

Restoring Life-giving in a Life-taking World:  
Lessons from the Life-giving Women of Exodus

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### Abstract

“Restoring Life-Giving in a Life-Taking World” examines women’s roles as life-givers in Exodus 1-2. The stories of the Hebrew midwives, Jochebed, Pharaoh’s daughter, and Miriam are paradigmatic of God’s use of unlikely characters to accomplish His creational plan. Through the life-giving actions of each of these women, God preserved His plan to deliver His people by preserving the life of their deliverer, Moses, and in turn, preparing for the ultimate deliverer, Jesus Christ.

This thesis reveals the life-giving actions of the women in Exodus 1-2 and their strategic position to influence change in their society. The paradigm of God giving life through women is crucial for all generations and ultimately represents God’s twofold plan to restore His image in human beings and give eternal life through Christ.

Restoring Life-Giving in a Life-Taking World:

Lessons from the Life-Giving Women of Exodus

**In the Beginning, There Was...Life**

In the beginning, God reigned in perfect supremacy over the expanse of His creation. He spoke light into the darkness of the universe, bringing form and fullness to unformed emptiness. To crown His creation, He formed mankind out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The creation of mankind is the single most significant creational work of God because no other created being bears the office or identity as an image-bearer of the Creator.<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1 inaugurates God's creational plan to give, preserve, and bless life.<sup>2</sup> In God's created order, mankind should have lived in fellowship with Him forever. However, sin's entrance into Eden fractured the fellowship between God and His image-bearing creations, bringing death, shame and depravity to the detriment of humanity and the interruption of God's creational purposes.

Though all seemed lost with the Fall of mankind, God's sovereignty was shown victorious over sin and Satan's scheme to bring death to humanity. In Genesis 3:15, instead of cursing the man and woman for their infidelity, Yahweh proclaimed *protoevangelium*, the first preaching of the Gospel, by cursing the serpent and pronouncing, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." In this act of divine grace, Yahweh announced the coming of a Savior who would crush the power of

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1. Robin Routledge. *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.

2. Terrance Fretheim. *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991.

sin and death forever that men and women alike might be redeemed.<sup>3</sup> Despite the serpent's endeavor to deceive the woman and ruin the creational plan, God frustrated the power of sin by choosing to employ the same divine image-bearer that Satan had attempted to defeat, a woman. Yahweh the Life-Giver's triumph over the first life-taker characterizes His actions throughout the rest of Scripture by announcing His promise to ultimately redeem humanity. God's actions in redemptive history are indicative of His ultimate purpose to restore His divine goals in and for His creation.<sup>4</sup> The beauty of life-giving endures in the certainty that although the Fall initiated sin and death on earth, the Creator's design for life-giving defies sin and death through the agency of women, who partake in the divine privilege of giving new life to the world.

Although God promised future restoration for humanity through a woman, the consequences of the Fall have introduced unparalleled misconstructions of God's design for life-giving. One of the most tragic results of the enmity between the serpent and the woman is mankind's increasing propensity to operate outside God's creational plan. According to an estimate by the National Right to Life Committee, abortion has been the cause of the death of a staggering 54,559,615 children in the United States alone since its legalization in 1973, in addition to untold numbers of children who have suffered a similar fate around the world.<sup>5</sup> If women better understood their identity as image-bearers of God and co-creators of physical and spiritual generations, many lives could be saved and spiritual destinies redeemed for God's glory.

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3. Sofia Cavalletti. *The History of the Kingdom of God, Part I: From Creation to Parousia*. Chicago, IL: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Liturgy Training Publications, 2012.

4. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*, 13.

5. "Factsheets: Abortion Statistics." National Right to Life Committee. <http://www.nrlc.org/factsheets/> (accessed January 25, 2014).

Yet the deepest and most fundamental reason it is imperative for women to preserve life-giving is because life-giving is an essential attribute of God's character as the ultimate Giver of life. Therefore, as image-bearers of God, men and women alike reflect God's image by giving and preserving life. Furthermore, any attack on life is a direct affront to the image of God. Recognizing the spiritual reality of a life-taking enemy constantly doing battle against a life-giving God is essential to understanding the vital importance of life-giving for women. Restoring the woman's role as life-giver is essential to the endurance of God's plan to give eternal life to all humanity. Through the life-giving actions of each of the women in Exodus 1-2, God preserved His plan to deliver His people by preserving the life of their deliverer, Moses. This paradigm of God giving life through women is crucial for all generations and ultimately represents God's plan to give eternal life through Christ, born of a woman (Isa. 7:14, Gal. 4:4, Jn. 1:14, Matt. 1:16, Matt. 1:21).<sup>6</sup>

### **The Need for Deliverance**

In the same manner that Genesis inaugurates God's creational plans to give, preserve and bless life, the book of Exodus represents the perpetuation of God's intervention on man's behalf to restore life. Exodus 1:1-7 thus acts as a continuation of the themes of God's promises and purposes for creation in the Genesis narrative by connecting the Israelite's sojourn in Egypt with the events of Israel's past.<sup>7</sup> The passage begins with a genealogy, listing the tribes of Jacob who settled in Egypt at the close of

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6. It is essential to clarify that life-giving is not inherently a biological process. Pharaoh's daughter and Miriam demonstrate their equal status as life-givers through their compassion and presence of mind that is integral to Moses' deliverance. Their example implies that life-giving is also a spiritual process that reflects the life-giving activity of God working through the compassionate actions of women, regardless of marital status or age.

7. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*, 24.

