

THE VOICES AND IMAGES OF WOMEN AS HEALERS

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

I began my journey with this thesis several years ago when my rabbi, Rabbi Susan Talve, was asked how she could be involved in such a patriarchal religion. She answered, "Because I can hear the voices of the women in the room next door." I found this to be a most wonderful response and longed to hear those voices for myself.

Our journey, mine and that of the voices, continued when about a year and a half ago I was attending an Acupuncture seminar. A woman asked me what the ancient Israelites did in the way of healing. I answered her that I didn't know. But I had a feeling that I was going to find out. I discovered that I needed to find out what those women healers did so long ago and how they lived in their communities. I wrote this paper to give more voice and image to those women.

I am first interested in these Jewish women healers, because I am one. I have been a Jew in my soul, all my life. My conversion confirmed that knowledge almost five years ago. I have been a Chiropractor in private practice for seventeen years, with a wonderful sabbatical at Hebrew Union College for two years. In this capacity I have treated and cared for women during their pregnancies, helped deliver their babies, and treated and cared for their children. My thesis topic, "The Voices and Images of Women as Healers", combines these two loves of mine: Judaism and healing. This project has

helped me find my own history as well as that of the ancient women healers, as I discovered and found their stories.

My search began in our beloved Torah, of course. In Exodus, I found the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah. Our first information about women as healers is that they were midwives. These women helped birth generations of the Jewish people. They attended the mothers physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Shiphrah and Puah had the courage to defy Pharaoh. They stood more in awe of our one true God, than they stood in fear of the Egyptians' definition of god on earth, Pharaoh. They defied his decree to kill all male Hebrew babies. And it is stated that God was well pleased with them for their courage. They and the mothers giving birth were compared to potters as they brought to life the babies of Israel. Further, not only did they allow these babies to live; they nurtured them to life. After the babies were born, they straightened their limbs and breathed air into their lungs. They had the knowledge and courage to save a nation.

As I looked further in Torah and found Rachel and Tamar and their midwives, I learned about the counseling of Rachel. As she lay dying in childbirth, the midwife consoled her and brought her son safely into the world. As Tamar's twins were born the midwife designated the firstborn son, so designating the messianic line. These midwives will forever be unnamed and yet they helped Rachel bring Benjamin into the world, to be one of the twelve tribes of Israel. And they led us to the messianic line through Perez.

Then I continued my adventure into Mishnah, Talmud, Tosefta, and Responsa. Here I found incredible information concerning the length and breadth of all the duties and responsibilities ascribed to midwives. They were considered reliable witnesses in disputes concerning births, even in disagreements with a rabbi. They were given wide exceptions to many rules for the observance of Shabbat. They decided when a baby was truly considered born and so considered human. They did abortions and decided when that was appropriate. They knew of drugs and herbs that helped with infertility, prenatal care, birth and afterbirth. They knew of prayers and even amulets to keep the mothers safe in what was considered one of the main times of danger and vulnerability. They were fully in charge of the births of the Hebrew women. They were respected and listened to by Hebrew men.

I also read Midrashim and their commentary, which further explained the play of Hebrew on the names of Shiphrah and Puah. And finally I found folktales from medieval times forward. In these aggadic tales I learned of these women's everyday lives. I learned of their uses of herbs and birthing tools. I learned about how they were treated by the community and their standing in the community. I could see them in my mind's eye and hear their voices. I could hear their victories and their doubts. I could hear their delights and their sadness. They came alive and I could sometimes empathize with them from my own life.

I was surprised and gratified at the amount of information available. I completely enjoyed my journey through our texts to find the laws and their stories and the stories of

the communities around them. I was totally surprised at the responsibilities and power these women had at a time when women were not allowed to be responsible and powerful. The image of Jewish women as healers emerged as an image of moral strength and determination. It emerged as one of women of knowledge and great skill. They survived many crises and built a foundation upon them. I loved entering their lives and hearing the voices of these women, from so long ago, right "in the room next door."

CHAPTER TWO TORAH

The texts that are found in Torah concerning midwives contain very few details. It became the job of Midrash and other authors to fill in the blanks. The following contains both the actual text from Torah and the commentaries designed to fill out the story.

EXODUS 1:15-21

15 ויאמר מלך מצרים למילדות העביות אשר שם האחת שפירה ושם השנית פועה
 16 ויאמר בילדכן את-העבריות וראיתן על-האבנים אם-בן הוא והמתן אותו
 ואם-בת היא חיה 17 ותיראן המילדות את-האלהים ולא עשו כאשר דבר אליהן
 מלך מצרים ותחזין את הילדים 18 ויקרא מלך-מצרים למילדות ויאמר להן מדוע
 עשיתן הדבר הזה ותחזין את-הילדים 19 ותאמרן המלחות אל-פרעה כי לא
 כנשים המצריות העבריות כי חיות הנה בשרם ובוא אלדן המלדת וילדו 20
 ויטב אלהים למילדות וירב העם ונצמד מאד 21 ויהי כי-יראו המילדות
 את-האלהים ויעש להם בתים

15 The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16 saying, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." 17 The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. 18 So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?" 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth." 20 And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and increased greatly. 21 And because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.¹

The Book of Exodus opens with the continuation of how and why the Hebrew people were in Egypt. It tells of all the sons of Israel who came to be in Egypt and of their proliferation in that land. Exodus tells us the land was filled with them. Sarna said "the

¹ JPS Tanakh (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999-5759) p. 113-114

land" most likely refers to the area of their settlement, the region of the eastern part of the Nile Delta, not to Egypt as a whole."² It then tells of a new king who did not know of or had forgotten how Joseph had saved the Egyptians from famine. Sarna said this is a new king, the founder of a new dynasty, who took over the reins of power. And with the change of ruler, the situation of the increased population of the Hebrews came to a head.³ It is also postulated, about Exodus 1:8, that this was indeed the same king, but that he issued new decrees. Exodus 1:8 says a new king arose, but it does not say the former king died.⁴ Further Rav and Shmuel differ about this topic in the Talmud.⁵ One says this means a new king in the literal sense and the other one says it was the same king who was the ruler during the lifetime of Joseph and acted as if he did not know Joseph.⁶

Further, as a backdrop, the Egyptians had a brutal history, with a foreign people called the Hyksos. From Sarna we learn they savagely burnt the cities, razed the temples of the gods to the ground, and treated the whole native population with the utmost cruelty, massacring some and carrying off the wives and children into slavery.⁷

So this king had reason to distrust alien peoples. He had either no knowledge of or had forgotten that Joseph had saved the Egyptians, not hurt them. This king, in fact, feared the growing number of Hebrews. He feared their possible growing power and might.

² Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus-The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) p. 15.

³ Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, p. 15.

⁴ *Tz'enah Ur'enah/Sh'mos*, trans. Miriam Stark Zakan, (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications Inc., 1983) p. 319

⁵ Sotah 11a

⁶ Rabbi Yisrael Zvi Herczeg, *Torah Commentary with Rashi-Exodus*, (Brooklyn, NY: Art Scroll Series, 1994) p. 3

⁷ Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, p. 17.

This king was afraid that in the event of war these Hebrews would join with their enemies and help bring about yet another Egyptian demise.

According to Benno Jacob, Pharaoh may have acted for deeper reasons than fear. The Hebrews wanted to be free to worship their God. But Pharaoh believed himself to be a god, to be the god. If he acknowledged Hebrew freedom, he would have in some sense acknowledged the Hebrew God as greater than himself.⁸ This was something he was not willing to do. So the scene was set for not only a struggle between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, but also between the divine ruler of Egypt and the divine protector and savior of Israel.⁹

So who was this king? Many sources agree that this Pharaoh was a Ramses, either the 1st or 2nd. This assertion comes from the mention of the city of Ra-am-ses in Exodus 1:11. It can be assumed that the king had the same name as the city that was built by the king of the time. Ramses I first appeared in the 19th Dynasty (about 1309 BCE). However, Ramses II, a later successor (1298-1232) must also be considered.¹⁰ He engaged in a great deal of construction and built many edifices during his long reign. Rameses II also shifted the center of Egyptian government to the eastern Delta. So, he had first hand knowledge of the number of Hebrews in the area. However, that the Torah in Exodus 1:11, states "he built" is not compelling enough data to indicate this was indeed the Pharaoh of Joseph's time. So, this king, a central figure, remains unnamed and unknown.

⁸ Benno Jacob interpreted, *The Second Book of the Bible*, trans. Walter Jacob, (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1992) p. 12

⁹ W.G. Plaut, *The Torah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1983) p. 10.

¹⁰ Benno Jacob, *The Second Book*, p. 14.

It is with this backdrop of history that we learn some of the reasons this Pharaoh began his persecution of the Hebrews.

In Exodus 1:10, the king said, "let us deal shrewdly (in our persecutions) with them." According to an 18th century midrash contained in *Tz'enah Ur'enah*, the Egyptians knew enough about the Hebrew God to know that their God would repay in kind. So they decided "we will throw their children into the water. Their God has sworn never again to bring a flood on the world, so He will be unable to punish us through water." They did not understand that God had merely vowed not to engulf the entire world, but He could most certainly drown them.¹¹

So, Pharaoh began to make life much harder for the Hebrews. In Exodus 1:13, the text says "Their treatment was ruthlessly imposed; their lives were made bitter." As the building continued in the Delta there was no greater, closer supply of manpower than the Hebrews. Pharaoh resolved to exploit them to hopefully, near extinction. This was state slavery where forced labor was imposed for a long and indefinite time. These slaves received no rewards and had no civil rights. They became a large anonymous mass, losing all individuality in the eyes of the Egyptians. Pharaoh subjected the Hebrews to backbreaking labor in the fields with the maintenance of the irrigation ditches and in building with brick making. Their lot was wretched. This was all part of Pharaoh's plan for breaking the Hebrew and causing their numbers to drastically decrease. Further, according to midrash, Pharaoh decreed that the Hebrew men remain in the fields and

¹¹ *Tz'enah Ur'enah/Sh'mos*, p. 319

sleep there. This was intended to keep the men and the women apart.¹² However, the women brought food and water to the men and remained with them, telling them that God would redeem them from this bitter exile.¹³

As history shows, none of these hardships worked and the Hebrews continued to be fruitful and multiply. So, Pharaoh decided to decree more drastic measures. He called the Hebrew midwives to him. Midwifery was everywhere an exclusively female occupation. It was regarded as a violation of the code of modesty for a male, even a doctor, to be present at a birth. Midwifery was thus one of the few occupations open to women; and it seems to have been a prestigious profession in ancient Egypt.¹⁴ It is also ambiguous in the Hebrew whether Pharaoh called to the "Hebrew midwives" or the "midwives to the Hebrews." Some say these midwives were Egyptian. Credence is lent to this thought, with the argument that Egyptian midwives would have been more likely to kill Hebrew babies. However, Plaut stated that the roots of the names of the midwives are northwest Semitic type, suggesting that they were Hebrews.¹⁵ According to Midrash Rabbah, Pharaoh would also have wanted Hebrew midwives to do the killing, for then he reasoned the Hebrew God would have brought punishment on the Hebrews and not on him or the Egyptians.¹⁶ Further argument is made, with much validity, that the large Hebrew population certainly would have supported its own midwives and they would hardly have summoned strange midwives from the ranks of their oppressors.¹⁷

¹² Midrash Rabbah-Shemot I. 12

¹³ *Tz'edah Ur'edah/Sh'mos*, p. 320

¹⁴ Nahum M. Sarna, , *JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia/New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1991/5751) p. 7

¹⁵ W. G. Plaut, *The Torah Commentary*, p. 8

¹⁶ Midrash Rabbah-Shemot, I. 12

¹⁷ Benno Jacob, *The Second Book*, p. 18

15 הוֹאֵמֵד מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִלְדּוֹת הָעִבֵּיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם הָאֶחָת שִׁפְרָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּאָה

15 The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah.

With Pharaoh's summoning the midwives, we are first introduced to Shiphrah and Puah. It is unlikely that there were only two midwives to attend to this large and blossoming Hebrew population. Hence, Sarna thought, that Shiphrah and Puah were the overseers of all the many midwives.¹⁸ Midrash raises the possibility these were not their names at all. Rather, Shiphrah was really Jocheved; the mother of Moses and Puah was Miriam, sister of Moses or Elisheva, the wife of Aaron. Further, Rav and Shmuel differed, one saying that it was a woman and her daughter: Yocheved and Miriam; and the other, a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law: Yocheved and Elisheva.¹⁹

Additional interpretation indicated the Semitic stem of Shiphrah means "to be beautiful or to beautify" the baby. The commentary of Tz'edah Ur'edah suggests that it was a midwife's job to beautify a baby.²⁰ Another interpretation explains "Shifrah" Israel was fruitful (paru) and multiplied in her days."²¹ And Puah means to call or cry and "speak and coo" to the child at birth.²² Also, Puah because she fretted and wept for her brother (Moses), as it says in Exodus 2:4, "And his sister stood at a distance, to know what will happen to him."²³ Another midrashic interpretation: she cooed with the Holy Spirit,

¹⁸ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 7

¹⁹ Harav Boruch Halevi Epstein, *The Essential Torah Temimah* (Jerusalem/New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1989) p. 4

²⁰ *Tz'edah Ur'edah/Sh'mos*, p. 322

²¹ Epstein, *The Essential Torah*, p. 4

²² Herczeg, *Torah Commentary with Rashi*, p. 6

²³ Midrash Sifre on Numbers 7. 8

saying, "My mother is destined to bear a son who will be the savior of the Jews."²⁴

Hence, the names given in Exodus 1:15, may not have been names at all, but rather job descriptions. Job descriptions of many women who ultimately saved a nation.

16 ויאמר בלדכן את-העבריות וראיתן על-האבנים אם-בן הוא והמתן אותו ותיראן המלדות את-האלוהים ולא עשו כאשר דבר אליהן

16 saying, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live."

There has been much argument about the translation and meaning of birthstools, אבנים. Literally it means "two stones." This may be an allusion to male genitalia. It may refer to actual stones on which the mothers crouched. This would have been helpful for the mother and for the midwife. The Talmud refers to a potter's wheel. As the potter sits at his wheel his thighs are the two stones and the wheel the baby.²⁵ In Genesis 30:3, Rachel gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob that she might give him a child. The actual words are "that she bear on my knees." This also refers to the idea of birthstools. Rachel stood behind Bilhah, with her knees bent and Bilhah would lean against Rachel's thighs. And so it would seem as if the baby would be born of both of them. We find another example of this in Genesis 50:23. Here the text speaks of "another generation being born upon Joseph's knees." This does not refer to Joseph actually attending the births, as men were not present at births, but rather could be a metaphorical reference to the stones in the Exodus 1:16 passage. And finally, in Job 3:12, Job is lamenting ever being born saying,

²⁴ Epstein, *The Essential Torah*, p. 4

²⁵ Sotah 11b

Midrash Rabbah-Shemot I. 14

“Why were there knees to receive me?” The meaning is unclear if two stones, two testicles, or two knees are intended, but surely all these definitions fit the image of birth.

Pharaoh further decrees, in Exodus 1:16, that if the Hebrew child is a boy the midwives should kill him and if it is a girl, they should spare her. There is some contradiction in this command. As Pharaoh’s chief concern was population control, killing the girls would have made much more sense. Further, he was willing to kill the Hebrew males even though it would eventually diminish his work force.²⁶ However the decree does make sense in considering that boys could become the very soldiers of whom Pharaoh was afraid and, according to Rashi, in light of a prediction from Pharaoh’s astrologers that “a boy was destined to be born who would save Israel.”²⁷

Further, in Exodus 1:16, Pharaoh also commands that the midwives *look* at the birthstool. It seems that they would do this anyway without being commanded. However, according to Talmud their first responsibility was to the mother, so the midwife may not have known the gender of the child until somewhat after its birth. So killing a male child covertly, without the knowledge of the mother, would have been difficult. Pharaoh commanded that the midwife look to the killing of the child first, instead of the welfare of the mother.

²⁶ Plaut, *The Torah Commentary*, p. 8

17 ותידאן המילדות את-האלוהים ולא עשו כאשר דבר אליהן
 ויקרא מלך-מצרים למילדות ויאמר להן מדוע

17 The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live.

The Hebrew midwives did not do as Pharaoh commanded them; they let the boys live.

"This was history's first recorded case of civil disobedience in the defense of a moral cause."²⁸ It should be noted that the text does not say that they did not kill the male babies. It does say they let them live. "They saved the men-children alive."²⁹ This indicates that they contributed to the babies' continuing to live. The Hebrew midwives cared for the infants. They straightened their limbs (in accordance with Shiphrah's name) they made them beautiful. Further, they fed them and gave them water. The implication from midrash is that if they did not supply them with food and water they would be considered as murderers, because preventing someone from being saved is akin to murder.³⁰ They kept the Hebrew babies alive, as well as the Hebrew generations.

The midwives feared God more than Pharaoh. They feared Divine retribution more than an earthly one. According to Torah their primary motivation for defying Pharaoh is the fear of God. This term is frequently used in biblical texts in situations that involve norms of moral or ethical behavior.³¹ Life was holy to them. God, not Pharaoh, was their moral guide. God determined their ultimate moral and ethical choices.

²⁷ Herczeg, *Torah Commentary with Rashi*, p. 7

²⁸ Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 25

²⁹ Midrash Rabbah-Shemot I. 15

³⁰ Aharon Yaakov Greenberg, *Torah Gems Volume II*, (Israel: Yavneh Publishing House Ltd., 1992) p. 13

³¹ Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 25 (Genesis 20:11, Leviticus 19:14, 32)

18 ויקרא מלך-מצרים למילדות ויאמר להן מדוע
ותאמרן המילדות אל-פרעה כי לוא

18 So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?"

The text gives no indication as to the length of time in which the midwives defied Pharaoh. However, at some point he called the midwives back to him and asked why they had let the boys live.

19 ותאמרן המילדות אל-פרעה כי לוא
בנשים המצריות העבריות כי חיות הנה בטרם תבוא אלן המילדות ולדו

19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth."

This verse indicates several possibilities. Some commentaries suggest that the Hebrew women are capable of giving birth without midwives, because they are as midwives themselves.³² They were healthy and so able to bear children without professional assistance.³³ Other sources indicate that the midwives compared the Hebrew women to beasts in the field and so they did not require the assistance of midwives.³⁴ Most commentators reject this, as it could be perceived as unseemly to compare Israelite ancestors to beasts.³⁵ In any case, the message to Pharaoh was the Hebrew women gave

³² Sarna, *JPS Commentary*, p. 8

³³ Israel Drazin, *Targum Onkelos to Exodus*, (University of Denver: KTAV Publishing House Inc., 1990) p. 45

³⁴ *Tz'nehah Ur'enah/Sh'mos*, p. 322

³⁵ Drazin, *Targum Onkelos*, p. 45

birth so well on their own, that the baby was already born when the midwife arrived. So the secret killing could, of course, not take place.

20

ויטב אלהים למילדות וירב העם ועצמו מאוד 21 ויהי כי-ידאו המילדות
את-האלהים ויעש להם בתים

20 And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and increased greatly. 21 And because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.³⁶

The term households or houses has several connotations. It may have meant merely many offspring. However, Benno Jacob thought that it did indeed mean numerous and distinguished offspring.³⁷ Indeed, God gave the highest of honors to the midwives. According to Herczeg, to Shiphrah or Jocheved, God gave the house of the priesthood through Moses and Aaron. And to Miriam, the house of royalty, as Miriam was an ancestress of King David.³⁸ In I Kings 9:1 it is said "When Solomon built both houses, the house of the Lord and that of the king," one knows that the "house of the Lord" is the priesthood, and "the house of the king" is kingship. So according to this midrashic interpretation the reward was indeed to be ancestors of priests and kings.³⁹ These women saved babies and generations in God's name. Their rewards, from God, were in kind, through their own offspring and their own generations.

³⁶ JPS Tanakh (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999-5759) p. 113-114

³⁷ Jacob, *The Second Book* p. 22

³⁸ Herczeg, *Torah Commentary with Rashi*, p. 10
Erubin 44b-45a

³⁹ Midrash Sifre on Numbers 7. 8

As we look further in Tanakh we find in Genesis two more examples of the many and indispensable roles of midwives.

Genesis 35:16-18

16 ויסעו מבית אל ויהי-עוד כברת-הארץ לבוא אפרתה ותלד רחל ותקש בלדתה
17 ויהי בהקשתה בלדתה ותאמר לה המילדת אל-תיראי כי-גם זה לך בן 18 ויהי
בצאת נפשה כי מתה ותקרא שמו בן-אוני ואביו קרא-לו בנימין

16 They set out from Bethel; but when they were still some distance short of Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labor. 17 When her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Have no fear, for it is another boy for you." 18 But as she breathed her last-for she was dying-she named him Ben-oni, but his father called him Benjamin.⁴⁰

The midwife in this passage had the skill, knowledge and experience to know that this labor was not going well for Rachel. The midwife also had the counseling skills and cultural knowledge to tell Rachel what made her the happiest and gave her the most peace in her last moments; she was to have another boy. It is unknown if this was the same midwife who delivered Joseph, but it can be assumed this midwife had knowledge of Rachel's history and her difficulties in becoming pregnant. It is also a possibility that the midwife had learned this by taking a medical history of some sort prior to the labor and that she had those necessary medical skills. Further, Rachel would have been worried about not having another son. For, according to the Sages, a hard labor indicated the coming birth of a girl.⁴¹ Jewish sages believed the travail of childbirth is much greater when a girl is born than when a boy is born.⁴² Perhaps the assumptions of later

⁴⁰ JPS Tanakh, p. 74

⁴¹ Sforno, *Commentary on the Torah*, trans Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz, (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1989) p. 172

⁴² Niddah 31a

rabbinic generations were shared by Rachel and added to her fears. This unnamed midwife not only safely delivered Rachel's child, but she also gave her peace as she died.

Genesis 38: 27-30

27 ויהי בעת לדתה חנה תאמץ בבטנה 28 ויהי בלדתה ויתן-יד ותקח המילדת ותקשר על-ידו שני לאמר זה יצא ראשונה 29 ויהי במשיב יד חנה יצא אחיו ותאמר מה-פרצת עליך פרץ וקרא שמו פרץ 30 ואחרי יצא אחיו אשר על-ידו השני וקרא שמו זרח

27 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb! 28 While she was in labor, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife tied a crimson thread on that hand, to signify: This one came out first. 29 But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" so he was named Perez. 30 Afterward his brother came out, on whose hand was the crimson thread; he was named Zerah.⁴³

"Behold there were twins in her womb." Quite clearly the midwife was capable of prenatal examinations and of determining multiple births by the exam. This indicates a high degree of knowledge and skill concerning prenatal care, labor and delivery. Further, the midwife knew to designate which child was to be born first. She had knowledge of Jewish culture, because though she did not know at this time whether the twins were boys or girls, she knew to designate the firstborn. Further, as we shall see in the next chapter there is a discrepancy here, in what actually determines birth. Sforno, concerned with this problem in the text explained, in considering "he drew back his hand" meant "it was not actually so, for it was not of his own volition but rather as a result of his brother pushing past him (that the first child was forced back entirely)."⁴⁴ So, as with many of our Patriarchs, Perez might have been the second born, yet he became of the messianic

⁴³ JPS Tanakh, p.82

⁴⁴ Sforno, *Commentary on the Torah*, p. 188

line. In the community of the time, it was the word of the midwife which determined who was firstborn.

Finally, this passage again illustrates the skill of the midwife in another manner. Multiple births are not easy births, under the best of circumstances. And yet, this unnamed midwife, under less than the best of circumstances, delivered these boys to life.

In summary, as our journey in Torah began, the stage was set for the valor of the midwives. Whether there was a new Egyptian king or the same one issuing new decrees, this king was alarmed by the increase in the Hebrew population and strength. He vowed to protect Egypt by decreasing their numbers and so their possible strength. Pharaoh increased the Hebrew slaves' workload to almost murderous lengths. He kept them in the fields and at building sites day and night, and away from their wives. And yet they increased even more. Finally, he called for the midwives and instructed them to covertly kill the male Hebrew babies.

Shiphrah and Puah were representatives of midwives of the time. They were skillful, knowledgeable, compassionate, moral and held in high standing in the community. At every turn, they defied Pharaoh. At every turn they stood in awe of God and saved the Hebrew babies...alive. These women achieved a high decree from God to save a nation.

CHAPTER THREE RABBINIC WRITINGS MISHNAH, TALMUD, TOSEFTA, MIDRASH, AND RESPONSA

As our journey together continued into Rabbinic literature, the halachah, we began the study of the laws concerning the actions, duties, and responsibilities of midwives. They were numerous and at times surprising in their depth, breadth, and in the freedoms they allowed. First, considered as a continuation of the Torah, are the Midrashic and Talmudic writings concerning the importance of the midwives and the subsequent respect and protection they were accorded.

In Midrash it is said:

וכן בשעה שתבע משה צרכיון של ישראל אמר לו הקב"ה הגידה לי שאדבה נפש כמה חיות בהן כמה מעוברות כמה מיניקות התקנת לתינוקות

Thus we find that when Moses pleaded for Israel's needs, God said to him: *'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth how many midwives there are among them, how many with child, how many nurses hast thou arranged for the pregnant among the babes.'*⁴⁵

אמר משה לפני הקב"ה אתה אומר לי לך והוצא את ישראל היכן אני משכים בקיץ מפני החמה ובחורף מפני הצנה מנן לי לספק במאכל ובמשתה כמה חיות יש בהן כמה מעוברות יש בהן כמה תינוקות יש בהן כמה מיני מזונות התקנת להן להחיות שבהן

Moses said to God: 'Thou dost tell me to go and bring out Israel. Where can I give them shelter in summer from the heat and in winter from the cold? Where shall I obtain a sufficiency of food and drink? How many midwives have they; how many pregnant women, how many babes? What food hast Thou prepared for their midwives?'⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Midrash Rabbah, Shemoth, Chapter 2:4

⁴⁶ Midrash Rabbah, Shemoth, Chapter 3:4

Moses was pleading to God for the lives of Israel. He was pleading for their continued survival. And the first thing God asked was: How many midwives are there? God did not ask how many priests or other exclusively male professionals there were, but God asked how many midwives. The main concern was with the continuation of the Hebrew people and what ultimately became the generation to enter the Promised Land. Midwives were of equal concern with shelter and food; all represented and insured survival.

And Talmud tells us:

אמר רב יהודה שלשה צריכין שימור ואלו הן חולה חתן וכלה במתניתא תנא חולה חיה חתן וכלה וש
אומרים אף אבל וש אומרים אף תלמידי חכמים בלילה

Rav Judah said: Three persons require guarding, namely, a sick person, a bridegroom, and a bride. In a Baraita it was taught: A sick person, a midwife, a bridegroom and a bride; some add, a mourner, and some add further, scholars at night-time.⁴⁷

This Baraita spoke to the times of life when danger was greatest, when humans were the most vulnerable. These times were birth, marriage, sickness, and death. It is significant that midwives were mentioned in this discussion. Additionally, they are mentioned in the same breath as the mitzvah of caring for the sick and rejoicing with the bride and groom, from whom will come the future generations. Finally, they are named along with the scholars. Scholars are the ones to carry on the tradition and interpret the law. The midwives were indeed compared in importance to the community of the scholars of the Talmud itself.

All of these groups, must be guarded against "evil spirits" so to keep them safe and pure. Their safety was paramount for the continued existence of the community.

Also found in Talmud is the following text about compensation for midwives.

רבי יוסי אומר נבי דיה בן עזאי אמור נבי מזונות מייד נבי דיה כילש נבי מזונות ומייד נבי מזונות אבל נבי דיה
לא דאמר ליה אתתא ידיי פקידא דיה ולא מבעיא דיה

R. Jose says: Deduct the fees of the midwife. But Ben Azzai says: deduct food. The one who says, deduct the fees for the midwife would certainly deduct food. But the one who says deduct food would not deduct the fees for the midwife, as the plaintiff might say, 'My wife is a lively person and does not need a midwife.'⁴⁸

This discussion focuses on fines for injuring a pregnant woman and the subsequent miscarriage. The person who injured the woman must pay damages to the husband.

One Rabbi said the fine should be equal to the payments already made to the midwife or the payments that would have been made to the midwife. Another said the fine should be the cost of the special food the woman had or would have eaten during confinement. Still another said the fine should be the midwife's fees and the special food. Finally, the argument was that it should be the food, but not the fees, because the woman may not need a midwife.

Instrumental to this argument is recognizing that midwives were allowed to charge and accept fees. In a time when there was little for which women were paid, midwives were valued enough to be paid.

Midwives were protected in the same categories with the sick, wives and husbands, and valued to the extent of being paid for their services. They were valued members of the community. Hence, as we will see in the following Talmudic quotes, the midwife had to protect herself and the community she served even from a dead unborn fetus.

⁴⁷ Talmud Bavli-Hebrew-English Edition (London: Soncino Press, 1994) Tractate Berakoth 54B

האשה שמת ולדה בתוך מעיה ופשטה ידה את ידה ונגעה בו הדיה טמאה טומאת שבעה והאשה טהורה עד שיצא הולד

If the fetus of a woman died within the womb of its mother and the midwife put in her hand and touched it, the midwife is rendered unclean for seven days, but the mother is clean until the foetus comes out.⁴⁹

רב יוסף דאמר רב יוסף אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל טומאה זו אינה מדברי תורה אלא מדברי סופרים מאי אינה מדברי תורה אלא מדברי סופרים ולא תימא אליבא דרי עקיבא דאמר עובר במעי אשה טמא אלא אפי' לדי ישמעאל דאמר עובר במעי אשה טהור נזרו בה טומאה מדרבנן מאי טעמא

For R. Joseph said in the name of Rab Judah who said it in the name of Samuel, This uncleanness (of the midwife) was not imposed by Biblical law but by decree of the Scribes. Why is it said 'was not imposed by Biblical law but by decree of the Scribes'? So that you should not say that our Mishnah agrees only with R. Akiba who holds that a (dead) foetus whilst yet in the womb if its mother is unclean; for indeed it is even in accordance with R. Ishmael who holds that the (dead) foetus whilst yet in the womb of its mother is clean, yet here the uncleanness (to the midwife) was imposed by Rabbinic decree.⁵⁰

And from Midrash it is said:

תמן תנינן האשה שמת ולדה במעיה והפשטה ידה את ידה ונגעה בו הדיה טמאה טומאת שבעה והאשה טהורה עד שיצא הולד המת בבית הבית טהור יצא מתוכו הדי הוא טמא מי עשה כן מי צוה כן מיגזר כן לא יחדו של עולם

"In the case of a woman whose infant has died in the womb, if the midwife puts out her hand and touches it, the midwife is unclean for seven days, while the woman is clean until the embryo comes out. When the dead body is in the house, the house is clean, but when it comes out it is unclean. Who did this? Who commanded this? Who decreed this? Was it not the world's Only One?⁵¹

⁴⁸ Tractate Baba Kama 59a

⁴⁹ Tractate Chullin 71a

⁵⁰ Tractate Chullin 72a

⁵¹ Midrash Rabbah, Bamidbar, Chapter 19:1

These writings first tell us of the midwives' possessing the knowledge and skills to do prenatal, intrauterine examinations. The day and time of these examinations must be remembered. These are not easy examinations and yet these women had the skill to

1. determine the viability of the fetus,
2. if there would be multiple births,
3. the condition of the mother, etc.

The midwife was expected to determine all this information without the aid of ultrasound or other modern day machines.

