

Delivery Day

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by

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A shard of sunlight stabbed at Shiphrah's eyes as it broke over the eastern hills. The slap of the early morning cold startled her back to attentiveness. The night hours seemed endless, but the baby had finally arrived—safely—and that is really all that mattered. Now mother and child both lie contentedly in one another's embrace, drifting into a peaceful sleep. And speaking of sleep, a fiery pain in Shiphrah's head shot another reminder that she had missed an entire night's rest.

As the midwife of Bethlehem, Shiphrah often faced sleepless nights. One can't schedule these things. When it's time, it's time. And whenever the time came it was Shiphrah's moment to be at the mother's side. It isn't an easy way to live, but it is the most meaningful way Shiphrah could imagine.

Shiphrah had delivered virtually every child in the village over the last decade. It birthed a unique bond with every family in town. She gained her skills under the tutelage of her own mother, who had been trained by her mother, who had learned from her mother before her. As long as any of them could remember, the women of their family had shepherded the children of Bethlehem into the world. She liked to think the chain went unbroken all the way back to her famous namesake who saved Hebrew baby boys from the clutches of Pharaoh in Moses' day.

A cold burst of wind pulled at her shawl and Shiphrah tugged it tight round her neck and scurried toward home, hopeful for a few hours' sleep.

The voice began as a distant, faint call, barely perceptible at first. It grew steadily closer and louder, until it demanded her attention. With a spasmodic jerk Shiphrah jolted into consciousness, realizing the voice had been real and accompanied by a gentle shaking. Her daughter, Puah, bent low over her calling, "Mother! You must awaken, Mother!"

Bolting upright and blinking her eyes for focus Shiphrah took in the familiar look on her daughter's face. Another baby had signaled the time of arrival. The hour was at hand, again.

Still groggy from lack of sleep, Shiphrah reached for her satchel. It is a midwife's calling card. Not that she needed one in Bethlehem, but it was a mark of dignity among the women in her life. Within were the familiar tools of her trade: olive oil, soft sponges from the sea, fomentations for the easing of pain, a privacy cloth, and strips of cloth for swaddling the child.

As she started for the door her clearing mind took inventory of the expectant mothers of the village. Stopping short, Shiphrah turned to her daughter, asking, "Who is it? The closest to her delivery day is Hannah, but she ought not to be in labor for several more weeks."

"It is a traveler, one of the pilgrims on the road for Caesar's census."

Ah, the travelers. There had been so many already. For weeks now the homes of the village had nearly burst in the housing of them. Bethlehem, “the house of bread,” was about to run out of not only bread, but gracious hospitality.

Caesar and his census—all to increase his tax revenues! And now he has stranded some poor soul heavy with child in a place far-distant from her home!

Shiphrah caught herself, surprised at her ungraceful thoughts.

“Well, um, whose home is she in?” Shiphrah inquired as she headed again toward the door.

“Not a *home*, Mother,” her daughter replied, “Malachi’s stable.”

Shiphrah whirled to catch her daughter’s eye. “Malachi’s stable! What on earth is she doing there?”

“All the homes are full up; and the inn is occupied as well. It was all that was left.”

“Oh glory! A birth in a barn!” Shiphrah exclaimed. The slamming of the door added an exclamation point. The sun was high in the sky. *How long did I sleep?* Shiphrah wonders. *Not long enough*, she answered her own question.

Rounding the corner she caught sight of Malachi’s place. Without announcement she circled back of the house and came to the stable’s entrance. There, nestled down in a fresh spread of hay lay a woman clearly in the pains of labor. Next to her was the anxious husband, lost as a carpenter in a dress shop. He held her hand, patting it gently, praying softly, and worrying intensely.

Shiphrah made her entrance, introduced herself, and smiled as relief and thanksgiving washed over the man’s face.

“So you are ‘the deliverer’?” the man asked anxiously.

It’s a title Shiphrah wore uncomfortably. She delighted in her calling, but to her mind the title had always seemed an ill-fit. The mothers tagged her with it somewhere through the years she’d been bringing their children into the world. But it seems a title too lofty, too ... sacred.

Shiphrah nodded politely and turned the questions upon the couple. In short order she learned that they were from Nazareth and were indeed in Bethlehem for the census, for the man was of the house and lineage of David.