Genesis 50. As Exodus 1:6-7 states, “Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.” The terminology used in Exodus 1:7 bears an unmistakable resonance to God’s first command to humanity recorded in Genesis 1:28 to “be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it.” Hence, verse seven heightens the realization of God’s creational plans coming to fruition for the children of Israel. God’s multiplication of the Israelites is a microcosmic fulfillment of God’s macrocosmic plans for the world to be filled with human beings who bear His image. This reinforces the primary theme of Exodus that becomes central to the events of chapters one and two: “The God who redeems has been at work in life-giving ways all along the journey” (cf. Gen. 45:5-7; 50:20).<sup>8</sup>

Although the creational language appears positive for the children of Israel, the Hebrews’ proliferation in Egypt was not welcome news to Pharaoh. Verse 8 shifts from the positive multiplication language of verses 1-7 and introduces Pharaoh’s destructive schemes to “deal shrewdly” with the Israelites. The English title “Exodus” derives from the Greek noun *exodus*, indicating a “going out” or “departure” which is a prominent theme in the initial chapters of the book.<sup>9</sup> Ironically, though the Hebrews’ and Egyptians were delivered together from the famine of the past because of the wisdom of Joseph, the Hebrew’s departure from Egypt became necessary as a result of the new king “who did not know Joseph” (Gen.41:39; 45:5-7; 50:20). Hence, the text conveys two unfortunate departures from the harmony enjoyed by the Hebrews and Egyptians of the past. The new

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8. *Ibid.*, 25.

9. Andrew E. Hill, and John H. Walton. *Survey of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

king's departure from his predecessor's positive embrace of the Israelite people becomes the lamentable foundation for the Hebrew's flight from the land their fathers previously saved from death.

The Hebrew terms *parah* and *ravah* reveal that the Israelites were not only fruitful, but that they continued increasing in number and became intimidatingly powerful.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as the Hebrew word *'atsam* demonstrates, the Israelites had become so strong that Pharaoh feared they would become a threat to Egypt in time of war. Consequently, in a desperate attempt to maintain political power, Pharaoh joined a long line of kings who conspired to wipe out God's people through his decree to annihilate every newborn Hebrew boy. However, the implications of Pharaoh's systematic decimation of the Hebrew race possessed deeper, more sinister insinuations than just the protection of his throne. In the words of William MacDonald, "Three evil rulers in Scripture ordered the slaughter of innocent children: Pharaoh, Athaliah in 2 Kings 11, and Herod in Matthew 2. These satanically inspired atrocities were aimed at the extinction of the messianic line. Satan has never forgotten God's promise in Genesis 3:15."<sup>11</sup>

Gordon Davies' rhetorical analysis of Pharaoh's address to the people of Egypt conveys an attempt to create disassociations between the Egyptians and the Israelites. Pharaoh paints a picture of "imperiled Egyptians" versus the "dangerous Hebrews" in order to justify the destructive actions he is preparing to perform. Davies' analysis

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10. Dorothy Patterson, and Rhonda Kelly. *Women's Evangelical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011.

11. William MacDonald. *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing Company, 1990.

exposes the paradoxical language of Pharaoh's discourse, which foreshadows the ironic themes characteristic of the rest of the episode. As Davies relates, "In the contradictions of its rhetoric, the Egyptian oppression is the vehicle of its own rebuttal, just as in the plot, the rigors of their forced labor are self-defeating, stimulating the proliferation that they were intended to ruin."<sup>12</sup>

In his attempt to deal shrewdly with the Hebrews, the power of the sovereign was thwarted by the cunning of the weak. This ironic turn of events is made possible by the intervention of Yahweh, whose design to make Himself known was soon to be revealed. Clearly, Israel's deliverance from her oppressor Egypt is not merely a historical account of a nation's sojourn in a foreign land, but theologically represents a profoundly significant event in the course of redemptive history. The entire narrative of Exodus announces the story of God's twofold plan to give life to His people and, as Thomas Dozeman asserts, "to bring the Egyptians (e.g. Exod.7:5), including Pharaoh (e.g. Exod. 7:10) to the knowledge of God."<sup>13</sup>

Theologically, Pharaoh's attack on the Israelites threatens God's creative design and represents a continuation of the cosmic war between Yahweh the life-giver and all life-takers. Terrance Fretheim illustrates this theological point as follows: "The new king of Egypt counters God's life-giving work with death-dealing efforts"<sup>14</sup> This theological framework of life-giving at war with life-taking sets the stage for Yahweh's superiority over destructive powers soon to be realized on a global scale. Ironically Pharaoh's

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12. Gordon F. Davies. *Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1-2*. Vol. 135. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.

13. Thomas B. Dozeman. *Eerdmans Critical Commentary: Exodus*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009.

14. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*, 27.

attempt to stem the population growth results in the fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarchs (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:4; 18: 18-19; 46:3).

### **Interpreting Women's Stories**

The fact that Creator-God involved five lowly women in His creational endeavors is replete with irony. It is because Moses was born to a mother characterized by resourcefulness, courage, and wisdom that he was delivered from certain death. These life-giving actions were followed by the tender compassion and defiance of a young Egyptian princess who was not afraid to rebel against the decree of her father. Furthermore, the Hebrew midwives served as mothers of Israel from a distance by making it possible for the newborn males to survive. Moses' sister Miriam also exhibited essential life-giving qualities in her resourcefulness and protection of Moses through a strategic arrangement for his survival in Pharaoh's household. Cheryl Exum offers excellent insight into these women's roles by arguing that, "the liberation of Israel from bondage in Egypt begins in the courageous actions and disobedience of women. It begins when women refuse to cooperate with oppression, relying on wisdom to foil the designs of a foolish Pharaoh and thereby bringing life out of threatened death."<sup>15</sup>

The life-affirming activities of these five women in Exodus 1-2 are paradigmatic of God's regular employment of unlikely characters in His creational plans. In a patriarchal society like the one in the Exodus narrative, women were not expected to exercise great influence in society. Indeed, most of the women of Exodus 1-2 were not powerful rulers or in a position of authority in their culture. Yet even within the patriarchal society of the biblical narrative, Exum asserts, "we find strong countercurrents

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15. Cheryl Exum, "Feminist Interpretation of the Bible." *Mother in Israel: A Familiar Figure Reconsidered*, Edited by Letty M. Russel, 73-85. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985.

of affirmation of women: stories that show women's courage, strength, faith, ingenuity, talents, dignity, and worth."<sup>16</sup> God's employment of the women in Exodus reveals His affirmation of their worth and His desire to use the lowly to overcome the powerful in order to bring life to His people and make His name great throughout all of the earth.