An "unclean" midwife, separated from the community for seven days, posed a serious problem. If an unclean midwife was the only midwife for many miles, it would have been a disaster for any other woman in labor and for the community in general. If this law was upheld, and we must assume it was, there had to be more than one midwife in a given area. This augments the possibility (as suggested in Chapter One, page 10) that Shiphrah and Puah were job descriptions or representatives and not merely the only midwives available to Pharaoh.

The midwife was deemed unclean for seven days, because she touched a dead fetus. This parallels the law that says anyone touching a corpse, renders them unclean for seven days.⁵² The mother remained clean, until the fetus was expelled.⁵³ The mother remains clean because the fetus is still in her womb and therefore she is not technically touching it. After the fetus is expelled she can then be touched by the dead fetus and be rendered unclean.⁵⁴

⁵² JPS Tanakh, Numbers 19:11

⁵³ Tractate Niddah 29a

⁵⁴ Mishnah Niddah 3:1-7

Finally, if the midwife determined that a, dead or living, fetus was causing a danger to the mother's life, was "pursuing" the mother, the fetus could be aborted. As detailed in the Mishnah, abortions could be "limb from limb"⁵⁵ if necessary.

האשה שהיא מקשה לילד מרחיבין את הולד במעיה ומוציאין אותו אברים אברים מפני שהיא קודמת לחייו
יצא רובו אין נוגעין בו שאין דוחין נפש מפני נפש

If a woman suffer hard labour in travail, the child must be cut up in her womb and brought out piece-meal, for her life takes precedence over its life; if its greater part has (already) come forth, it must not be touched, for the (claim of one) life can not supersede (that of another) life.

Fred Rosner in *Modern Medicine and Jewish Law* states:

"Murder in Jewish law is based upon Exodus 21:12 where it is written: "He that smiteth a man so that he dieth shall surely be put to death." The word "man" is interpreted by the Sages to mean a man but not a fetus.⁵⁶ Thus, the destruction of an unborn fetus is not considered murder."⁵⁷

This means, according to the Sages, that the aborting or killing of a fetus is not considered murder. It further means that the person doing the abortion is not to be considered a murderer and is not to be put to death.

We find further from Rosner in *Medicine in the Mishnah Torah of Maimonides*:

An unborn fetus in Jewish law is not considered to be a complete human being until it is born and, hence, may be destroyed to save the mother's life."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Mishnah Oholoth 7:6

⁵⁶ Tractate Sanhedrin 84b

⁵⁷ Fred Rosner, *Modern Medicine and Jewish Law* (New York, Yeshiva University, Department of Special Publications, 1972), p. 64

⁵⁸ Fred Rosner, *Medicine in the Mishneh Torah of Maimonides* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1984) p. 170.

'If a person is pursuing another with the intention of killing him, even if the pursuer is a minor, it is the duty of every Israelite to save the pursued, even at the cost of the pursuer's life.'⁵⁹

'We have no right to take life, except in the case where one person is pursuing another to destroy him. In that case the pursuer may be stopped, even at the risk of destroying his life. It is on this basis of stopping a "destroyer" or an "attacker" that Jewish law requires that if a child is being born and it becomes evident that its birth will kill the mother, the child must be destroyed in order that he does not kill the mother.'⁶⁰

The child is looked upon as "a pursuer, a murderer," and his life may be taken for that reason.

Once again, we find the Sages allowing abortion in order to protect the mother. The midwives are given instruction that the mother's life is given precedent over the fetus, if the fetus is a threat to the mother. And it confirms the notion that midwives were skilled enough to successfully perform abortions at different stages of pregnancy.

Eventually, Jewish law came to consider a grave psychological hazard to the mother as no less weighty a reason for an abortion than a physical threat. On these grounds a seventeenth-century responsum permitted an abortion in a case where it was feared the mother would otherwise suffer an attack of hysteria imperiling her life.⁶¹ Twentieth century legal decisions determined that if it is genuinely feared that a continued pregnancy and eventual birth might have such debilitating effects on the mother as to

⁵⁹ Maimonides, *Murder and the Preservation of Life*, found in Fred Rosner, *Medicine in the Mishneh Torah of Maimonides* p. 170.

⁶⁰ Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 425:2, found in Freehof, Solomon B, *Reform Responsa*

present a danger to her own life or the life of another by suicidal or violent tendencies, however remote this danger may be, a therapeutic abortion may be indicated with the same justification as for other medical reasons. But this fear would have to be very real, attested to by the most competent psychiatric opinion, and based on previous experiences of mental imbalance.⁶²

The midwife had the responsibility of performing an abortion and the responsibility of deciding when it was appropriate. The pertinent questions then and now are what is the status of the fetus, what constitutes birth, and when is therapeutic abortion allowed? These answers, though not always consistent, were determined by the Rabbis, but carried out by the midwives.

What is the status of the fetus? The Talmud tells us the following.

ואי מעברא עד ארבעים מאבעלמא היא

and if she is found pregnant, the semen, until the fortieth day, is only a mere fluid.⁶³

And Fred Rosner said:

Only an abortus forty days old or older conveys uncleanness, a recognition of the fact that an embryo begins to take form forty days after conception.⁶⁴

"An unborn fetus, in Jewish law, is not considered to be a complete human being until it is born and, hence, may be destroyed to save the mother's life."⁶⁵

⁶¹ Mizrahi, *Peri ha-Aarev*, *Yoreh de'ah* no.21, found in Fred Rosner and J. David Bleich, *Jewish Bioethics*, p.145.

⁶² Fred Rosner and J. David Bleich, *Jewish Bioethics* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2000) Chapter 10: written by Jakobovits, Immanuel, page 145.

⁶³ Tractate Yebamoth 69b

⁶⁴ Fred Rosner, *Medical Encyclopedia of Moses Maimonides* (Northvale, NJ and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc, 1998) p. 19.

⁶⁵ Fred Rosner, *Modern Medicine and Jewish Ethics* (Hoboken NJ and New York: KTAV and Yeshiva University Press, 1991) pp 133-167.

Talmud tells us:

אמר רבי אבהו ימימני סדים ואילונית וכן שמנה אין עושין בהן מעשה עד שיזו בן עשרים וכן שמנה מי קריה
והתניא בן שמנה הרי הוא כאבן ואמור לטלטלו אבל אמו שוחה עליו ומניקתו מפני הסכנה דבא במאי עסקין
כשגמרו מימניו דתניא איזו בן שמנה כל שלא כלו לו ודשיו רבי אומר סימנן מוכיחין עליו שגרו וצפרניו
שלא גמרו טעמא דלא גמרו דא אמרין דאי בר ז' הוא ואישתהוי הוא דאישתהי אלא דא דעבר

R. Abbahu stated: on the basis of the marks of a saris, woman incapable of procreation, and of an eight-month child, no decision is made until they attain the age of twenty. Is however, an eight month old child viable? Surely it was taught: an eight-month child is like a stone, and it is forbidden to move him; only his mother may bend over him and nurse him in order to avert danger. Here we are dealing with one whose marks, such as hair and nails, have not been developed. For it was taught: Who is an eight-month child? He whose months (of conception) have not been completed. Rabbi said: The marks, his hair and nails which were not developed would indicate it. The reason then is because they were not developed, but had they been developed it would have been assumed that the child was a seven-month one only his birth was somewhat delayed.⁶⁶

There are many arguments about the status of the fetus and these were the rules and roads by which the midwife delivered or aborted the fetus. By these often confusing and contradictory rules, these women made life and death decisions. They made them knowing in certain circumstances there were considerations of remaining "clean" themselves and they needed to be ever mindful of their continued ability to take care of their other patients. They made them with the skills of determining a seven month old fetus from an eight. They made these decisions for a community, determining the status of each fetus and so the community's future existence.

⁶⁶ Tractate Yebamoth 80a-b

Central to these decisions had to be the question of what constituted birth. First considered is what constituted birth when the fetus presents in the normal, head first, manner. We turn again to Talmud.

רב יוסי אומר משיצא כתקנו לידים ואיזהו כתקנו לידים משיצא רוב ראשו ואיזהו רוב ראשו רב יוסי אומר משיצאו צדעיו אבא חנן משום רב יהושע אומר משיצא פדחתו וי"א משיצאו קרני ראשו

R. Jose ruled: Only when it is issued in the normal manner in a condition of viability. And what is the normal manner in a condition of viability? The issue of the greater part of its head. And what is meant by the greater part of its head? R. Jose said: The issue of its temples. Abba Hanan citing R. Joshua said: the issue of its forehead; and some say: The appearance of the corners of its head.⁶⁷

If the fetus comes out in the usual manner, it is considered born when most of its head comes out of the womb. And what is considered most of its head? That is not clearly defined and rested upon the decision of the midwife.

However, if the fetus is delivered dismembered or in a breech position, it is considered born when most of it comes out and the mother becomes subject to the tumah laws of childbirth.

יצא מחותך או מסורס. ר. אלעזר אפילו הראש עמוק. ר. יוחנן אמר לא שנו אלא שאין הראש עמוק אבל הראש עמוק

If the embryo issued in pieces or in a reversed condition. R. Eleazar ruled: Even if the head was with them, but R. Johanan ruled: This was learnt only in a case where the head was not with them but where the head was with them the embryo is deemed born.

⁶⁷ Tractate Niddah 29a

ר. אלעזר אין הראש כרוב אברים ורבי יוחנן אמר הראש כרוב אברים

Eleazar ruled, The head has not the status of the greater part of the limbs but R. Johanan ruled: The head has the same status as the greater part of the limbs.

יצא מחותך או שלם וזה מה מסודר משיצא רובו דרי זה כילוד אמר רב פפא כתנאי יצא מחותך או מסודר משיצא רובו דרי הוא כילוד רבי יוסי אומר משיצא כתקנו מאי קאמר אמר רב פפא דבי קאמר יצא מחותך ומסודר משיצא רובו דרי הוא כילוד הא כתקנו הראש פטור

If the embryo issued in pieces or whole, but in either case, in a reversed position, it is deemed born as soon as its greater part issued forth. R. Papa stated, the is a matter of dispute between the following Tannas: If an embryo issued in pieces or in a reversed position it is deemed born as soon as its greater part issued forth. R. Jose ruled: only when it issued in the normal way. What does he mean? R. Papa replied: It is this that was meant: If the embryo issued in pieces and in a reversed position it is deemed born as soon as its greater part issued forth, but if it issued in the normal way the head alone caused exemption.⁶⁸

One master holds that it is in the case of a whole fetus that the head is considered significant, it is not considered significant in a dismembered fetus; whereas the other master holds that the head is considered significant in the case of a dismembered fetus as well.

In summary (in the case of a normal birth) the majority agreed the emergence of the head constituted birth. There was some disagreement as to the part of the head that must emerge. Some said the temples, some the forehead and some the crown or corners.

⁶⁸ Tractate Niddah 29a

The disputes were marked however when it came to a fetus emerging in pieces or breech. R. Elazar said the greater parts constituted birth and that the head wasn't needed to indicate birth if the fetus was in pieces. R. Yochanan said the head must be among the pieces to constitute birth.

And where did all of this leave the midwives? The midwives had to be aware of all these arguments and of the final rulings. They had to be learned in the law and the Rabbinic decisions. This itself was exceptional for women of the time. Further, as the midwives were the only ones assisting in the births, they were the only ones actually making all of these decisions.

A case in point was: There were twins born in the seventh month of pregnancy. One of the twins was viable and the other was not. Before the birth of the viable fetus, the non-viable one thrust its head out of the womb and then retracted it. It later died.⁶⁹ In this and in similar cases, the midwife decided who was considered born at all and who was considered first born. And, with these standards concerning what constitutes birth, the midwife determined when a fetus could be aborted and when it could not.

Therapeutic abortion rests on the knowledge of what constitutes birth. Once the baby is born, by definition, it is considered a human being and it cannot be destroyed even to save the mother's life. One is not allowed to trade one life to save another.

Here, once again we find the midwives literally making life and death decisions involving both the mother and the fetus. They determined when the fetus was "pursuing" the

⁶⁹ Tractate Niddah 29a

mother, when the fetus was considered born and, in the case of multiple births, even when one was not viable and which was first born.

An additional issue for the midwives was for whom could they be a midwife. We turn now to Tosefta, Mishnah, Talmud and the Reform Responsa for further enlightenment.

In Tosefta Abodah Zarah 3:4, it says:

- B. A gentile woman should not be called upon to cut out the foetus in the womb of an Israelite girl.
- C. And she should not give her a cup of bitters to drink,
- D. For they are suspect as to the taking of life.⁷⁰

Mishnah states, in Avodah Zarah 2:1 states:

בת ישראל לא תילד את הצובדת גלולים מפני שמילדת בן לצובדת גלולים אבל צובדת גלולים מילדת בת ישראל

The daughter of an Israelite may not assist an idolatress in childbirth, because she would be aiding the birth of a child for idolatry, but the daughter of an idolater may assist in the childbirth of the daughter of an Israelite.⁷¹

And finally, the Reform Responsa states:

"whether a Jewess may act as a midwife for a non-Jewess, and, by implication, whether a Jewish physician may give a Gentile woman such gynecological aid as will enable her to bear children. The Mishnah states that she may not so as to help another idolater into the world. The Talmud states in the name of Rabbi Joseph, that if she is a professional (or for pay), she may do so, for otherwise it would create ill will. The law is agreed that where the midwife may create ill will, the Jewess may be a midwife for a non-Jewess.⁷²

⁷⁰ Jacob Neusner, *Tosefta* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1981) Abodah Zarah 3:4

⁷¹ Mishnah Avodah Zarah 2:1

⁷² Reform Responsa, p. 187-188

Here again, we find the importance of the midwives. The Rabbis are concerned with what they did and with whom they did it. With this information we see the concern for who the midwives bring into the world and the consequences of their actions for Jewish and non-Jewish relations. With these sections we see further the role of the midwives as healers and diplomats to even the non-Jewish community.

Finally, Midrash offers further explanation of Shiphrah, or Jocheved, and her place in Jewish history.

ר' סימון בשם ריב"ל ז"ל חמא אבא דדי דושעיה בשם רב אמרי לא ניתן דברי הימי אלא לדרש ואשתי היהודיה ילדה את ירד אביגודר וגו' ואשתי היהודיה זו יוכבד וכי משבטו של יהודה היתה חללא משבטו של לוי היתה ולמה נקרא שמה יהודיה על שם שהעמידה יהודים בעולם

R. Simon in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi, and R. Hama the father of R. Hoshai in the name of Rab, said: The Book of Chronicles (I Chronicles 4:18) was given only to be expounded midrashically. *And his wife Hajehudijah bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah-and these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, who Nered took. 'And his wife Hajehudihah'; that is Jochebed. Was she then of the tribe of Judah-was she not of the tribe of Levi? Why then was her name called 'Hajehudijah'? Because she brought Jews into the world.*⁷³

Who were these midwives who brought Jews into the world? In Midrash Rabbah we learn:

אמר רבא בר רב הסדה נאמנן לאלתר ואלו הן הוציה והשיקרא והמטהרת את חברתה

"R. Abba said in R Hasdi's name: There are three persons whose word is accepted without further question, and they are these: A midwife, a foundling, and woman who declares her companion clean."⁷⁴

⁷³ Midrash Rabbah, Vayyikra, Chapter 1:3

⁷⁴ Midrash Rabbah Bereshit 85:13

The Bavli Kiddushin 73b-74a states:

רב חסרא שלשה נאמנים לאלתר אלו הן אמופי וזיה ופוטרת חברותיה אסופי הא דאמרן וזיה דתניא וזיה נאמנת לומר זה יצא ראשון וזה יצא שני במה דברים אמורים שלא יצתה וחזרה אבל יצתה וחזרה אינה נאמנת רבי אליעזר אמר החזקה על עומדה נאמנת ואם לא אינה נאמנת מאי ביניהו איכא ביניהו דאמר אפה פוטרת חברותיה

R. Hisda said: Three are believed there and then. And these are they: a foundling, a midwife, and she who frees her companions from the suspicion of uncleanness. A foundling, as stated. A midwife, as was taught: A midwife is believed when she states, This one issued first and this one issued second. When is that? Only if she did not go out and then returned, she is not believed. R. Eliezer said: If she was known to have been at her post, she is believed. Wherein do they differ? They differ where she turned her face away.⁷⁵

רבנו נאמנת וזיה לומר זה כהן זה לוי זה נתן זה ממזר במה דברים אמורים שלא קרא עליה שם ערער אבל קרא עליה ערער אינה נאמנת ערער דמאי אילימא ערער דר האמר רבי יוחנן אין ערער פחות משנים אלא ערער תרי ואיבעית אימא ילעולם אימא לך ערער דר וכי אמר רבי יוחנן אין ערער פחות משנים הני מילי היכא דאיתא חזקה דכשרות אבל היכא דליכא חזקה דכשרות דר גמי מהדימן נא

Our Rabbis taught: A midwife is believed when she affirms, "This one is a priest, this one is a Levite, this one a Nathin, this one mamzer." When is that? Only if no protest is raised: but if a protest is raised, she is not believed. What kind of protest? Shall we say, a protest by one person? Surely R. Johanan said: A protest is invalid if made by less than two? Hence it means a protest by two. Alternatively, I may say that after all that it was a protest by one. Yet when did R. Johanan say, A protest is invalid if made by less than two? Only where we have a presumption of fitness. But if there is no presumption of fitness even one is believed.⁷⁶

אמר רב נחמן שלשה נאמנים על הבכור אלו הן וזיה אביו ואמו וזיה לאלתר אמו כל שבעה אביו לעולם

R. Nahman said: Three are believed with respect to a first born. These are they: The midwife, the father and the mother. The midwife, only immediately. The mother, the first seven days; the father, for all time.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Tractate Kiddushin 73b

⁷⁶ Tractate Kiddushin 74a

⁷⁷ Ibid

In a responsum we learn further of the consideration given the word of a midwife:

מה יאמר אדוננו ראש הישיבה בדין אדם שנשא בתולה ושהה עמה כשנים ואחר כך תבעתו ואמרה כי אינו יכול לבעול וטענה שהיא עדיין בתולה. והוא אומר בעלתי והוצאתי דם בתולים בשעת כניסה לחופה. והיא כופרת ואומרת הביאו אלי נשים מלדות לבחון אותי ותמצאנה אותי בתולה. והוא אומר שנאתני ועיניה נתנה בארץ ואינו חושש בדברי המלדות ואינו נאמנות להפסיד אותי שאשלם כתובה כי זה כמו עדות ונשים פסולות לעדות. יורנו אדוננו מה הדין בזה והיאך יפדו. ואם דין זה מן הדינים שהיא נאמנת עליו בדבריה. כמו שאמרו דברים שבינו לבינה היא נאמנת. או אין להעמיד בדבר זה אלא בדבר שאינו ידוע בודאי והיא יודעת כגון יורה כחף אבל זה שהוא מדגיש ידוע בודאי אין להאמינה. ואם כן הוא ואין מאמינים לדבריה היש לקבל עדות הנשים הידועות או אם ישבע ויפטר. וכמו כן יורנו מה הדין כשאדם טוען כי בעל ולא מצא דם בתולים והיא אומרת מצא או צאמר שעדיין לא בעל כלל. יבאר לנו אדוננו מה הדין באלו הפנים ביאר יפה. וכמו כן מי שיש לו שתי נשים האחת טוענת שלא נתן לה עונה בראי והוא אומר נותני לה בראי. מה הדין בזה. ישבע שהוא נותן בראי. או אין זה מקום חיוב שבעה. וכמו כן מי ששהה עם אשתו עשר שנים רצופות שבמקצתן היה בעיר אחרת ובמקצתן היה עמה ולא ילדה ממנו. אם הוא חייב לגרשה כשהיא תובעת גירושין ויתן לה כתובה בטענת בעינא חטרא לידה ומרה לקבורה. או צריכין לדחות עשר שנים רצופות שהיה שם עמה בציר. ואם יש לו בנים מאשה אחרת והוא אינה יולדת. שיש לטעון כי ממנה נמנע והורע. אם יש בטענה זו ממש. יבאר לנו אדוננו כל אלו השאלות. והמחלוקת שביניהן בטענות אלו יפרש לנו פירוש מבואר. כי כבוד רבתה מחלוקת באלו הפנים.

What would our Lord the Head of the Yeshiva say in the case of a man who married a virgin and he stayed with her about two years (after marriage) and afterwards she made a claim of him. She said that he can't be a husband to me (can't have sexual intercourse) and she claims that she is still a virgin. He says, I did- I brought out a virgin's blood at the hour of entering the chupah. And she denied it and she said bring to me women who are midwives to check me and they will find that I am a virgin. And he said that she hates me. And he didn't care about he words of the midwives and they aren't trusted to cause me to pay the Ketubah. Because this is like the status of testimony (if we believe the midwives) and women are unexceptable as witnesses. Teach us our Master what is the ruling about his. And how you would break it down and if this ruling is from the rulings and that she is believed about it in her words.

And they say that words that are between him and her; she is believed (not over him, but is listened to). Or is it that we do not make a determination on this word rather on the word (basis) that he doesn't know for certain and she knows like a marksman with an arrow. If he feels and knows it for certain than you do not believe her. Is it necessary to accept the testimony of the knowledgeable women or is it that we take his oath?⁷⁸

We are shown, more fully, the status and duties of the midwives. The word of these women was taken concerning firstborn and hence the birthright. Her word was taken in

תשובות הגאונים שערי צדק ח"ד שי"ד סימן ל ד"ה ⁷⁸

the case of the child being a priest, a Levite, a Nathin, or a mamzer. It was taken with equal value as the mother and the father. This became especially important if there was more than one woman giving birth in one location. It was up to the midwife to declare which baby had what status. Her word was considered in the determination of virginity and in the payment of the ketubah. And finally, the midwife's word was taken as the truth, even if there was one dissenting voice. The midwife's word was taken even if that one voice was that of a rabbi or scholar.

Much can be learned from the rabbis based on the words used to name the midwives.

Interestingly, in Kiddushin 73b and 74a the word for midwife is מלדת

The meaning of this Hebrew word is threefold: life, Eve, and midwife. The Hebrew provides us with important linguistic associations for the midwives, with life. In Sotah 11b, the word used for midwife is ודה, meaning life, to live, to keep alive, and to sustain. In Eruvin 44b, the word used is רבמה meaning wise woman, wisdom, one who knows, recognizes, remembers, teaches, female physician.⁷⁹

Although many physicians studied obstetrics, and rabbis who were acquainted with that science were consulted on certain occasions with regard to the ritual cleanness or uncleanness of the mother, yet it does not appear from the Talmud that men were ever called to assist a woman in her delivery. It is also difficult to say whether in the Talmudic times midwives were specially trained for their profession or whether they gained their knowledge of it merely by watching the operations of others. The term רבמה however, would seem to indicate that they were well trained.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1904) page 580
 Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary* (New York: The Judaica Press, Inc. 1996)

⁸⁰ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, page 580.

Midwives were considered a necessity and a blessing for a community. They were respected and protected. Also, paramount and central to a community was God's gift of Shabbat. There were many laws concerning the remembrance and observance of the Sabbath. Hence, consideration had to be given to the problem of labor and delivery on this day of all days. Which, of their necessary duties, did the midwives do on this day?

רבן גמליאל הזקן שידו מהלכין אלפים אמה לכל רוח ולא אלו בלבד אלא אף חכמה הבאה לילד וחבא להציל מן הדליקה ומן הגייס ומן הנזר ומן המפולת וזי אלו כאנשי העיר יש להן אלפים לכל רוח

But Rabban Gamaliel the Elder introduced a rule that they could go two thousand cubits from it in any direction. These were not the only ones to come from a distance to help in childbirth or one who comes to rescue from a fire or from bandits or from a river in flood or from a building that has fallen in- all these are on the same footing as the residents of the town, and may go two thousand cubits on the Sabbath in any direction.⁸¹

ר"י הזקן שיש להן אלפים אמה לכל רוח ולא אלו בלבד אמרו אלא אפי חכמה הבאה לילד וחבא להציל מן הגייס ומן הנזר ומן המפולת ומן הדליקה וזי הן כאנשי העיר יש להן אלפים אמה לכל רוח וזי לא והא אמרת כל היצאין להציל וזיין למקומן אפילו טובא אמר רב יהודה אמר רב שזוזין בבלי זיין למקומן

But R. Gamaliel the Elder enacted that they shall be entitled to move within two thousand cubits in any direction. The enactment, moreover, was not applied to these only, but even a midwife who came to assist at a childbirth, or a man who came to rescue from an invading gang, from a river, from a ruin or from a fire is to be regarded as one of the people of the town and is entitled to move within two thousand cubits in any direction. Now (this evidently implies) No more; but has it not been said, all who go out to save life may return to the original places even impliedly a larger distance? Rab Judah replied in the name of Rab: The meaning is that they may return to their original places.⁸²

אין מילדין את הבחמה ביום טוב אבל ממערין ומילדין את האשה בשבת וקודין לה חכמה ממקום למקום ומחללין עליה את השבת וקושרין את הטיבור רבי יוסי אומר אף חותכין וכל צרכי מילה עושין בשבת

One may not deliver an animal (in giving birth) on a festival, but one may assist it. We may deliver a woman on the Sabbath, summon a midwife for

⁸¹ Tractate Rosh Hashana 23b

⁸² Tractate Eruvin 44b

her from place to place, desecrate the Sabbath on her account, and tie up the navel-string. R Jose said: one may cut (it) too. And all the requirements of circumcision may be done on the Sabbath.⁸³

מילדין את האשה וכי מכרי תנא ליה מילדין את האשה וקורין לה חכמה ממקום למקום ומחללין עליה את השבת לאתוי מאי לאתוי דא דתנו רבנן אם היתה צריכה לנו חבירתה מדלקת לה את הנר ואם היתה צריכה לשמן חבירתה מביאה לה שמן ביד ואם אינו ספק ביד מביאה בשערה ואם אינו ספק בשערה מביאה לה בכלי

One may deliver a woman, etc. Consider: He (the Tanna) teaches, one may deliver a woman and summon a midwife for her from place to place, then what does desecrate the Sabbath on her account add? It adds the following taught by the Rabbis: If she needs a lamp, her neighbour may kindle a lamp for her. And if she needs oil, her neighbour brings her oil in hand; but if that in her hand is insufficient, she brings it in her hair; and if that in her hair is insufficient, she brings it to her in a vessel.⁸⁴

From Midrash Rabbah, Bereshit 80:9 we learn:

אין מונעים לא שמן ולא חמין מעל גבי חכמה בשבת ולא עוד אלא שמחלפין חמין על גבי חכמה בשבת ואם תאמר מרדכיץ את המילה מאי שנא היא מכת קטן ממכת גדול אלא ללמדך מרדכיץ את הקטן כל גופו מה שאין כן בגדול אלא ע"ג חכמה בלבד רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר מרדכיץ את הקטן ביום השלישי של מילה שחל להיות בשבת אי"ר יקוב בר אבא בבל שעה הוה רבי יוחנן ורבי יונתן מפקדין דיתא ואמר להון כל שקועין שאתן עבדן בחולא הון עבדן בשבתא ביום השלישי שחל להיות בשבת

You do not withhold oil or hot water from a wound on the Sabbath. Hence if you say, you may bathe the prepuce (only), wherein does the wound of an infant differ from that of an adult? (Hence it is to teach you that) the wound of an infant differs from that of an adult. R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: You may bathe the infant on the third day after circumcision when it falls on the Sabbath. R. Jacob b. Aha said: R. Johanan and R. Jonathan used to exhort midwives frequently, saying to them, 'Whatever you do on week-days, you must do on the Sabbath, when that is the third day.'⁸⁵

Even Sabbath laws were put aside to deliver a human child. The midwives were allowed cutting, lighting fire, tying, carrying, and traveling. And not only the midwife was

⁸³ Tractate Shabbath 128b

⁸⁴ Ibid

allowed these privileges. If she needed oil or water a neighbor could carry these things for her. This was very important, so that the midwife didn't have to leave the mother, both for the delivery and for "not leaving her station" in the event of multiple births. Further, we are told that midwives could travel up to two thousand cubits, about one half a mile.⁸⁵ First, these decisions give midwives leave to break some of the rules of Shabbat. It also seems to indicate again, the number of midwives available, underscored by their ability to not only travel to someone delivering, but to return to their starting point so to be available for another birth.

These texts tell us the services of the midwife superceded even Shabbat. Throughout Jewish history the cornerstone of Judaism has been Shabbat. Midwives were exhorted by R. Jacob b. Aha in Midrash Bereshit 80:9. "whatever they did on week-days, to do on Shabbat." What these women did was so necessary and needed that they had to be free to do what they did everyday. What they did was to safely birth and care for the Hebrew generations.

By Talmudic times the status of the midwives was so elevated, they were compared to angels. In Sotah 11b we read:

והקבייה שולח משמי מרום מי שמנקיד ומשפיר אותן כוזה זו שמספרת את הולד

The Holy, blessed be He, sent down someone from the high heavens who washed and straightened the limbs (of the babies) in the same manner that a midwife straightens the limbs of a child.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Midrash Rabbah, Bereshit 80:9

⁸⁶ David Noel Freedman, (Editor in Chief), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume VI (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auchland: Doubleday Publishers, 1992) page 899 (One cubit equals the forearm length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger)

⁸⁷ Tractate Sotah 11b

From Torah we read:

לכל זמן ועת לכל חפץ תחת השמים עת ללדת ועת למות

A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven;

A time for being born and a time for dying⁸⁸

There was indeed a time to be born and a time to die. God decreed these times, the rabbis interpreted those decrees, and the midwives decided when and how these decrees applied to each birth situation. And in these decisions midwives were listened to, heeded, and respected for their mastery.

⁸⁸ JPS Tanakh, Ecclesiastes 3:1, page 1768.

CHAPTER FOUR FOLKTALES

My journey with the midwives took me next to stories that have been handed down from generation to generation, originally by word of mouth and then with pen and paper.

Folktales are a reflection of people's souls. They are the voluntary expression of our culture. Folk customs are depicted in our legends and stories of every day life. Folk customs include the songs we sing, the clothes we wear, and the stories we tell. Through these stories we can listen to the messages of women long ago, in the towns and the cities in which Jewish people lived. Imbedded within the stories are the everyday lives of our past. We have long known that stories have traditionally been the vehicle through which Jewish values and ethics have been transmitted.⁸⁹ By reading these stories, I had further opportunity to listen to these women healers as they traveled through their lives.

A milestone in the progress of Jewish folktale research was the opening in 1955 of the Israel Folktale Archives (IFA) and the initiation of folklore collection projects that continue to this day. About 21,000 authentic folktales have been collected, preserved, and archived.⁹⁰ They are being kept safe and are available to all who wish to enjoy them and to pass them on.

⁸⁹ Rush, Barbara (Retold by), *The Book of Jewish Women's Tales* (Northvale, NJ and London: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997), p. xxvi.

⁹⁰ Rush, Barbara (Retold by), *The Book of Jewish Women's Tales* (Northvale, NJ and London: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997), p. xv. Also see Appendix A.

We begin our study with one of the most often told stories. It is Kurdish, from the town of Zakho in northern Iraq. It was told to the IFA over thirty years ago and is entitled "The Midwife's Reward." Similar stories are "The Midwife, the Cat, and the Demon" and "The Underwater Palace"⁹¹.

The story opens with the midwife always ready for a knock on the door that would call her to work. She worked because she loved it, not expecting worldly reward, but was sure "her reward would be in Heaven."⁹² The midwife rejoiced in being given the opportunity to deliver a baby in a storm in the middle of the night. She rejoiced in the chance to do such a mitzvah.

