

THE "BLOODY BRIDEGROOM" IN EXODUS 4:24-26*

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EXODUS 4:24-26 comprises possibly the most perplexing passage in all the Torah, surpassed perhaps only by the puzzlement many feel concerning "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men" in Genesis 6:1-4.

The Book of Exodus begins in chapter 1 with a brief recital of the plight of Israel in their long period of servitude in Egypt. Then in chapter 2 the story records the birth of Moses, whose protection in his infancy was a most remarkable instance of divine providence, including humor.¹ The balance of chapter 2 through nearly all of chapter 4 focuses on Moses' early life, as Yahweh prepared him for his lifework of being the human agent for God's deliverance of His people from Egypt. Along the way God revealed Himself to Moses in terms of His divine name Yahweh (2:22-3:15),² and then He told Moses of His choice of him to be His agent. Moses was reluctant at first, but finally was convinced that his purpose in life was this grand task. So at last in Exodus 4:18 Moses prepared to leave Midian, where he had lived for forty years, to return to Egypt to obey God's command.

As Moses was on his way to Egypt, the Lord came to kill him. Surely these three verses (Exod. 4:24-26) are among biblical

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¹ It is interesting to note the comic justice of Pharaoh's daughter hiring Moses' mother to nurse her own baby (Exod. 2:7-10).

² Ronald B. Allen, "What Is in a Name?" in *God: What Is He Like?* ed. William F. Kerr (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1977), 107-27.

paths less traveled. Childs wrote, "Few texts contain more problems for the interpreter than these few verses which have continued to baffle throughout the centuries."³ In the New King James Version, Exodus 4:24-26 reads as follows: "And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses⁴ feet, and said, 'Surely you are a husband of blood to me!' So He let him go. Then she said, 'You are a husband of blood'--because of the circumcision."

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Several questions come to mind when one reads these verses.

1. This passage seems to be an intrusion into the flow of the chapter. It is abrupt as well as cryptic and difficult. Though these verses form a unit, the question remains, What is the purpose of this pericope?

2. The passage is marked by a lack of clear antecedents for some of its pronouns or named objects for some of its verbs. Further, many translations have inserted the name "Moses" in verse 25 where the Hebrew has only "his."⁵ Who did what to whom?

3. More significantly, the passage prompts the question, Why? What possibly could have prompted the rage of Yahweh that would have caused Him to want to kill Moses? This seems particularly inappropriate, since the initial "misunderstanding" between God and Moses had been settled (Exod. 4:1-17).

4. Why does the passage center on what for modern readers are the distasteful and embarrassing subjects of circumcision, blood, and foreskins?

5. What was behind Zipporah's action? How did she know what to do? Why did Moses not act? After she cut off the foreskin of her son, whom did she touch with it, what did she touch with it, and why did she need to touch anything with it?

³ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 95. John I. Durham writes, "These verses are among the most difficult in the Book of Exodus, not in terms of their translation, which is quite straightforward, but in terms of their meaning and their location in this particular context" (*Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 56-59). Walter C. Kaiser Jr. echoes these words ("Exodus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 2:332).

⁴ The footnote in the New King James Version correctly notes that the Hebrew is literally "his."

⁵ Certainly this passage must be studied on the basis of the Hebrew text rather than in a translation. At times the priority of the Scriptures in the original languages needs to be reasserted over that of any translation. All translations of Scripture are adequate for the purposes intended; no translation of Scripture is able to reveal the subtle nuances that are a part of the original locution.

6. What is the meaning of Zipporah's words, "You are a husband of blood to me," and to whom are they addressed?
7. What is the point of this passage?⁶

SUGGESTED INTERPRETATIONS

Not surprisingly, this puzzling passage has been a mine for critical scholars to explore, allowing them to look for exotic ores and bizarre treasures.⁷ Alas, they seem to have found mostly fool's gold. On the other hand three contemporary scholars have attempted to deal with the passage constructively.

BREVARD CHILDS'S VIEW

Childs notes many difficulties, including those of connection, the rash action of the Lord, the lack of stated reason, the lack of an explanation of the action of Zipporah, the lack of antecedents, and the irrational, almost demonic, atmosphere with its focus on blood.⁸ Then he says that it is not clear whose feet were touched. "In my opinion the redactor of the present narrative seemed to have understood the child as the recipient of the action. The smearing of the blood serves as a visible demonstration that circumcision had indeed been performed."⁹

To this the question may be asked, Would not the boy's wail be sufficient evidence that he was the one on whom the procedure had been accomplished? Why also put blood on the child's feet?

