)

### 6. How many Matzos are placed by the Seder leader and covered?

>> (3: representing the Jewish People – *Kohen*, *Levi*, and *Yisrael* - Priests, Levites, and Israelites)

### 7. How many items does Rabban Gamliel say are essential for the Seder?

>> (3: Pesach lamb, Matza, and Maror bitter herbs)

### 8. How many steps are there to the Seder?

>> (14: *Kadesh*, *Urhatz...*)

### 9. How many days are there between the second night of the Seder and the holiday of Shavuot?

>> (50: this is known as counting the Omer)

### 10. What is the highest number in "Echad Mi Yodea/ Who Knows One?"

>> (13: the attributes of G-d. The song begins [1] and ends [13] with G-d.)