We are reminded of the commitment of the midwives and their love for what they did. This corroborates our discussion of Shiphrah and Puah's reward from God (page 15) and our discussion concerning fees (page 21). Commitment to their laboring mothers and being deserved of some reward for that commitment runs through our literature.

In the story, the midwife ultimately delivered a healthy baby, though fearing for her own safety the whole time. Afterward she stated, "The reward for a good deed is the deed itself."⁹³ However, as she was strongly encouraged to take a reward, she took only a bunch of garlic. The garlic later turned to gold and the midwife shared it with her family.

⁹¹ *The Book of Jewish Women's Tales*, p. 12-14. Also see Appendix B
Sabar, Yona, *The Folkliterature of the Kurdistan Jews* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982) p. 190-192) Also see Appendix B

Schwartz, Howard, *Lilith's Cave* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988) p. 230-238.
Also see Appendix B

⁹² *The Book of Jewish Women's Tales*, p. 12.

⁹³ *Ibid*, page 14.

Again, as in Chapter One, the enormity of the reward reflected the enormity of the service.

Through this story we are given a view of a midwife who went with a strange man in the middle of the night, because he needed her. She went to deliver a child and bring it safely into the world. Though she felt in personal danger as she dealt with sheidim and sheidot,⁹⁴ she still did what she was trained to do. She still delivered a baby alive, even keeping the mother, baby, and herself safe from the evil spirits. And once again, she was well rewarded.

I am struck by the image of the midwives going out into the night, following a man they may or may not have known. They may have traveled near or far, by foot, horse or boat, depending on which story is read. They may have gone to strange places, under strange circumstances. And yet they went. They answered the call. It wasn't always convenient or comfortable. They went because it was expected of them. They went because they were trained to go and do what they did. And as we have learned, they went because it was good and high and holy work. They went because they were mandated from the Bible, through Shiphrah and Puah, to do God's work.

We next turn to a story from Morocco called *The Birth of the Maharul*.⁹⁵ It tells a story of Jews and Christians, and times of peril. The midwife lived far away and the people had to run to get her, in the dark. The story involves blood libel and that brings an

⁹⁴ Evil spirit, demon, devil, fiend: masculine and feminine

especially frightening danger. And still the midwife ran back with the people to deliver the baby. The baby who would one day be the Maharal, Rabbi Yehuda Liva Ben-Betzalel, a saintly figure in Jewish folklore.⁹⁶ Once again, a midwife went with a full heart into the night and into danger to do her duty. Once again, the midwife went to do her part in fulfilling God's command to be fruitful and multiply.

There is a further message in this particular story, however. Here we find a random midwife being responsible for delivering a saintly figure. We find a midwife, representative of all midwives, taking responsibility for bring the holy figures into the world.

In previous stories, we have seen the midwives deal with sheidim and sheidot. Childbirth is of course a particular time of vulnerability. Part of the midwife's job was to be mindful in many ways, of evil spirits and the evil eye. An evil spirit that often arose concerning childbirth was Lilith. We will next look at several stories about the constant threat of Lillith during childbirth and the responsibilities of the midwife.

From the book *Classic Tales* we learn a version of Lilith's story:

How lonely Adam was that first day as he watched the animals parade by, two by two, each with a companion. And God took pity on him and made him a partner, scooping out another handful of dust from the earth. This creature was named Lilith and she became Adam's wife.

⁹⁵ Portal, Hanania Rabbi, by Haya Bar-Itzhak, *Jewish Moroccan Folk Narratives from Israel* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993) p. 107-110. See also Appendix C

⁹⁶ *Jewish Moroccan Folk Narratives from Israel*, p. 109. He was born in Poznan, Poland, 1520 and died in Prague in 1609. He was a rabbi in Nicolsburg, Moravia, until 1598 when he became the Rabbi of Prague. It is interesting to note that this European rabbi made his way into Moroccan folklore.

Because this first woman was equal to Adam in every way, having been made by God out of the same earth and on the same day as her husband, she insisted on enjoying equal footing with him in the Garden: sharing the labor and its reward, working side by side to tend the growing things entrusted into their care. Also in the ways of love between a man and a woman, Lilith wished to share equally, sometimes lying on top of her lover and sometimes below him. For were they not full partners in creation?

But this was too much for Adam to bear, and he complained to God, saying, "Is this why I have been created-to share everything with her? When I asked for a companion, I did not mean this!"

When Lilith heard Adam's complaint, she decided to leave the Garden where she was not welcome, and make a new home for herself far away. Pronouncing the Awesome Name, she flew away to the shores of the Sea of Reeds. Instantly Adam was sorry that he had driven her away, and he once more cried out to God, "My wife has deserted me! Again, I am all alone!"

So God sent three angels, Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, to fetch Lilith back to Eden. But she was not willing to return, for she knew that Adam did not desire her the way she was. "If you do not return with us," threatened the angels, "you will lose one hundred of your children each day until you change your mind." "So be it," replied Lilith. And she sent them back to Eden empty-handed. And soon the angels' dire prophecy came to pass.

From that day on, in revenge for her hurt pride and slaughtered children, Lilith has prowled through the night, looking for newborn babies to harm. With her long black hair and great flapping wings, she will sometimes swoop down on day-old baby boys or on baby girls during their first twenty days of life, and suck the breath out of them.

But at heart she is not cruel. For out of compassion for her sister creatures, she has betrayed her own power: "If you inscribe the names of the three angels, Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, on an amulet and tie this charm around you children's neck," she has whispered to the mothers of these innocent babies, "I promise not to harm even one hair on their heads."

And she has never failed to keep her word.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Frankel, Ellen, *The Classic Tales, 4000 Years of Jewish Folklore* (Northvale, NJ and London: Jason Aronson Inc, 1989) p. 22-23.

We find in a story named "The Tale of Lilith," the inscription that must be on the amulet that is hung either around the mother's neck and then the child's neck or hung above the child's cradle to keep Lilith away. It had to first say "Out Lilith!" and then the following:

I adjure you, Lilith, in the Name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and in the name of the three angles sent after you, Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, to remember the vow you made that wherever you find their names you will cause no harm, neither you nor your cohorts; and in their names and in the names of the seals set down here, I adjure you, Queen of Demons, and all your multitudes, to cause no harm to a woman while she carries a child nor when she gives birth, nor to the children born to her, neither during the day nor during the night, neither through their food nor through their drink, neither in their head nor in their hearts. By the strength of these names and seals I do so adjure you, Lilith, and all your offspring to obey this command.⁹⁸

And from the *Myth and Legend of Ancient Israel* we learn further of Lilith and her powers.

Lilith is thus a female night demon, and is also known under the name of Meyalleleth, or the howling one.

Lilith is accompanied by four hundred and eighty hosts of evil spirits and destroying angels, and she is constantly howling.⁹⁹

And so we have a picture of Lilith, and the dangers she represented for the mothers, babies and midwives. With this information as a backdrop we now turn to two more stories involving Lilith and midwives.

The first story is entitled "The Hair in the Milk"¹⁰⁰ and is from Turkish Kurdistan. It tells of a laboring mother who asked for a glass of milk, looked in the milk, and fainted. The

⁹⁸ Schwartz, Howard, *Adam's Soul The Collected Tales of Howard Schwartz* (Northvale, NJ and London: Jason Aronson Inc, 1992) p. 262-263.

⁹⁹ Rappoport, Angelo S., *Myth and Legend of Ancient Israel* (New York: KTAV Publishing House Inc, 1966) p.79.

midwife looked in the cup and saw a long black hair. She quickly poured the milk and the hair in a jug. She corked the jug and shook it as hard as she could. There was a scream from inside the jug, yet the midwife only listened. She carried the jug far from the house and heard the voice of Lilith. The story goes on to show Lilith was afraid of the midwife and the midwife exacted a promise from Lilith in the names of the three angels, to protect the mother and child. And Lilith promised.

We have learned many times of the midwife protecting the lives of the mothers and the babies. Here we also learn of them protecting this mother and baby from even a demon. We see that midwives can even control the uncontrollable demons. And as is typical of the midwives, she even turned Lilith around to participate in protecting the mother and child.

Additionally, we are given the symbolism of the jug and the fluids. Here again the midwife controls the uncontrollable in the jug containing bodily fluids. These were beyond the control and understanding of men and within the realm of the midwives.

Secondly, we find a story called "Watch Night"¹⁰¹ from *The Shtetl Book* written in Eastern Europe. The Watch Night is the last night of the eight-day period after birth. Lilith was known to steal babies from their mothers during this period and especially dangerous was Watch Night. She either exchanged the babies for one belonging to demons or killed them outright. Though this story tells a different tale regarding the

¹⁰⁰ Schwartz, Howard, *Lilith's Cave*, p. 118-120. See also Appendix D.

¹⁰¹ Roskies, Diane K. and David G, *The Shtetl Book* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc, 1975) p. 143-146. See also Appendix D

midwife, it still leads us to the power of the midwife, even when used badly. Finally at the end of the story we find the admonishment from the Baal Shem Tov: "From now on you should always know who your midwife is and who is the woman in attendance. This is a serious matter and much depends on it."¹⁰²

To further illustrate this point, from the novel *The River Midnight*, we learn how serious a matter this is from the quote: "No, you need a person who knows what's what. It was Misha, the midwife, who kept me in this world and only her."¹⁰³

Also from *The River Midnight*, we find an admonition about the local midwife, "When a woman is in childbirth, even the Angel of Death is afraid of Misha."¹⁰⁴

Midwives had access to this world and the world beyond as illustrated in their dealings with demons and through dreams. Most people had no access to these worlds. Even the Angel of Death was afraid of the midwife. Dealing with demons and the Angel of Death, among all other roles, was unique and within the power and scope of the midwife.

As illustrated in the three stories above, indeed the choosing of a midwife was a serious matter and much depended upon it. So much in fact, we have said and continue to say the existence of the following generations depended on the skill, integrity, and courage of the midwives.

¹⁰² *The Shtetl Book*, p. 146.

¹⁰³ Nattel, Lillian, *The River Midnight* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1999) p.65

In the next few stories we will see the far-reaching powers of the midwives and the consequences of that power when it was misused. However, bear ever in mind, that all the situations described tell us of the centrality of the midwife in the culture and the control they had over the delivery of each generation.

The following seven stories came directly from the Israel Folktale Archives housed at the University of Haifa.¹⁰⁵ They are stories about midwives switching babies and the ensuing problems. They are about human frailties and succumbing to temptation. Maybe we all indeed do have a price. And they are about owning mistakes and rectifying the results. They are about every day life.

This first story is from Afghanistan; recorded by Zebulum Korat and told by Sarah Gad.

AT 707	מס' הסיפור:	מס' אספני 3083
	הרושם: זבולון קורט	
Korat, Zebulum	המספר: סרה גאד	
	הערה: אפגניסטן	
	כרשם בתאריך:	
	תמצית הסיפור:	
	בן עם בלורית זהב, בת עם שיניים כרמליות	
	<p>שלוש אחיות הפתחו חנות עם שלושה בני-סלך מבטיחה הבוגרת להלביש את כל הילדי המלך, השנייה להאכילם הצעירה ללוח לבדלה בן עם בלורית זהב ובה עם שני כרמליות. האחיות הגדולות מפלאות את הכסיתין רק באופן סמלי, הנה הצעירה יולדת את הילדים עם התוכנות הטובות. בזמן הלידה מחליפה המילדת, כי זמם האחיות הקנאות של הצעירה את התינוקות בשני גורי-כלבים, את שני הילדים היא מסליכה בתוך אוזן הימה. את הכלבה עם גורית מצוות המלך לסגור בבית כלל, קרר מנצל את הילדים, כשהמילדת מגלה שהילדים עודם בחיים, היא מסיתה את הבת לרושם אחיה שלושה דברים נדירים שבקוצנו להשיגם הוא ימצא את מותו. הנער משו את המבוסס בעזרת עצה של זקן שמוגס אותו בדרכו. כשהמלך מקבל ידיעה שילדיו עוד חיים, הוא מצווה להביא אותם לפניו, הוא שומע את ספורים עיי צדור (אחר בין) המפצים שהנער הביא לבת) ועיי ודוי המילדת. הוא לוח את המלכה מכלאה ומעביש את האשמים.</p>	

¹⁰⁴ *The River Midnight*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Ms. Edna Hechal, IFA Coordinator, University of Haifa. See also Appendix A.

"A Son with a Golden Forelock of Hair and a Daughter with Teeth of Pearl."¹⁰⁶

Of three sisters who marry three sons of a king-the oldest promises to clothe all the king's soldiers, the second one-to feed them, the third (the young one)-to give birth for her husband to a son with a golden lock and a daughter with pearly teeth. The oldest sisters do their promises only symbolically. But the young one gives birth to children with a golden lock and pearly teeth. At the time of birth, under the initiation of the jealous sisters- the midwife changes the babies with two puppies. She throws the children in a cart into the sea and the King commands the queen and her puppies be closed in a dungeon. A potter raises the children. When the midwife realizes the children are alive she instigates the daughter to demand of her brother three rare things, that if he tried to get them he dies. The young lad gets the three things with the help and advice of an old man, who he meets on his way. When the king gets the message that his children are alive-he wants to see them. He hears their story from a bird and by a confession from the midwife. He takes the queen from the dungeon and punishes the guilty ones.

The story is about a king's three sons who married three sisters. The two oldest sisters made promises they essentially did not keep. The youngest sister made a promise to have children, which she did keep. The older sisters were jealous and bribed the midwife to exchange the babies with two puppies. The midwife threw the children in a cart and into the sea. The king commanded the queen and her puppies be thrown into the dungeon. A potter raised the children. When the midwife realized the children were still alive, she set in motion a plan, involving the advice of an old man and a bird. When the king heard the real story of what happened to the children from the bird and through a confession from the midwife, the king freed the queen and punished the guilty ones.

¹⁰⁶ IFA #3983-See also Appendix E

The second story is from Morocco; recorded by Yafa Almadwi and told by Chananya Portal.

16.390

המיילדת וילדי המלך

יפה אלמדורי (שלומי)

1988

עברית

מבנה מרכזי

707 . א.ל.

מכל נשותיו, רק אחת ילדה למלך ילדים. הנשים הצרות שיחדו את המיילדת
 שישליכו את הולדות ויבידו למלך כי אשתו ילדה כלב, חתול, נמל. המלך בלא את המלכה
 בבקתה.
 אחת מבנות המלך הושלכה בשדה ובמצאה ע"י אנשים טבידלוג. כשנודע לה כי אינם
 הוריה האמיתיים, הביאה לאחוז שדה, משם יצאה לחפש את הוריה האמיתיים. בעצת זקנה הלכה
 למלך, ולאחר בירור עם המיילדת האבירה זהוהה. המלך החזיר את מלכתו וחיו באושר. את
 הנשים האחרות בירש (פ"ה).

שלומי

"The Midwife and the King's Sons."¹⁰⁷

Of all his wives only one gave birth to children for the king. The jealous women bribe the midwife that she would throw away the newborns and they will tell the king that his wife gave birth to a dog, a cat, and a camel. The king imprisoned the queen in a hut. One of the king's daughters was thrown in a field and was found by people who raised her. When it became clear to her that they were not her real parents-they brought her to the same field and from there she went out to look for her real parents. With the advice of old man she went to the king and after verification with the midwife, her identity became clear. The king returned his queen and they lived happily. He expelled the other wives.

This is much the same story except the midwife substituted the babies for a dog, a cat, and a camel. The midwife was once again part of a plot to switch babies. The queen was brought back to the palace and the other wives were punished.

The third story is from Morocco; recorded by Esther Newman and told by Chaya Mazoz.

AT 707 1987 16141

שלוש אחיות

המלך מוריס

חיה, חב' ב' (כעור משי זקנה בדרך לישראל)

סוניסיה

מלך מוריס שמע סיחה שלוש אחיות, מה יעשו אם המלך יסאף לאשה אחת מבנותיה להלביש את כל הצבא, והשנייה - להאכיל את כל הצבא והשלישית - ללדת שני בנים ובה. המלך נוסא את הבכירות וסגרשן וילדו השלישית ילדה שני שהבטיחה באחיהם הקטנים מהליפוח. בעזרת מילדה את הילדים בגדרי כלבים, המלך זרק את אשתו לכלוב. זקן מרוב את הילדים ומבדלם. המלך מרוב אהבתו ומתיידי איתם. האחיות שולחות את המיילדה להיפטר מן הילדים והיא בטכנע את האחיות להתחלף (לצבור פניה בכחכות צהוב) ולבקש מאחיה את בריכת המים בחולים והדגים הקטנים ואחר כך את עוד השלא. בדרך נמקלה פוסטרו כל האה הצעיר באבן, ירצאת זקנה, הוא מאכיל אותה, פרעל לפי הוראותיה ומצליח למלא את המשימה. עוד הפלא בסרב לעיר עד שכל בני הקיר יאספו, כולל האחיות, האם והמיילדה. המיפור בבלה את האשה. קונס לרשעים והתאחזרה המסמנה (א"נ).

"Three Sisters."¹⁰⁸

A disguised king hears three sisters talking about what they will do if the king marries them. The first sister promises to clothe the entire army. The second promises to feed the entire army. And the third promises to give birth to two sons and a daughter. The king marries the two elder ones and divorces them. The third gives birth as she promised. The jealous sisters exchange the children with puppies with the help of a midwife. The king throws his wife into a cage.

An old man finds the children and raises them. The king finds them and befriends them. The sisters send the midwife to get rid of the children. And she convinces the sister to pretend to be sick (by coloring her face with yellow) and to ask her brother for the; 1. pool of blue water and the jumping fish and afterwards, 2. the wonderful bird. On the way the horse of the young brother stumbles into a stone, an old woman comes out, he feeds her, acts according to her instructions and succeeds in fulfilling the task. The wonderful bird refuses to sing until all the residents of the city will gather, including the sisters, the mother, and the midwife. The bird

¹⁰⁷ IFA# 16.390-See also Appendix E

¹⁰⁸ IFA # 16141-See also Appendix E

reveals the truth. Punishment is to the wicked and unification of the family.

Again, with the help of the midwives the children were substituted with puppies. In the end, a bird told the truth and the midwife and the sisters were punished and the family unified.

The next story comes from Idiarna, Turkey; recorded by Margalit Tovi and told by Fanny Afia.

16.563

בגלל קנאת אחים (אליהו ונביא)		
1988	עברית	מרגלית טובי (מנכ"ת)
מורקית (אזרירגה)		
707		
<p>מלך צירור לא להדליק בלילה אור. מצא שלוש אחיות, הוסרו כפתורים באור, למרות מצותו. האזין לשיחתן ומילא בקטניות: הבכורה - לשרת בארסון, השנייה - לשאת את בעלה הצעיר לבית-המרחץ והצעירה - להינשא לבסוף וללדת לו בן עם כוכב זהב במצחו. עם שירות כמיה האחיות שיחדו את המיילדת ושהצעירה ילדה לקור את הילדים, השליכון אוחז בחיבה לים ושמו במקומם כלכלב וחחלמול. המלך העניש את אשתו וקבע מקומה בחדר הארמון וכל העובר שם ירד במניה.</p> <p>הילדים אומצו על-ידי דייג-דגבן-גורע בצייד-הציפורים-הטוב ביותר. בגיל-13 נרדע קיומם לאחיות אדם ובחטמתן החלפתן מאחות וביקשה מאחיהם חלב לביאת ואחר-כך ציפור מולאה. כדרכו למילוי הבקשה עזר לו אליהו הנביא בעצרת (הלביאה ישנה כשעיניה מקורחת; צריך ללכת כנגד הירח מבלי לחטב את הראש לאחור). נאח הצליח במשימה וסמך שירת הציפור הגיע לאזני המלך. שיתת עם הדייג. במעברת לו זהרם הילדים. הוא מעניש את האחיות הברגדניות ומחזיר אליו את ילדיו ואת אשתו (ע"ה).</p>		

"Because of the Jealousy of Brothers"¹⁰⁹

A king commanded to not turn on the lights at night. He found three sisters sewing buttons in the light, in spite of his command. He listened to their conversation and fulfilled their requests. The eldest-to serve in the

¹⁰⁹ IFA # 16.563-See also Appendix E

palace. The second-to carry the honorable king's things to the bathhouse. The young one-to be married to the prince and to give birth to a son with a gold stain on his forehead and a daughter with silvery hair for the king.

The sisters bribed the midwife and when the youngest gave birth they took the children and threw them in an ark into the sea. And put in their stead a puppy and a kitten. The king punished his wife, determined her place at the palace's gate and all who passed her spit in her face.

A fisherman adopted the children and the son was known as the best bird hunter. At the age of thirteen their existence was known to their mother's sisters and with their instigation the sister (the king's daughter) pretended to be ill and asked her brother for milk from a lioness and afterwards a wonderful bird. On his way to fulfilling their requests, Elijah the prophet helped him with advice (the lioness sleeps when her eyes are wide open; it is necessary to go against the wind without turning your head back). The brother succeeded in the tasks and the king heard of the bird's singing. From a conversation with the fisherman the identity of the children becomes clear to him. He punishes the treacherous sisters and brings back his children and his wife to him.

Once again the midwife substituted the children for a puppy and a kitten. The ending was much the same with the return of the children and punishment of the treacherous sisters.

Over and over again we find the occurrence of substituted puppies in these stories, with an occasional kitten and camel. But what is the symbolism of puppies or other non-human substitutions? According to Howard Schwartz:

"The most worthy thing for a woman to do was to give birth to healthy, human children. Children of another species were the most degrading. The older sisters did not fulfill their promises and the younger one did. Hence, the sisters brought about the worst treachery they could in taking away the human children and substituting puppies."¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Schwartz, Howard, living in St. Louis, Missouri and affiliated with my synagogue, via a telephone conversation November 2001

But why did the midwives engage in the ruse and bribery in the first place? Maybe they were offered more money from the king's two wives then they had ever seen before. Maybe they were threatened by the wives. Maybe they were tricked. Maybe they forgot Shiphrah and Puah and their mandate from God; and bowed to whatever political power the wives had. Whatever their reasons, they did ultimately realize their mistakes. They did ultimately feel their guilt and in most cases, confessed. In most cases, they did ultimately remember they were to act as messengers of God.

Also interesting is the story being put right with the assistance of an old man and a bird. Symbolically, the old man must be God. The midwives are in charge of the deliveries, but they have limits. Always they are under the rule and guidance of the heavens. The birds come from the skies/heavens with the Truth. In the end, God does and will step in to make the situation as it was intended.

The next story is from Yemen; recorded by Sarah Basri and told by Shoshanah Froy.

AT-516B	אהבת שכי אחים	
אלב' 65	עברית	6713
AT 516*E		(פית)
ביסן		מנחם פריד

אם השולטן והמשרתם נדעו ללדת לשולטן בנות יום. המשרתת מתה בלדתה, המילדת בדחמיה החליטה את הילדים. לפני מותה נתלה לאם סימן לזיכור חבן האמית' כמחשבת שוטה בנה האמיתי יאמר לה להחבסות והשני יעבור. שמה רעל במזון חבן האמית', החולו בכל ומה. ביש מהרסון והביע לארץ אחת, שם עבר כמשרת באזוריה. אלף סוסה וחכב ליער מוצר, שם מוצר-אמית' ונערה יפה שאביה עד. בחשפכה הכחור טאלה הנטרה את אביה ליער. אמר להחגור עליה. השיבו בנות ארבו בעלה 7 המזילות, הנמצאה במגירה המניח' בחדר. עשה כן במחור, במחור בארץ בלילה וזעק בא. ברו-קרב הדג, שרדו דעור עיניו. נעשה במחור לע' ים. הקלן שלה חיללים להביא לעמית, וזרעה. ברוח שלבה על המדגום, הוא החלק וחיילי הכלל הדגום. אהובתו נביע לכיב השולטן במבועה, התנהבה במשוגעה. בן-השולטן יצא לחפש את אחיו. הביע לאהובת אחיו השלואה במשוגעה, קיבל מידה פתוחה למשוגעה. לארמון. מוצר שם את גופה אחיו ובחדר משביעי בילה סי-מחית. החיה את אחיו, באו לארמון חסל, אחרי שחגגו ברוח שלושתם. שם בן-השולטן מוצר ברוח אחיו, ודג את אמו. שלושתם שחקו, החזירו לאמסון את אביהם ואח' בן-השולטן נשא ישה.

"Two Brothers' Love"¹¹¹

The wife of the Sultan and the maid went to have a baby on the same day. The maid died in birth and the midwife with her mercies gave the child to the Sultan's wife. Before her death she gave a sign to the mother for the identity of the true son. When she sits naked her true son will tell her to cover herself and the second will pass. She put poison in the food of the second son. His cat ate it and died. He ran away from the palace and reached another country where he worked as a servant in a stable. He trained a female horse and rode to a strange forest where he found a palace and a beautiful young lady whose father was a demon. At his persuasion the young lady asked her father, how it was possible to overcome him (a giant). He replied: "With a hit of his sword with the seven bells which is located in the inside drawer of his room. The young lad did so and while he was holding the sword, she rang and the giant came. In a dual he killed him (the giant), burned him and spread his ashes. The young man became a ruler. Two times the king sent soldiers to bring him and he killed them. They spread Halva on the stairs, he slid and the king's soldiers killed him. His beloved one reached the house of the Sultan as a captive, and behaved like a crazy woman. The Sultan's son went to look for his brother. He reached his brother's lover who was imprisoned as a crazy woman and received from her hand keys to their palace. He there discovered his brother's body and in the seventh room discovered revival waters. He brought his brother back to life. They came to the king's palace and after they killed him, the three of them ran away. The Sultan's son asked why his brother ran away and he killed his mother. The three of them were her hand keys to their palace. He there discovered his brother's body and in the seventh room discovered revival waters. He brought his brother back to life. They came to the king's palace and after they killed him, the three of them ran away. The Sultan's son asked why his brother ran away and he killed his mother. The three of them were happy. They returned their father to the palace and afterwards the Sultan's son married a wife.

¹¹¹ IFA 6713. See also Appendix E.

This story is from Israel; recorded by Eti Zimran and told by Gamila Levi.

מס' סיד' 6592 שם חסידות . המילדת הפוסעת ותקון נשמתו של הרב .

כנסת פ"ד . א. ת. זימרון (א-ט) . זכרית . יונאי 65 .

מס' נפילת נפש . בן חפז (חא"צ) . ספר' א"י . בחאריר .

מצות חסידות: למשפחה אחת רק בנים למכנתה רק בנות. בשאם הבנות יולדת שוב
 בת זאם הבנים שוב בן מתליפה המילדת את התזוקות. כשבתבגרים רוצה הבן
 שגדל אצל האם הראשונה להתחתן עם הבת שגדלה אצל האם השנייה. הרב
 מכין את הקדושין אבל כל פעם נופל ת לו הכוס מן היד. כהלום מתגלה לו
 שאם עומד להתחתן עם אחותו. המילדת טכניקתיים מזה, מודה לרב בחלום
 במעשיה ומגלה לו שהיא בעברה על ידי כך שהיא מפרסרת זה 12 שנה בין
 השניים והארץ מוקטת מקון בגלל החטא שהיא. השמש מוכר את ספור נשמת
 המילדת בשנה של בית הקברות, בקוטבתוואם של הנשמות. החתן והכלה סולחים
 לה בנשמת המילדת מוצאת את מנוחתה. (א"ש)

לוי גמילה

"The Criminal Midwife and the Mending of the Rabbi's Soul"¹¹²

A family has only sons and its neighbor only daughters. When the daughter's mother gives birth again to a daughter and the mother of the sons gives birth again to a son, the midwife switches the babies. When they grow up, the son who grew up at the first mother's wants to marry the daughter who grew up at the second mother's. The Rabbi prepares the Kiddushin, but each time the glass falls from his hand. In a dream it is revealed that a brother is about to marry his sister. The midwife who meanwhile died admits to the Rabbi in a dream of her deeds, and reveals to him that she was punished by having to hover for twelve years between heaven and earth asking for tikkun for the sin she has committed. The Shamash hears the story of the midwife's soul in the corner of a cemetery, a soul's hiding place. The groom and the bride forgive her and the soul of the midwife finds its rest.

Once again we see the midwife using her position to switch babies. These stories come to tell us of the importance and the respect for the word of the midwife.

¹¹² IFA#6592-See also Appendix E

In the first story we find a midwife assisting in the delivery of two women. One was a Sultan's wife and the other a maid. The maid died and the midwife took pity on the maid's child and gave him to the Sultan's wife, with a secret message for the wife so she might eventually tell which was her true son. It tells us again of the midwife's unique knowledge of the possibility of multiple births. No one questioned her declaring the Sultan's wife had given birth to two children. She and she alone, could make this switch. We are also given further example of the midwife caring for the babies alive. The midwife not only delivered the maid's child successfully, but she also arranged for him to be considered the son of the Sultan. Though creating a false situation, she cared for the babe even after he was safely born.

The second story is about the midwife switching the babies of two families. One family had no daughters and another had no sons. The midwife switched the newborns to give each family what they did not have. Eventually, the midwife died and admitted what she did to a Rabbi, in a dream.

There are several important messages embedded in this story. The midwife, though with good intention, switches two babies. And then she eventually dies. And her falsehood creates a larger problem: the betrothal of a brother and sister. The Rabbi tries to bless the union as holy, but the cup always falls from his hand. This could symbolize the midwife "dropping the ball," as we say in more modern times. It could also symbolize the wedding glass breaking before the wedding, so there would be no wedding. It could also be a message from God that this was not a holy union. It could also be a message from the midwife, trying to make right what she originally made wrong. As her punishment

the midwife hovers for twelve years between heaven and earth, unable to rest because of her deception and its subsequent results. This is her punishment from God for changing the order God had created.

Finally, the midwife, with the verb **נחן** is both admitting and thanking. She admits her wrong to the Rabbi, in a dream. And the same breath thanks the Rabbi for the release admission brings. The groom and bride, the two sides of God forgive her, and her soul is granted rest. She finally finds her just reward in setting her mistake to the right.

A theme through all of these stories of substituted babies is the midwives' abilities and opportunities. They and they alone could have brought about these situations. Their motives were probably varied. And in most cases they were sorry they had abused their powers. They recognized their limits. They tried to make it right and they paid for their mistakes.

These are stories written about women and for the most part written and told by women. They are women's voices telling women's stories. We are indeed hearing the voices of women from the room next door, in these stories.

The following story illustrates further the healing of the midwife. Here we find the healing "team" of a Jewish midwife and an Arab woman. They join to bring the news of safety to the Jews during the German occupation of Tunisia.

The following story is from Morocco; written by Pinchas Uzan and told by Yachov Lasri.

11775
 תלמה - פנחס אדון - תלמה - פנחס אדון
 1978 עכרית יעקב לסרי
 מאדוק זכרון

בימי מלחמת העולם השנייה, כשכבשו הגרמנים את טוניסיה,
 חלמה אשה ערבית כי ר' פנחס אדון חזר לה כי לא א
 יאונה כל רע ליהודים, וכי עליה להודיע זאת ליהודים.
 בני משפחתה לערבים לה, ואינם מאמינים בהלומה. והנה חלמה שנית,
 את אדום הדברים ובנוסף לכך, הדעה, שאם לא תספר את דבריה
 ליהודים תחזק כלייל. ובעוד היא מספרת בגומל שומע, רבץ אפילו
 היסודיה, שלה ספרה הערבית את חלומה הבריאה אותה כלייל.
 לכן, הערבים מאמינים דברים כיום את עבר הקודש. (ט.א.)

