

Who was Zipporah in the Bible?

Zipporah in the Bible was the wife of Moses and the daughter of Jethro, the priest of Midian. When Moses fled from Egypt to the land of Midian, he met Jethro's seven daughters, who were having some trouble getting enough water for their flocks (Exodus 2). In that area, the troughs for watering flocks were being monopolized by some shepherds who denied Jethro's daughters access to the troughs. Moses assisted the women by driving the shepherds away so their flocks could be watered. Zipporah was among the sisters helped by Moses.

Zipporah and her sisters brought Moses back to their tent to meet their father, the priest of Midian, who liked Moses. Moses was content to stay there in Midian (Exodus 2:21). Moses later married Zipporah and began a new life. Zipporah gave birth to a son. Moses named him Gershom, a name that sounds like the Hebrew word meaning "a foreigner there." Gershom's name was a reminder that Moses was a foreigner and living among foreigners. Later, Zipporah had another son named Eliezer (Exodus 18:4).

Later in the book of Exodus, there is a strange passage involving Zipporah. Moses and his wife are traveling to Egypt because God had told Moses to bring the Israelites out of bondage (Exodus 3). On the way, Moses and Zipporah stop at an inn, and the Lord meets Moses there, seeking to kill him. Perceiving that Moses was in mortal danger, Zipporah takes a sharp stone and circumcises her son. She takes her son's foreskin and, touching Moses' feet with it, she utters the enigmatic statement, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" (Exodus 4:25). Her action worked. After Zipporah's intervention, the Lord left Moses alone. The Bible does not explicitly explain why the Lord desired to kill Moses, but it was probably because Moses had not performed the rite of circumcision. Circumcision was an important symbol of the Abrahamic Covenant, and the lack of

circumcision would mark a person as cut off from God's people (Genesis 17:9-14). For Moses to neglect to circumcise his son was an affront to God, as if he were saying that he and his family did not truly belong to God. How could Moses be an effective leader of God's people if he were in violation of God's clear command?

Zipporah's words to Moses are puzzling, but the text explains that "she said 'bridegroom of blood,' referring to circumcision" (Exodus 4:26). It seems that Zipporah was angry at having to perform the rite, which should have been completed by Moses. Sometime after this incident, Moses sent Zipporah and his two sons back to Midian to stay with Zipporah's father (see Exodus 18:2-3).