The agency of women in the story of Moses' deliverance introduces a few notable hermeneutical features in the text. In his work, *Reading Women's Stories*, John Petersen notes multiple challenges in establishing point of view, plot, character, and voice in many women's stories from Scripture.<sup>17</sup> Petersen affirms that scholarly interest in recent decades has led to significant discoveries about the activities of women and the role their stories play in the biblical canon as a whole. Historically, women's roles, struggles and contributions to God's plan have been unfortunately neglected in biblical interpretation. However, it is clear from the biblical text that the mention of these women is noteworthy and indicates the significance of God's engagement with feminine agents in His plan.

The five female characters in Exodus 1-2 certainly represent models of life-giving while simultaneously fulfilling typical roles with which contemporary female readers can identify. These women are a testament to God's love for the oppressed and His faithfulness in making those of humble estate agents of His life-giving plan. Alice Ogden-Bellis expounds on this concept in her work *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*:

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16. Ibid.,73.

17. John Peterson. *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004.

The most important story in the Hebrew Bible begins with women determining events. It begins with God using the weak and the lowly to overcome the strong. It begins with women who act courageously, defying oppression. It begins with women who are life-affirming, women who are wise and resourceful in tough situations. Without these women, there would be no Moses to liberate the Hebrews from bondage.<sup>18</sup>

As Ogden-Bellis suggests, the text is both anthropocentric and theocentric in God's utilization of women who fulfill His life-giving purposes. Yet despite the courageous acts of the women, the primary meaning of this pivotal event is to chronicle the intervention of Yahweh on behalf of His people for the advancement of His plan. Consequently, interpreting the text on the basis of Moses' deliverance alone results in a failure to comprehend Yahweh's ironic humbling of the strong through the activity of the weak. Neither Moses nor the women around him are intended to be the center of the text. Rather, Israel's deliverer and the women of the story merely serve as reflections of Yahweh's role as the supreme Deliverer of His people and His plan.

In addition to the author's use of irony, one of the unique literary features of the text is the use and omission of personal names in the description of the women. The only women named in the opening chapters are the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, while Moses' mother and sister remain nameless until later chapters and Pharaoh's daughter is never named at all. Likewise, a fascinating contrast is revealed by Moses' evident praise for the midwives whom he specifically identifies, and his omission of Pharaoh's identity. Exodus 1:15 in the original Hebrew is purposefully constructed to focus on the women's names. The manner in which Moses chose to emphasize the names of these two women is characteristic of how he carefully identified prominent characters at the beginning of the

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18. Alice Ogden-Bellis. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1984.

account.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the exclusion of Pharaoh's name indicates that, unlike the women in the text who fulfilled a specific role in Yahweh's plan, the unnamed monarch represents opposition to God's creational plan. Moses' omission of Pharaoh's name may be a literary device, employed to reduce the most powerful man in the most powerful nation of the age to nothing more than a sheer office and generic title.<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly, Adele Reinhartz suggests that Moses' mother, sister, and Pharaoh's daughter remain nameless for the specific purpose of accentuating what she classifies as a "typified" or traditional feminine role.<sup>21</sup> The typified roles of the women illustrate the truth that God could have used any woman who was willing to be obedient to her divinely appointed role as a life-giver to bring about the deliverance of Moses and the Hebrew nation. Fulfilling their typified roles was the very activity that made these women successful in delivering the Hebrew boys and the infant Moses. As Victor Hamilton contends, the text emphasizes the exemplary archetype each woman epitomizes: "One woman is a creative and nurturing mother; the second woman is a quick-thinking young girl and a protector of her baby brother; the third woman defies her father's ultimatum and demonstrates compassionate maternity as more than merely a biological process."<sup>22</sup> The biblical text therefore celebrates the courage of the women who were able to thwart the evil plan of Pharaoh precisely because they fully inhabited

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19. Douglas K. Stuart. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of the Holy Scripture, Exodus*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006.

20. *Ibid.*, 24.

21. Adele Reinhartz. "Why Ask My Name?" *Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998.

22. Victor P. Hamilton. *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.

their roles as mothers, midwives and daughters. Moses, the author of Exodus, clearly expressed that God sovereignly positioned each woman in a uniquely strategic role that enabled her to become an agent of life-giving in His divine plan.

### **Unlikely Heroines**

Exodus 1:15-22 introduces the remarkable theme of God's strategic utilization of women in His life-giving activity in redemptive history. Fretheim refers to this theme as "the importance of the activity of women in the divine economy."<sup>23</sup> The life-giving actions of the midwives in chapter one foreshadow the importance of women in chapter two. In an ironic stroke of grace, God gave women crucial roles in Israel's survival by working through their presence of mind, courage and compassion. As Fretheim suggests, "They [(the women)] make a difference, not only to Israel but to God. God is able to work in and through these women and that creates possibilities for God's way into the future with this people that might not have been there otherwise."<sup>24</sup> Precisely as the role of women as life-givers is often ignored in contemporary society, Pharaoh too underestimated the significant power of women in his mandate to slay every Hebrew son. The Exodus account honors the midwives as unlikely heroines and examples to future generations who will courageously risk their lives out of reverence for the God of Israel.<sup>25</sup>

Although Exodus 1:15-22 exposes the disregard Pharaoh showed for women, the passage simultaneously offers a fascinating insight into the importance of women in the

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23. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*, 32.