To whom were the words addressed? On the surface they seem to apply neither to the child nor to Moses, and assuredly not to Yahweh. The frequent suggestion of translating the phrase on the basis of Arabic to mean "the blood-circumcised one" escapes some of the difficulties but cannot be sustained philologically.¹⁰

Childs concludes that the story "serves to dramatize the tremendous importance of circumcision. . . . the implication is certainly that Moses was held culpable for its omission. Indeed so serious was the offense as to have nearly cost him his life. When Zipporah righted the omission, he was released."¹¹

⁶ To put it another way, How does this text aid in one's spiritual development, and how may this text be used in preaching God's Word to hurting people? How is this a part of Scripture that has its role in making the believer complete in the Lord (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

⁷ For a survey of theories, see Durham, *Exodus*, 57.

⁸ Childs, *Exodus*, 95.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

Thus Childs suggests these points: (1) The child was circumcised by his mother because Moses did not do so. (2) The bloody foreskin was touched to the feet of the child to demonstrate that the circumcision was accomplished. (3) Questions about Zipporah's enigmatic words are unanswered. (4) The meaning of the passage is to be found in the tremendous importance attached to circumcision (and its role in the covenant of God and man).

WALTER C. KAISER JR.'S VIEW

With the two textual clues, the rite of circumcision as the explanation of the whole episode and "my firstborn son"¹² as the connection between the sections, the rest of the passage yields this explanation. The Lord had attacked Moses as he was enroute to accomplish the mission of God in Egypt. The nature of this nearly fatal experience is not known to us; therefore, it does not figure in the interpretation. That Moses was the object of the divine action is clear from the fact that the otherwise unspecified son in v. 25 would need to be identified as belonging to someone other than Moses. The sudden introduction of Zipporah's action leads us to believe that she instinctively connected her husband's peril (a malady so great that it left only her hands free to act, for presumably his were not able to help) with their failure to circumcise their son. This she immediately proceeded to do. But her words of reproach--"Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me"--indicate that the root of the problem was in her revulsion and disgust with this rite of circumcision.¹³

Kaiser then gives this conclusion:

Thus for one small neglect, apparently out of deference for his wife's wishes, or perhaps to keep peace in the home, Moses almost forfeited his opportunity to serve God and wasted eighty years of preparation and training! To further underscore this connection between Moses' grave condition and the circumcision of his son, Zipporah took the excised prepuce and touched Moses' feet (this need not be as many commentators argue a euphemism for his genitals, for this is not a puberty rite here). The Lord let Moses go, and the grip of death was lited.¹⁴

These are the salient elements in Kaiser's presentation: (1) Moses was the one under God's action, suffering from an (unnamed) illness that incapacitated him.¹⁵ (2) The child (presum-

¹² Kaiser is referring here to the words, "my firstborn son," in verse 22.

¹³ Kaiser, "Exodus," 332-33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 333.

¹⁵ This is also the view of U. Cassuto: "that the Lord met him, that means, that he contracted a severe illness (on the Hebrew usage that attributes every event to the direct action of God)" (*A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967], 60).

ably Gershom) had not been circumcised, possibly the result of a family dispute. (3) Zipporah showed revulsion to the act of circumcision of her son, as seen in her words to Moses; nevertheless she acted to save Moses' life. (4) One senses the homiletical point in Kaiser's last paragraph: What sadness if one were to lose a ministry for God just to keep peace in the home.

JOHN I. DURHAM'S VIEW

Durham insists that the study should be "of the passage as it stands in Exodus, and, just as important, where it stands in Exodus."¹⁶ These are his interpretive points. (1) The main point is clearly circumcision, and at that, a specific circumcision. The etiological view (as Childs argues) is not in view here, nor (in the present text) is there any ground for a demonic interpretation. (2) Moses was the object of Yahweh's encountering action. (3) The reason for the attack is "that Moses had not previously been circumcised."¹⁷ (4) Zipporah circumcised her son, because if she had circumcised Moses, he would have been incapacitated for his journey. On the child, the effects would be less problematic; in any event, the child did not make the journey. (5) To transfer the effects of the rite to Moses, she touched the severed foreskin of her son to Moses' genitals. (6) The phrase "a bridegroom of blood" was an ancient formula recalling circumcision as a premarital rite. (7) Thus Zipporah's action "is a vicarious circumcision of Moses to prevent his being painfully crippled at the beginning of the most important undertaking of his life."¹⁸

There are some strengths to Durham's position, but his view is marred by a critical error. "Vicarious circumcision" is as unlikely a category as "vicarious baptism." This is a theological oxymoron. If Yahweh were about to kill Moses because he was not circumcised, the blood of his son's foreskin on his still uncircumcised organ would not likely assuage the wrath of God. Further, Durham says that the words of Zipporah form "the ritual statement which accompanied the premarital circumcision as a declaration to a young man's in-laws that he was of an appropriate for marriage."¹⁹ Of what application would this be for Moses, who had long before married her and fathered two sons by

¹⁶ Durham, *Exodus*, 57.

