

# Yocheved's Story

after Exodus 2:2 - 2:7

Hilene Flanzbaum

No more babies, her husband said:  
Not another Hebrew boy and no son  
of mine will be born only to die  
at the hands of Egyptians.

But the girls,  
where are my unborn daughters? Yocheved  
mourned. Not to be, her husband replied.  
But she watched the moon, and he did not,  
and bore a child despite him. A boy  
so beautiful (like all babies) that she refused  
to give him up.

So the story says:  
Yocheved put the boy in a basket  
made of wicker, patched with bitumen  
and pitch, and placed it among the reeds  
on the banks of the Nile, but couldn't bear  
to watch, to be near and not go to him.  
Miriam, her older daughter, watched.  
Yocheved wept so hard she didn't see  
her daughter approach to give her news:  
"Mother," she cried, "he has been saved —  
a strange woman gathered him from the reeds."  
And they rejoiced, mother and daughter, then  
followed, knowing that the strange woman's

breasts would be dry. Yocheved saw the baby  
grow to be a man, and answer to a name  
she had not given him: Moses. Soon  
he would be called to leave forever.

Yocheved grieved  
harder and asked for her daughter.  
And when she heard Miriam's voice  
in her ear, like God's whisper,  
Only then was she consoled.



Hilene Flanzbaum ([hflanzba@butler.edu](mailto:hflanzba@butler.edu)) is a co-editor of *Jewish-American Literature: A Norton Anthology*. She has published poetry in *Ploughshares*, *Tikkun* and *The Seattle Review*. Currently, she heads the English Department at Butler University in Indianapolis.