24. *Ibid.*, 33.

25. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus*, 75.

divine economy and God's view on the sanctity of life. Pharaoh charged the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1:16, "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." In their explanation of this passage in the *Women's Evangelical Commentary of the Old Testament*, Dorothy Patterson and Rhonda Kelley attest that Pharaoh's edict was inspired by his concern in being overwhelmed by the Hebrew men who might join forces with enemy armies. According to Pharaoh's rationale, Hebrew girls could be integrated into Egyptian society as slaves since they presented no obvious military threat while the genocide of males would result in an eventual extermination of the Hebrew race. Ironically, Pharaoh's murderous scheme was undone by the very individuals he had considered innocuous, the women. The implications of Pharaoh's command cannot be overlooked. As Patterson and Kelley explain, "Pharaoh's instructions to the midwives amounted to a government imposed system of infanticide or post-birth abortion—murder based on ethnicity, gender and age."<sup>26</sup> Pharaoh's infanticide initiative was intended to be a war on the Hebrews. However, the king of Egypt failed to realize that his anti-creational actions put him at war with the King of Creation. Through this heinous command, Pharaoh sought to implicate these God-fearing midwives in a scheme they refused to endorse; he was unknowingly outwitted by a few ordinary females.

It is doubly ironic that the sovereign of Egypt would condescend to speak directly to two Hebrew women. Fretheim notes that Pharaoh's direct address to the midwives enhances the narrative's irony through the fact that the king of Egypt remains nameless and ultimately suffers Yahweh's destruction, while two daughters of Israel are not only

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26. Patterson et al. *Women's Evangelical Commentary*, 50-53.

named but blessed with households by Yahweh. The irony is compounded by the Egyptian community's fear of the Israelites, contrasted with the Hebrew midwives' fear of God that guarantees their victory. Despite Pharaoh's national infanticide initiative, God's creative work through the women of Israel enabled life to flourish, proving Yahweh's ability to use those of humble station to accomplish His divine purposes.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that Pharaoh chose to involve the midwives indicates that these women were in a strategic position to instigate change in their society. Since midwifery in the ancient Near East was an exclusively female governed operation, and in many respects the midwives had more access to a newborn child than the infant's own mother, Pharaoh must have concluded this was the ideal opportunity to rid himself of the Hebrew threat.<sup>28</sup> The text indicates that Pharaoh was somewhat familiar with the practice of midwifery and mistakenly assumed he could utilize the midwives, the individuals with the most exclusive access to the newborn Hebrews, to carry out his deadly design.<sup>29</sup> Evidently however, Pharaoh had not accounted for the possibility of being cheated out of his evil plan by a few unlikely heroines.

In a totalitarian society like Egypt, the word of the Pharaoh was not only binding law but a divine decree since the Pharaoh was esteemed as an incarnate deity.<sup>30</sup> In the Egyptian ethos of the day, Pharaoh had the power and the right to take and preserve life according to his own desires. Therefore, the midwives must have possessed an

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27. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*, 32.

28. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 20-26.

29. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus*, 77.

30. Jeffrey J. Niehaus. *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008.

indisputably powerful motivation to obey the word of Pharaoh since they were aware their disobedience could cost them their lives. Despite their awareness that disobedience could cost them their lives, the midwives' choice to disobey Pharaoh is evident in Exodus 1:17: "The midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live." The use of the Hebrew term *Yare'* in verse 17 denotes "reverence, honor, respect and the act of standing in awe of someone great."<sup>31</sup> It was the midwives' fear of Yahweh and their conviction that He, not Pharaoh, was sovereign over life that provided the motivation and courage for these women to defy Pharaoh's evil decree, even if it cost them their lives.

The midwives' fear of the Lord suggests another significant theological theme. Not only did the midwives fear the Lord because of His holiness and sovereignty, but they feared defying His creational plan for mankind to bear His image. Old Testament theologian Robin Routledge asserts that the reference to human beings created male and female in Genesis 1:27 is significant because both sexes are made equally in God's image. It is only in relation with one another that God's purpose to fill and subdue the earth will be fulfilled.<sup>32</sup> God gave the task of life-giving to both men and women, yet as Pharaoh demonstrates, human beings can freely choose to oppose their responsibility to give, protect, and preserve life. The midwives' choice to fear the Lord rather than Pharaoh reveals the positive result when image-bearers seek to fulfill God's life-giving goals in the midst of opposition. Pharaoh's instruction for the midwives to assist him in his systematic decimation of Israel through infanticide was a direct attack on God's plan

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31. MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 85-90.

32. Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 78.

to fill the earth through his image-bearing people. Hence, the Hebrew midwives fulfilled their role as life-givers who were unwaveringly committed to obeying Yahweh's original mandate for mankind to subdue the earth and perpetuate His image through Israel's offspring.

Jeffrey Niehaus indicates that Egyptian religion championed a belief similar to Yahweh's creation of mankind. In the same way that God created mankind, so too did the Egyptian creator god fashion lesser gods in his image and likeness. The biblical phraseology of being created in the image and likeness of a greater god can also be expressed through describing the created being as a "son" who reflects or participates in the father's nature.<sup>33</sup> In order for the midwives to defy the Pharaoh, who was esteemed as god incarnate, the midwives must have believed with unwavering conviction that these Hebrew boys the god-king was endeavoring to destroy were equally created in the image of God. Their conviction that these sons of Jacob were also sons of the one true God was almost certainly the foundational motivation for their defiance of Pharaoh and of his plan to become preeminent over all creation. Their fear of God, and their reverence for His image manifested in His people revealed their profound character as life-giving image-bearers of the God they feared. In a deliciously ironic moment in history, God thwarted the plans of the mighty through the obedience of the weak and revealed that the greatest power on earth is not found in the authority of a throne, but in reverence for the Lord.