“You are welcome here. You are home.” *Despite the smell!* Shiphrah added in her heart.

Labor had begun as they approached town. There was nowhere else to go. Malachi had shooed the animals to the side of the stable, thrown down a fresh bed of hay and sent word for “the

deliverer.”

Shiphrah set to her work, first gathering details as to the time of the conception. Yes, it was the fullness of time. She sent the father for warm water. She soothed the young mother; Mary, she learned was her name. The next few hours disappeared as they had so many times for Shiphrah and as they had never before for Mary. All was healthy, all was right. A perfect baby boy was welcomed into the world that night.

Having delivered the baby into Mary’s arms, Shiphrah set about cleaning up and gathering her things. Casually, she asked, “And what shall be his name?”

“Jesus,” replied the father.

“Jesus,” Shiphrah echoed softly. “A wonderful name,” she added as a blessing. “And Jesus, then, is your name, sir?” she inquired.

“No,” came his reply, “my name is Joseph.”

Odd, she thought. “Oh, then it’s a family name?” she tried again.

“No,” again was the reply.

“Oh,” was all Shiphrah could add now as a reply.

Joseph, sensing her uneasiness, felt a need to explain.

Shiphrah listened intently, masking her interest by tidying the stable. A dream. An angel. “... that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” “You shall call his name Jesus.” “He will save his people from their sins.”

OK then! thought Shiphrah. Every birth was a holy event in her eyes. She was used to parents—especially first time parents—gushing over their child. But this was a new one on her. She took in the explanation silently, finishing her work and bid the new family farewell, with a promise to return to check in on everyone.

As she left the stable night had fallen. The day’s events had dropped hard on her as well, coming so closely upon the sleepless night. *Home! Supper! Sleep!* Shiphrah half mumbled to herself as she strode through the cool air of the evening.

Again the faraway voice called her name. It was so soft as to be nearly imperceptible. The shaking began shortly thereafter. Both grew more pronounced and unavoidable until she again bolted upright from a sound sleep. *What now!?*

The wide-eyes of Puah again met hers. “*Mother, something’s wrong. There’s shouting in the*

streets! Mother, I'm frightened."

Shiphrah wrestled her foggy thoughts into the candle light and stumbled to the window. Peering through the shutters she saw a band of shepherds skipping down the street in full-throated chorus.

Drunkards! she denounced them inwardly. But then she noticed they turned down the street leading to Malachi's home. *They are going to wake the baby!* She bolted out the door and broke into a run. *You can drink yourselves silly if you want, but you will not mess with my baby!*

As she neared Malachi's barn, Shiphrah stopped short. The shepherds had run straight into the barn and thrown themselves down before the child. And they were singing. Shouting in rhythm is probably more accurate. Nothing completely coherent, but it was no bar tune. They weren't drunk, but they weren't completely in control of themselves either.

Shiphrah stood silently at the door and watched with the sense that she was beholding something decidedly special, dare she say, almost ... holy. The shepherds grew quiet in a hush of reverence before the child. She overheard their tale of innumerable angels. "... unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

As Shiphrah turned the words over in her mind she recalled the father's explanation from earlier in the day: "He will save His people from their sins."

Shiphrah chose not to interrupt, for the child was contented and the parents, though a bit overwhelmed, did not appear distressed. She quietly slipped away and headed home again. Lying once more upon her mat Shiphrah found that sleep now eluded her, despite her fatigue. *Savior? Christ? The Lord? What does all this mean?* she wondered.

The child was well, as were the parents. Upon their return from Jerusalem on the child's eighth day, they secured lodging and chose to settle in rather than travel with a newborn.

Shiphrah kept an eye on the little family, though from a distance. She was never able entirely to shake from her thoughts the explanation of the father and the words of the shepherds. But her family needed her and other babies were to be birthed. Soon life took on a familiar feel and Shiphrah caught up on her sleep.

Several Sabbath's after the child's arrival, the family joined the others in the synagogue. The day's reading was from Isaiah. When the reader came to the words "The Deliverer will come from Zion" (Isa. 59:20; Rom 11:26) the most curious thing happened. The child leapt in his mother's arms and let out a loud—well, what would one call it? It wasn't a cry of distress or of hunger, nor a signal that he had soiled himself. Odd as it seemed, it was more akin to the call of a herald. It was a child's cry, but *not* ... in a way that neither Shiphrah nor anyone else present could quite think into clarity, let alone explain.