¹⁷ Or if he had been circumcised, it was in the "partial manner" of the Egyptians. This is farfetched, for was it not Hebrew circumcision that led Pharaoh's daughter to recognize Moses as a Hebrew baby (Exod. 2:6)?

¹⁸ These points are summarized from Durham, *Exodus*, 57-59.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

her? If circumcision were a necessity for marriage in her culture, and if Moses had not been circumcised as a baby in Egypt, surely Moses would have been circumcised by Jethro, her father,²⁰ in the time-honored tradition of the Arabian (and other) peoples of this period. The weaknesses of this view outweigh the strengths.

A PROPOSED INTERPRETATION

VERSE 24

"Now it happened on the way at an inn, that Yahweh encountered him and sought to kill him" (author's translation). The "him" (twice) in verse 24 undoubtedly refers to Moses.²¹ Is it possible that the delicate nature of the text led Moses (or another) to refer to him obliquely? Moses was on his way to Egypt, as commissioned by Yahweh (4:21-23). The strained interplay Moses had had with the Lord (4:1-17) was behind him.

Yahweh is clearly the subject of the verbs "met" (פָּגַעַ, "to encounter") and "sought to kill" (though the Septuagint substituted the word "angel" for Yahweh). Moses had recently learned the meaning of the name of God, Yahweh (Exod. 3:13-15); now God who was for him had become his enemy.

The verb "encounter" is minimized by many commentators. Cole says Moses "was struck down by some dangerous sickness or other blow as the sign of God's displeasure."²² However, Hebrew has a clear way of speaking of physical illness or injury (e.g., 1 Kings 17:17; 2 Kings 1:2), and such phrases are not in this passage. The verb "encounter" is as significant in this passage as is the word "son." Kaiser rightly sees "son" (v. 25) as the connecting link of this pericope with the preceding one (v. 23), but he

²⁰ This is particularly the case since the Hebrew for "his father-in-law" (חַתָּן) used of Jethro is derived from an Arabic word that means "his circumciser."

²¹ Because there is no clear antecedent for the pronoun "him" in this verse, it is remotely possible that the one whom the Lord was about to kill was not Moses but his son (either Gershom or Eliezer) who was not circumcised. The uncircumcised one was to be cut off from Israel (Gen. 17). In this case one may picture the Lord holding the boy, even as his mother circumcised him. Then the Lord would have released the boy. This option is likely without precedent among interpreters (but see comments below on v. 26). Perhaps the strongest objection to this view is the observation that one would have expected Moses to have acted on behalf of his son in this Hebrew custom rather than his mother (who was a Midianite). Yet her mother's love may have urged her to act quickly, as Phinehas acted with zeal in Numbers 25.

²² R. Alan Cole, *Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 79. Similarly, John J. Davis suggests Moses "was punished by God and was apparently desperately sick" (*Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in the Book of Exodus* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971], 71).

strangely dismisses the link of "encounter" with the next pericope beginning in verse 27.²³

Yahweh encountered Moses to kill him; in the next unit Aaron encountered Moses to embrace him. Both statements use פגש, a relatively rare verb that connotes a significant personal encounter.²⁴ This verb suggests a dramatic (hostile) encounter of Yahweh with Moses in what may be a hitherto-unacknowledged theophany. Those approaches that say Moses was ill because of a visitation by the Lord overlook the serious nature of this term. This theophany was an appearance of the living, preincarnate Christ, the One who reveals the Father and is the living Word (John 1:14-18).

Yahweh's encounter with Moses was similar to the wrestling match of the Angel of Yahweh (the preincarnate Christ) with Jacob (Gen. 32). Both theophanic appearances were sudden, personal, direct revelations of the divine presence in a hostile, wrestler's hold. Moses was held by the Lord, not beset by a mysterious disease. And then he was released by Yahweh when His demands had been met (Exod. 4:26); it was not simply that he "got better." Just as he was later held by Aaron (v. 27) in a warm embrace, so now he was held by the Lord (v. 24) in a hostile hold--a death grip.