"The Arab's Dream"¹¹³

During World War II when the Germans conquered Tunisia an Arab woman dreamed that R. Pincus Usan was telling her that no harm will come to the Jews and she has to inform them about it. The members of her family are ridiculing her and do not believe her dream. And here she dreamed again the same things and in addition was warned that if she does not tell her words to the Jews she will be completely paralyzed. And as she was telling this, her body was paralyzed. And only the Jewish midwife, to whom the Arab told her dream, cured her completely. Therefore, the Arabs believe and respect today the grave of the saint (R. Usan).

An Arab woman had a dream that no harm will come to the Jews and she must tell them. Her family ridiculed her and did not believe her dream. She was also warned that if she did not tell the Jews, she would be paralyzed. And as she was telling this dream her body was indeed paralyzed. Only the Jewish midwife could cure her completely. Here, we find the midwife not only assisting in giving birth, but also in saving the people by bringing them hope.

¹¹³ IFA # 11775-See also Appendix E

There are several interesting aspects of this story. We begin with an Arab bringing a message of safety to the Jews, in the face of German occupation. In this instance, German occupation was so horrific that even an Arab, an old enemy, came to assist. An Arab woman and a Jewish midwife are teamed to bring a hope of safety. The midwife listened and believed the Arab woman and helped her to heal. Paralysis brings a cessation of life, as the person knows it. The midwife received the gift of a message from the heavens and she gave in return a healing of the Arab woman's life.

In the novel *The River Midnight*, we find further illustration of the midwives' skills in not only delivering babies, but also in the treatment of many disease and injuries.

"Misha, the midwife, knows a lot about plants, but she's always learning more. She tells me all the time that no one knows everything. You always have to watch and learn. You have to change your mind, she told me. One time using this herb could work, but with another person it might not."¹¹⁴

"It's a common plant, one of the first ones that Misha told me about. It grows in wet fields like near the river. As a poultice, it's very good for wounds and bites, and for someone who's spitting up blood, you make an infusion of it for her to drink."¹¹⁵

"The midwife was walking in the woods looking for larch trees. Five drops of larch resin mixed with honey would dry up a blood-spotted diarrhea."¹¹⁶

"The boy groaned as he was dropped onto the couch. I'll see what Misha can give you for that cut."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ *The River Midnight*, p. 99.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.135.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.225.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 289.

"What truth? That we talk together, drinking your bitter tea? Or that I sit while you make up your mysterious infusions and powders? Or," his voice softened, "that I never tire of watching you? Every day, something different. The light, the smell of the river, the table covered with herbs, your hands moving. It's like a holy text, like a deep commentary; I find something new in it all the time, I never know it all."¹¹⁸

This was the midwife. She was like a holy text, a deep commentary. She was the healer for her community and her village.

Two additional stories tell us of duties of the midwife that exceeded "merely" assisting with the birth of the child. In the story "A Yemenite Midwife's Duty"¹¹⁹ we find the drama of a mother's first birth. The midwife successfully delivered the baby, attended to him, and uttered prayers to ward off the evil eye.¹²⁰ As was the rule, the father was away from the birth in an upstairs room. Due to the layout of the house, it was necessary for him to pass through the room where the child was born, "the territory of women," to go to the synagogue to offer prayers for his new son. As he could not walk through this room, the midwife picked him up and carried him over the puddle of blood and out the door. She said, 'How I could have done that I still don't know for he was much heavier than I.'¹²¹

This story helps to further emphasize the wide range of situations continuously confronting the midwife. She had to be skilled in the delivery of the babies, consider the

¹¹⁸ *The River Midnight*, p. 310.

¹¹⁹ *The Jewish Women's Tales*, p. 17-18. See also Appendix F

¹²⁰ Cardin, Nina Beth Rabbi, *Out of the Depths I Call to You-A Book of Prayers for the Married Jewish Woman* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc. 1992) Included in this book are a number of prayers which pray for the different stages of gestation, delivery, and birth.

safety from evil eyes, and sometimes even carry the father so he could get to the synagogue to ask for God's blessing for his child.

The midwife made it possible for the father to carry out his religious duties. It could be said the midwives made it possible for men to carry out the mitzvah of being fruitful and multiply, by delivering healthy Hebrew babies.

The second story is called "A Sixteenth-Century Castilian Midwife and her Encounter with the Inquisition," from the book *The Expulsion of the Jews 1492 and After*.¹²²

This story involves a Jewish, conversa, midwife who safely delivered a Christian child. She was present at the church baptism and was asked if the child was baptized in the father's home by the pouring of water. The midwife replied that she was. Certain conclusions can be drawn. For example, it must have been acceptable for a midwife to pour water on a newborn prior to the church baptism. Further, it must have been acceptable for the midwife to do so, in lieu of the priest. Now we learn, that a midwife can even baptize a Christian child into their community.

It was important for the midwives to be sanctioned to baptize a baby unlikely to survive the pre-christening period.¹²³ The midwife performed the baptism to safeguard the soul of the baby when there was no priest present to perform this rite. She did it, because it was her duty to preserve her patients, above all else.

¹²¹ *The Jewish Women's Tales*, p.18.

This raises one final point concerning a conversa baptizing the baby of another conversa. Or only saying she did. Here again we are reminded of Shiphrah and Puah and saving Hebrew babies. Here again a Spanish "Pharaoh" is told not to worry about Hebrew babies, they have been baptized. But maybe they weren't and they remained part of the Jewish covenant with God.

Finally, we look at two stories about midwives for the soul. The first of these stories is called "The Angel of Conception" from the book entitled *Gabriels's Palace*¹²⁴ and the second called "The Midwife for Souls" from a book entitled *The Dream Assembly*.¹²⁵

The first story tells us of the angel Lailah, the angel of conception. Lailah sought souls from the Garden of Eden and sent them to enter the seed in the womb. Lailah nurtured and watched over the growing seed. Through her the unborn soul saw from one end of the world to the other.¹²⁶ Lailah was a guardian angel who watched over all souls.

Lailah is clearly feminine and has the responsibility of assisting at birth and for guiding the soul from one world to the next.¹²⁷ As in גלגל Lailah helped "roll the soul from one world to another."

In the second story, "A Midwife for Souls" we find a young girl whose destiny is to

¹²² Waddington, Raymond and Arthur H. Williamson, *The Expulsion of the Jews 1492 and After* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1994) See also Appendix F

¹²³ *The Expulsion of the Jews 1492 and After*. p. 58-59

¹²⁴ Schwartz, Howard, *Gabriels's Palace* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) See also Appendix H

¹²⁵ Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman Rabbi, Collected and Retold by Howard Schwartz, *The Dream Assembly* (Amity, NY: Amity House Inc., 1988. See also Appendix H

¹²⁶ *The Dream Assembly*. p.57

¹²⁷ Ibid. p.286.

become a midwife for babies born of the heart.

“And so it was that in the end she did indeed become such a midwife for souls, for she helped all those whom she encountered in bringing forth the child in their heart that was waiting to be born.¹²⁸

In modernity, where there are alternatives to midwives in delivery, I have had the joy of participating, as an acupuncturist and a friend, in a birth. There was a midwife present who delivered Max, with the assistance of Acupuncture. And there were the midwives of the heart, who helped roll Max's soul into this world. We helped bring forth Max and the child in each of our hearts waiting to be born.

Many times we have witnessed the obstetric skills of the midwife. And we have also witnessed the heart of these healing women. They followed strangers into the night. They followed them to strange places, sometimes with demons. And they cared for their laboring mothers and then for their newborn babes. They helped save the souls of the babes by carrying the fathers over the birthing area so they could pray for the new baby. They healed the community in many ways. They even healed to the point of healing hearts and bringing forth the child within. The midwife stepped into one of the most frightening times of life and brought order. They brought forth and sustained the life of the community. This was the domain of the midwife and it was a very serious matter.

CHAPTER FIVE LESSON PLAN

This study was indeed a labor of love, as I am both a woman and a healer. At the completion of the research and the day before I left New York, I said to my advisor, Rabbi Nancy Wiener, "I learned a lot; both about the topic and how to find my way through our many texts." She smiled, just a bit. And I responded, "But I guess that was the point."

I think the main point that is important to teach is we, as Jewish professionals, must know there were and are women's voices. It is important that we know that women saved the Jewish people, not only men. I chose midwives as representatives of these women's voices. Through these voices we can know what these women did and how they did it. It is important that we know that there was medicine learned and practiced and in the case of labor and delivery, practiced entirely by women.

I was reminded of this main point recently in a situation where a woman volunteered to facilitate a portion of a program. Through several miscommunications, she became disillusioned and upset with the whole situation and decided not to participate. Eventually, and thankfully, another conversation occurred through which she revealed her motivation for wishing to be a facilitator. In this subsequent conversation she found her voice, expressed her needs, and was finally heard. Her participation was reclaimed,

¹²⁸ "A Midwife for Souls," p. 139.

she was an insightful facilitator, and everyone enjoyed her input and grew from the experience.

Additionally, I feel it is important that we know how to read the text, not just for what it says, but also for the underlying messages. It is important that we become intimate with the texts, so the texts can become intimate in our lives. We need to consider why the Rabbis wrote what they did. What were they telling us just by the fact that they discussed a topic at all? It is important that we learn to listen for underlying voices as we read and as we listen to other people. And it is important that we find and listen to our own voices and our own power and worth.

The text themselves, this paper and the situation above are illustrations of the power of voices. We must hear all voices. We must speak all voices. I researched, wrote and will teach this material to bring sound to a group of women's voices, so to know them. Hopefully, we can then learn to hear the joys and pain of others, as we find our way through the paths of our congregations.

GOALS:

1. To hear and listen to the voices of women through the midwives.
2. To bring to life these women's voices and deeds, from the texts, but also from my perspective and my heart.
3. To realize the amount of medicine these women healers practiced in their communities.
4. To realize the standing these women had in their communities with the general population, with the ruling rabbis, and the laws that governed them.
5. To show, through these women, that all voices can have power and gain respect, even when the circumstances are less than optimum.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Learners will be able to realize a fuller understanding of the lives and duties of the midwives found in Torah.
2. Learners will be able to realize the breadth of the laws governing pregnancy, delivery, birth, abortion, and the care of the child following delivery: the laws governing the duties of the midwives.
3. Learners will be able to understand part of what constituted a practice of midwifery in the days of Torah, the Rabbinic Period, and Folktales.
4. Learners will be able to read and discuss Biblical, Rabbinic, and folkloric text in chavrutah.
5. Learners will be able to find their own powerful voices and to listen to what the voices of others are saying.

PEDAGOGIC REASONING AND ANALYSIS

- The Big Idea for this unit is to hear women's voices. I chose women who were midwives to be the voices we will hear. Through the study of various texts the importance and deeds of these women will be brought from obscurity to the light. As we read the Bible and other texts, we will search for and listen to the less heard voices. As we study these different texts additional skills in reading, interpreting, and discussing will evolve. In listening to the strong voices of the midwives, learners will hopefully find their own strong voices.

PARTICIPANTS

- The target audience for teaching this lesson is the Hebrew Union College community consisting of highly educated faculty, students, and staff.
- Consideration must be given to the amount and depth of Jewish educational background, knowledge of Hebrew, familiarity with the study of Talmud, Mishnah, and Midrash, and the willingness to probe Biblical, Rabbinic, and Folkloric text. My hope that with this study, participants will grow in their abilities to hear the more obscure messages from texts.
- I want the participants to know there were women who made Jewish history. There were many women who saved the Jewish people.

- I want the participants to experience the lives of these women who brought healing and subsequent generations to their communities.
- I want the participants to feel the challenges and victories of these women as they fulfilled their duties of being midwives.
- I want the participants to understand that it is vital for them to listen to all their congregants.
- I want the participants to realize their own voices as they go into their congregations and relationships with many people.

NOTES TO THE TEACHER

- Essential to adult text study is creating an environment that is comfortable and enjoyable: a comfort zone. There will be learners who are generally, unfamiliar with text study and uneasy with the experience. They must have an environment in which they feel valued and welcomed. Small group learning can be valuable. Each learner can then have a greater chance of speaking and being heard.
- Additionally, adults must find personal meaning in the texts. They must see how the information can be used in their lives. In Chiropractic seminars, predominately held on weekends, this is defined as "You can use this in your office on Monday morning." Text study must have information that can be used on Monday morning.
- This study can be used on Monday morning, because for text to be relevant to everyday lives, it must first be read and heard. This study involves text and commentaries. It involves the paths through text to capture a view of the lives and challenges of midwives. It involves reading text, both for the obvious messages and the more obscure ones.
- This study can be used on Monday morning as learners struggle to hear and understand their own voices. It can be used on Monday morning as learners struggle to give relevance and power to their own voices.
- This study can be used on Monday morning as learners live in relationship in their lives. Martin Buber was correct in stating that we must strive for I/Thou relationships. I/Thou relationships are ones in which we listen to and hear one another. These are relationships in which there is vulnerability and learning. This

requires listening and hearing voices. This requires hearing voices even "from the room next door." As we interact with people during our days, we must remember each has a voice that counts and to listen. This lends itself particularly well to the Hebrew Union College community as we all interact in our related work environments and as students, faculty, and staff. It lends itself well to this community of religious and spiritual advisors. It also is an important message for adult learners as they interact in their own work places and with their family and friends.

- We are a community of Jewish learners. In order to follow in the tradition of Jacob, the instructor must encourage learners to wrestle with multiple meanings. In Genesis 32:25-29, Jacob wrestles with beings divine and human. And he is given the name Israel, to signify his struggle. Learners must be encouraged to bring even contradictory interpretations and perspectives to the table.
- Further, it is of equal importance for the instructor to model all she/he aspires to create. The instructor must demonstrate her/his own comfort and enjoyment of the material. He/she must also relay instances in his/her own life where the text has been applicable and had personal meaning. Torah and other texts must be shown to have a role in their lives. The instructor must be willing to also wrestle with and acknowledge many divergent perspectives and interpretations, as the class unfolds. And finally, the instructor must be willing to be part of the community he/she is creating; a community of learners.
- The instructor must convey a feeling of caring, concern, commitment, knowledge, and vulnerability. This must permeate the environment of the classroom of adults. Then there can be openness and a willingness to be vulnerable on the learners' part.

This is about showing up. You have to show up with all of your foibles to allow your learners to show up with theirs. You have to show up with a willingness to explore and learn to allow your learners to explore with you.

LESSON PLAN AS FULFILLMENT OF M.A.R.E. SENIOR PRACTICUM
(A one and a half-hour program with 15 minutes for question and answer)

- Begin with welcome and introduction of self
- Introduction of topic and how I chose it
 - Today you are going to hear voices you may not have heard before.
 - Why is that important?
 - It is important to find all voices in text
 - It is important to find marginalized voices
 - It is important to find our own voices
 - It is important to hear the voices of our congregants
 - Story of facilitator
 - I began this journey with a story from my rabbi, Rabbi Susan Talve and continued with a woman in an acupuncture seminar
- Goals for this session:
 - To more fully understand the history of midwives through Torah, the laws enacted to guide the midwives and how they impacted especially difficult and even disastrous births, and to view the midwives everyday lives as we read folktales.
 - To study Torah, Rabbinic text, and folktale.
 - To portray the relevance of this material to relationships in everyday lives.

- Torah portions
 - Exodus 1:15-21: Shiphrah and Puah
 - Meanings of their names
 - Straightening limbs
 - Comforting the babies and mothers
 - Job descriptions
 - Ways and reasons for defying Pharaoh
 - More in awe of the one true God
 - Hebrew women so hardy they didn't need midwives
 - God rewarded them
 - Generations of priests and kings
 - The same generations they helped save
 - Genesis 35:16-18: Rachel and the birth of Benjamin
 - Unnamed
 - Delivered one of the twelve tribes
 - Compassionate in Rachel's death
 - Genesis 38:27-30: Tamar and birth of twins
 - Difficulty of a multiple birth
 - Named the firstborn
 - Delivered Perez, the continuation of the messianic line
- Break-out into small groups

- Discussion:
 - As in the example of the woman who facilitated the program,
 - What are some specific examples in your congregation of hearing valued women's voices?
- Share one or two stories with the larger group.
- Rabbinic writings
 - The need for and importance of midwives: Midrash Rabbah, Shemoth 2:4, 3:4, Berakoth 54b
 - Conversation between God and Moses
 - Equated with a sick person, bride and groom, and a scholar
 - Witnesses: Midrash Rabbah, Bereshit 85:13, Kiddushin 73b, 74a
 - Declaring firstborn
 - Declaring status in the society
 - In an argument with one rabbi
 - Shabbat: Rosh Hashana 23b, Eruvin 44b, Shabbath 128b, Midrash Rabbah, Bereshit 80:9
 - Traveling
 - Returning to their original places
 - Carrying
 - Oil
 - Even the neighbor
 - Tying
 - Lighting fire

- Abortion: Mishnah Oholoth 7:6, Sanhedrin 84b, *Modern Medicine and Jewish Law, Medicine in the Mishnah Torah of Maimonides, Murder and the Preservation of Life, Reform Responsa, Jewish Bioethics*
 - Limb from limb
 - Rules of pursuing
 - Psychological hazard
 - Mother's life is first consideration
 - But cannot trade a life for a life
- What constitutes birth: Yebamoth 42a, 69b, 80a-b, *Medical Encyclopedia of Moses Maimonides, Modern Medicine and Jewish Ethics, Niddah 29a*
 - Status of the fetus
 - Forty days
 - Seventh or eighth month old fetuses
 - Surfactin at seven months
 - Arguments concerning what fetal parts indicate birth
- Break-out into small groups
- Distribute handouts of each passage to each group
 - Yebamoth 69b
 - Mishnah Oholoth 7:6
 - Niddah 29a
- Read and discuss using the following questions:
 - Imagine yourself, hundreds of years ago, involved in a labor and delivery and you are suddenly presented with the following cases. What must the midwife

do? What did the rabbis say the midwife must do?

- The mother will die if the unborn fetus is allowed to live
- By definition the fetus is considered born, but if the delivery is allowed to continue the mother will die
- The mother is one month pregnant, but the pregnancy is the result of incest
- What does the necessity of these minute by minute decisions tell us about the value of the midwives to their communities?
- How far does the scope of practice extend for these women?
- How far were their voices heard?
- What would have happened if there had been no midwives?
- Report back to large group of findings
- Folktales
 - Break-out into different small groups
 - Distribute handouts of each folktale to each group
 - The Hair in the Milk from *Lilith's Cave* by Howard Schwartz
 - The Criminal Midwife and the Rabbi from IFA
 - The Midwife's Reward from *The Book of Jewish Women's Tales* retold by Barbara Rush
 - Watch Night from *The Shtetl Book* by Diane K. and David G. Roskies
 - The Midwife and the King's Sons from IFA

- Discussion will involve the following questions:
 - What does this story tell us of the duties of the midwife and how are these beyond the capabilities of other people?
 - What is the symbolism of the other characters and objects in the story?
 - How does the midwife influence the community and its leaders?
 - Why was it important to have these women as healers?
- Concluding discussion and comments
 - We have been on a journey to hear women's voices. We have been on a journey to hear voices that often were not heard. Through our study we have learned of the broad, influential scope of these women healers.
 - I think the main point to teach, as Jewish professionals, is that we must know there were and are women's voices. It is important that we know that women also saved the Jewish people.
 - In my work places, I teach adult CAJE classes, administer and teach conversion and interfaith programs and classes in my synagogue, and I treat my patients.
 - With this work I hear many voices, many sacred voices. I hear the voices of potential Jews-by-choice filled with awe and excitement, mixed with nervousness and fears. I hear adult learners' joys at learning parts of their heritage they never knew and can now claim. I hear interfaith couples as they struggle with respecting both religions. And I hear patients' fears from their pain and disease; and relief and gratitude as they heal.

- I think the last challenge from all the voices in our tradition must be: What would our congregations be like if we only listened to the loudest voices? What would our congregations be like if we didn't hear the voices "in the room next door?" Would we have congregations worth having?
- The text themselves tell us of the importance of all voices. We must hear all voices. We must speak all voices. I researched and wrote this paper to bring sound to a group of women's voices, so to know them. Hopefully, we can then learn to hear the joys and pain of many others, as we find our way through the paths of our congregations.
- Question and answer period.

ASSESSMENT

- Learners will show they have attained the learning objectives by their ability, during discussion, to assimilate the information provided and create thoughtful and succinct answers to the suggested questions.
- Further, important to assessment, will be the addition of discussion concerning why it was important that there be midwives. Why it was important there be valued women's voices?
- Were the learners involved, were they passionate, were there ah-ha moments where they "got" a point they had not realized before.
- During discussion did the learners communicate specific examples of how this could translate into their everyday lives?
- Evaluation of my own instruction always comes first from my own feelings. I ask the questions of myself: "Was I present?" "Did I show up?" "Did I reach my own level of passion for the subject and for teaching?"
- Was there adequate information to fill the allotted time?
- Did the activities achieve the desired goals of learning?
- Integral to the process of assessment is the keeping of a professional diary, in which the answers to the questions above and all other feelings and observations can be noted. This is very helpful at the time of writing and also helpful during later readings.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

We have been on quite a journey this year, the voices and I. We started with my Rabbi stating she can be so passionately part of Judaism, because she hears the voices of the women in the room next door. And the journey continued with the woman in the Acupuncture seminar who asked what the ancient Israelites did in the way of healing. And indeed, I was right when I told her I had a feeling I was going to find out.

I found in Torah the midwives Shiphrah and Puah and the Egyptian history that set the stage for their courage. Was this Pharaoh just inherently cruel or did Egyptian history dictate his actions? History does not come to tell us. It seems he and the Egyptians would have fared better if they had listened to the voices of the Hebrews, instead of making life so much worse for them. But they didn't listen and the stage was set for the midwives to save the male Hebrew babies and subsequent generations.

Also, unknown is whether Shiphrah and Puah were really the midwives' names or were they Yocheved and Miriam or Elisheva; or were they job descriptions. In one way, I would rather they were their names. There are so few women actually named in the Bible. But the commentaries seem to support the idea that these were job descriptions. As a Chiropractor, I loved one of the meanings of Shiphrah: straightening limbs. Straightening limbs is a wonderful way of caring for the babies and saving them alive. However, the important concept is not their names, but their actions. And their actions saved the babies alive.

In addition, these midwives honored God to the extent of endangering their own lives. They defied the ruling king, who could have ordered them killed. Clearly, this king had shown no hesitation in murdering babies. And yet, they still defied him. They defied him because they believed and loved God more. When called to Pharaoh they said the Hebrew women were so healthy they gave birth before they could get there. Hence, they couldn't secretly kill their babies. And Pharaoh was not pleased.

And God was very pleased. I like the image that the midwives were rewarded with the gifts of generations of priests and kings, for they had saved those same generations. They had made possible the honoring of the mitzvah to be fruitful and multiply.

We learned further in Genesis of Tamar and her twins. We saw the midwife had the skill to deal with the labor and delivery of a multiple birth. This is difficult under modern conditions. It must have been staggering under ancient conditions. And yet, they were delivered safely and firstborn customs were noted and respected.

Also, in Genesis we learned of the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel. The midwife safely brought Benjamin into the world and compassionately helped Rachel leave it. And Rachel left, knowing her child was a boy and that there was a good midwife and a good person to straighten his limbs.

Then our journey took us to rabbinic times and writings. Here we learned further of the value accorded the midwives. They were valued with the care of a sick person, a bride

and groom, and a scholar. Indeed, they were valued to once again receive compensation. This started with Shiphrah and Puah being well rewarded by God. In rabbinic times as well, midwives continued to be rewarded by their communities.

I was intrigued with the laws and rules concerning what constituted birth. The rabbinic arguments were insightful and indicated their struggle with a difficult issue. This difficult issue persists to modern times. There were many thoughts as to what defined birth and not many agreements. There were even more arguments if the baby was born in an abnormal manner or condition. There were considerations given about which life had priority: the mother or the fetus. If the fetus was putting the mother's life in jeopardy, it was the midwife's duty to abort the fetus. All of these considerations and decisions had to be in the midwife's mind as she assisted during labor and delivery. Birth, in its most normal manner, is a vulnerable time of life. Birth, when something is clearly going wrong, is chaotic and extremely frightening. When it goes wrong, it goes wrong very quickly. At these times, it was the midwife who made life and death decisions based on obstetric knowledge and knowledge of Jewish law. They made decisions to save the child or abort it. They made decisions as to which was firstborn. They made decisions that could change a family and a community profoundly. And their voices were heard. Their word was honored.

I found they were so needed in the communities that Shabbat laws were suspended or amended for them. They could travel, kindle fire, carry, tie and cut umbilical cords, wash babies, and, when finished, return to their original places. If the midwife needed

something even a neighbor woman was relieved of these Shabbat laws. What the midwife needed superceded Shabbat. The duties of birthing the next generation came first.

In Tractate Sotah, the midwives were compared to angels. And they were women, in a time when only men were held to be holy. And their voices were heard.

Finally, I turned to folktales to hear of the daily lives of these women. Here I found midwives going out sometimes in the middle of the night, sometimes in dangerous times, and sometimes following men they did not know. And they did all this because excited and frightened people desperately needed them.

I found midwives engaged in activities ancillary to childbirth. They created and hung amulets to keep evil spirits away. They dealt with demons and prevailed. They delivered children who were destined to be saintly. They made a way for a father to go to the synagogue to pray for his newborn son. They were the people in control. So powerful were they that even the Angel of Death was afraid of the midwife. Very few confronted the Angel of Death and prevailed, but midwives did. They were like a holy text, a deep commentary.

We also learned in several stories of the midwives' influence, even when depicted in less than a positive manner. They were said to substitute human children for puppies or other non-human species. They also had the power and access to switch one baby with

another. Midwives were even capable of speaking from beyond death to rectify past mistakes and so to find rest.

Through our texts we heard and listened to their voices and saw their images in our mind's eye. We learned of their challenges and their triumphs. These women as healers became real and as human as us all.

I loved reading and learning about what these courageous, skilled, and knowledgeable women did. I loved hearing different voices and stories that are usually not so readily available. I loved getting to know them and with that knowledge my practice of medicine has grown and feels more sacred than ever before. I will love teaching others about these remarkable women, finding my own voice along side theirs, and encouraging others to find theirs.

As we have seen, women of long ago were not generally valued. Yet, midwives were. As we have evolved into modernity more voices are striving to achieve value. We do hear, to some extent, women's voices, African American voices, Native American voices, children's voices, and on and on. We hear voices that are less afraid to honor their own light and skills. But we have much yet to hear. We must continue to evolve and to hear everyone's voices in the rooms next door. And maybe as we evolve even further, we'll hear everyone's voices in the main room.

APPENDIX A

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ISRAEL FOLKTALE ARCHIVES (IFA)

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The Israel Folktale Archives (IFA) were established in 1955 by Prof. Dov Noy, under the auspices and framework of the Museum of Ethnology and Folklore of the Haifa Municipality. As from 1983 the Archive is situated in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Haifa and Prof. Aliza Shenhar was its academic head. Since the beginning of 1995 Dr. Haya Bar-Itzhak is IFA's academic head.

IFA, which is the only archive of its kind in Israel, serves as a center for knowledge and information and is open to researchers, students and the general public, concerned with the cultural heritage of the ethnic communities in Israel. By the Beginning of 2001, 21.800 folktales are preserved therein, which were narrated by story-tellers from various communities living in Israel – both Jewish (stemming from North Africa, Asia, Europe and America) and non-Jewish (Arabs: Moslems, Christians, Beduins, Druzes etc.).

Ethnic Division

The Following list includes only the 13 communities represented in IFA at the beginning of 2001, by more than 2% of the total material (21.800 folktales):

1. Poland	2800	7. Israel, Sephardi	801
2. Israel, General	2400	8. Iran	801
3. Morocco	2040	9. Ukraine	762
4. Yemen	1545	10. Tunisia	691
5. Iraq	1389	11. Iraqi Kurdistan	688
6. Israel, Ashkenazi	943	12. Romania	590
		13. Afghanistan	529

With the growth of the number of stories in the archives, the concern for the preservation and protection of the material stored therein has increased. The first stage of computerization of the folktales, which was completed, answers the need for their physical preservation as most of them are written in manuscript form. The second stage should answer the scientific research requirements: speedy access and retrieval of the material, is still a goal to be attained, as lack of funds prevents us from realization of this stage.

Edna Hechal
IFA Coordinator

APPENDIX B

The Midwife's Reward



My grandmother, may she rest in peace, was a midwife. She was always ready for a knock on the door that would call her to her work, to help at the birth of a newborn child. Grandmother worked for the love of it and never asked for any reward. She was sure that her payment would be to go straight to Heaven. Since there were neither doctors nor qualified midwives in the town of Zakho at that time, my grandmother had more work than she could handle.

One day she was sitting outside her house, embroidering. She was very tired after a hard day's work. Suddenly she saw a beautiful cat creeping quietly into the house, sniffing in all the corners as if searching for food.

The Midwife's Reward

My grandmother took a liking to the cat and fed her. As she did so, she noticed that the cat was pregnant. "Ah, if only I could be this cat's midwife," Grandma said to herself.

Days passed, and one dark and stormy night my grandmother was awakened by the sounds of footsteps. There was a rap at the door. She rose quickly, dressed herself, and opened the door. There in the doorway stood a man, panting and sweating as if he had come in a great hurry. "Grandma, come with me," he said. "My wife is about to give birth, and there is no one to help her."

Grandmother listened quietly and rejoiced with delight. How lucky that such a request had come to her at this time! "Why, to bring a child into the world on such a stormy night and at such a late hour," she thought to herself, "would be like doing all the 613 commandments at once."

Now, Zakho is a small town, and Grandma strode up the main street behind the man. She could not understand why she did not hear the sound of his footsteps. Suddenly she noticed that they had gone beyond the last house in the town and were now walking in an open field.

Grandma trembled all over, knowing that no one lived there. She understood that the man leading her was none other than a *sheid*.

"Lord, have mercy on me," she muttered to herself, but she did not utter a sound. Soon they came to a bridge made of large stones and, thereafter, entered a huge cave. There Grandma heard a man's voice, "Grandmother, come in. You have reached the place."

Now Grandmother was really frightened. She glanced about; there inside the cave were *sheidim* and *sheidot*, prancing and dancing and meowing like cats.

"What dreadful company in which to find myself," Grandma thought to herself, but she did not say a word. The *sheid* with the longest horns took her aside. "If the newborn is a son," he said, "you will get everything you want, but, if it is a daughter, God forbid!"

Pale with fear, Grandma did not answer a word. She entered the room of the birth, and what did she see? The cat that had visited her a few days before was lying there.

"Dear, dear Grandmother," whispered the cat, "do not eat here or you too will be turned into a *sheid*."

My grandmother listened to the warning of the cat and did not eat anything in the cave during the whole night, even though she was offered the best and most delicious of foods and drinks. When the time for birth came, she rolled up her sleeves and set to work.

A male cat was born. What rejoicing broke out in the cave! Why, the cries of joy even reached the heavens! The chief of the *sheidim* called my grandmother to him and said, "Whatever you ask, even up to half my kingdom, I will give you."

"No, no, no!" said Grandmother, "I do not want anything. The reward for a good deed is the deed itself."

"That is impossible! You must take something! This is our custom!" warned the chief.


My grandmother was aware this was a serious matter. She looked around, and her eyes fell upon a bunch of garlic in the corner of the room. Grandma asked for a bit of the garlic, just to satisfy the chief of the *sheidim*, and before she knew it, the sleeves of her clothes were stuffed with garlic, and the *sheidim* quietly escorted her home.