Weeks passed into months; months into nearly a year. Life wound on in the small village. The census travelers were a forgotten memory, except for the small family that had now settled into the rhythm of Bethlehem's life.

But again the village was upset by visitors, this time by Magi from the east. Confusion, controversy and plenty of conversation swirled over their presence—not so much for their strange clothing, accent, and manners, but because of their inquiry. They were on a quest, seeking a child who had been born king ... right there, they claimed, in Bethlehem. The citizens were confused, but the men eventually found their way to the baby Jesus and his parents. Those who were within eye-shot of the event told of extravagant gifts changing hands and of the magi acting out before the child acts of deference and homage; gesticulations so profound that some likened them to worship.

In the wake of the Magi's departure a night fell upon Bethlehem which no one in all Israel would forget. Jackbooted thugs from Herod thundered into town under cover of darkness, dealing mayhem and madness in every direction. Racing home-to-home they put to the sword every male child under two years of age. Shiphrah lost no son of her own blood, but all the sons of Bethlehem were her children. Her cries mingled with the screams of disconsolate mothers and the wails of desolated fathers. Young blood ran thick and red through streets of Bethlehem.

Then, as quickly as they had come, they were gone—the soldiers, that is. *Their* absence was a welcome relief, but the absence of the baby boys opened a hole of darkness from which Bethlehem would never entirely arise. The sun rose the next morning, but the darkness never lifted from Bethlehem.

For her part, Shiphrah sat stunned for days, trance-like, nearly comatose with grief. She neither ate nor spoke. Mostly she stared blankly at the walls of her tiny home. Puah urged her to eat, to rise, to speak. *But*, thought Shiphrah, *there is no balm that can heal a wound such as this.*

The inevitable call eventually arrived again: "*The deliverer*" is needed!

Shiphrah rose, went, attended, aided, served, helped. But *love* came hard for her now. There was something mechanical about her ministrations. Her skill was as keen as ever, but her heart had shut down. She was aware of what was happening to her, but felt powerless to deliver herself from the bonds of the brewing bitterness.

And so it was, with each passing year and with each new delivery Shiphrah's heart grew harder, stony and cold. She was professional. She was skilled. But the passion was gone, the tenderness abated, the sense of calling had evaporated. A clinical sterility slipped its bony fingers around her heart and showed its hand in her interactions with the mothers. Still babies were born healthy to adorning mothers and fathers, but something was missing, something that had previously marked the first moments of each life with compassion and tender love. Puah noticed it before anyone else: a sharp statement; a crisp rebuke; a stinging reproof. Yes, she was being taught to birth children, but she was no longer being trained as a caregiver, for care is sometimes too

heavy a burden for a wounded heart to bear.

Sometime the next year a caravan of travelers arrived from the south. Among them was a family with something familiar in their faces. The toddler boy ran and played, stumbled and fell, laughed and cried like the little boys of Bethlehem had once done. But when one afternoon Shiphrah heard his father cry out, “Careful, Jesus!” her heart leapt. That name! That voice. That woman. That *baby!*

He’s alive! Shiphrah nearly shouted it aloud in the street. She clutched her shawl over her mouth to muffle the sound. *How? I assumed ... When did they leave? How did they know?* The questions raced through her mind faster than she could imagine answers to them.

Oh, but it doesn’t really matter, does it? she told herself. One of the boys—one of *her* boys—had survived that dreadful night.

The pain did not leave entirely, but there was—at every thought of that little boy—something else mingled with it, something that seemed almost like light and felt like a flicker of hope.

When the family set out for Nazareth from whence they had first hailed, Shiphrah’s heart sank. *But location doesn’t really matter*, she consoled herself. *Jesus is alive!* Back from the dead as it were. In this she could rest ... and give herself again to her calling—to the babies and to the mothers who depended upon her.

Weeks faded into months; years turned like leaves in the wind. Decades rolled by. Shiphrah had now handed off most of the deliveries to Puah who had apprenticed under her watchful eye. Occasionally Shiphrah still took the call and made the delivery, but the any-time-of-the-night calls had taken their toll and though she was no less passionate about the work, her body simply didn’t allow her heart to fulfill its desires as often as it once did.