Why does verse 24 state that "Yahweh. . . sought to kill him"? If He truly wished to kill Moses, could He not have done so in a moment? Actually the very opposite was God's intention. He held Moses in a death grip, but He did not want to kill him. The verb שׁקף, "to seek," means not a frenetic activity on God's part, but a sudden struggle, a divine grip, and divine patience before the final blow. Indeed, He was giving Moses one last chance to stay alive. Strangely, but surely, this is another instance of God's grace. Moses had committed a serious offense against the Lord that made him unfit to be God's agent of deliverance or to live in God's presence.

VERSE 25

"Then Zipporah took a flint and she cut off the foreskin of her son, and she held it out to touch his feet, and she said, "Surely you are a bloody bride-father²⁵ [בַּחַיִּים - בְּרֵיבִי] to me!" (author's transla-

²³ Kaiser, "Exodus," 332.

²⁴ The word here (v. 24) is not the more familiar verb אָקַח, "to meet." Both פָּגַשׁ and אָקַח are used in verse 27.

²⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs list בְּרֵיבִי as a "daughter's husband, bridegroom" (meaning one who undergoes circumcision), and more generally, a wife's or husband's relations. For Exodus 4:25 they give the standard translation, "a bloody

tion). Crucial to the interpretation of this verse is the Lord's instruction regarding circumcision based on Genesis 17. Clearly that passage says that each male child is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. Should that fail to be done, that one was to be cut off from Israel; he had broken covenant with Yahweh (Gen. 17:3-14).

Moses was guilty of not carrying out circumcision in his own family, yet he was the one who was to lead the circumcised nation of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. The situation was simply intolerable. "But if Moses was to carry out the divine commission with success, he must first of all prove himself to be a faithful servant of Jehovah in his own house."²⁶ Though a sentence of death was pronounced on any neglect of circumcision as being a breach of the covenant (Gen. 17:14), "Moses had probably omitted circumcision [of his child] simply from regard to his Midianitish wife, who. . . disliked this operation; he had been guilty of a capital crime, which God could not pass over in the case of one whom He had chosen to be His messenger, to establish His covenant with Israel."²⁷

There may be a grisly pun in the words "cut off" in Genesis 17:14. If the foreskin were not removed, then the person was to be removed. Did the punishment fall on the child who was uncircumcised, or on the parent who refused to have this done? The answer may be "On both." That is, the child seems to be in view in Genesis 17:14, but the command is for the father (or his agent) to do the task. Another issue concerns which son is in view in Exo-

bridegroom art thou to me" (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1907], 368). However, there are etymological data that may suggest the standard translation is based on the false assumption that Zipporah's words were addressed to Moses.

The verb קָטַץ , "to circumcise" is related to an Arabic verb, *hatana*, "to circumcise." The Hebrew קָטַץ , "father-in-law," is related to the Arabic *hatin*, "a circumciser," hence to a father-in-law with reference to circumcision performed on young men just before marriage (cf. the Arabic *hatan*, a relative on the wife's side). The Hebrew קָטַץ is used of Jethro, Moses' "wife's father" (Exod. 3:1; 4:18; 18:1-2, 5-8, 12, 14, 17, 24, 27; Num. 10:29; Judg. 1:16; 4:11). The same word in the feminine is used of the wife's mother (Deut. 27:23).

In Ugaritic the related verb *htn* means "to marry," and the related noun *htn* means "son-in-law" (Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965], 405).

These Hebrew, Arabic, and Ugaritic terms also have cognate nouns in Aramaic, Syriac, and Old South Arabic, with the same general meaning (cf. the Akkadian *hat(a)nu*). See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1:364-65.

²⁶ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3 vols., Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [n.d.], 1:459.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

dus 4:25. Since only one son is said to be circumcised, one may assume that the other son had already been circumcised.²⁸

The words "her son" do not exclude Moses as father, of course, (nor is it likely that this was a child of hers from another marriage). But they may suggest something of the animosity she may have had against circumcision.²⁹

VERSE 26

"Then He released him. (Now she had said 'bloody bride-father' with reference to the circumcision)" (author's translation).

The verb "to release" (רָפָה, "to sink," "to relax," "to withdraw") fits with the idea of the release of the wrestler's grip of death, described above. Zipporah repeated the scurrilous phrase "bloody bride-father" to the living God because she was so angry at the act she was forced to perform on her child.

