

*Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him – Ex. 2:1-9*

Her name was Jochabed. She was a Levite and married to her nephew Amram. She had 2 kids and now she was pregnant with her third. But this was a bad time to be pregnant. Pharaoh, the leader of these people who had enslaved Jochabed's people, had just declared that all baby boys were to be killed to slow the population growth of her oppressed people. What was she to do?

As we approach Mother's Day, we have been looking at great mothers of the Bible. We are going to conclude with Jochabed, a little known but incredibly important mom from the Old Testament. While Mary taught, and Hannah prayed, and the widow of Zerepheth welcomed, Jochabed did what all good mothers do for their kids: she fought.

With the declaration that her baby boy would be killed, Jochabed hatched a plan and prayed for God's blessing. Her first step was to hide the baby, which worked for about 3 months. Eating, sleeping, and pooping could all be done quietly until then. But when the baby began to make a little too much noise, she moved on to step two. Pharaoh's declaration was that any baby boy would be thrown into the Nile River, so that is just what Jochabed decided to do. She made a makeshift boat out of a basket and some tar, just big enough for her baby, and floated him in it in the reeds near shore. She stationed her eldest daughter Miriam to watch over him. And when Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and took him in, Miriam became step 3. She offered Jochabed as a wet-nurse for the baby, and so Jochabed got paid by Pharaoh himself to raise her own son. That son grew up to be Moses, and to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt.

As a rule-follower myself, I find it hard to swallow that God so often rewards the sneaky schemes of His own people. There is a Jewish word used in the annual celebration of this event: that word is Dayenu and means, "It would have been enough..." Throughout the Exodus story, God keeps piling blessing upon blessing, but it all begins here with Jochabed. Dayenu! It would have been enough for God to silence the child for the first 3 months. Dayenu! It would have been enough for God to save the child in the reeds from boat holes, crocodiles, or discovery by Egyptians. Dayenu! It would have been enough for God to save Moses by the hand of Pharaoh's daughter, the only person in Egypt with the power to save the child. Dayenu! It would have been enough for God to allow Jochabed to rear her own son. Dayenu! It would have been enough for God to support her by having her paid to rear Moses, but by Pharaoh himself!?!

Jochabed, like every good mother, fought for her child. And her fight, flowing out of the love of a mother for her baby, was rewarded by God. Maybe God recognized Himself in Jochabed's fight, for God has fought for us, His children, since day one. And He continues to fight for you to this day. This is love, sacrifice and care and protection and nurture and teaching and modeling, but also fighting for us. We can learn a lot from the moms in our lives.

Questions to ponder: Who do you love enough to fight for? How has God fought for you? Are you willing to return God's love by fighting for Him as well?