Tired and discouraged, Grandma threw the garlic near her door and sank into bed.

The next morning her grandchild woke her up. "Grandma, Grandma," she called, "from where did you bring so much gold?"

Grandma looked at the door and saw that the garlic was, indeed, nothing else but pure gold. She divided the gold among her children, her grandchildren, and all of her family.

After many years Grandmother passed away. Her children and grandchildren are now scattered all over the world; my sister and I live in *Eretz Yisrael*, the Holy Land. And each of us keeps until this very day a small piece of golden garlic—to remind us of the reward of our grandmother, the midwife, and of her gift to us.



A Jewish family in Zakho⁶⁷ was renowned for its wealth, acquired, it was said, through a grandmother who was a midwife.

One night, when she returned home from a busy day of many deliveries, she felt quite exhausted.⁶⁸ As she was about to fall asleep, she saw in front of her bed a red-haired cat walking very gingerly and in an advanced stage of pregnancy. The beautiful cat captured her heart, and she instantly expressed a wish, "I wish I could act as midwife for this cat."⁶⁹

After a few minutes, having just fallen asleep, she was awakened by two men who asked her to follow them. When she asked "What for?" they replied, "A moment ago you expressed a wish — we want to fulfill it for you."

So she went out with them, and they traveled with her for a great distance in a carriage pulled by two goats, until they reached a stone bridge.⁷⁰ There she saw a great celebration, with groups of dancers dancing around a very beautiful woman who was about to give birth. They immediately seated her next to that woman and asked her to be in charge of the delivery.

While she was making preparations, she heard the female dancers chanting, "If it is a boy, we shall give her rich gifts; but if it is a girl, we shall put her to death."⁷¹ The midwife understood that they were referring to herself.⁷² Fortunately for her, the female demon gave birth to a baby boy, and the joy among the demons was great.⁷³

One thing amazed the midwife: she noticed that the clothes worn by the dancers were none other than those belonging to her own family. She recognized them well, but in order to be sure she marked them with bloodstains, so that she might check them when she returned home.⁷⁴

At the end of the celebration she asked them to take her home, and they did so, giving her as a gift a bundle of onions and garlic. Naturally, she was greatly disappointed, but she did not dare to ask any questions or request another gift instead.⁷⁵ On the way

home she threw away the garlic and the onions, one piece after another.

When she arrived home, all she had left in her hand was one onion, which she threw down on the hall floor. The next morning, when she got up from her bed and went into the hall, she was stunned to find that the onion had turned into gold. She realized then that she had made a grave error in throwing away the rest of the onions and garlic.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the single remaining onion brought this family great wealth, and they lived in abundance for many years to come.

The midwife also checked the clothes and found that they were indeed stained with blood, as she had marked them. This shows that demons do often use our clothes when we are sunk in deep sleep.

The Underwater Palace

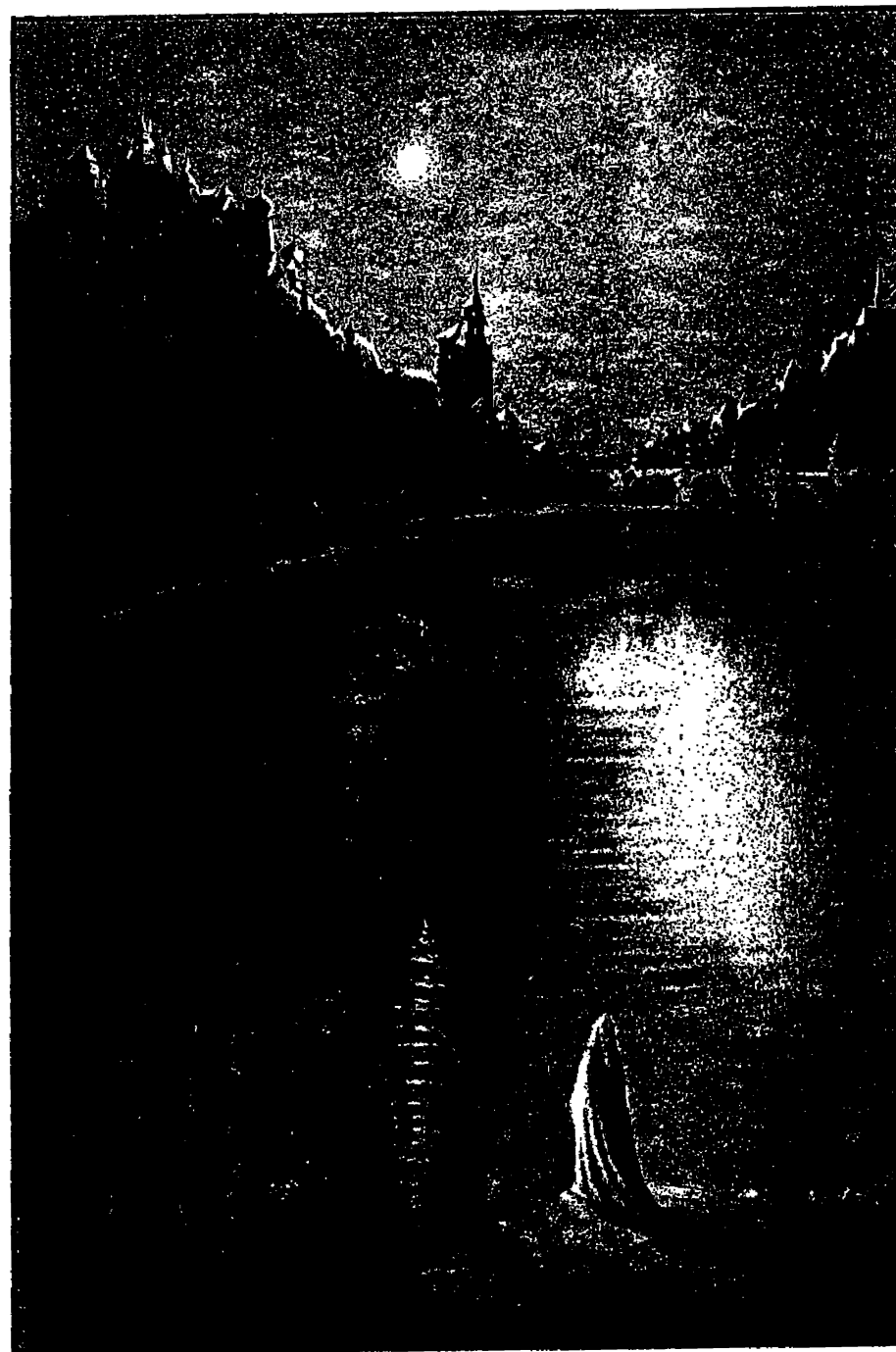


Long ago, in the city of Prague, not far from the river Moldau, there lived a wealthy merchant whose name was Kalman. He had but a single child, a daughter, whose name was Haminah. So beautiful was she that many thought she resembled a princess. Her adoring father had betrothed her to a young man who was a fine match, except that she could not bear the thought of marrying him. For if she did, she would lose forever her true love, the one who came to her from across the river every night. But no one knew of this, for she had kept it secret.

Every evening at twilight the maiden Haminah would go down to the bank of the river Moldau in Prague, unobserved by anyone. There she would wait in a ramshackle hut until it grew dark. Then she would go outside to the old dock and peer out over the river. At last the boat she was waiting for would come into view, and a young man of striking appearance would step out onto the shore. They would embrace for a long time, and before parting he would always say, "Let us leave together tonight." And as hard as it was for her to say, she would always reply, "Not yet."

Now as the time of the wedding approached, the secret lovers began to grow desperate. When only a few days remained, and Haminah had replied "Not yet" still another time, the young man rowed away in silence, and beneath the light of the full moon Haminah saw his boat stop, as if it had dropped anchor. Then the young man stood up in the boat and cried out, "If you truly love me, follow me!" and he dived into the waters and disappeared.

When Haminah did not return home that evening at the usual time, her father and her fiancé went out looking for her. They found her standing on the muddy riverbank, staring out over the waters, as if in a trance. They called out her name, and at that moment she made her decision. They saw her run into the river, where she soon vanished, carried off by the currents. Her father ran into the waters after her, but it was too late.



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Nothing was to be seen on the surface of the water except for the reflection of the moon.

In the days that followed, fishermen searched for the body of the young girl, but in vain. And every day the broken-hearted Kalman sat at home, waiting for the news that she had been found. But the river refused to surrender her body. Only when the time of mourning came to an end did Kalman resign himself to the fact that he would never see his daughter again, dead or alive. And after that he became a different man, losing all interest in his possessions. He became known for his generosity to the poor, but it gave him no pleasure, for he was walking toward the grave without offspring.

Now Kalman had a sister, whose name was Shifra. She lived in a narrow lane of Prague with her husband. Although she had no children of her own, she had brought many into the world in her role as midwife. She would often visit her brother Kalman, who seldom left home, preferring to remain in isolation with his grief.

One day when she was visiting him, her brother stood at the window and stared out at the river. He was thinking of Haminah, and he relived for the hundred thousandth time how his beloved daughter had run out into the water and had been carried off by the currents. So too did he know again the bitterness of his loss. Then he turned to his sister and said, "How long has Haminah been gone?" And she replied, "Soon it will be a year."

Just then Frau Shifra became aware of a black cat sitting on the wall outside the window. It stared at her with green eyes full of sadness and wisdom and looked as if it were trying to speak to her, to beg her for something. "Look at that cat," she said to Kalman, hoping to distract him from his grief. He looked down at the wall and at the same time the cat looked up at him, and for a long time they stared at each other. And it seemed to him that he recognized the cat from somewhere, but he couldn't remember where. Then the cat suddenly jumped down from the wall and disappeared.

During the night a sharp wind blew from the direction of the Moldau, and all the weather vanes and merchants' signs were creaking. Frau Shifra was unable to sleep. The wind howled through the narrow lane, and the raindrops clattered as they fell in the chimney. Once she raised her head and peered out the window, and she saw that same black cat sitting outside, looking as if it wanted to come in. When Frau Shifra finally fell asleep she dreamed that she opened the window, called to the cat, and it was about to enter. Just then Shifra was awakened by the sound of

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knocking at the door. It was the middle of the night, but such things were not unusual for her, because she was a midwife.

Already exhausted from her lack of sleep, she got out of bed, walked to the door, and looked out the peephole. "Who is there?" she asked. "Someone who needs your help," came the reply. So she opened the door.

There stood a servant, elegantly dressed. Frau Shifra was very surprised, for she assumed that he served a nobleman, and those who came to her were all Jews. She tried to elicit some information, but he was in a great hurry, so she dressed quickly and left with him. He led her through the rain to the Moldau, where he had fastened a boat to the dock. As soon as Frau Shifra realized that she was expected to cross the river on such a stormy night, she wanted to turn back. The servant turned to her and said, "What are you afraid of?" And she replied, "The wind and the waves." But no sooner had she spoken than the wind calmed down and the water became smooth. Much amazed, Frau Shifra sighed and entered the boat, and the servant began rowing. Soon the bank receded into the distance, and Frau Shifra again became fearful. She closed her eyes and decided not to open them until she reached land once more.

When the boat finally bumped another dock, she opened her eyes. To her great astonishment she saw before her a palace more splendid than that of the emperor. Its spires and curving walls were green and blue and glistened like a waterfall. All things around her glowed with a soft light, that of neither night nor day, and she did not know whence it came. Strange plants grew in the palace garden, and it appeared that a faint breeze was constantly fanning them.

Frau Shifra finally took heart and climbed out of the boat. That was when she discovered that she did not walk in that place, but floated, as if lifted by an invisible power at every step. In her confusion she looked up, and above her she saw schools of fish swimming about, and she realized, with great amazement, that she must be beneath the river. She was breathing, but how was that possible? She did not have long for such musings, however, because the servant hurried off, and she followed as quickly as she could.

The servant knocked on the palace door, and a splendidly dressed young man opened it, who Frau Shifra knew at once must be a prince or king. He was dressed in a green coat and green pants, and his buttons, rings, and buckles were all made of gold. The young man smiled at her and said, "We have been expecting you, good woman. Please follow me."

Then he turned to go and she hastened after him, floating through the halls, which were illuminated by a mysterious light the color of pearls.

At last they arrived at a glowing green door, and when the prince opened it, Frau Shifra had the shock of her life. For there, lying on the bed inside, was none other than Haminah, holding out her hand to greet her aunt. The room glittered with gold, pearls, and diamonds, and the curtains that floated behind the bed had been embroidered with the colors of the rainbow. When Frau Shifra saw the miracle of Haminah, who was not only alive, but ready to give birth, she began to feel faint. But she pulled herself together, for she knew that she must not fail her niece. Haminah said, "Will you stay and help me?" And Frau Shifra said, "Of course."

Frau Shifra wished to ask questions but there was no time, for Haminah was well advanced in her labor. And before long a fine infant was born, a son. Frau Shifra gave the news to the young man, who was filled with joy, and happiness radiated from all corners of the palace.

Before long, lovely singing and harp playing were heard, although the musicians kept themselves hidden. Frau Shifra listened with pleasure to this supernatural music, then turned to Haminah. "Tell me, my child, how did you come to be here? For your father thought you were drowned on that terrible night, and he has never stopped mourning."

Haminah held her baby close and said, "I had a secret love whom no one knew. We met at night on the bank of the Moldau. When I refused to elope with him he dived into the waters and I thought that his life was lost. At the time my father reached the river I decided to follow my love into the grave. I descended farther and farther into the depths, certain that my life was lost, when I saw a green light glowing from the river bottom. Suddenly I was embraced, and I knew that I had been reunited with my loved one at last. He brought me to this water palace, for it is from here that he rules the river. And it was here that we celebrated our wedding."

Frau Shifra heard this explanation, but if she had not been in that very palace, she would not have believed it. And for the first time in her life, Frau Shifra found herself speechless. Haminah continued: "You must know that my husband is not a human being. He is the ruler of the river Moldau, but the king of all waters cursed him and condemned him to live on the land. He had to wander throughout the world until he found someone who loved him so much that she would be willing to sacrifice her life. Only then would the spell be broken. Throughout the ages he was

engaged to many maidens, but none were willing to follow him into the realm of the deep. Only I did and thus redeemed him from that terrible curse. Now he once more reigns over the river, and our love for each other is strong.

"Yet," Haminah continued, "there is pain in my heart for causing grief to my father, and I long for him and the rest of my family, including you, my dear aunt. And when this longing begins to overwhelm me, my husband permits me to take the shape of a black cat and to visit the world above." And suddenly Frau Shifra realized that Haminah had been the black cat outside her brother's house and the one of which she had been dreaming when the knock had come on her door. And she said, "Your father felt there was something familiar about that cat, and I did too. Wait until I tell him!" But Haminah grew pale. "No, my aunt, you must not, for if those in the world above should learn of this kingdom, our existence would be endangered. As much as I would like to let my father know, I cannot."

Frau Shifra understood, and she vowed to keep all that she had learned secret. But she also became afraid that she would not be trusted to remain silent. "Will your husband let me go back?" she asked. And the girl replied, "As long as you do not eat or drink anything here, or accept any of the rewards that are offered to you, you will be free to leave. But if you do accept anything, you will be forced to remain here for the rest of your life. All that you may safely accept are some pieces of coal you will find lying outside the door of the palace. Take a handful of these with you, and be careful not to lose them."

At that very moment the ruler of that kingdom entered the room and beckoned for Frau Shifra to follow him. She said a fond farewell to Haminah, knowing that she might never see her again, at least not in human form.

As they floated down the hall, the ruler told her that she was welcome to dine with them, but she replied that it was still the middle of the night for her, and she was not hungry. Then he led her into the treasure room, where she saw great heaps of gold, silver, pearls, and jewels. "Take whatever you like," said the ruler. But Frau Shifra replied, "No, thank you, what my husband and I possess is sufficient for us. And I have been rewarded enough to learn that Haminah lives and that her life here is a happy one. My only desire now is to return home."

Then the ruler thanked her for all her help, and he called the servant who had brought her there. As she left the palace, Frau Shifra noticed

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pieces of coal sprinkled on the ground, and she bent down and picked up a handful, wrapping them in her apron. Then she climbed into the boat and closed her eyes once more, in order to forget just how far beneath the surface she really was.

Some time later the servant informed her that they had arrived at the riverbank. Frau Shifra opened her eyes and gave thanks when she saw the familiar shoreline of Prague before her. She climbed out of the boat and took leave of the servant. And when she turned around to watch him go, she saw that the boat had already disappeared, and there was nothing to be seen except circles on the surface of the water, as if someone had thrown a stone into it.

As she walked along, yawning, Frau Shifra began to realize just how exhausted she was. And she held her apron carelessly, not even thinking about the pieces of coal she carried in it. When she reached her home, she crawled into bed beside her husband and was sound asleep in no time.

In the morning she was awakened suddenly. Her husband was holding a large lump of gold in his hand, and he was jumping for joy. "Look," he shouted, "at what I found at the foot of the bed!" Frau Shifra rubbed her eyes. Was the visit to the underwater palace not a dream after all?

A moment later a great commotion was heard outside the house. Frau Shifra and her husband ran to the window, and they saw that people were streaming from all directions along the path to their house. Some of them were running around, scuffling and chasing each other, and others were hiding something in clenched fists. "They must have found gold too," her husband said. "Let's go outside and search with them. Perhaps gold has rained from the heavens instead of manna."

"We shall do no such thing," said Frau Shifra. But suddenly she thought of the apron, with the pieces of coal, and when she untied the knot she found a heap of gold glittering there. Her husband danced around the room and gave thanks, for never again would he have to worry about making a living.

Frau Shifra smiled but she remained silent. She knew that the gold on the path had fallen from her apron as she had returned from the river. And she thought of her niece Haminah with gratitude, and she recalled her promise not to reveal what had happened. So too did she keep that promise until the day she stood by the deathbed of Kalman, Haminah's father, and then she whispered the truth to him about his beloved daughter, so that he departed from this world with a smile on his face.

In the days that followed, the narrow lane outside Frau Shifra's house

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became known as Gold Lane, because of all the gold that had been found there. And from time to time a black cat would walk down it to sit outside the midwife's window. It was said that Frau Shifra always let it in so that it could hear all that was said inside. And the eyes of that cat were always melancholy, as if there were something it wanted to say. And there are those who insist that same cat can still be seen wandering the streets of Prague.

Eastern Europe: Nineteenth Century

APPENDIX C

The narrative is located in the most critical period of the Jewish year, the time between Purim and Pessah, the time to prepare for the Seder. It involves much preparation and is moreover costly. That the rich man failed to ask his poor brother to spend the night of the Seder at his house, although he knew that he was penniless, and that he only remembered him on the night of the Seder makes him a negative character who fails to observe the commandments of man's relation to man and man's relation to his God. His actions as well as his greed, represented by his foolish imitation, cause the audience to loathe him and to gloat over his punishment at the end of the narrative.

Many narratives constructed on the principle of foolish imitation are realistic and belong to the genre of the novella of cleverness or foolishness, respectively. This narrative is a sacred legend. The protagonist is not clever: the decision to bring the king a kuskus dish is not his own. He is guided by divine providence: the gates of Heaven open, and a messenger comes and advises the man what to do. When he places the crown on the king's head "it was as though studded with jewels and pearls and precious stones" signifying divine intervention. In this respect it is very much like the Jewish oicotype Aarne-Thompson *750 (IFA): "The two washer women."²

It is also similar to this oicotype because of the time of year in which the narrative is set—that is, before the Pessah holiday with its central values and norms that include the unity and coherence of the family seated at the Seder table. Moreover, both narratives deal with foolish imitation, and both belong to the genre of the sacred legend; the only difference is that the characters in our narrative are men, whereas the characters in oicotype Aarne-Thompson *750 (IFA) are women.

In addition to values and norms, the narrative reflects the customs of the narrating society that include marriage between cousins and the eating of kuskus, the Moroccan staple food. In addition it is interesting to observe the realities of life in modern Israel which the narrator includes in his traditional narrative. When the narrator tells the audience in what dire straits the poor man was, he hastens to add "in those days the government did not help . . .". Undoubtedly, this remark contrasts conditions in Morocco with the new realities of life in Israel.



The Birth of the Maharal¹

FROM: RABBI HANANIA PORTAL

This story happened long ago, just before the Maharal was born. It happened on the eve of Pessah. The Maharal's mother was in labor. In those days the Jews would be charged with the murder of a Christian whose blood they allegedly used to prepare the Matzah of Pessah. This is what they would do to the Jews before every holiday.

Now it happened that a Christian who hated Jews wanted to bring false charges against the Jews. He removed the body of a Christian from the churchyard. The body of a man who had died shortly before Pessah. He carried the body from the churchyard in a sack and dropped it at the rabbi's house, Rabbi Bezalel, the Maharal's father, saying: "They are going to find it, and they are going to say 'There! The rabbi has killed the Christian because he wants his blood for the Matzoth.'"

That very night the rabbi's wife went into labor, and there was a great commotion in the house. Several people came to help. The midwife lived far away, and they wanted to go and bring her to the rabbi's house. They rushed out to fetch her. The Christian, who was an enemy of the Jews, saw them run, and he too started running so they should not catch him. They run—he runs, they run—he runs, they run—he runs.

The watchmen saw a man running and other men running in pursuit of him. They said: "Surely this man has stolen something, and they are trying to catch him." The watchmen caught him, opened the sack, and found the corpse. They said: "What is this?"

They took the Christian to the police station and kept him there till morning. In the meanwhile, the people who were running to fetch the midwife found her and brought her to the rabbi's house, and this is how the Maharal was born. That is when you say, "There was a miracle."

In the morning they questioned the man, and the man pleaded guilty, saying he had taken the corpse in order to drop it at the rabbi's house so people should say the rabbi had killed a Christian for his blood because he needed it for the Matzoth.

² For an exhaustive treatment of this oicotype, see Shenhar and Bar-Itzhak 1981, 160-164.

¹ Rabbi Yehuda Liva Ben-Betzalel, see commentary.



An amulet for guarding the baby and mother after birth, probably nineteenth century. Y. Aynhorn collection. By kind permission of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

The rabbi knew nothing about it, and the people who had brought the midwife did not know anything about it either. On the following day, which was Pessah, the governor sent for the rabbi. A messenger came to the rabbi's house and said: "The governor wants you." The rabbi replied: "You know today is a Jewish holiday, don't you? I cannot go to the governor's house on a holiday. Perhaps I can come tomorrow?" But he said: "No. You have to go right now."

The rabbi went to the governor's house.

The governor said to him: "What did they steal yesterday? Was anything stolen from your house?" — "No, God forbid."

The governor continued: "Then why were there so many people at your house, and why did they all rush out?"

He answered: "They rushed out to bring the midwife because my wife was in labor."

And the rabbi explained all of it to the governor.

The governor said to the rabbi: "I want you to know that a miracle happened to you. I will issue an ordinance prohibiting blood libel as of today."

APPENDIX D

The Hair in the Milk



Once there was a woman who felt that she was about to give birth. They called the old midwife, who had learned the secrets of her trade from her mother and grandmother before her. Not long after she arrived, one of the servants served the expectant mother a glass of milk. Just as she was about to drink it, the woman looked into the cup, put it down with shaky hands, and all of a sudden fainted.

The midwife picked up the cup and saw that there was a long black hair in the milk. She looked around, but none of the other women had hair that was so long or so black. Then she knew what to do. She quickly poured the milk into a jug, the hair along with it. Then she corked the jug and shook it with all her might, using both hands. All at once there was a scream from inside it. Another might have dropped and broken it then, but not the midwife. Instead, she listened. And from inside the bottle she heard a distant voice crying, "Stop! Please let me go! I beg for forgiveness!"

The first impulse of the midwife was to carry the jug to the sea and throw it as far as she could. Instead, she took it outside and when all the doors and windows of the house were locked, she lifted the cork, set it down, and peered inside the bottle. Then all at once the head of a woman popped out. And the first thing the midwife noticed was that her hair was very black and so long that it fell back into the bottle. "Lilith!" the midwife hissed, and she started to pick up the cork to replace it in the bottle. But she found that it had become so heavy that she could not raise it even one inch. And then, for the first time, the midwife became afraid.

"What are you doing here!" the midwife shouted. "Set me free from this bottle and I will do you no harm," Lilith replied, for that is who it was. "First tell me why you have come to this house," said the woman. "I have come for the mother or the child, of course," said Lilith. "You know that. But now I will forswear doing any harm to them if you will only let me go." "That is not enough," said the midwife. "What more do you

want?" asked Lilith. "First, how did you know that a woman was here who was about to give birth?" demanded the midwife. And Lilith replied, "As I was flying past, I smelled the odor of a mother's milk. I wanted to steal the afterbirth—we feed it to our children." "And what happens then?" asked the wise midwife. "Then the woman dies," Lilith whispered.

In a sudden motion the midwife grabbed Lilith by the hair, pulling her out of the bottle at the same time. The demoness struggled to get free of her, but the woman held on with all her might, for she knew that a demoness is helpless when held by her hair. When Lilith stopped struggling, the woman said, "Know that you will not leave here until you tell us how to save this woman from you once and for all!" And Lilith, seeing that she had no choice, said, "Take saliva from the woman's mouth and put it in a bucket filled with water." They did this. Then Lilith blew on the foam of the water, and at that instant the woman awoke from her faint. The midwife then said, "How is it that you did not fear to approach this house?" Lilith replied, "The *mazah* of the house is defective, and the people do not have an amulet against me hung on the infant's bed. Now, will you set me free?"

"Not yet!" said the woman, holding Lilith's hair just as tightly. "There is more that I want of you." "What is it?" Lilith asked. "That you serve this family in every way, especially the mother and child, and protect them from every danger for three years." "And what if I do not agree?" asked Lilith. "Then I will throw you and the bottle into an old trunk, lock it, and cast it to the bottom of the sea, with you still in it!" cried the midwife, ready to carry out the threat.

Lilith saw that the midwife was a formidable opponent indeed. Her voice grew calm and reassuring. "I vow to do as you say, and to serve this family for three years. Nor will any demons dare to approach while I am here, for I am their queen." Then the midwife demanded, "Swear in the names of the angels Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof," and Lilith saw that there was no escape. For those were the three angels who had commanded her to return to Adam when she had left him and flown to a cave by the Red Sea. And she had vowed that whenever she saw or heard their names, she would do no harm. So Lilith swore in the names of the three angels, and after that she did indeed remain captive there and serve as a faithful servant. For the words of a vow are sacred not only among men and the angels, but among the demons as well. She pumped water from the well, cut wood, and guarded the woman and her child at all times so that no harm came to them.

Long before Lilith left, the text of the *mezuzah* was repaired. And when she took her leave, she promised that she would never come back. Nor did Lilith or her daughters attempt to return to that house, and the family lived a life of peace.

Turkish Kurdistan: Oral Tradition

1. WATCH NIGHT

In olden days, the Watch Night was a far more solemn occasion than it is today. People kept a close watch for Lilith who was known to steal newborn children from their mothers during the first eight days after birth, and especially on the last night known as Watch Night.

On this last night Lilith reigned supreme. Like a cuckoo bird she either exchanged the child for one belonging to demons (this is how all evildoers are born into the world) or she killed him outright. For protection, mothers pasted up a sign on the wall on which was written: *Lilith and Her Band — Stay Out*. Also, *belfers* brought their *kheyder-yinglekh* to read the "Sh'ma" prayer every evening at the home of a newborn boy until he was circumcised. On the last night before the *bris* candles were lit and poor Jews who were very learned recited Psalms and studied all night. A special dinner was made for them and charity was given out.

In an out-of-the-way village called Roznoy there lived a learned and very pious Jew named Reb Henekh Reydzisker. It was his great misfortune that each of his children died after birth. They were all born healthy and beautiful but on Watch Night would be snatched away. He was still young then, his wife younger still and quite wealthy at that, so they spared no efforts. To no avail. Six children already lay buried and now a seventh was on its way. They were very worried.

Unfortunately, our Lite was still a wasteland in those days. There were no *khasidim* and no *khasidic rebeim*. In such cases, there was no other choice than to seek the help

of magicians and sorcerers who knew far less than the Tatars of today.

Luckily, there arrived at the Zilver Fair none other than the world-famous Reb Yoel Bal Shem (Master of the Name), author of the book *The Deeds of God*. Reb Henekh and his wife appealed to him for help offering a huge sum of money, and Reb Yoel accepted. They happily received him into their home a full month before she was expecting; they gave him a separate room with all conveniences. He stayed there until she gave birth. Then Reb Yoel gave the mother a large amulet (good luck charm) and a tiny one for the child. He drew a circle in charcoal around all the walls, and above the chimney he hung a bunch of different things: a bit of hay that fell out of a horse's mouth while the moon was shining; seven different types of hair taken from seven animals; seven pieces of cloth taken from seven shirts worn by seven men.

On Watch Night he put an amulet on the maid as well. He ordered twenty poor Jews to bathe themselves and stay up all night to study. He had as many candles lit as were stars in the sky. In the house itself he forbade the chimney and the door to be opened. Despite all these precautions a cat managed to steal into the house with a terrible howl. She grew larger and larger and kept trying to break into the room where the mother and child lay. The Bal Shem sat at the door and beat back the cat with his cane that had a pointed metal tip. The cat kept lunging at him and began to spurt forth glowing sparks. The people standing round were petrified.

Finally Reb Yoel got the better of her and gouged out one of her eyes with the tip of his cane. He chased her out of the house and ran after her. The Bal Shem did not appear for quite some time. At last, panting and drenched in sweat, he returned and shouted: "*Mazltov!* We are home at last. With God's help we pulled through. Bring out the brandy and cake!"

Well, there was joy upon joy. Everyone sat down at the table, feasted, discussed holy matters and had a good time. The next day many friends and relatives arrived for the *bris*. All the invited and even uninvited guests came except for one person. This was the midwife. The mother was very upset.

"How can this be?" she cried. "She attended all the previous births when there was no cause to celebrate. Today, when we can finally rejoice, she is missing." She called a halt to the ceremony until the midwife be brought. While someone went out to fetch her, the Bal Shem chuckled and said to all the guests: "You can be sure that she will not appear at this *bris*." And so it was that the messenger returned to say that the midwife was sick, that one of her eyes went blind during the night. The mother was very grieved to hear this, but the Bal Shem on the contrary was as pleased as could be.

Later, when all the guests were seated at the table he revealed a great secret to all. "I want you to know," he said, addressing himself to Reb Henekh in particular, "that the midwife murdered all your previous newborn babes. She is a witch. She is in cahoots with Lilith whom she gives all the children that she delivers. In all those holy places where Lilith cannot enter, the midwife helps her out. Since I placed such a close guard last night, she could not use her usual tactics and turned herself into a cat. I gouged out one of her eyes which explains why one of her eyes went blind this very night. As for what happened outside, that I cannot tell you. From now on you should always know who your midwife is and who is the woman in attendance. This is a serious matter and much depends upon it."

Soon afterwards the midwife died and confessed beforehand that she had turned over many children to the demons. She was buried on the outside of the cemetery fence and for several years after her death she could be seen walking about in the fields and forests.

Ayzik-Meyer Dik, pp. 32-39.

APPENDIX E

היה היה מלך ולו שלושה בנים ולו זירו היו שלוש בנות, הבנים של המלך גדלו גם הבנות גדלו והגיעו לפרקן. כאשר שינים ששבו שלושת הבנות שוחחו בינמן אמרה הגדולה אם הבן הגדול של המלך ישא אותי אעשה תלבושת לכל החיילים שלו. אמרה השניה אם ישא אותי הבן השני של המלך אאכיל את כל החיילים שלו. אמרה השלישית אם ישא אותי הבן השלישי של המלך אלד לו פסרי כאכל זרי דוכתר דנדון מרוארי (בן עם בלורית זהב, בת עם שיני מרגליות).

