

EVERY WOMAN IN THE BIBLE

ZIPPORAH (Ex. 2:21, 4:25, & Ex. 18: 2-6, & Num. 12:1.)

GIFTED ARTISANS (Num. 35: 22-29.)

Shelomith (Lev. 24:11)

Cozibi (Num. 25: 14-18).

ZIPPORAH

Date: About 1450 B.C.

Name: Zipporah (meaning: "bird").

Greatest Contribution: She circumcised her sons as Moses began his mission for the Lord.

ZIPPORAH'S ROLE IN SCRIPTURE:

When Moses was forced to flee from Egypt he settled in a desolate part of the Sinai Peninsula.

The area supported a few shepherders, and long before Moses' time it had been mined for semi-precious stones. Moses attached himself to the family of Jethro, a Midianite who lived in the Sinai. In time Moses married Zipporah, one of Jethro daughters.

Though her husband Moses is one of the greatest leaders of all time, Zipporah herself is an example of one of the Bible's undistinguished wives. In only 4 passages is she called by name, and these are brief segments. The words spoken/recorded about her lead us to believe she was a woman of violent temper who had little sympathy with the religious convictions of Moses.

Though her name means "bird", not even that gives us any idea of her character. She came from a Midian background. Her father Jethro, was a priest. What god Jethro worshiped we can not definitely state. There is reason to believe that he later became a believer of Moses', God, because later Jethro stated to Moses, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods." (Exodus 18:11). We do not have any such expression of faith from Zipporah.

We don't know much about Zipporah, from her brief record we do know that she was one of seven daughters, and she met Moses in the land of Midian soon after he fled here because he had killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, one of his own brethren. Zipporah and her sisters, who had been tending their father's sheep, had come with their flocks to draw water at the well. Other shepherd's had driven the flocks of the seven sisters away but Moses was a courteous shepherd. He gave water to the sisters' sheep.

They went and told Jethro about the kindness Moses had done, who in turn offered Moses the hospitality of his house. Zipporah's marriage to Moses after that, has a mere seven words in Exodus 2:21. The romantic element found in the wooing of both Isaac and Jacob is not found here. Soon afterward Moses became very engrossed in the problems of his people. Zipporah does not seem to play a part in his lofty plans or even his tremendous hardships.

We do know that they had two sons, Gershom, and Eliezer. Moses took his wife and sons with him when he left Midian - to follow God's call to go back to the land of Egypt. She was on a donkey and the males were walking -

Moses with his staff in hand - a picture of a humble traveling family, whose head was destined to become Israel's great prophet, lawgiver, and leader.

One night when they halted at an Inn for the night, Moses became very ill. The narrative is very obscure and hard to follow, but the the idea of it - some believe - is something was troubling him. He became so ill, that death was a distinct possibility. Records found do not furnish actual historical details, so most of this is just conjecture as to the cause - Zipporah was a Midianite, and had refused to allow the circumcision of their sons, which Moses believed was a covenant between God and His people. And Moses, now called by God to the leadership of His people, was troubled because he had neglected the sacred duty of circumcision, which was not practiced by his wife's people. (Ex. 4:24-26).

The assumption is that the delay in circumcision was due to Zipporah's prejudices. When she saw her husband so violently ill, she doubtless believed God was angered with him because he had not circumcised his son. She then seized a flint and circumcised her son herself. Which son it was, remains unknown, as there is not record. Jewish tradition, says it was the second son Eliezer.

After the circumcision incident Zipporah becomes a nonentity. What further part she played in Moses' life, we can not be sure of. She had very little in common with Moses, on his mission to Pharaoh, he probably had to send her back home. Another theory is that she and her sons did accompany Moses to Egypt and stay with him there, and after the Exodus, when Moses' people were slowly approaching Mount Sinai, Zipporah and her sons may have been sent ahead to visit with Jethro and tell of all that God had done for Moses and the Israelites.

These verses have puzzled ancient Jewish commentators as well as Christian scholars. A few elements seem clear, however, Moses failed to have his sons circumcised, a rite given to Abraham that functioned as a sign of male membership in the covenant community. When God "attacked" Moses [perhaps through a sudden illness?] Zipporah was apparently aware of the importance of circumcision, and quickly acted to avert disaster by circumcising their son.

Another puzzle is the meaning of Zipporah's repeated reference to Moses as a "husband of blood". What is significant in the context of the passage, however, is that Zipporah's quick analysis of the situation and her willingness to act, removed the threat to Moses, and he was able to continue on his mission.

Some people have assumed that Zipporah had died and that Moses remarried, because of the Numbers 12:1 passage that speaks of Moses' marriage to an "Ethiopian" or "Cushite". It is more likely that the reference is to Zipporah. Cush was an imprecise term during most of the biblical era, but at all times it referred to lands south of Egypt where the Sinai lay.