A PROPOSED SCENARIO

When Gershom was born, Moses would have circumcised him on his eighth day as a matter of course, following the clear teaching of Genesis 17:9-14. While circumcision was also practiced by the Midianites, it would have been a kind of puberty "rite of passage" for them (and other Semitic peoples as well).³⁰ Thus to

²⁸ Some might suggest the second son was an infant, not yet eight days old, but this seems unlikely. The birth of the second son that near the time of travel would have been an extraordinary hardship. Only Gershom's birth has been mentioned to this point (Exod. 2:22). But Moses took with him his "sons" and his wife (4:20); the name of the second, Eliezer, was not given until 18:3-4.

²⁹ Some suggest the son in view here is Gershom, Moses' firstborn. The tie that may link this pericope with the preceding may be the words "firstborn son" (v. 23). Also, as Kaiser suggests, the firstborn of Moses and Zipporah may be linked with the firstborn of Pharaoh. However, even Kaiser is uncertain on this point. Actually the relationship is tenuous. In the case of Pharaoh, it was his son who was at risk, but in the case of Moses, it was Moses himself, not his son, who was at risk. Yet the problem concerned his son. "He who is on his way to liberate the people of the circumcision, has in Midian even neglected to circumcise his second son Eliezer" (John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical* [1876; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d., 2:13).

³⁰ The rite of circumcision was not an exclusive practice of the ancient Hebrews. Actually circumcision was practiced in prehistoric times, as attested by some cave paintings. It was practiced among many people groups in the ancient world, in Asia, among South Sea Islanders, in many tribal groups in Africa, and among some of the native peoples of the Americas. However, in most of these cultures, circumcision was a rite of passage performed on a boy at puberty rather than shortly after birth. Among the ancient Semitic peoples, circumcision was practiced among many of Israel's neighbors, but not among the Canaanites or among the Semites of Mesopotamia. Circumcision was practiced in Egypt, but exclusively among priests. The Philistines (who were Indo-European peoples) did not practice circumcision

the child's mother the practice of circumcising babies would have been unexpected at best and abhorrent at worst. When the second child was born, Zipporah (perhaps in association with her father³¹) may have strongly resisted, saying, "You have done this with the first boy, but not again. Not with my son." If only one son had not been circumcised, it would seem more likely to be the younger rather than the older.

So now at the critical moment she did what she had objected to before. Moses, her husband, was in the death grip of his God. She rushed forth, did the deed, but was surely repulsed by the practice. In her anger "she reached out with the foreskin to touch his feet." At whom was she angry? Certainly not at her son, for she had sought to protect him from an "early" circumcision. Nor would her anger have been directed principally against her husband. For she sought to save him by her impetuous action. Instead, she was angry at Moses' God. Who demanded the circumcision of babies, against the traditions of all peoples in the region? Who had brought about her husband's action in circumcising their older boy shortly after his birth? And who now demanded that her younger boy be circumcised or her husband would be killed? Her husband's God!

So to the Lord she reached out with the bloody prepuce, touching His feet.³² And to Him she called out harshly, "You are a bloody bride-father to me." She would have addressed these words to Yahweh for three reasons. (1) God was the One who had demanded that this action be done on her son. (2) She reasoned that since God "liked" the bloody prepuce so well, He might as well have it. (3) God had become to her like the circumcisers of her culture, demanding the circumcision just before marriage. This

(Judg. 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam. 14:6). The distinction in Israel was the meaning attached to the rite. This was not a rite of passage, but a sign of God's covenant with His people ("Circumcision," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988], 1:462-65).

³¹ When Moses arrived in Midian he was a fugitive, a person without land, family, wealth, or standing (Exod. 2:15). Besides marrying Zipporah (2:21) he likely became the adoptive son of Jethro. He had become like Jacob in relation to Laban. This is likely the point of Exodus 2:21: "Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses." The verb translated "was content" (Hiphil of לָצַח), probably means here, "he came to terms with," or "he acquiesced with." When Moses wanted to leave, he was not free to do so. He needed to seek permission from Jethro, as he had become Jethro's dependent (4:18). Thus Jethro would have had considerable influence over the treatment of his grandson.

³² Critical scholars assert that "feet" is a euphemism for the male genitalia. The unnamed translator of Martin Noth's commentary wrote, "'Feet,' is of course here a euphemistic expression, as elsewhere in the Old Testament" (Noth, *Exodus*, 50, note).

is the meaning of her ambiguous words in which she called God her "blood relative" by means of the enforced circumcision of her son.

This view helps explain the use of **וַיִּכְרַם** in verse 26. This word sometimes serves as a stylistic device to introduce a phrase that is to be stressed.³³ She said what she did to the Lord, "because [**וַיִּכְרַם**] of the circumcision." This passage does not explain circumcision; circumcision explains the passage.

Also this point of view helps explain something the text does not mention until later. