

## The Conversions of Zipporah and Jethro

Abstract (Revised Version)

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This paper focuses on Zipporah nurturing Moses and Zipporah mentoring Moses. Multifaceted cross cultural engagement and intimate interfaith relationships result in conversions and transformations of both Hebrew and Midianite cultures. Moses, returning from Midian to Egypt to deliver his people, is “met” by Yahweh, who is about to kill him, but Zipporah cuts off her son’s foreskin and touches Moses’ “feet” with it, declaring that “you are a bridegroom of blood to me,” mitigating the Lord’s anger (Ex. 4:25-26). Moses’ Midianite wife delivers the Hebrew deliverer from death. Moses’ has gained a new identity, in blood bond with his wife; she has also gained a new identity, bonded through an Israelite blood ritual. Zipporah's quick-fix circumcision makes her "blood bridegroom" of Moses, placing the whole family within the covenant of Israel. This sudden religious change in the midst of severe stress will be explored with implications of inter-religious continuity and discontinuity.

Zipporah’s father mentors Moses and also performs an Israelite burnt offering. Jethro rejoices over Yahweh’s miracles that delivered the Hebrews from Egypt, declaring a newfound faith in the God of the Exodus community: “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods” (18:8-11). In sum, both Zipporah and Jethro perform rites of initiation into the covenant community of Yahweh, indicating both continuity and discontinuity of previous and newly avowed religious beliefs.