Of late Shiphrah was more attentive to scattered reports that rode into Bethlehem with passing travelers. Someone named Jesus was making extraordinary claims, teaching unheard of things, doing—they said—things that, well, one would think only *God* could do. Healings—even returning a little boy to life!

Could this be, Shiphrah wondered, *my Jesus*

Shiphrah insisted Puah take her to Jerusalem for the next Passover. She must see Jesus all grown up. She wished to hear him, to make up her own mind about him.

At Shiphrah’s age the trudge to Jerusalem was no longer an easy assignment, but the determination of her heart overrode the frailty of her body and she found herself in the capital city, swept along among the festival crowds. She had Puah under strict orders to find out if Jesus

had arrived. Quite a scene, they had discovered, played out the day before as Jesus and his disciples were swept into Jerusalem by singing crowds, celebrating his arrival in Messianic choruses of praise.

“To the temple!” Shiphrah commanded her daughter. Off they went, the narrow streets clogged with pilgrim feet. As they rounded a corner the flow of humanity slowed and then ground to a halt.

“What’s happening?” Shiphrah queried Puah.

“I’m not sure, Mother.”

“Wait! Someone said the name Jesus.” Straining to extend herself to her full height, Puah caught bits of conversation and echoed them to her stooped mother—“scribes and priests,” “coins,” something about “taxes.” “O Mother, I just can’t hear it all!” she exclaimed in distress.

Then like a wave rolling in on the Sea of Galilee the final sentence came: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

Caesar! Shiphrah’s heart protested. *Caesar! What on earth rightly belongs to Caesar? Is not all God’s and God’s alone?* Dark memories of that murderous night long ago flamed up like dry tinder to the spark. An old bitterness instantly roared back to life within her.

Shiphrah gazed with both anger and confusion into her daughter’s eyes, begging for an explanation. The look frightened Puah. It reminded her of days she wished never to remember. A shrug served as her silent confession of ignorance.

The crowd slowly unknotted and began to slip onward toward the Temple. Mother and daughter were carried along in its flow. Entering the outer courtyard Puah exclaimed, “Mother! Don’t gawk, but Jesus is over along the wall. See? Over there! There’s just a handful around him.”

“Let’s see if we can get close enough to hear more,” Shiphrah suggested in what sounded more like an order. They purposely meandered in Jesus’ direction. He was causally conversing with men who seemed to be friends. Just as they were passing by Jesus raised his hand and pointed across the way toward the offering box. He pointed out an elderly woman, not so different in appearance from Shiphrah herself.

“What’s He saying?” Shiphrah demanded with a stage whisper.

“Shh! Mother! I can’t hear him if you keep asking me questions!”

“He’s talking about the money she put in the offering box. He said that her two coins were all she had. He is praising her.”

Now Shiphrah was totally confused. First he said that money belonged to Caesar and now he is praising a woman just like her for giving it all to God. This just wasn’t quite what she had

expected. *He* was not quite what she had expected, or hoped for.

“I’m tired, dear,” she sighed. “Could we find our room and rest?” Shiphrah needed to think as much as she needed to rest, but it was easier to confess fatigue than confusion. Puah led her out of the Temple courts, through the streets and to the home in which they would be staying.

The next days were filled again with efforts to see and hear Jesus. Nothing really cleared Shiphrah’s mind nor put it at rest. She was glad to be in attendance at Passover. There was comfort in that. But she hated the proximity to all things Roman. Soldiers were around every corner. Signs of power hung conspicuously at every turn.

With each encounter bitterness rose like a wraith from a dark cavern in her soul. Wrapping its skeletal limbs around her heart, it would again threaten to wring all love and compassion from Shiphrah’s being. Her heart wrenched in her chest, but that was minor compared to the old chill that blew again through her soul.

The sun had barely risen over the Mount of Olives when Puah knelt at her mother’s side and whispered in her ear: “Mother! You have to wake up, Mother!”

Her first thoughts were familiar ones, experienced countless times over many years: a distressed mother drenched in a cold sweat; a baby desperately fighting through the narrows, reaching for the new world into which it must be birthed and live out its existence. But as Shiphrah came to consciousness her daughter was not calling her to attend at another birth, but to events that would usher in the opposite end of human experience.

