**From Migdal Bavel To The Midwives**

**Netziv to Bereishit Ch.11**

We must understand why the builders of the Tower of Babel feared people leaving for another land. This was certainly related to the *devraerim ehadim,* the “one speech” among them. They feared that since not all human thoughts are identical, if some would leave they would adopt identical thoughts. And so they saw to it that no one left their enclave. Anyone who deviated from the *devarim ahadim,* the “one speech” that was among them, would be sentenced to burning, as was done with our forefather Abraham. What emerges from this is that they decided to kill anyone who did not think as they did.

It is undoubtedly illogical to assume that there would be but one city in the entire world. Rather, they thought that all cities would be connected and subsidiary to that one city in which the tower was to be built. And the purpose of the tower was to look out upon the distance over all their dwellings that none would split off into another land.

**Judy Klitsner, Subversive Sequels In The Bible, *The Rebirth Of The Individual,* pp60-62**

In a culture without names, these women are named. In a world bereft of God’s presence, they find God, fear Him, and lay the foundation for His active engagement with his people. In a civilisation in which silent - and at times lethal - acquiescence to authority is the rule, the midwives protest Pharoah’s command with their act of defiance. When contrasted with the characterless society of Babel, these women appear all the more extraordinary. If Babel warns of the dangers of a society that fails to confront itself, the courageous midwives who challenge convention serve as the Bible’s retort to that failed generation.

In Babel, the individual is blotted out, and as a result, so is the entire generation. In the story’s subversive sequel, the enslavement in Egypt, the individual is seriously eroded, but two distinctive women arrive in time to reverse the process. Shifra and Puah set off a chain of events that will ultimately lead to the defeat of the tyrannical Egyptian regime and to the salvation of the Israelite…

While the builders at Babel see their efforts end in ruin and rubble, the story of the midwives concludes with the reconstruction of the broken household of Israel. The outstanding women of Exodus undermine the Babel narrative to such an extent that in their story, the only structure to come crashing down is the textual account of uniformity, oppression and godlessness.