### **Jochebed's Treasure**

Once Pharaoh's desperate effort to control the Hebrew population was foiled by the midwives, he attempted to recover his destructive plan by expanding its scope to a

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33. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 84.

nationwide pogrom. Instead of murdering the infant sons at the vulnerable point of birth, he now took the aggressive measure of involving his people in the desired Hebrew annihilation. After his national command to cast newborn sons into the Nile in Exodus 1:22, chapter two shifts from the life-giving actions of the midwives to the life-giving actions of Moses' parents, particularly those of Moses' mother. It is fascinating to note the apparent absence of men in the story of Moses' deliverance. While Exodus 2:1 details the origins of both Moses' father and mother, the rest of the story exclusively emphasizes the actions of Jochebed. It is reasonable to assume based on the evidence of Jochebed's relentless actions to save her son that she possessed a powerful motivation to treasure and protect him simply because she was his mother. Jochebed was compelled by her character as a nurturer to preserve life, not to destroy it. Furthermore, God worked through Jochebed's maternal instinct to preserve the life of Israel's earthly deliverer in order to also give life to the children of Israel and ultimately to the world.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the absence of men in the biblical text does not imply that Moses' father did not care for him nor that men have no nurturing ability. Rather, the emphasized actions of the women around Moses illustrate the fundamentally nurturing nature of womanhood that Dee Jepsen explains in her article, *Women in Society, The Challenge and the Call*. This article asserts that "when God created woman, He created her with sensitivities that most men possess to a lesser degree. We need these sensitivities because we were created to be the life-bearers, the nurturers. That's part of what it means to be a

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34. W. Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

woman.”<sup>35</sup> Jochebed clearly did not act alone in her preservation of Moses since his concealment from the Egyptians would require the cooperation of the whole family. Furthermore, Hebrews 11:23 clearly states, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.” It was their unified faith in God’s sovereignty over life and their conviction that He was the ultimate Giver of Life that enabled Jochebed and Amram to protect their son from Pharaoh’s life-taking threats. There is some room for speculation as to the reason the text does not mention Amram’s actions. The most likely reason, according to most commentators, is that he was drafted into the workforce during the time Moses’ deliverance took place. Hence, Jochebed’s actions are emphasized in the text because she was the one primarily entrusted with the task of fulfilling her son’s preservation plan.<sup>36</sup>

Historically, some commentators have sought to link Jochebed’s creative preservation plan to the “Legend of Sargon of Akkad” (ca. 2350-2294). According to the legend, Sargon was put into a container made of reeds, set adrift on a river, and grew up to be a hero and king.<sup>37</sup> Despite the fascinating similarities, it is far more likely that Moses’ mother was familiar with the story of Noah and the Ark and therefore was inspired to create a smaller version of the vessel to protect her son from the elements.<sup>38</sup> The King James Version yields an interesting translation of Exodus 2:3 that aids the

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35. Dee Jepsen. “Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.” *Women in Society: The Challenge and the Call*, Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 388-393. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006.

36. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 24.

37. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus*, 87.

38. *Ibid.*, 89.

reader in recognizing the similarities between the flood story of Genesis 6-8 and the deliverance of Moses. As the King James version states, “when she could no longer hide him, she [Jochebed] took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.” Although other translations translate the word for Moses' life-preserver as “basket,” the King James Version's rendering of the Hebrew word *tebah* or *tevah*, meaning “ark,” draws a clear connection between Jochebed's life-preserving actions and God's preservation of Noah.<sup>39</sup>

Undoubtedly, Jochebed's nurturing actions can be attributed to her God-given nature as a life-giver. In giving life to her son and consequently preserving his life at the peril of her own, Jochebed reflected God's life-giving nature as the loving Creator and Deliverer of His people. Jochebed's nurturing nature is evident in the words of Exodus 2:2: “When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.” According to James Bruckner's analysis of Exodus 2:2, “The combination of the Hebrew words *tob* and *tsapan* (NIV ‘fine’ and ‘hid’) communicates that she saw that he was ‘precious’ and she ‘treasured’ or ‘hid him as a treasure’ for three months.”<sup>40</sup> It was the very same nurturing nature in Jochebed that caused her to value her child's life so deeply that she was willing to risk the consequences of defying Pharaoh's edict, just as the midwives had done. The fundamental significance of this verse is not that Moses earned his right to be saved because of his fineness, but because of his life's inherent value as a human being that his mother recognized and protected. The colorful language of this verse is unmistakably

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39. Patterson et al. *Women's Evangelical Commentary*, 118.

40. James Bruckner. *Exodus: New International Bible Commentary*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008.

reminiscent of God's declaration in Genesis that His creation was "good" (*tob*). In the same way God saw that His creation was good, the author intentionally uses the same language in Exodus 2:2 to illustrate that Moses' mother saw that he was good and therefore she treasured him.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to her incredible legacy of courage and nurturing, Jochebed was created by God for a divine purpose to give life as a bearer of His image. As Douglas Stuart affirms, "To be in the image of God is to have a job assignment. God's 'image' is supposed to represent him on earth and accomplish his purposes here."<sup>42</sup> Jochebed's image-bearer status provided her with the privilege and responsibility to reflect the nature of her Creator in order to give glory to His divine name. God's sovereignty and favor is evident in the name ascribed to this remarkable woman. Hamilton explains that "Jochebed has the distinction of being the first person in Scripture with a name part of which includes a portion of one of God's names... *Jo* is an abbreviated form of 'Yahweh.' Her name means 'Yo/Yah/ Yahweh is glorious.'"<sup>43</sup> Jochebed's name is pregnant with theological implications. Undoubtedly, God sovereignly oversaw the naming of this woman whose life-giving actions would be the means of deliverance for Israel's deliverer, Moses. Jochebed embodies the true purpose of nurturing and life-giving, namely, making the name of Yahweh glorious in all the earth.