השמועה הגיעה לבני המלך ומס נאז את שלושת הבנות. הבן הגדול, את הבת הגדולה, הבן השני את הבת האמצעית, והקטן את השלישית. הבת הגדולה קנתה חבילה גדולה בד ותפרה אצבעון לכל חיל, ככה היא הלבישה את החיילים. הבת השניה בשלה דוד גדול דיסה שמה בפנים הרבה מלח, כל חיל שעם כף אחת מהדיסה ולא יכול היה לאכול יותר. באופן כזה כל החיילים אכלו מהאוכל שהכינה להם, הבת השלישית הרתה, כשהגיעו ימיח ללדת שתי אחיותיה קנאו בה חששו שבעליהן לא יאהבו אותן, הניעצו ביניהן מה לעשות, החליטו להסתדר עם המילדת נתנו למיילדת סכום כסף הבון והיא כשנקראה אל המלכה, האחות הצעירה ליילד, לקחה אתה ארגז ובו שני גורי כלבים. כרגע שהאחות הצעירה ילדה את ילדיה, המילדת הוציאה את הגורים מהארגז והכניסה את הילדים במקומם. המילסת הכריזה ואמרה אוי ואבוי גורי כלבים ילדת. לקחה את הארגז ובמלכה זרקה אותו לים. חודיעו לקן השלישי של המלך שהוא בעלת, אשתך ילדה גורי כלבים הוא כעס מאוד כי היא לא רק שעזבה אותו ולא ילדה מה שהבטיחה, אלא אפילו לא ילדים רגילים. צוה שיכניסו את היולדת עם הגורים למרתף אפל וכל יום לתת להם ככר לחם ולא יותר. היולדת עם הגורים נשאר במרתף והיא חיה חיים קשים ומרים רעבה וצמאה כל הזמן.

למחרת הלך הקדר למלא כד מים מהים ראה ארגז צף על המים לקחאת הארגז פתח אותו ראה תינוקות כוכים, לבו מלא חמלה רחם עליהם לקח אותם לביתו אפל בהם גל אותם והז היו כילדיו. הילדים גדלו עם ללדי הקדר וחיו כמותם היו משחקים אתם וחשבו את הקדר ואשתו להוריהם. יצאו לרחוב לשחק, בן הקשר היה מסדר כדים וקערות. מהרס ביב אומר : כאשה טאזם כוזה טאזם כארי באבאם מיכרד (קערה אכנה כד אבנה מלאכה שאבי היה עושה)

הבת חיתה יושבת על כסא כמו מלכה והבן היה מסדר לו קשת חצים חנית ורומח היה אומר: תיר זנב כפון זנב כארי רח באבאם מיכארד (אקלע ואזרוק חצים מעשה שאבי היה עושה) כל יום היו משחקים ככה, האח היה אותה האוד את אחותו

ומה שהיתה אומרת היה מביא בשבילה.

באחד הימים עברה משם המילדת ראתה אותם משחקים היא הכירה את הילדים כי לילד היה בלורית זתב ולילדה היו שיני מרגלית. היא פחדה מאוד ואמרה אם יתגלה לבן המלך שהילדים חיים קיימת סכנה לחייה, היא מוכחה לעשות משהו לסלק אותם. לכן הדבר הראשון היא צריכה להפריד בין האח והאחות. היא הרגישת שהאח אוהב את אחותו לכן המתינה לרגע שתמצא הזדמנות שהאח לא יהיה על ידה אמרה לה את חוששת שאחייך אוהב אותך. האחות אמרה בשח שהוא אוהב אותי המילדת אמרה בגידי לו שיביא

לך באר כבדון סיב גריון (ריטון צוחק תפוח בוכה) המילדת אמרה והסתלקה כשכא האח מיד אמרה לו אחותו אני רוצה באר כבדון סיב גריון, האח אמר אינו יודע מאיפה להביא, האחות אמרה לא איכפת לי תביא מאיפה העיקר אני רוצה שתביא לי. האח יצא הלך לחנויות ושאל, אף חבוני לא היה לו. יצא מחזיר עבר שדות כפרים בכל מקום שאל, אף אחד לא ידע. הלך למדבר הרים שלך ימים הלך לילות ובכל מקום ששאל את מי שפגש אף אחד לא ידע לענות לו.

עייף יגע שבור ורצוף הלך ראה לפניו אדם זקן. הזקן אמר לו דרך זו שאתה הולך אין לחזור ממנה כי קשה לחשיג את זה. הבן אמר שהוא מוכרח לששיג וההי מה. הזקן אמר: אם כל כך אתה חזק בדעתך, תכנס לגן יש שם דלת פתוחה, סגור אותה יש שם דלת סגורה פתח אותה, יש שם שטיח פרוש קפל אוגו, יש שטיח מקופל-פרוש אותו. שוכב שם כבש לפניו מונחים עצמות ושוכב כלב לפניו עשב, קח את העצמות מלפני הכבש ושים לפני הכלב. ואת העשב מלפני הכלב שים לפני הכבש. אתה הולך עולה מדרגות על כל מדרגה שוכבת חיה שורפת והן ישנות, כשתעלה את המדרגות תמצא עץ ועליו ישנם "באר כבדון סיב גריון". תקסוף רק שנים ולא יותר, כי אם תקסוף יותר יפול רחד בקערות הנהושת המונחת תחת העץ יצלצל כל החיות בבעורבנה ותטרופנה אותו.

האח נכנס לגן סגר את השער הפתוח, פתח את השער הבעול, פרש את השטיח המקופל, קפל את השטיח הפרוש. לקח את העצמות מלפני הכבש הניח לפני הכבש, לקח את העשב מלפני הכלב הניח לפני הכבש, עלה למדרגות עבר ע"י החיות אריה דב נמר ברדלס זאב וכו' הגיע לעץ קסף אחד, קסף שנים חשב לעצמו אם אני נמצא ליד העץ למה שאקסוף יותר כי התפוחים והרסונים היו יפים ומושכים. קסף עוד ועוד לפתע נפל

רחד בקערה המונחת למשח וצלצל בלין-גלן, גלין-גלן, קפץ מהעץ ורץ
עבר את החיות ירד את המדרגות לכוון השער. החיות התעוררו.

האריה שאג הדוב בהם הנמר וכו' כל החיות צעקו ופללו אמרו מי זה
שהפריע למנוחתנו, תפשו אותו. אמרו לכבש תתפוש אותו, והכבש אמר זה
שנים ויובלות שלפני מונחים עצמות ואינני יכול לאכול, הוא בא החליף
לי לעשב, איך אוכל להיות כפוי טובה לתפוש אותו? לא! לא אתפוש אותו
אמרו לכלב לתפוש אותו, הכלב אמר זה שנים ויובלות שלפני היו מונחים
עשב, לא יכולתי לטעום וכל הזמן רעבתי, בא הבחור החליף לי את העשב
לעצמות, האם אהיה כפוי טובה אגמול לו רעה תחת טובה? צעקו לשטוחים
לתפוש אותו גם השטוחים טענו אותו הדבר, השטיח השרוש אמר הייתי
מקופל שנים פרש אותי, והשטיח המקופל אמר הייתי שנים פרוש והוא קפל
אותי, עכשיו שניהם אמרו לא נפריע לו. צעקו לשערים למנוע בעדו מלצאת
השער הפתוח אמר זה שנים הייתי בעול אף אחד לא עבר דרכי עכשיו הוא
פתח אותי אני רואה משהו, והשער הבעול אמר כל הזמן הייתי פתוח כלם היו
עוברים דרכי ומפאיעים לי עכשיו אני סגור נז, אף אחד לא מפריע לי.
(הזקן כנראה ידע את טבעו של האדם שאינו לא שבעה אם הוא רואה שמהו
רוצה עוד ועוד ועדע שהחיות בבנגדנה לכן הכין לו הקלות.

האח יצא מהגן עם הפירות הגיע העירה מסר את הפירות לאחותו היא
שמחה מאד. למחרת שוב יצאו הילדים לרחוב, הילדה ישבה על הכסא עם
הפירות ביד ומשחקת אתם. בן הקור עשה כדים ואמר: כאסה זנב רוצה זנב
כארי כה באבאם מיכרדי. האח שחק עם החץ והקשת שלו באמרו: תיר זנב
כמון זנב כארי כה באבאם מיכרד עברה המילדת ראתה אותם משחקים
התפללה בראותה בידי הבת את הפירות, כי בדרך זו ששלחה את הבן ידעה
שאין חושרים ממנה. המילדת פחדה אבל חכתה שוב להזדמנות לראות את הבת
יחידה.

רק שהאח נפרד למספר רגעים שוב תפשה המילדת את האחות ואמרה לה,
מה את חושבת שאיך אוכל אותך? לגמרי לא, אם את רוצה להוכח תבקשי ממנו
מרקי זחר צנג ביא בו צנג (עוף זהב גפים בא ביד) אם הוא יביא לך אזי
כאמת הוא אוהב אותך. המילדת הסתלקה, האחות חכתה לבא אחיה, וכאשר הגיע
התחילה לבכות שהיא רוצה "מרקי זהרצנג ביא בו צנג" האח אמר שעד עכשיו
לא שמע דבר כזה ואי אפשר להשיג, האחות בכתה ואמרה שדוקא היא רוצה ואם
הוא אוהב אותה יחפש ויביא לה. האח יצא הלך לחנויות שאל בכל חנות אף אחד
לא ידע, יצא מהעיר עבר לכפרים שאל, אף אחד לא ידע. שוב יצא מהישובים

הלך למדבר עבר הרים, עבר בקעות בכנס ליצר עיף ויגע ושכ תחת עץ לנוח. והנה ראה טוב את הזקן ששאל מה הוא רוצה? האח אמר שחוא בא לחפש "מורקי" קהר צנג ביא בו צנג" הזקן אמר דבר כזה קשה לששיג האח אמר הוא מוכרה להשיג ויהיה מה, הזקן רחם עליו ואמר: בדרך זו שאתה הולך תמצא בור גדול עשוי אבנים ענקיות. תרד מדרגה אחת תצעק "מורקי" זהר צנג ביא בוצנג" האבנים מתקרבות מכסות אותך עד המטנים העוף מתגלה ומתקרב אליך, פעם שניה תצעק האבנים מתקרבות עד הצואר והעוף מתקרב יותר פעם שלישית תצעק, העוף מתקרב אליך והאבנים יפלו ואתה תצא. ואם לא תזדרז לחשוף את העוף ליד, תחטוף אותו והאבנים יכסו אותך תשאר שם לעולמים, הזקן אמר ובעלם. האח המשיך ללכת הגיע לבאר ירד מדרגה אחת צעק "מורקי" זהר צנג ביא בו צנג" האבנים התקרבו וכסו אותו עד המטנים ולא יכול היה לזוז העוף נתגלה מעל לראשו, צעק פעם שניה, האבנים התקרבו והגיעו עד צוארו, רק חידים והראש היו בחוץ. העוף התקרב אליו יותר, הפעם שלישית צעק העוף נגע בידו והוא חטף אותו האבנים נפלו הוא יצא הלך ישר הביתה מסר את העוף לאחותו. היא שמחה מאוד שיש לה דברים נדירים מאוד שאף אחד אין לו. למחרת יצאו טוב לשחק ברחוב, הילדה ישבה על הכסא ושחקה עם תפירות והעוף, כן בקדר עשה כדים ואמר: כאסה זנס ריזה זנס כארי כה באבאם מיכרדי האח החזיק בחץ וקשת שחק ואמר "תיר זנס כמון זנס כארי כה באבאם מיכרדי" טוב עברה המילדת ראתה אותם משחקים כשתנן אם בלורית הזהב מחזיק את החץ וחקשת משחק ואומר בריוק כנו המלכים, והבת יושבת משחקת עם הדברים הנדירים שאפילו היא בעצמה לא חשבה שאפשר לששיג.

המילדת ארה לה מאוד ופחדה שאם הם יתגלו משהו יכיר אותם אחריתה תהיה מרה, טוב חתה להזדמנות שהאח יזוז למספר רגעים. האח הלך הצדה לרחוב השני, המילדת באה לאחות ואמהה, איך המשחקים שלך? עכשיו חסר לך דבר אחר תאמרי לאחיך שיביא לך "שיר שיר-משכי שיר-פשת שיר" (חלב לביאה כנאד אריה, על גבי אריה) (בפרסית לחלב ואריה אומרים שיר), אם הוא יביא לך בטח שהוא אוהב אותך המילדת היתה בטוחה שדבר כזה בשום אופן אי אפשר לששיג כי האח ילך ולא יחזור. אמרה זאת והזתלקה, כינתיים חזר האח ראה את אחותו בוכה שאל למה היא בוכה? אמרה שהיא רוצה: "שיר שיר משכי שיר פשת שיר" האח אמר זה בלתי אפשרי איך אפשר לששיג, כי מי יכול לחלוב לביאה או מי יכול להרוג ולפשוש עור אריה ועל הכל מי יכול לרכב על אריה? האחות גבר בכית ואמרה אם אתה אוהב אותי אתה יכול לששיג, האח שאהב מאוד את אחותו לא יכול היה לסכול לא רצה שתבכה, פנה חוץ לעיר והלך

הלך עד חשיג למדבר, עבר הרים עבר סלעים עבר בקעות עבר ימים

עבר נהרות עיף ויגע חביע ליצר עבות שכב לנוח ראה שוב את הזקן זאל
 אותו הזקן מה מעשהו כאן? אמר לזקן שהוא רוצה "שיר שיר משכ שיר פשת שיר"
 אמר לו הזקן אתה יודע שדבר זה קשה מאוד להשיג, אמר האח הוא מוכרח
 ויהי מה, הזקן אמר אתה הולך כאן בקצה היער שוכב אריה שזה 14 שנים
 נכנס לו קוץ ברגל ואף אחד לא יכול להוציא, הוא טובל מאוד, עכשיו
 הוא ישן, תגש לאט מאחוריו תמשוך ותוציא את הקוץ קפוץ למערה הנמצאת
 לידו ותתכבא, האריה ישאג ירעיד את היער, אתה אל בזוז ממקומך, האריה
 ישאג וישאג ישאל מי זה היה אתה אל תענה בעבור שעה קלה יירגע מהכאבים
 ישאל מי זה היה יבוא אלי לא אעשה לו כלום, אתה אל תענה לו, הוא ישאל
 הרבה פעמים אתה כאילו אינך קים. לבסוף יישבע "כו חזרת פאדשהי סלימאן"
 (בחיי הנביא שלמה המלך) אז תגש אליו תבקש ממנו מה שאתה רוצה. תזהר
 שלא תלך אליו לפני שהוא נשבע. הזקן אמר זאת ובעלם.

האח הלך הגיע לקצה היער ראה את האריה שוכב וישן, לאט הלך מאחוריו
 אחז את הקוץ ומשך בחזקה והוציאו. רץ מחר למערה והתכבא. האריה התעורר
 מעצם הכאב שאג שאגה עצומה כל העצים רעדו וכמה מהעצים נפלו, האריה
 שוב שאג ושאל מי זה היה שהכאיב לי, האח מתחבא במערה לא עונה. האריה
 שואג ושואג, עברה שעה קלה האריה נרגע והושב לו הנכאבים שאל מי זה היה
 שהוציא ממני את הקוץ והיטיב לי יגש אלי, לא אעשה לו כלום. האח לא
 עונה. האריה שאל שוב ושוב אין קול ואין עונה. לבסוף נשבע: בסר
 חזרת כולימאן יגש אלי לא אעשה לו כלום. אז קם האח יצא ממחכואו
 נגש לאריה הרכין לפניו את ראשו, האריש שאל, אתה זה שהוצאת ממני את
 הקוץ והבראת אותי? האח אמר כן, האריה שאל מה משאלתך ותינתן, האח
 אמר: אני רוצה "שיר שיר משכ שירפשת שיר" האריה אמר משאלה גדולה
 שאלת. כמעט ובלתי אפשרי אבל אתה הישבת לי אני מוכרח לגמול לך טובה.
 הופיע לפניו אריה על גבו נאד סלא חלב לביאה, האריה כבר
 שיק לבן אדם הפה ומעכשיו הוא נתון לפקודתו. האח רכב על האריה
 דהרו שגיעו העירה נכנסו הביתה האחות ראתה שמחה מאוד.

למחרת שוב יצאו לרחוב לשחק, בן הקדר מסדר קערות וכדים
 ואומר "כאסה זנס רוזה זנס כארי כה באנאס מיכרד" האחות יושבת
 ומחזיקה את הפירות והעוף, לפניו האריה כשעל גבו נאד עם חלב לביאה
 והאח מחזיק את החץ והקשת משחק ואומר: תיר זנס כמון זהם כארי כה
 באנאס מיכרד. במקרה או שלא במקרה עבר שם אחד משומרי ראש המלך, ראה
 אותם משחקים, ראה את הבת עם שיני מרגליות כשהיא מחזיקה "סיב גריון"
 באר כנדרון

ביד אחת, ביד השניה מחזיקה "מרקי זהר כו צנג כיא כו צנג" לפניהם
עומד הארית עם הנאד על גבו, וראת את הקן עם כלורית הזהב שהוא
מחזיק את החץ והקסת משחק ואומר: " תיר זנם כמון זנם כארי כה באבאם
מיכרד" החיל שאל אותם מי הם ומה הם עושים, הם אמרו שהם בני הקדר,
והם משחקים כאן. החיל הלך ספר למלך מה שראה והא השמין אליו את הקדר
ושאל אם שילדים הם שלו. הקדר ספר לו הכל, איך שהלך לשפת הים להביא
כד מים מצא את הארגז ופתח אותו ראש בפנים את הילדים בוכים, הוא רחם
עליהם הביאם הביתה מאז הוא מספל בהם כילדיו.

קראו לילדים הביתה שאלו מאין ה"משחקים" האלה, האח אמר: אחותי
יקרה לי מאוד ומה שהיא רצתה הלכתי והבאתי לה. שאלו את האחות מי אמר
לה שתבקש את ה"צעצועים", אמרה וודה זקנה עוברת מכאן יום יום והיא
למדה אותה לבקש דברים אלה המלך חזר לארמונו עם הילדים והקדר.

בינתיים העוף סיפר להם את כל ההיסטוריה איך האיש הרתה, האחיות
שלה בנות הושיר קנאו בה שחדו את המילדת והיא החליפה את הילדים עם גורי
כלבים וכו'. חפשו ומצאו את המילדת שאלו אותה מי הילדים? בהתחלה הכחישה
הכל, וכה סיפרה: כשהנסיכה הרבה ללדת האחיות של המלכה אמרו למילדת שהיא
תחליף את ילדיה בגורי כלבים, הן שלמו לה סכום כסף גדול והיא עשתה כך.

כשתזמנה להוציא את התינוקות לקחה אתה ארגז ובו הגורים, ברגע שיצאו
הילדים היא הוציאה את הגורים ואת הילדים הכניסה לארגז ושם הכריזה ואמרה:
שהמלכה ילדה גורי כלבים, היא לקחה את הארגז עם הילדים זרקה לים. חשבה
שהילדים ימותו, אבל לפני זמן מה עברה ברחוב ראתה את הילדים הכירה אותם
שהם בני המלך. אתה פחדה מאוד חששה שהסוד יתגלה, לכן רצתה לשלוח את הילד
למקום שלא יחזור ואת הילדה איך שהוא אחר כך היתה מסלקת, אבל שלוש פעמים
הסיתה את הילדה והילדה שלחה את אחיה. והוא חש כבראה שיש להם מזל יוצא
מהכלל.

מיד שלח המלך למאורה שבה זרקו את אשתו לקחת ולהביא אותה לארמון, כשהלכו
להוציאה ראו אותה רזה חיוורת כל גופה שריטות שריטות כי הכלבים גדלו והיו
משחקים אתה ושורטים אותה. לקחו אותה למרחץ רחצו אותה מרחו עליה דפואות
ותמרוקים שתבריא, הלכישו אותה וידם יפים בגדי מלכות הביאו אותה לפני השלך
את הקדר ובני משפחתו הביאו אליו לארמון. לקדר מסר תפקיד חשוב והיה ממקורביו
בתן לו כל טוב. את המילדת לקחו לכפר העיר אספו את צואת הכלבים הדליקו
מדורה ואת המילדת זרקו במדורה ושרפו אותה. המלך התחיל מחדש את חייו כשלידו
אשתו ואתם "פסד כאכל זרי דוכתרי דנדון מרוארי" היו שמחים ומאושרים אחרי זה היו
חיים טובים נולדו להם עוד בנים ובנות. שמצתי

רשמה: יפה אלמדורי
מפי: פורטל חנניה, מאת

המלך והנסיך

היה מלך - בעל נשים רבות. אך אשה אחת בלבד יכלה ללדת. ובכל לילה - לקחו נשות המלך הנוחרות - את המיילדות ובקשו מהן - לזרוק את הולדות ולומר למלך, שנולד, כלב, חתול או חיה אחרת. והמלך לא אהב לשמוע את זה. וכך עשו - שיחדו נשות המלך וציירו אותן לעשות כך - כדי להשחית את פניה בפני המלך - שאפילו יכולה ללדת - זה לא שוה שום דבר. ואכן המיילדות זרקו את הולדות ובדו סיפורים בפני המלך.

אמר המלך לעצמו - האשה היא אינה שוה ממילא - הלך ובנה לה בקחה כוודדה. שלא תראה אנשים, ואנשים לא יבקרו אצלה.

בינתיים - אותם ולדות שנזרקו (לא הרבו אותם) אחד מהם - נלקח ע"י עובר אורח. גידל אותה. כאשר באה יום אחד בחברת חברותיה - אמרו לה - לך אינן הורים. התפלאה הילדה - כיצד זה אין לה הורים? הלכה בבכי לביתה לא אכלה ולא שחחה. שאלו הוריה - מה לך - שאת לא רוצה לאכול ולשחות וק בוכה כל הזמן? הרי כל מה שתצטרכי נשתדל לקנות לך כדי שלא יחסר לך דבר. (אותה מפשחה היתה מפשחה פשוטה - וגם לה לא היו ילדים) אמרה הילדה - אינני צריכה דבר - אתם אינכם הורי. וכעת - אני מודה לכם שגידלתם אותי עד הנה, ומה שאני מבקשת הוא שתאמרו לי מי הם הורי, ואם אמצא אותם והם חיים באושר-אשיב לכם כגמולכם, מכל מקום אתכם לא אשכח.

אמרו לה - אנחנו לא יודעים מי הם הוריך - מצאנו אותך בשדה - אם את רוצה ניקח אותך לאותו שדה. ומשם תלכי לאן שתרצי. הסכימה, ובקשה להראות לה את השדה. לקחו אותה לאותו שדה. החלה ללכת, והחלה מספרת לאנשים את קורותיה - עד שפגשה באשה זקנה - אמרה לה הזקנה, אולי את בת המלך? כל אשת המלך ילדה לו ילדים ואת הילדים האלה זרקו - מי ידע מה עלה בגורלם, אולי את אחת מהם ונשארת בחיים. שמעי לעצתי לי אל בית המלך וספרי להם את קורותיך. הגיעה לבית המלך ובקשה לראות את המלך. נכנסה למלך והחלה מספרת את קורותיה מאז שנמצאה בשדה. בזמן סיפורה הרגיש המלך רגשות כלפי הילדה.

אמרה הילדה הרי מצאו אותה בשדה ואתר גידל אותה, אולי אמי היא אשתך שזרקו לך את הולדות. וכעת, הבא את המיילדות שיילדו את האשה ונשאל אותן. הסכים המלך. שלח המלך לקרוא למיילדת - אמר לה - אם לא תאמרי

16.390

את האמת - אני הורג אותך. שאלה המיילדת - מדוע? אמר המלך - אשתי
 שילדה - הייתן מספרות לי כל פעם סיפור - שילדה גמל, חתול, כלב - מה היא
 ילדה באמת? אמרה המיילדת - היא ילדה ילחלס טובים ובריא'ים. שאל המלך
 - לא תוכלי לזהות אף אחד מהם? (והילדה - היתה לה הדרת מלכות בפניה)
 אמרה המיילדת ייתכן מאוד שאוכל לזכור, לפתות את האחרונה שבהם. הביאו
 את הילדה - ראתה המיילדת ואמרה - באמת זוהי בת המלך. הלכה המיילדת
 עם המלך והבת לראות את המקום בו זרקו אותה כשהייתה חינוקה. כשהגיעו
 למקום - הבינו שזוהי אכן בת המלך - לקח המלך את בחר, הושיבה בארמונו,
 ואת אשתו שישבה בבקתה הוציא משם והביאה לארמונו, והפכה לאשתו היחידה
 ואח שאר נשותיו גירש מעליו.

פורטל חנניה : נולד בסיורה במרוקו בשנת 1917, עלה לארץ ב- 1956,
 לשלומי וגר זה עד היום.

a16/41

שלוש אחיות

אסתר נאמן (י"ח) עמי תיה (ריב"ז) מלך מלכה, 10/1 סיה

היה פעם מלך יצא לטייל בעיר. הרי דרך הטיול בעיר הוא רוצה לראות מה טוב ומה רע.

הוא עובר רואה בית עם מרפסת פתוחה, ליל קיץ ויושבות שם שלוש בנות יחד. אחת אמרה: אני, אם המלך ישא אותי - אלביש את כל החיילים שלו מחצי מטר בד, אלביש את כולם. ביגוד.

השניה: אם ישא אותי - משק אחד של קמח כולם יאכלו צהרים וגם ערב. והשלישית אמרה: אני אם ישא אותי, אלד לו שני בנים ובת.

המלך שמע את הסיפור הזה. הוא התחפש כאילו לבן אדם פשוט והן דברו. הוא שמע את השיחה הזו. אחרי שבוע או שבועיים הלך וביקש את ידן, המלך. המלך ביקש את ידן.

נשא את זו של הבד. מה עשתה? לקחה את חצי המטר הזה וחתכה אותו חתיכות חתיכות. כל אחד חתיכה, סמל. סידרה אותם. מצא שזו סתם שטות, החזיר אותה הביתה. העיקר נשא אותה והחזיר אותה הביתה.

האחרת היא הביא לה שק של קמח. נשא אותה והביא לה שק קמח. מה עשתה עם הקמח הזה? שמה שק קמח ושק מלח, לשה אותם. ומי שאכל נגיסה - לא גומר, זורק. טוב, המלך ראה שזה מלוח, אז טוב, נשא את זאת והחזיר אותה לביתה.

עכשו האחרת, ההיא, מפנק אותה. היא יפה יותר וצעירה. הן שלוש אחיות, יפה והכל. נשא אותה דואג לה והכל. נכנסה להריון. נכנסה להריון, השפחה בבית, והוא - "וין נחתק זא קפק אל ורד" - היכן אניח אותך טס של ורדים, משמע פינוק ודאגה רבה. עברו ימים ובאו ימים, הבטן גדלה והיתה צריכה ללדת. הביאו מילדת. באו שתי האחיות למיילדת ואמרו לה:

ניתן לך שכר גדול אם תגידי שאשת המלך ילדה גור כלבים.

אם בן - כלב ואם בת - כלבה. ואת התינוק תביאי אלינו.

אמרה להם בסדר.

נתנו למיילדת שוחד.

נכנסה המיילדת, והאשה בצירי לידה, עד שילדה. ילדה. והיא - המיילדת נכנסה הביאה איתה גור כלבים. הביאה לה גור כלבים. היא ילדה בן. שמה לידה את גור הכלבים ואמרה לה זה מה שילדת. האומללה לא ידעה מה לעשות. ראתה את הגור ופניה השתנו.

רשמת: והיא לא ראתה שילדה בן?

מספרת: לא ראתה. הרי היא באמצע הלידה.

לקחה את הילד והחביאה אותו ושמה לה את הגור לידה. אז בא המלך: מה היא ילדה, בן או בת?

אמרה לו:

שלא תדע, שאני אהיה כפרתך (זאת המיילדת) הפעם הזאת ילדה
גור כלבים, בפעם הבאה תלד בן.
האשה המסכנה התחילה לבכות. אמר לה אל תבכי. משקיט אותה המלך:
הפעם ילדת גור, בפעם הבאה הלוואי שיהיה בן.

והילד הזה, מסכן, היא לקחה אותו והביאה אותו אל האחיות. האחיות
הלבישו אותו וסדרו אותו, השקו אותו חלב, החזיקו אותו שבוע או
שבועיים אחר כך אמרו נזרוק אותו באיזו שכונה, לאנשים יש ילדים.
זרקו אותו וגמרנו. הגיעו לאיזו שכונה ככה. עבר איזה זמן מסכן.
עובר ומוצא תינוק בוכה ברחוב. לממש כמו בסיפורים שרואים עכשו. ממש
עכשו נושים את זה. הזקן לקח את הילד וחזר איתו הביתה. המסכן היה
רעב וצמא. קנה לו חלב הבין לו בקבוק והתחיל להאכיל אותו. הזקן
מסכן לבדו, נותן לו חלב ומטפל בו. הזקן לבדו וממשיך לגדל את
הילד. הילד גדל, היה כבר בן שנה בערך.

האשה הזו שוב הרתה. הרתה האשה. עשו שוב אותו דבר. שמו גור אותו זכר.
והמלך מסכן התעצבן, אל תשאלי. אמר לה:
טוב, אין דבר בפעם הבאה הלוואי תלדי בן.
והאשה בכתה ושתקה. לא ידעה מה קורה איתה.

עברו ימים ובאו ימים האחיות עשו כמו קודם. האחיות לקחו את הילד
וזרקו אותו. למזלו, הזקן שוב עבר בדרך הזאת ומצא את התינוק. לקח
אותו והתחיל לגדל אותו עם הילד השני. היו לו עכשו שני ילדים.

אז עברו ימים ובאו ימים, שוב הרתה. ילדה בת. שמו לה כלבה קטנה.
בא המלך מסכן התעצבן, אמר לה:
אינך מתביישת? מה זה, את יולדת לי כלבים כאן? יאללה,
זרק אותה לכלוב של תרנגולות. אוכלים המשרתים והמלך וכולם, ואת
העצמות והשאריות הם נותנים לה לאכול בלול. נותנים לה את השאריות
והיא מסכנה נמצאת שם בלול.

והילדים ההם הזקן מגדל אותם. אז הם גדלו. הילדה היתה בערך בת עשר
- אחת עשרה והבן השני בן שלוש-עשרה - ארבע-עשרה, והאחר בן חמש
עשרה. והזקן כבר זקן מדי, לא יכול יותר. אמר להם:
עכשו אני הולך למות. תשמעו, יש לי בית,
יש לו בית מקום ככה רחוק, מחוץ לעיר, בית גדול. כפר, כפר.
בית גדול יש בו עצים והכל. כשתגדלו ותוכלו ללכת תעברו לבית ההוא.
הוא לקח אותם יום אחד הוביל אותם לבית. יום אחד, יום שבת, לקח
אותם לארמון ההוא הגדול של אבות אבותיו. והוא אין לן ילדים, ואין
לו אף אחד, גר בדירה קטנה והבית הזה סגור. אז אמר להם:
כשתגדלו ותוכלו להסתדר בעולם, תעברו לגור בבית הזה.
אמרו לו בסדר אבא. הם לא יודעים בכלל שאין להם אבא או אין להם אמא
או משהו, חשבו שזה האבא שלהם.
בסדר אבא.
וזהו.