“Mother! Something is happening. Jesus was arrested in the night.”

A youthful surge of energy shot through Shiphrah’s body and she sprang upright. Wrapping her shawl around her they were out the door and down the street. As they neared Pilate’s quarters the gathered crowd had swelled and the energy in it felt more mob-like than that of pilgrims gathering for worship. Clearly they were arriving into the midst of events which had been unfolding for hours. There was no time to catch up on the details.

Pilate appeared and lifted his voice: “I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.”

Two soldiers manhandled Jesus into the light. He stood before the crowd bloodied, but upright, barely. His near naked body was draped in a purple robe matted with blood and his head was crowned with thorns.

Pilate again raised his voice: “Behold the man!”

What madness is this? What are they doing? What has he done?

Shiphrah was called from her silent query by the chorus of the crowd: “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”

It was all too much and coming at her too fast. What in God’s name is happening here? Has Jesus claimed to be the Jew’s king? Has he claimed—how could it be?—to be the Messiah? And what care does this crowd have with friendship with Caesar?

Then the crowd’s voice was as one. It began as a protest, but its tone turned into a demand: “Crucify him! We have no king but Caesar!”

With that Shiphrah crumpled to the ground. Her legs could no longer bear the weight of a lifetime spent attending to the Jewish race at its most vulnerable moment and spent also in bitter hatred toward Rome for its disregard for Jewish life. And now to hear the Jews themselves crying out loyalty to Rome’s king and demanding the death of one of their own, one of *her* own ... it was simply more than she could bear.

“Mother!” cried Puah.

Bending low she tried to right her, but all Puah could do was wrap her mother in her arms and shield her best she could from the wild press of legs and feet all about her.

As the crowd finally began to disperse and laying her mother’s head gently back, Puah asked, “Mother, are you alright? Mother! Say something!”

“We must go to him,” was all Shiphrah could muster.

“Who, mother?”

“Jesus.”

“Mother, no. You aren’t strong enough. I don’t even know where they’ve taken him.”

“Where do you think they’ve taken him, my love?” Shiphrah asked.

Yes, Puah knew of course. But to say it was more than even she could bear.

“Mother, no,” she protested again.

“Yes, dear. We must. If it is the last thing I do, I must go to him.”

Puah retrieved some water. Shiphrah sipped. Puah bathed her brow. Up she came, with Puah’s gentle assistance, and they were off, through the streets, headed for the place of the skull.

When they crested the hill the soldiers had already suspended Jesus high upon the cross. Nausea

washed over both mother and daughter. They had given themselves to bringing life into the world. They had no stomach for snuffing it out.

They drew as near as they dared. Others stood about as well. Soldiers. Mockers. There were others also, who were clearly moved in sorrow by the scene playing out before them. Like these midwives, they too were unable to tear themselves away from this scene of death.

Then came his voice; raspy and hoarse, yet clear and strong. With his eyes Jesus turned the attention of the entire crowd upon the Roman soldiers. Then he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Shiphrah nearly sank again, this time not under the weight of her burden, but under the authority of Jesus’ words.

Forgive them? Forgive them! She grew lightheaded and felt a swoon washing over her, but she remained upright. Images came rushing back from the past, long buried and locked away in the cavernous chamber that had been dug out of her heart that night so long ago. *That night! Roman soldiers. Swords. Blood! Cries! Tiny bodies draped in the arms of wailing parents, blood running syrupy and scarlet from little limbs.*

It was too much; her knees gave way. If Puah had not already had her hands on her mother’s arms Shiphrah would have taken a frightful fall. Instead she slunk to the ground, guided by Puah’s able arms.

The others barely noticed, held transfixed by the scene before them. Puah cradled her mother, calling tenderly, “Mother! Are you alright, Mother?”

Sparkling stars seemed to dance against the darkness of the back of Shiphrah’s eyelids. Her daughter’s voice called to her as if from a distant land, begging her to come to her again. When her eyes opened the darkness of her eyelids was no match for the darkness that had descended over the land.

Fighting to bring her thoughts to clarity Shiphrah heard one in the crowd half-whispering familiar words. She recognized them from the synagogue, words of the prophet Isaiah ...