### **The Nature to Nurture: Pharaoh's Daughter**

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41. Ibid., 21.

42. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus*, 37.

43. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 17.

Perhaps the greatest irony in the account of Moses' deliverance is God's employment of Pharaoh's own daughter in His life-giving plan. Contrary to the emphasis of many biblical texts on the importance of "sons," Jopie Siebert-Hommes suggests that the focus of Exodus 1-2 should be removed from the sons to draw attention to the active roles of daughters. As she surmises, "The sister of Moses and the daughter of Pharaoh take on active roles in the story. They are the agents who make it possible for Moses to live, whose leadership is tied to the emergence of the Israelites as a nation."<sup>44</sup> Through the example of Pharaoh's daughter, the reader is offered a paradigm of a woman who defied the prejudices of her culture by embracing her feminine role as a life-giver and nurturer in adopting a child who was not her own. Above all, this account of Moses' deliverance through an unlikely woman represents another instance of divine intervention.

Pharaoh's daughter's nurturing nature is a complete foil to her father's destructive initiatives. While her father adamantly opposed God's life-giving plans, the princess reflected the nurturing nature of God through her compassion toward Moses. It is in God's very urge to nurture His children as the Creator and Sustainer of life, and it is this same nature to nurture that characterizes life-giving in its purest form. In order to truly understand the kind of life-giving capacity God has designed women to reflect, it is essential to define the true nature of nurturing. "The word *nurture* originated from the Latin word meaning 'act of nursing, to suckle or nourish.'"<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the biblical text

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44. Jopie Siebert-Hommes. "A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy." *But if she be a Daughter, She May Live! 'Daughters' and 'Sons' in Exodus 1-2,* Edited by Athalya Brenner, 62-74. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.

45. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., 1993, 799.

indicates that Moses' own mother was given the privilege of nurturing her newborn son as the hired nurse of Pharaoh's daughter.

However, the meaning of the word nurture possesses a significantly more extensive meaning in the English language, which includes "furthering the development of, to train."<sup>46</sup> According to the broader definition, it is appropriate to reason that Pharaoh's daughter also played a significant role as nurturer to Moses through her influence as his adopted mother. While Jochebed had the opportunity to give birth but not to train her young son, Pharaoh's daughter did not give birth, but committed many years of her life to encouraging Moses' development into adulthood.

Defining nurturing and motherhood is essential to interpreting the actions of Pharaoh's daughter. If motherhood is nothing more than a biological process, then Pharaoh's daughter cannot be classified as a legitimate life-giver. However, according to Barbara Hughes' explanation of nurturing in *Disciplines of a Godly Woman*, she insists, "There are many women who never give birth, whose nurture will necessarily extend to those who are not her children. It isn't the actual process of pregnancy and childbirth that makes a daughter of Eve a nurturer."<sup>47</sup> According to Hughes' assessment of nurturing, Pharaoh's daughter deserves equal status as a life-giver and nurturing mother by virtue of her exercise of maternal love in adopting Moses as her own son.

Historically, however, Pharaoh's daughter has been surprisingly neglected. According to Naomi Steinberg's contribution in *Methods for Exodus*, the princess' namelessness seems to suggest that the author wished to draw attention to her actions

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46. Ibid., 799.

47. Barbara Hughes. *Disciplines of a Godly Woman*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001.

over her personal identity. Pharaoh's daughter, like Moses' mother who is not named until Exodus 6:20, and savvy sister who also remains nameless until Numbers 26:59, is never identified.<sup>48</sup> It would appear that this is a literary device to draw attention away from the princess herself in order to draw the reader's attention to God's compassionate purposes being furthered through her actions.

Fascinatingly, Fretheim suggests that "the princess' movements in chapter 2 parallel God's in chapter 3."<sup>49</sup> The text draws attention to the similar verbs used to describe how the princess "came down" to the Nile to bathe in 2:5 just as Yahweh told Moses, "I have come down" in Exodus 3:8. Likewise, the princess "saw" a basket in Exodus 2:5 which parallels how God "saw" the misery of His people in Exodus 3:7. The daughter of Pharaoh "heard" the cries of the helpless Moses that provoked her compassion, mirroring God's statement to Moses in Exodus 3:7 "I have heard the cries of my people."<sup>50</sup> None of Pharaoh's daughter's actions would be worthy of note were it not for the life-giving nature that God instilled in her heart. There is no other explanation for the course of these events but providence. Hence, the emphasis is concentrated on God's life-giving compassion being manifested through maternal instinct rather than on the individual woman herself.

### **Restoring Divine Image**

The exemplary roles of the women in Exodus 1-2 clearly affirm that life-giving is a not simply a matter of politics, race, or the struggle against power and oppression.

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48. Naomi Steinberg. "Methods for Exodus." *Feminist Criticism*, Edited by Thomas B. Dozeman, 172-185. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

49. Fretheim. *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*, 35.

50. *Ibid.*, 38-39.

Rather life-giving is crucial because it is central to God's plan to restore His image in His created people. Since God is the Creator and Sustainer of life, giving and preserving life is an essential assignment for His image-bearers. Indeed, the significance of the women in Exodus 1-2 is their faithfulness to life-giving and life-sustaining activities that reflect the image of God. Robin Routledge acknowledges several primary areas of significance for understanding the concept of human beings as image-bearers of God. The first of Routledge's observations is that being created in the image of God implies that "human beings share spiritual characteristics with God."<sup>51</sup> Secondly, "human beings are made for relationship with God." Finally, "human beings are made to reflect the glory of God."<sup>52</sup>

Recognizing that human beings share spiritual characteristics with God is particularly important for interpreting the events of Exodus 1-2. Throughout the course of this episode, God's life-giving characteristics are revealed through the actions of the women who give, preserve, and bless life as a sacred gift. This characteristic of image-bearing is first revealed through the midwives' fear of the Lord and their commitment to preserve the lives of the Hebrew infants at great risk to their own. Just as God saw in the beginning that His Creation was good, God's life-giving nature is also seen through Jochebed who treasured and preserved her son from death because she cherished her child as a creation made in God's image. By setting her son afloat in an ark, Jochebed ensured that Moses, Israel's earthly deliverer, would be linked with God the Deliver's rescue of mankind from the flood in Genesis 6-8.<sup>53</sup> Like Noah, Jochebed entrusted the

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51. Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 74.

52. *Ibid.*, 73.

53. Patterson et al. *Women's Evangelical Commentary*, 118.

future to God and reflected His image through her commitment to His creational plan to give and preserve life. Finally, God's compassion is revealed through the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter and her rescue of Moses. It was God's life-giving compassion that stretched out the princess' arms and prompted her to adopt a child she should have scorned as her enemy. The only force powerful enough to inspire a woman of such high privilege and close relation to the murderous Pharaoh to take pity on her enemy's child was the life-giving nature God instilled in her identity as a female bearer of His image.

This theme of God's plan to restore His image is evident throughout all of Scripture, yet it is never as evident as in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection revealed that He was the consummate agent used by God to restore His image through His atoning sacrifice. Jesus was the ultimate, preeminent Son of God and the complete fullness of His image and likeness (Col. 1:15). Hebrews 1:3 demonstrates that the Son is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." In Niehaus' discussion of God's image manifested through Christ, he clarifies that "The term translated 'exact representation' is Greek *charakter*. Used also of an image or likeness on a coin, meant to be a faithful representation of the original—usually an emperor or a king. Thus Jesus is an exact image or likeness of the Great King."<sup>54</sup> Only through Christ's fulfillment of God's image in human flesh was the hope of humanity, and God's plan for life-giving, restored to a like-taking world.

It is through Christ's atonement and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers that God renews His people and consequently, renews His image within them. James Frame describes this renewal of God's image in His people as follows: "That renewal is a

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54. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 85.

renewal in the image of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:49; 1 John 3:3ff)... Christ is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3; John 1:18; 12:45; 14:9). Adam defaced the image of God in which he was made, but Jesus honored and glorified the God whom He supremely pictures and represented”<sup>55</sup> Frame clarifies that it is through Christian love that the image of God is restored because Christian love is the very essence of the imitation of Jesus Christ. This love is made possible through the atonement of Christ which restores the divine human relationship and the image of God revealed through Christ’s love shown through His people (John 13:34ff; 15:12; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:5-11; 3:21; 1 John 3:11-16; 4:10ff.).<sup>56</sup>

The significance of restoring the divine image in human beings is central to the plan of God because God’s purpose in impressing His image on human beings is that He might be glorified. This coincides with the third of Routledge’s primary inferences regarding the image of God that “human beings are made to reflect the glory of God.”<sup>57</sup> Just as Jochebed’s name recalls the purpose of all mankind to be living reflections of God’s glory through the sufficiency of Christ (the quintessential image bearer of God) so too does it suggest that human beings can be restored to their created purpose to glorify God. The life-giving actions of the women in Exodus 1-2 and their preservation of Moses, Israel’s deliverer point to God’s plan to ultimately restore His image in human beings through His Son “who would save the people from their sins,” Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:21). In Christ, human beings were given the supreme model of a God-glorifying image-

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55. James Frame. “Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.” *Men and Women Created in the Image of God*, Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 228. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006.

56. *Ibid.*, 228.

57. Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 75.

bearer which He designed human beings to imitate. Though the human nature was marred by sin, God's ultimate plan to restore life to His image-bearing people was redeemed through Christ who revealed that the glory of God could still exist in human form.<sup>58</sup>

### **Restoring the Plan**

In His sovereignty and grace, the Creator has chosen to make Himself known through women who reflect His life-giving nature as they fulfill His command to give and preserve the lives of others who will bear His image and reflect His glory. Exodus 1-2 clearly provides a profound illustration of the influence women possess as vital agents in the advancement of God's creational plan. Each woman in Exodus 1-2 exhibits characteristics of nurturing and life-giving that women of the church today can emulate in their own cultural context. In his summation of *Reading Women's Stories*, Peterson contends that the biblical "stories of women still speak" to the struggles and yearnings of women today. Women's trials and triumphs continue to resonate with the unchanging theme of God's faithfulness and His employment of unlikely characters in His plan. The women of Exodus speak through their legacy as preservers and givers of life. Petersen conveys the powerful influence women exercised in biblical stories in his summary statement, that such

Women transcend their traditional roles. Although they begin within the narrow boundaries assigned to them, they work through broken relationships and social problems to transform the roles of wife, mother and daughter. Facing heavy obstacles in turbulent times they act decisively to change the course of events for their families and their people, building hopes for a meaningful future.<sup>59</sup>

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58. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 110.

59. Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, 165

The paradigm represented by the life-giving women of Exodus has never been more crucial to women than today. These faithful women truly transcended their traditional roles through their legacy of reverence for the Lord, compassion for the weak, and preservation of the sanctity of life. The five women of Exodus 1-2 represent the timeless truth that God alone can restore life and hope to a life-taking world. Though His actions are not always readily seen, they are made manifest through the love and compassion of women who bear His image.