אחרי ימים הילדים גדלו, הזקן מת. הילדים גדלו, היו בני שמונה עשרה,
תשע עשרה, בחורים גדולים כאלה והבת גדלה. אמרה להם:
בואו נלך וננקה את הארמון ונעבור לגור בו.

והאמא המסכנה נמצאת עדיין בתוך הכלוב. נותנים לה שאריות של אוכל.

אז לקחו שני הבנים והבת, אספו את החפצים שלהם ואת הבגדים שהם לובשים ואת הדברים היקרים שלהם, סגרו את הבית הזה והלכו אל הארמון. וזה בית גדול. ניקו אותו וסידרו אותו וגרו בו. הם חיים בכל טוב. האחים הולכים לעבוד, מביאים כסף ושמים אותו על ראש אחותם. והאחות מבשלת ומנקה ומסדרת. והכל יופי.

והמלך, מה אמרתי לך, הוא מתחפש בבגדים רגילים והולך ומסתובב ממקום למקום. יום אחד הסתובב והגיע לארמון הזה. אמר זה יופי של בית, מי גר פה? מצא את הבת הזו. ביום שבת מסתובב, והילדים האלה מאוד נכנסו לו ללב, נכנסו ללבו. בא אליהם מכבדים אותו בקפה ובתה. והוא בא כמו בן אדם פשוט. נותנים לו לאכול עוגה נגיד או משהו.

יום אחד הבנות, הרי מה הן עושות, ראו מי לקח את הילדים. הן זרקו את הילדים ומסתכלות, ראו אצל מי גדלו, ומכירים אותם. ראו שהם עברו לבית ההוא, ראו שהמלך נכנס ויוצא אצלם. מה יעשו עכשיו? הלכו אל המיילדת ואמרו לה:

מה נגיד לך, הנה המלך הולך אל הילדים ההם. הוא אוכל אצלם וישן אצלם. מה יהיה אם יגלה את המצב? אולי יגלה משהו, לכי תראי מה לעשות.

אמרה להם:

אל תפחדו. תנו לי את שכרי ואני אסדר את הענין.

מה זה שכר, נתנו לה כסף או משהו וזהו.

היא הלכה לשם. נכנסה:

איזה בית יש לך (אומרת לילדה) איזה בית יפה יש לך ואיזה נקיון.

אה, אה, אם רק היתה לך בריכה עם מים כחולים, ודגים מתרועעים בה.

— מאיפה המים?

אמרה לה:

תגידי לאחייך והוא יביא לך.

— מאיפה אחי יביא את זה?

אמרה לה:

תגידי לו והוא יביא לך.

אמרה לה:

איך אבקש?

אמרה לה:

תצבעי את הפנים בכרכום ותעשי את עצמך חולה, ותגידי שלא תכריאי

רק כאשר יביאו לך את המים הכחולים והדגים המקפצים בהם.

והיא [הבת] יש לה בריכה שם ויש לה הכל. אמרה בסדר. והיא [הזקנה]

עשתה את זה כדי שההוא ילך ויהרגו אותו ויתפטרו ממנו.

אז האח הלק ... כשבא האח הגדול וראה את פניה חוורות וצהובות:

מה יש לך אחותי?

אומרת אני לא יודעת. לא אמרה כלום. נשארה עוד יום.

— מה יש לך אחותי למה הפנים שלך חוורות?

שני האחים דואגים לה. אמרה להם:

אני אכריא רק אם תביאי לי מים כחולים ודגים המקפצים בהם.

האח הגדול אמר:

איך נביא אותם?

הצעיר אמר:

אני אלך להביא לך.

הבכור נשאר להתעסק בעבודה שלו והצעיר אמר אני אלך.

הביא סוסה טובה, והכין אוכל, אוכל שישמר לו, ועלה על הסוסה.

- איפה מוכרים את הדגים ואת המים האלה?

הוא נוסע ונוסע ונוסע. וסוסה קבלה מכה מאבן. נתקלה באבן ויצאה לו זקנה.

- שלום עליך אמי הזקנה.

אמרה לו:

אלמלא השלום שלך, וזייתי שומעת את עצמותיך מתרסקות.

אמר לה למה?

אמרה לו מרעב.

- מרעב, אמי הזקנה? מה את רוצה? קחי מה שיש לי.

הוציא את הצידה שלו והיא אכלה ואכלה עד ששבעה. אמרה לו:

מה מביא אותך למקום הזה? מה הביא אותך לארץ השדים הזאת?

אמר לה:

אחותי חולה והיא רוצה מים כחולים ודגים המקפצים בהם.

אמרה לו:

אוי בני, מי ששלח אותך, שלח אותך אל מותך. אבל אני אעזור לך.

לך מכאן ישר ותמצא סמטא צרה וחשוכה, ויצעקו אליך ויקראו לך

'בוא מכאן, טעית בדרך', אל תענה ואל תסב את ראשך. עבור ישר.

ואז תמצא שם בריכה גדולה. תקח משם מים בקופסה ויש עוד בריכה.

קח ממנה דג אחד או שניים. ויגידו לך 'בוא בן המלך, חזור,

לקחת מעט מדי, בוא וניתן לך עוד' אל תענה ואל תעשה שום דבר.

אל תשוב את הראש. לך ישר וזהו. אל תענה להם.

אמר לה תודה רבה והלך.

האח הלך מצא באמת את הסמטא כמו שהיא אמרה לו. סמטא שחורה, נכנס.

לא ענה ולא סובב את הראש. לקח

- הי, הי, בן המלך, בן הזקנה, בוא ואתן לך עוד, בוא הנה, זה מעט

מדי ..

הוא לא ענה ויצא משם.

הגיע הביתה. שפך את המים במזרקה שלהם - והוסיף עוד מים, כל המים נהיו כחולים. שם את שני הדגים והם ילדו והיו הרבה דגים. היה מלא.

והזקנה נעדרה כמה זמן. המלך, ממש השתגע על המים והדגים האלה. ישב

שם ולא זז. אמרו לה:

מה עשית מיילדת? הלכת בשביל להרוג אותם ועשית את המצב עוד

יותר גרוע. עכשו הוא בא ולא הולך יותר.

אמרה להם:

אל תדאגו. אלך לסדר את העניין.

הלכה. נכנסה:

איזה בית, איזה סדר איזה יופי,

והיא מאוד חרוצה הבת. היא הבריאה, רחצה פניה והבריאה.

באה ואמרה לה:

איזה יופי של מים ושל דגים, איזה יופי. עכשו כל מה שאת צריכה זה העוף שכנפיו עונות לעומתו.

אמרה לה - מה זה?

אמרה לה:

זהו עוף מזמר וכנפיו עונות לעומתו.

- איך אביא אותו?

אמרה לה:

אחייך. כמו שהביא לך את המים והדגים, יביא לך גם את העוף.

אמרה לה בסדר.

עשתה אותו דבר. מרחה את פניה בכרכום, ועשתה את עצמה חולה ונאנחת.

- מה יש לך אחותי? מה יש?

אמרה להם:

אני רוצה את העוף שכנפיו עונות לו.

בא הגדול ואמר: אני אלק.

והצעיר אמר לו:

לא, אתה לא יכול. אני אלק.

כרגיל לקח צידה העמים על הסוסה והלך.

הוא הולך הולך והסוסה נתקלה באבן. יצאה לו הזקנה.

הא, שלום עליך אמי הזקנה.

אמרה לו:

אלמלא השלום שלך הייתי שומעת את עצמותיך מתרסקות.

- מדוע אמי הזקנה?

אמרה לו מרעב.

נתן לה את הצידה שהביא, ואכלה עד ששבעה. אמרה לו:

מה מביא אותך לארץ הר'ולים והעדים, מה מביא אותך לכאן?

אמר לה:

אני רוצה את העוף שכנפיו עונות לו.

אמרה לו:

אוי בני, מי ששלח אותך שלח אותך לקראת מותך.

- איך?

אמרה לו:

תראה מה שתעשה. לך. לעוף הזה יש שומר. אם יתמזל מזלך תמצא

את השומר ישן. הוא ישן חודש אחד וחודש שלם הוא ער. ואם יתמזל

מזלך והוא ישן, קח את העוף בכלוב ותברח איתו. יקראו לך 'בוא,

חזור, טעית, לקחת את העוף הלא נכון! זה לא העוף הזה!' תשים לב,

יש שם הרבה כלובים. קח את העוף שבכלוב הגדול. העוף הוא לבן ויש

לו מקור צהוב. זה הוא. אל תקח את האחרים. זה הכלוב שבאמצע. ואם

יקראו לך שטעית, אל תענה להם. קח אותו ותברח.

הלך באותה דרך. הלך באותה סמטה אותו דבר. הלך ומצא למזלו שהשומר

היה ישן. יש שם מי ששומר והוא ישן חודש וער חודש. לא שומר אלא

לפעה נדירקון. לפעה, לא שומר. ישנה חודש וערה חודש. היא לפעה חזקה

וכשהיא ישנה באים הגנבים. אבל מה יש כאלה שתופסים אותם. אבל היא

נתנה לו סימנים שלא יסתובב. אבל אם היא ערה הוא בשום אופן לא יכול

להגיע. למזלו היא היתה ישנה. ישנה. וכנס לקח את הכלוב ויצא.

- בוא חזור, טעית, זה לא הכלוב הזה...

לא ענה להם. הלך שם את העוף והביא אותו לאחותו.

הביא אותו לאחותו והעוף אינו רוצה לשיר. המלך בא, מבקשים ממנו לשיר.
והעוף מדבר, אומר:
לא, אני באֶבֶל ואיני יכול לשיר.
באה הנערה ואומרת לו:
תשיר.
אומר:
לא, אני אֶבֶל ואיני יכול לשיר.
הבנים מבקשים ממנו, והוא לא רוצה לשיר.

יום אחד באה הזקנה כרגיל.
הו, עכשו יש לך את העוף, אבל אינו רוצה לשיר?
אמרה:

אינו רוצה לשיר.
והעוף יודע מי זאת הזקנה. אז בא העוף ואמר לבת - תראי. בא המלך אמר להם [העוף]:
אני לא אשיר אלא אם כן תִּזְמַן את כל האנשים שיש בעיר. כשכולם יהיו כאן אני אשיר.
המלך רוצה לשמוע את השירה של העוף. אז הזמין את כל המכובדים, הביאו אותם. והעוף אמר:
עדיין חסר משהו.
- מי?
- עדיין חסרה המיילדת.
הביאו את המיילדת שמו אותה כדי שתשמע את השירה.
בא העוף ואמר:
יש עוד שתי נשים גרות בבית כך וכך, תביאו אותן.
הביאו אותם. העוף הוא זה שמדבר. הביאו את הנשים. הביאו את כל האנשים.
אמר למלך:
תביא את כל המשרתים שיש לך בבית. ותביא את כל האנשים שאתה מכיר.
הביאו.

- נו תשיר!
- לא, עדיין לא אשיר. חסרה משהי.
- מי זאת? אין לנו אף אחד.
בא ואמר למלך:
תשמע יש עוד משהי שיש לך בבית. תחפש אותה ותביא אותה.
והמלך שכח ממנה לגמרי. אמר אין אף אחד. והעוף אומר:
לא אשיר.
המלך התחיל לחשוב. והבת אמרה לאיש הזה, למלך, היא לא ידעה שהוא מלך,
אמרה:

חפש בבית אלי יש עוד משהו. חפש ותראה.
המלך הלך וחפש, מסתכל מסתובב בבית. הוא משוגע עכשו. רוצה שהעוף ישיר.
מחפש רואה את זאת שבכלוב. לא רצה להביא אותה. חזר. אמר לא מצאתי.
אמר לו העוף:
למה, אינך יכול להביא את זאת שבכלוב? לך ותביא אותה.
הלך. המסכנה היא כבר היתה עור ועצמות. רעבה. נותנים לה רק שאריות.
והוא שכח ממנה. המשרתות נותנות לה שאריות וזהו. על הזמן נותנים לה אוכל כזה והיא נשאר שם. הלך אל המשרתות ואמר להן:
תלכו תרחצו אותה ותלבישו אותה ותביאו אותה.
אין שהוא יביאו אותה לשם. רחצו והלבישו וסידרו אותה. הביאו אותה.

והושיבו אותה על כסא.

והעוף עכשו בא ואמר:

אני אספר לכם עכשו סיפור. לא אשיר. קודם אספר ואחר כך אשיר.
מי שצריך להשתין שיצא עכשו, מי שצריך שילך. ומי שרוצה לשתות
שילך לשתות. באמצע הסיפור אף אחד לא יקום. אני מזהיר אתכם.
אמרו בסדר.

ישב העוף הזה בכלוב, והם כולם במתח. והעוף מספר:

המלך יצא לטייל וראה שלוש בנות, ואחת עשתה כך וכך ואחת עשתה כך.
והאשה הזאת ילדה בן ואמרו למלך שהיא ילדה גור כלבים.
והמלך מקשיב ומביט. והמילדת אומרת:

אני צריכה לצאת להשתין.

והעוף אומר - שום דבר, לא קמים.

והמלך גם לא מרשה. אמר להם:

תראו, זרקו את הילד ובא הזקן הזה לקח את הילד וגידל אותו.
ולקח את הבן השני וגידל אותו, ואת הבת, וגידל אותה. ונתן להם
את הארמון הזה. אלה שני הבנים והבת. אביהם הוא המלך.
והמלך מסכן רועד כולו ושומע.

ואת האשה שמו בכלוב ונותנים לה עצמות ושאריות לאכול. והיא
בכלוב. איפה היא האשה שהבאת מהכלוב? לא רצית להביא אווה בכלל.
אמרו הנה היא. והילדים מסכנים בוכים ומחבקים את אמם. והוא אומר:

כך אחיות עושות?

והמילדת הוא אומר לה:

אינך מתביישת, מה שאומרים לך את עושה?

המילדת היא הראשונה שיש להסיר את ראשה.

הסירו את ראשה! והאחיות ההן, אל תהרגו אותן, תנו להן להמשיך

ולחיות בבית שלהן. שיחיו ככה עם העונש שלהן.

והיא המסכנה חזרה לביתה. היתה שוב אשת המלך עם הילדים שלה. והיא שמחה
ובוכה ומחבקת את הילדים:

הנה, לא ילדתי כלבים, ילדתי בני אדם.

השתגעה האם המסכנה. מחבקת אותם ומנשקת. וחיה בכל טוב היא והם.

ואת הארמון ההוא צרפו לארמון המלך, והמלך היה מבסוט, וזהו.

זה הסיפור של הזקנה ההיא שאמרתי לך סיפרה לי באוניה. זה אחד מהסיפורים
שלה ונזכרתי בו.

והוא מציג את (מורה) שני מאן אפיה, סונקיה (א/ויני)

216.563

[14] בגלל קצת אחים

יום אחד הוציא המלך צו: "עם רדת החשכה, לא ידליק איש אור בביתו, והעיר חשאר באפלח מוחלטת." והמלך לא רק ציווה, אלא גם יצא עם ערב לחתולך ברחובות העיר ולברוק אם חפר מישהו את מקורו. ואכן, מילא העם את מקורו אלא שבאחד הבתים דלק אור למרות הפקודה.

בבית זה ישבו שלוש אחיות. הן היו עניות והחמרנסו כלילות מתפירת כפחורים ובימים חביאו את הפחורים וקבלו שכר תמורתם. החליטו שלוש הנערות להפר את מקור המלך. אחת איך ירדוהו את לחסן הדל.

עבר המלך ליד הבית שבו דלק אור ושמע קולות שיחה עולים ממנו. היו שלוש הנערות מפתטות ומשיחות את אשר בלכן. אמרה האחות הגדולה: "הייתי רוצה להיות מסרת בארמון המלך." אמרה האחות האמצעית: "אני הייתי רוצה. לשאת עבד חסוכי הארמון את חכילת הבגדים אל בית המרחץ." והאחות הקטנה אמרה: "אילו הייתי אשתו של הנסיך, הייתי יולדת לו שני ילדים: ילד עם כוכב זחב במצחו, וילדה עם שערות כסף." המלך, שמע בחוץ והאזין לשיחת הנערות הקיש על הדלת.

נבולו חילדוהו מאד כי טכרו שכא מייהו מפקירי המלך לאסור אותן על הפרת הפקודה. הרגיע אותן המלך ושאל על מה זה שוחחו ביניהן עתה. יראו הנערות לספר לו על מה דיברו. אמר להן: "אין בכוננתי לחרע לכן. ספרו לי על מה דיברתן עתה ולא יאונה לכן כל רע." והנערות סיפרו למלך על שלוש המידאלות שהביעו בקול רם זו באזני אחותה. והמלך, שדחו היחה טובה עליהן, ציווה על הנערות לבוא עמו לארמונו, ושם, כך חכמה לחן, ימלא את שלוש מישאלותיהן.

הובאו שלוש האחיות לארמון. נעשהו האחות הבכירה מסתח בארמון. היחה האחות האמצעית נלוויה על ראשי הארמון בלכתם אל בית המרחץ, כשהיא נושאת עכורם את ציור בגדיהם. והנה הקטנה, היחה לאשתו של הנסיך.

אשת הנסיך חרחה. הכל ציפו לראות האם יולד לה בן שכוכב זחב במצחו וחיוור ד-בה ולא שערות כסף. אחיותיה נבחרו שמה באמת חלר אחותן לנסיך שני ילדים כאלה? כשביעה הנערה ללדה באר אל חוזר בו שככה. נתנו שוחר רב בידה של המי-לדה ודרשו ממנה כי אם יבאו מרחם האם שני ילדים בן עם כוכב זחב במצחו, ובה עם שערות כסף, תסליך חמילדת הימה את שני החינוקות ותניח כלכלב וחלתול לצידה של חילדתה. וכך היחה. האשה הביאה לעולם את שני הילדים שהבטיחה לנסיך. מיד הוכנסו הילדים לחכה וחושלכו הימה, ובמקומם הונחו לצד האם חלתול כלכלב. באו שתי האחיות אל הנסיך ובישרו לו כי אשתו ילדה כלב וחחול. נחרד כל הארמון: חלא טוב היה לו ילדה לפתוח ילד או ילדה רבילים. לצחוק יחיה הנסיך באייוודע בעולם כי נולדו לו כלב וחחול.

מיד לקחו את חילדתה, העמידוה בפתח הארמון כשהצי גופה עכור בארמה, וכל מי שעבר על-ידה חיה יורק בפניה. היו מניחים לה לאכול את השאריות של מה שנאכל בסעודתה.

כינתים, ניטלטלה החכה ובה שני החינוקות על גלי הים. דיב עצי אחד, שהיה יוצא מדי יום בסירתו לדיב, העלה באחד הימים את החכה בחכתו. פתח את החכה וגילה בחרכה שני חינוקות חסודים. מכיוון שלא ולאשתו לא היו ילדים, לקח חדיב את החינוקות לביחור, והוא ואשתו החליטו לגדל אותם כאילו היו ילדיהם. גדלו שני הילדים בבית חדיב העני. ומלאו להם שלוש עשרה שנה. היה הנער בעל שכל חריף ולב חכם. עשה הנער חיל בלימודיו והיה בכור ציד. בקשת ובחיציה אשר לו נהג לצוד ציפורים וחיה ציד הציפורים הטוב ביותר בסביבה. יצא שמעו של הנער בכל העיר, כנער נבון ומוכשר, שלא בכדי יי כוכב זחב במצחו.

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הגיע שמו של הנער המוכר שכוכב זהב כמצחו בט אל שתי האחיות.
הבינו האחיות כי הנער הוא החינוך שילדה אחותו וחן השליכו לים לפני אגים.
מחר מאד שם יגלה הסלך את המעשה שנעשה והחליטו לעשות דבר כדי להסחיר את
המשע.

הלכה אחת האחיות אל בית הדין. תקישה בדלת והציגה את עצמה כדודה של הילדה
שבניה. נאחזה אשה הדין לה יום את האורחת לכיתה. האשה הביאה לילדה הכשיטים,
נישקה וחיבקה אותה באמרה לה כי היא ודחתה. חוך כדי כך, פיתחה האורחת את
הילדה כי העשה עצמה חולה מאד. אחיה יבוא הביחח וכשיראה את אחותו השוכבת
חולה, ודאי ישאל אותה מה יוכל לעשות למענה. אז חבקש מאחיה כי ילך אל המקום
הרחוק בו שכנה לכיתה ויביא לה מחלבה של חלביתא, מרפא לחולית. ידעה האחיות,
כי במקום הרחוק בו שכנה חלביתא לא ישוב הנער בי יסרף. כך, לא יודע
דבר המשע שלה ושל אחותה.

והילדה התפתחה ועשתה כדברי הדודה חבלתי צפוייה. כבוא אחת הביתה, החלחה
הילדה וביקשה ממנו את בקשתה. והנער אסף לב, היה ואהב את אחותו מאד.
לקח הנער את קשתו וחיציו ויצא לבקש את חלב לכיתה—רפואה למחלת אחותו.
חלך הנער בדרך והנה נקרה לפניו אליהו הנביא. אמר אליהו לנער: "נערי הטוב,
אל חלך בדרך אשר אתה הולך בה. לא לטובה שלחו אותך בדרך הזאת כי אם להרע
לך." תמח הנער: "הכידך אחותי היא ששלחה אותי וסודע חבקש את רעתך?"
אמר לו אליהו: "בדרך אשר אראה לך, בה חלך. וחשבא לכיתה מיניקה את גוריה.
אם עצמנה עיני חלביתא, דע כי ערה היא ומסוכנת. אך אם מקוחה עיניה,
תוכל להתקרב אליה בחניקה את גוריה ולסחוט מפיסמחה מעט חלב לאחותך."
הנער חלך בכיוון שהראה לו אליהו הנביא. מצא את חלביתא כשעיניה מקוחות
והיא מיניקה את בנה. התקרב הנער אל חלביתא, סחט מעט חלב לחוך בקבוק,
חטף את גוריה וחלל נס עמו. רדפה חלביתא אחירו. הגיע הנער לנחל וצלה אותו.
לא הצליחה חלביתא לתפוס ושבח למאורתה. שב הנער בשלוש לביתו והביא לאחותו
חלב לביאה וגור אריות. נודעה גבורתו של הנער בכל האזור. נודעה גבורתו לשתי
האחיות והכינן כי מצימחן נכשלח. החליטו לנסות שוב לשלוח את הנער למקום ממנו
לא ישוב.

שוב באה אחת האחיות לכית הדין. הביאה לילדה כסף זהב וחכשיטים, ופיתחה
אותה להתחלחל בשניה. המעם, אמרה הדודה לילדה, כי עליה לבקש מאחיה לחביא
לה צפור מופלאה, השוכנת הרחוק, ויודעה לשיר שירים שלא שמעה כמותם אזן
אדם. והילדה, התפתחה. כשבא אחיה הביתה התחלחה, וכששאל אחיה מה יוכל לעשות
למענה, סימרה לו על הצפור המופלאה וביקשה שיביאנה לה.
ידעו האחיות כי מקומה של הצפור הוא מעבר לחרי חושך, ואיש לא ישוב ממנו
בשלום. המעם, חשבו, ייפטרו סופית מהנער הזה.

הנער, לקח עמו קשת וחיצים, רגט את גור האריות שהביא עמו צרף אליו, ויצא
הנער לדרך ארוכה ושוב נגלה לפניו אליהו הנביא. אמר לו: "נערי הטוב,
אל חלך בדרך שאחך הולך בה, כי לא לטובה שלחו אותך בדרך הזאת כי אם להרע
לך." תמח הנער: "הכידך אחותי היא ששלחה אותי לדרך." אמר לו אליהו:
"כאשר חלך בדרך, חשמע צעקות מעוררות פלצות ורוח סערה חנוב, חילל וחבקש
להפיל אותך. אך אחך, האבק ברוח ואף פניך אל חפנה לאחור. אם חפנה את
פניך אחור ותאמר: דבר, תחמך לבוש אבן." הזחיר אליהו הנביא שוב ושוב את הנער
לבל יסב פניו לאחור כשתפוזר הסערה, ונעלם.

דית חזקה מאד החלה מצליפה בכל. הרוח נשאה עמה קולות מעוררי אימה של
צעקות וצריחור. והנער, כמצורה אליהו, לא סרטה מדרכו ולא מסב פנים אחור.

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ארסט' ארזנים רמוסיף ללכת בגד הרות העזה.
 הגיע הנער אל מקום המצאה של הצפור. חכם ואוהה, וכוחות חזקים ובלתי נראים
 ניסו להתילול ולהרפו. אך הוא גבר עליהם והביא את הצפור לאחוזו.
 הייתה הצפור המופלאה מזמרת בחצרו של הדיב שירים ילא טטעה כמרחם ארזן
 ארס ליומי ולעדינות. שמע גם המלך אודות הצפור המופלאה, המרטיסה לבכות
 בשיריה. בא המלך אל בית הדיב והקניב לצפור המזמרת יום ולילה. יאל המלך את
 הדיב מניין הגיעה לביתו הצפור הקטנה. סיפר לו הדיב על שני הילדים הבולטים
 כביחיו כיצד מצאם בחור חכם בין גלי הים, כיצד גידל אותם יחד עם אשתו,
 ואיך הביא הבן האמין לאחוזו את צפור המלאים ממקום רחוק מאד. ראה המלך את
 שני הנערים: לנער נוכח זהב במצחו ולנערה טעורה מכסף. בלב חולם שאל את המלך
 מתי מצא את הילדים בחכה. סיפר לו הדיב כי הדבר ארע לפני כאלוש-עשרה שנים.
 לבו של המלך ניבא לו כי הילדים הללו, נכדיו שלו הם. הביא המלך לארמונו את
 הדיב וזרזתו ואת שני הילדים. קרא לשתי האחיות ששחר בארמונו. שאל אותן:
 "ארם הנגרם רעה למלך, איזה עונש ראוי להן לכן של האחיות ניבא להן
 רעות אך הן השיבו בליח ברירה: "מי שמיע למלך, ינחתה גוטו לנחמים ויטלחו
 הנחמים בכל רחבי המלכה." אמר המלך: "כמו פיתן תרצחן את גורלכן." הדיב המלך
 את השחים ועשה להן, מה שראוי לרעתן לעשרת למי שמיע למלך. והאחות השלישית,
 אמם של שני הנערים, הוצאה ממקומה שכמתח הארמונו, הולבשה בבגדי מלכות ותיא
 ישבה בכבוד בארמונו, לצד ילדיה ובעלה הנסיך.

ספור מס 14
 השם: מילדת הפושטת ותקון פשמה ע"י הרב
 בחצר אחת גרו שתי נשים, לאחת נולדו רק ילדים ולשניה נולדו רק בנות. יום אחד
 ילדו שתי הנשים עוד פעם בכת אחת הראשונה ילדה כן והשניה ילדה בנה. המילדת
 של שני הילדים רחמה על האמהות, ובשעה הלידה ראתה ששניהם דומים, החליפה
 ביניהם ולראשונה נחנה את הבח ולשניה את הכן. עברו שנים, הילדים גדלו והבן
 שבדל אצל השניה החתאכ בכת שבדלה אצל הראשונה וחם החארוסו. בערב החופה בא
 הרב לקדש את החתן ואת הכלה, נפלה הכוס מידו. לקח כוס שניה, ונפלה גם היא
 מידו, אמר הרב לכו והביאו כוס שלישיה מכיתי, אולי יצליח הפעם, לקח הרב את
 הכוס לקדש נפלה גם היא מידו. אמר הרב בלבו, יש דברים בגו. הלך הרב ועשה
 שאלה חלום, אמרו לו שלא יקדש אותם לעת עתה. אמר להם שלא יעשה עכשיו את
 החופה. עשה עוד פעם שאלה חלום, וגילו לא שזה מחתחן עם אחותו. אמר הרב: "הביאו
 לי את המילדת", אכל המילדת מזה כמה שנים קודם. קם הרב והלך לבת של המילדת.
 שאל אותה, אולי נשארו לה אילו ספרים של אמה ששם היחה נוהגת לרשם, אולי
 ימצא את החלומה. אמרה לו: יש כאן איזו תיבה ובתוכה כל הספרים שקאמה, ושם
 רשום הכלפפתה. את הספרים חפשו וחפשו עד שהרכיב מצא רשום כל מה שקרא. אמר
 הרב בלבו, איך היחה יכולה היא לעשות צבר כזה, ולהביא בני ישראל לעכירה גבולה
 כזאת. כלילה חופיעה המילדת בחלומה של הרב ובקשה ממנו תקון, ואמרה לו: "אדוני
 החכם, כבר שנים עשרה שנה שאני מושלכת בין שמים וארץ ואיני מקבלת תקון, כגלל
 החטא שחטאתי, כשהחלפתי את הילד בילדה". בבקר קרא החכם לכל הרבנים שהיו בסביבה
 ואמר על ידם, שילך השמש למקום הקבר, וימצא את הפנה בה מוחבא הנשמה, ושנשמה
 חספר לו בדיוק את כל ספור המעשה. למחרתו לקח השמשאח מקל החכם והלך, ושמע
 את הנשמה מדברת עם הרבאומרת, שהיא היחה מאד מדאגה, ועשתה מהשעשעה על מנת
 שכלם ישמחו. עכשיו היא נמצאת בגלגול ומחפשה תקון. עכשיו היא מבקשת שהחתן
 והכלה יסלחו לה על הצער שהיא גרמה להם, כי היא היחה שנים עשרה שנים בגלגול.
 הרב בעצמו עשה לה תקון, עד שמצאה את מנוחה.

נרשם ע"י איתי זימרון (י-ס) מפי אמירה ע"י, ספר א"י.

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ל פנחס

ארנן
חלואה של
בצורה

היה חכם ה' ש' השנה
נכבשה טו"ס ביד רומנים, ש'
המנונו אחדות מערית, וגם ה'
אנלום השיבו בהפצות על רי'
כזו כוחותיהם, העיר שס נח'
רבה קשות והפליטים היהודים.
ניצאו מכלט בעיר מוכנין, היהו

דים שבערי התלאות נהנו לשבת
על יד קבר רבי פנחס און עליו
השלום ולומר תהילים ופרקי
משנה ונמרה. בשכונות לבית ח'
עלמין נר ערבי ושמו פאשור
רסטאס, ערבי וכבד וידיד היהו
דים ולו תואר וכבוד. ערב אחו
בא רבי פנחס ז"ל בחלום אל
אשנו של באשור וניווה עליה
בפעם הראשונה כי תלך אל ה'
יהודים ותאמר להם כי אל להם
לפחד כי דבר רע לא יאונה להם.
וכשיפצה למשפחתה, לעט לה
ולחלומה. חרבי בא אליה שנית
ומסר לה דברו ליהודים, גם ה'
פעם סיפרה לבני משפחתה, ושוב
צחקו על תענוציה, שטויותיה ר'
דברי ההויות איתם קמה משי'
תה. גם הפעם לא מסרה דבר
ליהודים, אף כי נאמר לה כי

חלומה כי תלכה בשיתוק נופה
אם לא תמלא את השליחות. כו
במקום שותקה כליל בכל נופה
ורק מילדת יהודיה ושמה יורה
הלאה, שהזעקה ושמה את ה'
דברים ומסרה אותם לקהילה ה'
יהודית — הסירו את הנזירה מן
היהודים והביאה להם שלום ו-
לעריצי הביאו רמאה שלמה ל-

נופה.
מאז דואגים חרבים לסויד
ולשמו את מקום חקבורה של
רבי איון, לעלות אף הם אליו
ולחללות עניי קטורת מבושמת
להקליא. כל זאת נעשה לפועלו
וגודל רוחו של רבי פנחס עליו
השלום.