Later we find that Miriam and Aaron have issues with Moses because of his Cushite wife. The text of Num. 12:1 would lead us to believe Zipporah had died and Moses had married a second time. Some scholars, however, believe that Zipporah and the Cushite were the same person. A phrase in Habakkuk 3:7 indicates that it could be true.

Though interpretations regarding incidents of Zipporah's life vary, there is one conclusion we may quite confidently draw from all of this. Zipporah seems to have been a woman who was prejudiced and rebellious. To neither her husband nor her sons did she leave a legacy of spiritual riches.

Exploring Zipporah's Relationships:

Zipporah's relationship with God: Zipporah responded to God when for some unknown reason, her husband Moses had refused. God was upset that Moses had neglected to circumcise his son to honor the covenant God had made

with Abraham. That Zipporah knew enough to do this; points to Moses' having told her about this covenant and custom.

Zipporah's relationship with Moses' siblings: When Miriam and Aaron attacked Moses on account of his "Ethiopian woman" and complained that Moses was not the only one through whom God spoke, "Miriam became leprous, as white as snow." After God intervened, there is no more unfair criticism about Zipporah.

ZIPPORAH: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY:

Just as Miriam and Aaron criticized Zipporah, many times wives or families of religious leaders will be unfairly criticized. It is better to focus on Christ's example of love and acceptance of other than Miriam and Aaron's negative example.

GIFTED ARTISANS:

(Exodus 35:22-29).

Date: About 1445 B.C.

Names: Unknown

Major

Contribution: These women used their talents as well as their treasures to beautify the Tabernacle.

THEIR ROLE IN SCRIPTURE:

At Sinai God gave the Israelites His Law. He also gave them the blueprints of a portable worship center. Men and women quickly contributed the wood, cloth, gold, silver, and precious stones required. The text then tells us that "all the women who were gifted artisans (Ex. 35:25) spun the yarn to be used in construction.

All too often in our day we limit the idea of "spiritual gifts" to "spiritual" ministries. But any gift or ability God provides can be dedicated to God.

GIFTED ARTISANS: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY:

The Lord spoke to Moses and told him to have those with a willing heart to bring offerings of jewelry and other valuables such as gold, onyx, silver, bronze, thread of fine linen and goats' hair in blue purple and scarlet, ram skins dyed red, badger skins, acacia wood, oil for the light, spices and incense. These would all be used by artisans with willing hearts to build the Tabernacle of meeting, including its tent, its covering, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, the Ark, and its poles, with the mercy seat, and accoutrements (Ex. 35:18).

Exodus 35 reminds us that women and men with willing hearts are to use their gifts for Glory to God. (Ex. 35:25-26, &29.)

These artisans contributed to all elements of the Tabernacle. Though we are not all artistic, all believers have gifts to be used for the edification of the body.

SHELOMITH:

(Leviticus 24:11)

Date: About 1445 B.C.

Name: Shelomith ["peaceful"]

Major

Contribution: Unknown.

SHELOMITH'S ROLE IN SCRIPTURE:

Shortly after God gave the Israelites His Law, a fight broke out in the Hebrew camp. In the heat of the struggle, the son of an Israelite woman named Shelomith and an Egyptian husband "blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed". (Lev. 24:11) In so doing he broke the third commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." (Ex. 20:7.)

The meaning of the commandment and the incident itself is often misunderstood. The phrase "in vain" renders a Hebrew word that indicates something that is empty or meaningless; it is frequently linked with idolatry. The "curse" mentioned here is not a swear word, but rather an occult curse: an attempt to invoke supernatural powers to harm an enemy. What Shelomith's son did was to invoke God's name in a curse hurled against his adversary in the same way pagans used the name of their demons and deities.

This serious violation of the third commandment led to the execution of Shelomith's son and is an unforgettable reminder to Israel that God is to be honored always as real and present.

SHELOMITH: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY:

For those who are unmarried, Shelomith serves as a reminder that God does not want us to be unequally yoked to nonbelievers. She was an Israelite married to an Egyptian who worshiped pagan deities. This undoubtedly gave her son knowledge of these pagan gods and occult worship that led him down a path that caused him to sin and pay for it with his life. Our choice of a life-partner affects not just us but our children as well.

Shelomith had not modeled the behavior that her son acted out. If she had, she too would have died. Even if she were a wonderful mother who taught her son God's commands, he still had the power to make his own choices. Society likes to blame parents, especially mothers, for all the faults of their children. Parents truly have an awesome responsibility in raising children, but we must remember that our children have been given the choice to respond to authority or to rebel. Adam and Eve had the perfect Father, yet they chose to rebel. Surely, we do not hold God responsible for their sinful choices.

Anymouse