Furthermore, the women of Exodus bear witness to God's unchanging character from the beginning to the end of His revelatory Word. The life-giving example of the women of Exodus still endures because God's Word is the written record of the Spirit who gives life (Jn. 6:63). Kevin J. Vanhoozer expresses the power of the Spirit's life-giving work when he claims that "The Scriptures are the Spirit's work from first to last. The Spirit is involved in the very messy historical process of producing Scripture—prompting, appropriating, and coordinating human discourse to present God's Word—as well as in the process of bringing about understanding of Scripture among present-day readers."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the Scriptures are the living proof of God's mission to make Himself known.<sup>61</sup> God's creational plans are clearly displayed in the book of Exodus, which bears witness to the benevolent nature of the Creator and His desire to reveal Himself through His life-giving acts in history. Certainly, the account of Exodus epitomizes Moses' theological interest to disclose "Real knowledge of God" not only to Israel but to the

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60. Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

61. Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 32-33.

world.<sup>62</sup> From its dramatic genesis in chapters 1-2, Exodus is a work that provides knowledge of the one true God, “for who He has made Himself known to be, rather than who we might think He is, imagine him to be, or wish him to be.”<sup>63</sup>

The pattern of women in Scripture provides vital models for Christian women to emulate as they seek to incarnate the truth of God’s Word in their own context and society. The story of Jochebed, Miriam, Pharaoh’s daughter, and the Hebrew midwives thwarting the impending genocide of God’s chosen people is a timeless illustration of God’s sovereignty over life and of His design to perpetuate life through women. Just as the women in Exodus 1-2 chose the fear of the Lord over the fear of man, Christian women must embrace their calling to restore life-giving to a life-taking society.

Over the last several decades, the concept of life-giving has tragically deteriorated in Western culture as women have nearly abandoned their unique role as preservers and bearers of life. It is estimated that a million and a half children in the United States alone are aborted every year while the political climate toward the pro-life constituency is becoming increasingly more hostile. The result of women deserting their role as nurturers to their children has been the impending collapse of the family, the pillar of civilization and God’s primary vehicle of blessing to the nations.<sup>64</sup> Despite the tragic consequences of a diminished spirit of life-giving today, women can transform their culture with the same courage and audacity as the women around Moses. As the women of Exodus

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62. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus*, 36.

63. Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 22.

64. Bruckner, *Exodus: New International Bible Commentary*, 75.

clearly demonstrate, women were created by God to have a tremendous influence on society and the world for His glory.<sup>65</sup>

The manner in which each woman will fulfill her role as life-giver is unique, just as the women around Moses each satisfied a different role which was necessary for his deliverance. Nonetheless, the calling to restore life-giving is the same today as it was for the courageous women of Exodus. Women of the church should follow the example of the Hebrew midwives by challenging the demands and values of an immoral society and refusing to contribute to the increasing number of abortions each year. In the same way the Hebrew midwives used their influence to preserve the lives of the Hebrew infants, women of the church are called to be influences in their culture by speaking the truth and upholding the cause of the unborn. Women can be empowered by the courageous example of the midwives who defied the wicked demands of their society in favor of truth and righteousness. For by choosing to give life in the face of death, these women unknowingly became agents of the plan of God. Women today are also in an exceptional position to defend the truth as instruments of God's design for womanhood as they fulfill their God-given role as life-givers and life-preservers in a life-taking world.

Although many women do not have the opportunity to become biological mothers, Christian women can also emulate the same God-given compassion Pharaoh's daughter exhibited by being adoptive parents. The lives of thousands of children could be transformed and saved through the compassionate care and nurturing love of willing women. In the same way that Pharaoh's daughter chose to save the life of Moses and willingly trained him to obey the values of her society, women are vital agents in passing

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65. Jepsen, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 390.

on values to their physical and spiritual children. In perhaps the most stirring passage from *The Challenge and the Call*, Jepsen proclaims, “Our society urgently needs the influence and action of Christian women. If the women of this country do not stand up in protest against the killing of a million and a half of their young a year...who will? It has been said that if the women of a nation lose their virtue the nation will lose everything.”<sup>66</sup> Christian women are vital to God’s plan to show His compassion as they breathe life into their society as biological, adoptive, and spiritual mothers.

In a similar manner, though Moses’ sister Miriam was a young child at the time of her brother’s deliverance, she fulfilled her unique role as a life-giver by facilitating the circumstances that enabled him to live. Like Miriam, women of the church must be challenged to facilitate life-giving by offering counsel to women struggling with their maternal role and those who are contemplating abortion. Women today must accept their commission as spiritual mothers to younger women by teaching others the truths of God’s Word as Titus 2:3-5 commands. Though not all women will become biological mothers and not all will be called to adopt children, women are unmistakably called to fulfill their role as life-givers through spiritual mothering.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, women of the church must nurture and protect their children as Jochebed nurtured and treasured Moses. Jochebed’s nurturing actions in Exodus 2 offer powerful implications for restoring a spirit of life-giving to women today. Godly women should treasure their children as precious and worthy of training and protection from harm in a life-taking world. Christian women must follow the example of Jochebed and be

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66. Ibid., 391.

67. Susan Hunt. *Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Model for Women Mentoring Women*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1992.

protectors and nurturers of their children by striving to instill the truths of God's Word and His view on the sanctity of life for the next generation, to the glory of God's name.<sup>68</sup>

Ultimately, the restoration of a spirit of life-giving is crucial for women because giving life is part of God's plan to make Himself known through all the earth. From the beginning, God desired to glorify Himself through breathing life into creation. The Scriptures bear witness to God's faithfulness to preserve and restore life through divine intervention, human agency, and ultimately through His Son who is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6). In his work *The God who Makes himself Known*, W. Ross Blackburn explains, "God's mandate to be fruitful and exercise dominion has the distinctly missionary purpose of making himself known through creation. Because humanity is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), the command calls for God's image to spread throughout, and ultimately fill the earth."<sup>69</sup> Women have the unique calling and privilege to fulfill God's missionary purpose to make His name known throughout the earth by giving life to future physical and spiritual generations. God's purpose in creation is uniquely realized through the life-giving nature of women who recognize God's sovereignty over life and their role in His plan to make Himself known.

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68. Sally Clarkson. *The Mission of Motherhood*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbook Press, 2011.

69. Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 29.

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