“He was despised and rejected by men ...”

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ...”

“... upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.”

“... he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”

Shiphrah stirred and with Puah’s assistance, rose to her feet again.

She raised her eyes to look upon Jesus—to take in the full panorama of the events before her. It

was, by some strange power that had overcome her soul, as if she could see not only the physical realities before her, but the breadth of time and eternity, of heaven and earth melded together in this singular moment. Shiphrah was overcome with an awareness that what was happening here would prove to be the pivot point of not only her life, but of life itself.

Jesus' voice interrupted her thoughts one more time. The harseness remained, but the tone was stronger, clearer, almost triumphant. Nearer a trumpet blast than a human voice, it was not the cry of a martyr, but of a victor. It was not a cry of surrender, but of command—directing, announcing, declaring: “It is finished!”

And with that, his head slumped down upon his chest. He was gone.

Shiphrah gazed upon Jesus' body, limp upon the cross. “My Jesus,” she said softly under her breath without awareness she had made a sound. “Now they are gone, *all* of them, all my boys of Bethlehem.”

The crowd began to filter away, with them Puah and Shiphrah. As they departed someone asked them if they would join them. They were going to pray. Though strangers it felt as if they'd shared a lifetime together. Something unseen, but powerful bound their hearts as one.

Days passed. Passover was complete. The sun rose on Sunday and Shiphrah and Puah were intent on making the return trek to Bethlehem. But suddenly the door flew open and one of their new friends appeared: “He's gone!”

“Who?” Puah asked.

“Jesus!”

“Gone? Gone where?”

“From the grave. The stone has been rolled away. His body isn't there! You've got to come pray with us.”

As they entered the room where they'd gathered after the events of Golgotha, they could sense a change in atmosphere. There was a different vibe, a hope that had been absent before. Some of the women were telling their story—of actually meeting Jesus. “He is,” they said, “alive!”

Two of the men demanded the tomb had been empty when they'd arrived there earlier in morning.

Could it be? How could it be? Shiphrah wondered.

Then, late in the day, two others told the story of Jesus appearing to them as they walked along the road toward home.

Neither Shiphrah nor her daughter could discount the multiplying witnesses, but neither could they explain them. Nor could they quite believe them. Yet they did not quite *disbelieve* them.

As they were caught up in their conversations, questions and doubts, he slipped into the room unannounced. They felt his presence before they saw his body. *Jesus!* Their stunned silence slowly morphed into a holy hush.

Shiphrah and Puah, like the rest, found themselves prostrate before him, overcome, overawed, overwrought by his presence.

Shiphrah heard the voice before she realized it was her own. It was but a hushed whisper, but as crystal clear to her as any thought she'd ever had: "My Jesus; my baby."

Jesus spoke, briefly, and then departed as effortlessly as he'd come. For Shiphrah, more than the words he had spoken was the look he had cast into her eyes. He did not so much look *at* her, as *through* her . . . into places she'd not wanted to admit existed in her heart. And with that look Jesus' presence filled, possessed, transformed and made utterly new all those dark places. Her entire heart softened, became pliable; it beat again with life—life of a flavor she'd never tasted before, of a hue she'd never before seen, with a song the likes of which had never fallen upon her ear.

Her heart cried out in an exchange that passed as clearly between her and Jesus as if it had been signed and sealed before the elders in the gates of Bethlehem. She signed on to the covenant with her own simple words: "Jesus, my King. Jesus, my God!"

Just like that he was gone—from the room, but not from her heart. But something else *was* gone, from her heart. It had been vanquished when Jesus moved in. Darkness had fled at the light of his presence. Bitterness had broken like a dam before the flood of his love. Sharp splinters of hate had swept away in the wind of the Spirit sweeping through her.

Mother and daughter gazed into one another's eyes in a way that only two who have shared a life-changing, eternity-transforming experience can know. All Shiphrah could manage to utter was a quotation of those words of Isaiah that had always felt so uncomfortable, but now were filled with new, life-transforming meaning: "The Deliverer will come . . . he will banish ungodliness . . . and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins" (Rom. 11:26-27).

Puah broken the silence, "Mother, I'm free!"

To which Shiphrah replied, "I know. Me too. I feel like a newborn baby."