

The pomegranate on the seder plate

Now the king of Egypt said to the midwives of the Hebrews – the name of the first one was Shifra, the name of the second was Puah – he said: “When you help the Hebrew women give birth, look carefully at the child: if he be a son, put him to death, but if she be a daughter, she may live.”

But the midwives held God in awe, and they did not do as the king of Egypt had told them: they let the male children live.

The king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them: “Why have you done this thing? You have let the children live!”

The midwives said to Pharaoh: “Indeed, the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are hardy – before the midwife comes to them, they have given birth already!” God dealt well with the midwives. Since the midwives held the Eternal One in awe, God made them houses.

Exodus 1:15-21

Shifra and Puah concealed their true intention, and many Israelite boys owed the brave midwives their lives.

To remember their courage in disobeying Pharaoh’s evil order, we add a pomegranate to our seder plate: the thick skin of the fruit conceals the hundreds of seeds inside.