בשנת הצדיק הגדול תמשיך לע'
מוד על בני עם וישראל בכל
אתר ואתר אמן.

כס' וקא ספר
1355
אורח

APPENDIX F

A Yemenite Midwife's Duty



n the middle of a Friday night *Dod* Yosef took sick with an illness called *subah*, from which one either recovers or dies; for seven days and seven nights there is a high fever. In the middle of the same night *Dodah* Sabrah, his wife, felt the pains of childbirth.

Now, at that time your father and I slept together in a big sleeping bag in our bedroom on the third floor. Sinyah, your father's sister, came in the middle of the night, shaking my leg, trying to awaken me, and so I accidentally kicked father with my foot. He nudged me. "What happened to you?"

"I don't know. Someone pulled my leg."

Sinyah laughed. She whispered, "Hurry! Sabrah is giving birth. Come quickly."

Father pulled off the strings of the sleeping bag, and I jumped out and ran. Father called me to come back and light the candles. One is not supposed to give birth in the dark, and it is permitted to light the candles on *Shabbat* to save a life.

Now Sabrah was giving birth on the ground floor, at the entrance to the house, right near the stairs. The corner for giving birth was nearby but Sabrah did not manage to get there; the baby was coming too quickly. I found her sitting on her knees, which was the position for giving birth, and I quickly embraced her, grasping my hands in front of her chest. With my knees I pressed on her back, exerting all my strength, and the child was born, the first child to be born to her. Then I cut the cord and held the child and took care of him as needed to be done. At that moment Sinyah, my sister-in-law, burst into "Hallelujah!" as an expression of happiness and also as an expression against the evil eye.

Suddenly *Dod* Yosef, still sick, came downstairs, dressed in a white robe and *tallit*. He was on his way to synagogue for, even though he was ill, he needed to offer prayers for his new

son. But there on the threshold he was greeted with a puddle of blood and the afterbirth. Frozen with surprise, he didn't know where to go, what to do. He wanted only to get to the synagogue to fulfill the male's role of praying for his newborn son, but there he found himself in the territory of women, unable to pass. What could he do?

Quickly I summoned every bit of my strength and lifted *Dod* Yosef over the puddle of blood and outside the door. How I could have done that I still don't know for he was much heavier than I.

"Go, go, go to pray," I called.

"Watch over the boy and his mother," he shouted back.

Then I cleansed the baby, covered him with cloth and swaddled him. I covered the mother and tied her, as needs to be done after birth. Then I burst into "Hallelujah" to awaken the people in the house and to announce the birth.

We took Sabrah to the second floor and set her to rest on a high, soft mattress. She was so beautiful, especially at this time, that your father, upon returning from synagogue, rubbed two black stripes of *saberr* on her face in order to reduce her striking beauty, so that she would not attract the evil eye.

After prayers in the synagogue, everyone came to bless her, to wish her, "*Mazal Tov*." Her mother-in-law brought a special gift, an amulet prepared from skin, decorated with shells and beads, rolled and sewed in a beautiful way.

Surely with all the good wishes, the amulets, and especially the prayers of his father, made possible by the midwife's *mitzvah*, this eldest son of Sabrah would have a long and happy life.

A Sixteenth-Century Castilian Midwife and her Encounter with the Inquisition

Renée Levine Melammed

Beatriz Rodríguez was a Castilian midwife, a resident of Santa Olalla, whom the inquisitors in the Archbishopric of Toledo were anxious to convict. During the course of fifty years the Inquisition persistently collected information concerning this *conversa*. In the latter half of this period, from 1536 until 1563, Beatriz was summoned numerous times to the central court in Toledo, as well as to interviews during local visitations to various towns and villages by one of the inquisitors.¹ Both the tactics employed and the accusations made by her adversaries seemed to vary each time she was confronted. While the court appeared to be preoccupied with the distinct possibility that there might be a Judaizer to expose, the fact that Beatriz was a midwife was by no means irrelevant to her case.

By examining the trial proceedings, one discovers that the first time the suspicions of the inquisitor Alonso de Mariana were aroused occurred while he was on *visita* in northwestern New Castile.² In a town not far from Santa Olalla, Talavera de la Reina, two witnesses came forward to the inquisitor on 26 February 1514 to offer testimony concerning Beatriz.³ Juan del Páramo, a cloth-weaver of Old Christian lineage, reported that in the winter of 1511 he made a trip to Santa Olalla for the purpose of purchasing a shirt for his servant. At this time, he and this servant lodged with Enrique Lencero and his wife, a New Christian couple. The midwife Beatriz Rodríguez, as fortune or, in this instance, misfortune would have it, was also present in this household as her services were required for the care of Enrique's sick wife. Thus the *partera* was busy preparing spices, presumably herbs, by grinding them before applying them to the abdomen of the afflicted *conversa*.

Juan decided to strike up a conversation with the "tall, round-faced woman." In the course of this conversation, the *comadre* inquired about the fate of an arrested New Christian woman from Juan's village, Maqueda, located north of Santa Olalla. The weaver, who would later pride himself on his guile and deceptiveness, misled Beatriz by informing her that he, too, was a New Christian. The midwife, assuming that a fellow converso would be an empathetic listener, proceeded to malign Old Christians. She said that she was certain the above-mentioned woman from Maqueda was arrested because her Old Christian neighbors had informed upon her; this *cristiana nueva de judia* had graciously given these neighbors left-over food which they then claimed was *adafinas*, the remains of the special Sabbath stew prepared by the Spanish Jews on Fridays before sunset.⁴ At first Beatriz obliquely referred to the misfortune of having bad neighbors by saying, "Quien avia mal vezino avia mal maytino."⁵ However, once Juan made his false declaration of solidarity, she became bolder: "The Old Christians want to harm us because we are prosperous, but we do not steal [from them]." She referred to God's love for "this law" and called the Jews the "apple of his eye." According to Juan's version, Enrique re-entered the room at this time, and the conversation ceased.⁶

Similar, but not identical, testimony was provided by Juan's servant Alonso Sánchez who explained that the "tall, heavy-set" *comadre* was called in to care for the mistress of the house, who was apparently suffering from menstrual cramps.⁷ His own master flattered the ministering conversa, complimenting her on her knowledge of her craft.⁸ Beatriz was not certain if she had met Juan previously; the latter assured her that indeed she had. When she asked if he knew the wife of Corcobado, who was a prisoner of the Inquisition, Juan replied that he did and then "naively" questioned Beatriz concerning the nature of the arrest. Alonso also reported that the midwife referred to the aforementioned incriminating lies perpetrated by the imprisoned woman's Old Christian neighbors; then Beatriz affirmed God's love for the Jews. The servant recalled that his master told Beatriz that this divine love was a well-known fact, for God had parted the Red Sea for them. Beatriz then added that whosoever offends a Jew offends the "apple of God's eye."⁹ Alonso also noted that the conversation was interrupted when the master of the house, Enrique, summoned the midwife; his own master admonished him to remain silent, assuring him that "if this Jewess returns here, I'll take her to where they'll burn her!"¹⁰

Although this inquisitor was by no means pleased to hear about Beatriz's unorthodox comments, these depositions did not and could not justify initiating proceedings against her. Nevertheless, they were copiously

recorded in a Book of Testimonies from Talavera de la Reina and stored for possible future reference.¹¹ The opportunity did not present itself until 1536, twenty-two years later, while the inquisitor Gíron was on *visita*. In March, at Santa Olalla, he had collected new information concerning the midwife, but she was nowhere to be found. While the representative of the Holy Office was continuing his rounds in the village of Montalbán (west of Toledo and south of Santa Olalla) a month later, however, Beatriz was located and summoned to come to this neighboring village.

At the outset of her interview in April 1536, the inquisitor did not confront Beatriz with her unorthodox statements of 1514.¹² When these comments finally were brought to her attention, Beatriz eventually admitted to having made such contentions, but it was extremely obvious that she had no clear recollection as to when and with whom she had conversed. This was no wonder since more than two decades had passed from the time of the unfortunate conversation. Very likely she had made similar comments to various fellow New Christians during more than forty years of life as a conversa. As her memory did not serve her well, she wrongly attributed the conversation to a mere four years prior (1532) and as taking place either with another midwife or possibly with a neighbor named Cardeñas, the wife of Sandoval, with whom she frequently had chatted.¹³ Although Beatriz first denied having made such statements, she later recognized the comments but was unable to recall any particular context. In all honesty, how could she possibly have succeeded in naming Juan del Páramo or his servant, Alonso Sánchez, with whom she'd spoken so long ago and for such a short time? There is a distinct possibility that the actual names of these two witnesses did not even emerge in the course of that brief and fateful conversation.

The inquisitor, however, had amassed other evidence with which Beatriz was confronted on the previous day. It was precisely this evidence which was considered to be substantive and due cause for re-opening her file. A number of depositions about her had been made in the presence of Gíron while on *visita* in Santa Olalla between 18 March and 21 March 1536. Beatriz could not have made a physical appearance for questioning before the inquisitor prior to the session on 3 April; during most of the month of March, she was not even in Castile, a fact that was by no means inconsequential to her trial or to the charges made against her.

The two accounts perceived by the court as providing incriminating evidence pertain to an odd incident that transpired in January of that same year. The following story was told by the parish priest, Diego de Casarrubios, and corroborated by one of the local sextons, Diego de Tapia.¹⁴

The baptism of the daughter of Gonzalo de Loarte of Santa Olalla was scheduled to take place in the Church of Sant Pedro after the vesper service on 29 January 1536. The priest performed the exorcisms and then asked the godparents, the midwife Beatriz Rodríguez, and the others present if the child had been baptized in her father's home.¹⁵ Beatriz replied that water had been poured on the child; however, the two sextons apparently wanted to confirm the fact that there was indeed water in the house of the infant's father, whereupon the midwife unhesitatingly affirmed her statement. The ceremony then proceeded on the basis of this affirmation; consequently the baby was anointed with oil and chrism and all that was deemed to be necessary for performing the rites of initiation was done, except for the pouring of water. After the baptism, the parents were accompanied home by one of the sextons. When the latter mentioned this detail of the ceremony to the father, perhaps fifteen to twenty minutes later, he most adamantly denied that any water had been poured on the infant in his house.¹⁶ After the mother of the child corroborated this assertion, the sexton and the father set off for the home of the parish priest, who, once informed of the scandalous situation, ordered the family and the sextons to return to the Church where he would properly baptize the infant.

The inquisitor only learned of this incident on 18 March. Because the midwife was nowhere to be found in the village, four witnesses were summoned and questioned regarding her whereabouts. The first witness had heard from the *partera's* son that his mother had gone to visit relatives in Portugal;¹⁷ the witness himself raised suspicions regarding her true motives. Was it not fortuitous that she was absent at the very time the inquisitors appeared in Santa Olalla?

The others who were questioned were three of Beatriz's children. One of her daughters, Leonor, related that her mother had long wanted to visit a brother in Portugal; this plan finally materialized when she departed on 6 March, accompanied by a son-in-law.¹⁸ The inquisitor emphasized the fact that Beatriz did not part with all of her children, which was a detail that aroused suspicion. Leonor's brother, Juan Martín, thought their mother had departed on 4 March for Evora, where she thought her brother was residing; on that day, she had indeed said goodbye to him.¹⁹ Catalina, the daughter whose husband, Diego Díaz, had accompanied her mother, pointed out that this trip had been contemplated and discussed by her mother for over a year; as a matter of fact, Beatriz had frequently mentioned the prospective trip to her neighbors. Not only was there nothing surreptitious about her departure, but Beatriz told Catalina that she expected to return in about twenty days' time. When questioned about the possibility

that her mother might have fled the kingdom, this daughter saw no reason whatsoever to entertain such a notion.²⁰

This was the sum total of the evidence amassed by the Inquisition thus far and the basis of a potential case for the prosecution. When confronted with the problematic baptism, Beatriz claimed she had been covering up for the parents' negligence, for ten days had passed since the birth of the infant and they had not yet taken the child to be baptized.²¹ The midwife apparently had feared for the soul of the child, and that the maximum time period might transpire without performing baptism. To avoid maligning the parents, she chose to pretend that the baptismal water had already been applied. She later admitted to her error in judgement.²² It had been a simple woman's unintentional mistake, the consequences of which she had no knowledge until after her return from Portugal, where she had gone to find her brother, Francisco de Toledo. After an unsuccessful search in Evora, rather than wandering aimlessly about searching for her merchant brother, who travelled by land as well as by sea, Beatriz returned home, only to find the Inquisition waiting at her doorstep.²³

The tribunal most definitely was troubled by this woman's activities. Questioning at the first session on 3 April 1536 revealed that she was a woman in her fifties whose origins lay in Castile. When Castilian Jewry was faced with the expulsion decree of 1492, Beatriz's widowed mother, Leonor Rodríguez, took her young daughter to Jerez de la Frontera where they both converted to Catholicism. The midwife's father and her grandparents had all died as Jews; her conversa mother died in Santa Olalla.²⁴ After presenting this brief genealogy, Beatriz was then told that there were certain things she had said as a Jewess, things she needed to contemplate before her next audience with the inquisitor.

This was a reference to that unfortunate conversation with the weaver in 1514. When Beatriz returned in the afternoon of the same day, 3 April, however, she simply repeated her version of the baptism episode. She was then released, but instructed not to leave town and to report daily to the court.²⁵ On the following day, she offered no additional information and was subsequently confronted with her reference to Old Christians as bad neighbors.²⁶ On the fifth of April, she appeared at the court in Montalbán, affirming those explanations she had presented already. She suspected one or two individuals of bearing false witness against her, but did not seem to understand that she could attempt to invalidate the testimony of unreliable witnesses.²⁷ Beatriz seemed anxious not to be troubled further with legal procedures and to have to come to court so frequently.²⁸

The midwife's prayers were answered, for no formal accusation

against her materialized that April. Indeed, what were the potential charges that could have been formulated by the prosecution? Had this *conversa* been Judaizing? What were the reasons why she misinformed the parish priest concerning the baptismal waters? Did the priest and the sexton have any grudge to bear against this midwife? How incriminating were her comments against Old Christians? And, if she had fled to Portugal precisely at the time that the inquisitorial court had established itself in Santa Olalla, why on earth did she return while it was still in the vicinity? Had Beatriz actually done anything for which she could have been legally convicted? Would the Inquisition of Toledo opt to remain, so to speak, "on her case"?

Since the fact that these proceedings did not end in 1536 has already been mentioned, the last question is rhetorical. Yet, before proceeding with the remainder of the trial, perhaps it also will prove useful to contemplate some of the relevant historical and legal circumstances concerning inquisitorial trials. The testimonies about her tactless comments were made in 1514, in the midst of an intensive drive on the part of the Inquisition to extirpate Judaizing heretics; however they did not contain ample proof of Judaizing on her part. While inappropriate and even blasphemous-sounding remarks often appeared in prosecutors' accusations, legal priority determined precedence and thus charges of this nature inevitably were placed near the bottom of their lists. The top of the list contained more tangible deeds and actions of the *converso* Judaizers which were far more incriminating and therefore easier to prosecute effectively.

The testimonies received in 1536 did not necessarily point to a crypto-Jewish orientation. Why would a *conversa* midwife deliberately misinform the clergy concerning baptismal rites?²⁹ If the parents of the infant had been fellow Judaizers, then this would be a case of a perfectly constructed collaboration against the Church on the part of three untrustworthy New Christians, in this instance, the midwife and the parents.³⁰ A crypto-Jew hoping to "de-baptize" his or her child would rinse off the baptismal waters after the ceremony; as a matter of fact, he or she could have avoided the entire sacrament by a clever collusion with a sympathetic *conversa* midwife.³¹ This possibility would have been viable, had the parents not been the ones to object vehemently to the improper baptism. No such diabolical collaboration transpired, however; the decision to lie about the baptismal waters apparently was made by Beatriz on her own.³²

From the reactions of the clergymen involved, certain conclusions may be drawn. For example, it must have been acceptable for a midwife to pour water on a newborn prior to the church baptism; if not, why would the priest have asked if water had been administered?³³ And, when a midwife

had done so, it obviously was acceptable in lieu of the priest's actions. If Beatriz had not done as she had stated, why was there no immediate reaction to her lie on the part of the parents of the infant? Although the sextons apparently made certain to ascertain the *partera's* contention, where were the others when Beatriz was being questioned and when she replied? And where would they have been when she was administering the water beforehand? Why did the parents not react until later and only then deny the midwife's story?

The most likely possibility that would explain the midwife's involvement with baptismal waters would stem from the fear that the child would not survive until the time of official baptism. Midwives were sanctioned to baptize a baby unlikely to survive; this pre-christening period was full of uncertainties, which often served to motivate as prompt a baptism as possible.³⁴ Beatriz clearly was perturbed because the parents had waited a full ten days before arranging for a proper baptism. Yet, in this particular case, no mention was made of any need for an emergency baptism, so this possibility must be ruled out.

There were also cases of re-baptisms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the regularity of the baptism was in question, or even when an endangered child had been baptized and, upon its survival, the parents hid this fact so as to celebrate properly the infant's birth at a "bona fide" baptism.³⁵ Had the latter been the case, the parents would have reacted differently; essentially, the former option, a re-baptism, did occur because the supposed pouring of water never transpired the first time around, resulting in a very questionable sacrament indeed.

The character and religious beliefs of the midwife were of utmost concern to the ecclesiastical authorities. The midwife was valued and trusted by the community; this situation presented a challenge to the Church, for "the acquisition of power by peasant women posed a threat to the Church."³⁶ How great was the resentment and how threatened were the men of the clergy? To make such a determination, the activities of the midwives must be assessed; only then can the fears of them, entertained by the clergy and other males in power, be evaluated.

A midwife had varied duties which included pre-natal advice to the pregnant mother; psychological support of the woman in labor; possibly easing of delivery by oiling the stomach; preparing special drinks, herbal remedies or food; and cutting the umbilical cord. She would bring the infant to church for baptism or, in critical cases, perform emergency baptism and prepare the deceased infant's body for burial. She might remain to care for the post-partum mother as well as attending the newborn. In certain cities,

a midwife would be called in to perform physical examinations of women, as in cases of rape. Furthermore, "the midwife's close association with birth and death as well as her knowledge of abortifacients and other medicaments made her vulnerable to witchcraft accusations."³⁷

During this period, there were attempts to impose legal limitations upon midwives in some Spanish cities:

Many officials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wanted a stricter rule for midwives, perhaps because birth remained in the hands of women. . . . Licensing was necessary not simply because midwives could be ignorant, but also because it was believed that they used sorcery and promoted immorality.³⁸

Those who were not of Old Christian heritage typically were even more suspect. A 1565 regulation was passed in Granada instructing New Christians to avoid using New Christian midwives; if possible, they were to employ only those of Old Christian lineage.³⁹ At the same time, the Inquisition used its own techniques, often denouncing and discrediting women healers, who had to take care not to disturb the clerical religious monopoly.⁴⁰

Had Beatriz Rodríguez defied the Church? Was she playing an active role in this dialectic between herself and her accusers or was she merely a passive victim of the Inquisition?⁴¹ Were the inquisitors displaying a conscious or even subconscious fear of female power?⁴² Was this conversa midwife a heretic or was she a strong, independent woman whose actions and attitudes might have perturbed the inquisitor even had she not been a New Christian?⁴³ Was she merely a simple widow attempting to perform her role in the community as she understood it, thereby becoming more vulnerable to prosecution by the Inquisition because of her standing in the community?⁴⁴

The very fact that Beatriz did not hesitate to lie to the clergymen attested to her spirit. Since she obviously was acting on her own, she might well have been attempting to protect the parents of the infant whom she thought had endangered the soul of their daughter. She was steadfast in her version of the baptism story, when confronted by the tribunal in 1536, and was released. While the Inquisition was not comfortable with the various reports about this woman, it apparently was unable to justify going beyond the hearing stage at this time.

On 10 July 1550, the inquisitors at the central court of Toledo assessed the material amassed at the earlier *visitas* and hearings and decided that, if Beatriz were still alive, she was to be taken prisoner and have her goods

sequestered.⁴⁵ Once the midwife had been summoned to Toledo, the prosecution took a more aggressive stand. Beatriz, now more than sixty-five years old, could not imagine why she had been called to court, for she was certain that she had been meticulous in reciting her catechism, in confessing and in receiving communion. Although she was admonished to confess at what was effectively her first audience before the tribunal, on 3 August 1550 the conversa had nothing to add to the previous statements she made in 1536 in Montalbán and Santa Olalla.⁴⁶

The questioning became more intensive. When she referred to God's love for the Jews, why did she say *Dio* rather than *Dios*? Did she not know that the Jews say *Dio*? Beatriz admitted that the Jews say *Dio*; but the rationale for this usage was beyond her comprehension, as she herself was not literate and had been but a mere girl when she abandoned Judaism. The inquisitors, in pursuing this theological approach, also questioned her concerning her contention in 1514 that God loves "this" law.⁴⁷ After this session the inquisitors abided by their decision to imprison Beatriz.

After three weeks in prison (and no record of physical torture), the midwife was granted an audience and admonished to confess. On 25 August, Beatriz repeated the story of her conversion in Andalusia, adding the fact that, soon after converting, she had married an Old Christian named Alonso Martín and later moved to Toledo with him.⁴⁸ The marriage lasted eight years; and, after her husband's death, Beatriz moved to Santa Olalla where, about six months later, she remarried. This marriage, to George Díaz, a New Christian, lasted about five years, at which time she apparently reentered widowhood.⁴⁹

At this point in the trial, Beatriz, most unexpectedly, confessed to Judaizing.⁵⁰ During her marriage to the converso Díaz, she began to observe the Sabbath, abstaining from work, wearing clean blouses and her best clothes. When Beatriz attempted to reconstruct the chronology of her observance, her account became rather distorted. At first she claimed that she had observed the Sabbath by herself some seven or eight times while married to George. Later she surmised that perhaps she had observed the Sabbath after his death as well, but that she had inevitably returned to the fold of the Church.

The rationale provided by Beatriz to explain her Judaizing was classic: she blamed external forces, such as her marriage to a New Christian, the devil, madness, and even her own sheer stupidity.⁵¹ She chose to present an image of herself as a weak, ignorant woman who had sinned through circumstances beyond her control. The inquisitors informed her that this was not a likely story. Had not she thought she would be saved by observing

the Jewish law? "Yes," conceded Beatriz, who was thereupon sent to her cell to think everything over; perhaps she had not made a full confession.⁵²

At long last the prosecution could explain her actions and subsequently presented its formal charges against the defendant on 19 August 1550. Beatriz had fled to Portugal for fear of imprisonment by the Inquisition; she was a believer in the Jewish law who had disappeared, hoping to be forgotten.⁵³ Concerning the baptismal ceremony in 1536: the midwife obviously had subverted this sacrament as a Jewess, misleading the priest because of her belief in the Law of Moses.⁵⁴ Next the prosecutor described her derogatory statements about Old Christians, made with the "intention" that she had toward the law of the Jews.⁵⁵ The rest of the charges were standard: Beatriz had observed the Jewish Sabbath, wearing good and clean clothes in its honor;⁵⁶ she had observed with other individuals and neglected to bring this to the attention of the tribunal;⁵⁷ she had not admitted to the truth.⁵⁸

On the following day, further questioning of the defendant did not prove fruitful. Beatriz did not attempt to defend herself, nor did her defense lawyer prove to be of any help.⁵⁹ Consequently, on 10 September 1550, the *Consulta de Fe* voted to reconcile her to the Church, sentencing her to life imprisonment and confiscation of all her goods.⁶⁰ The sentence was recapitulated on 21 September;⁶¹ the *conversa* midwife was summoned on the following day and admonished to provide additional testimony, but none was offered. The conditions of reconciliation were then pronounced and included the requirements of consistent confession, communion and attendance at mass and sermons on Sundays and holidays at the monastery of San Pedro along with other penitents in their *sanbenitos*.⁶²

On 13 April 1552, Beatriz, who was already nearing seventy years of age, was permitted to go and live with her aunt, provided she remain within city limits.⁶³ On 9 August, her request to return home to Santa Olalla was granted.⁶⁴ Eleven years later, on 11 August 1563, the final entry was made in this proceeding. Here the terms for confiscation of Beatriz's property were specified and were to be retroactive more or less to the date of her marriage to her New Christian husband; the Court had determined that she had been a crypto-Jew for half a century.⁶⁵

Beatriz Rodríguez confirmed the suspicions of the Tribunal of Toledo; she was, after all, a Judaizer. She confessed to some observance of the Jewish Sabbath while married to a New Christian man; no one else was implicated in these heretical activities. While the court determined that she had been Judaizing for fifty years, Beatriz never made any statement that could justify this conclusion. Her anti-Old Christian comments of 1514 were

made during or shortly after her Judaizing phase. Yet, it is evident that a New Christian did not have to be a Judaizer in order to have just cause to resent Old Christians in sixteenth-century Castilian society.

Certain details of this complex and fascinating trial remain elusive to the investigator. Why did the Inquisition release Beatriz in 1536 and then, fourteen years later, summon her to a formal audience in Toledo, despite the fact that no new information had been acquired? Why did she decide to confess to Judaizing when no questions had been presented that dealt with specific rituals? At the same time, the inquisitors' persistence in their attempts to discredit this woman is quite significant. The first confrontation in 1536 was not fruitful; the suspicious statements she made in 1514 were not sufficiently incriminating; and her inappropriate behavior at the baptism in Santa Olalla remained extremely problematic. Having eluded an arrest in 1536, this *conversa* midwife would not be forgotten and would be hounded again, fourteen years later, although by that time, the court was not even certain if she was still alive.

Beatriz's profession as a midwife played a central role in these proceedings; a Judaizing midwife would have been especially threatening to the men of the Church. The mere thought that a Judaizer had participated in infant baptism was horrendous. The tribunal's struggle to indict the midwife ended in 1550 when Beatriz unexpectedly confessed to observing the Sabbath. The twice-widowed and ageing *conversa* was, most probably, tired of confrontations, and chose to reveal some ancient *pecadillos* in order to end the psychological torture. While her attempt to blame external forces for her deviation from the Church was unconvincing, she was nevertheless granted reconciliation to the Church.⁶⁶

From what one can gather, Beatriz had long been an observant Catholic, although the most successful of crypto-Jews were those who had perfected the façade of appearing faithful to the Church. And what she may have omitted in her confession will never be known. The inquisitorial court was, nonetheless, satisfied to have cornered the *conversa* midwife at long last. Despite its display of mercy by not relaxing her to the secular arm, its power was asserted by declaring that all possessions amassed during the fifty years prior to her arrest would be confiscated. When permission was granted to the near, if not already, octogenarian prisoner to return to her home in Santa Olalla, the Inquisition had effectively removed this erstwhile Judaizing midwife from her practice.⁶⁷

APPENDIX G

THE ANGEL OF CONCEPTION

Among the angels there is one who serves as the midwife of souls. This is Lailah, the angel of conception. When the time has come for conception, Lailah seeks out a certain soul hidden in the Garden of Eden and commands it to enter the seed. The soul is always reluctant, for it still remembers the pain of being born, and it prefers to remain pure. But Lailah compels the soul to obey, and that is how new life comes into being.

While the infant grows in the womb, Lailah watches over it, reading the unborn child the history of its soul. All the while a light shines upon the head of the child, by which it sees from one end of the world to the other. And Lailah shows the child the rewards of the Garden of Eden, as well as the punishments of Gehenna. But when the time has come to be born, the angel extinguishes the light and brings forth the child into the world, and as it is brought forth, it cries. Then Lailah

lightly strikes the newborn above the lip, causing it to forget all it has learned. And that is the origin of this mark, which everyone bears.

Indeed, Lailah is a guardian angel who watches over us all of our days. And when the time has come to take leave of this world, it is Lailah who leads us to the World to Come.

□ Babylon: c. Ninth Century

A MIDWIFE FOR SOULS

for Shalvi and Khaya

There was a young girl whose name was Shulamit who lived in a mountain village in Southern Germany where very few Jews were to be found. And although this girl was only twelve years old, the longing of her spirit for God was very great, and as long as she could remember she had been praying to God for a sign.

In those days Reb Zalman passed through that village while on a long journey to visit the grave of the Baal Shem of Michelstadt, and joined the *Minyan* in that town for *Minhah* on Friday afternoon, even though he did not know where he would be spending the *Shabbas*. Now the *Minyan* in that village was very loyal, for there was barely a *Minyan* of Jewish men living there, and if one of them were to stay home, there would not be enough left for a *Minyan*. But it happened that one of those men was sick that day, and that Reb Zalman had the honor of being the tenth man. And from that moment on Reb Zalman knew that he need fear for nothing, for whenever one has the honor of the tenth man it is a sign that God is watching over him.

So it was that after *Minhah* and *Maariv* Reb Zalman was invited by one of the men in the *Minyan* to stay at his

home for the Sabbath. And that man was the father of the girl Shulamit. And one of the reasons that he invited him was that there were no Hasidim to be found in the village, and he wanted his daughter to know something of the Hasidim, for he himself was a great admirer of the tales and teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

Now all during the *Shabbas* dinner Shulamit was very silent, and rarely looked up from her plate. But Reb Zalman was aware from the first that there was something unusual about her, for she was far more intense than other children her age. And after the meal Reb Zalman turned to her and said: "Is there something you would like to ask me?" Then the young girl found the confidence to speak, and she said: "Would you please tell me a story? I've been waiting for someone to tell me a story. I need to hear a story." And this is the story that Reb Zalman told her:

"Once upon a time there was a young girl who was young on the outside but old on the inside. Now this girl had a special destiny, for she had been given a particular task by God to do, but no one who knew her believed it was more than a fantasy. Therefore this young girl waited for a sign from God to confirm her calling. Yet, though she expected that sign to come at any time, nothing out of the ordinary seemed to happen. Still, she never gave up hope for her special calling.

"And what calling was this? This young girl believed that it was her destiny to become a midwife. But not only a midwife to women, but a midwife to every one in the world. For there are some babies that are born from the belly, and others that are born from the heart. And when she would say to her parents that she wanted to be a midwife to babies that are born from the heart, they would laugh and think her merely naive. They did not understand at all that she knew what she was saying, for she had been born with a wonderful intuition that let her perceive her destiny long before it manifested itself.

"And so it was that in the end she did indeed become such a midwife for souls, for she helped all those whom she encountered in bringing forth the child in their heart that was waiting to be born."

Here Reb Zalman ended the story, and he saw that tears were flowing from the girl's eyes, and everyone wondered why she was crying. And Reb Zalman alone among them knew the reason for her tears, for the story he had told her was her own story, and it was also the sign that she had been awaiting so long.

All the next day, during *Shabbas*, Shulamit smiled and glowed as if the Sabbath Queen were her closest friend. Her parents had never seen her so happy and at peace with herself, and they thought that she must be happy to have a visitor stay with them for so few visitors passed their way.

And that night, as Shulamit held the *Havdolah* candle and Reb Zalman stood beside her, she whispered to him: "How did you know?" And Reb Zalman replied: "If you listen hard enough it is possible to hear the angels as they whisper among themselves. Now on the Sabbath everyone is accompanied by two angels, and during the dinner I heard one angel tell another about your future destiny. And when you asked me to tell a tale, I thought that you might have been dimly aware of overhearing the angels, and what you were really asking is that I repeat what they had said. So I did." And when Shulamit heard this, the glow that surrounded her face became as bright as the flame of the candle, for then she knew for certain that it was indeed her destiny to serve as a midwife for souls. And that is exactly what she grew up to be.

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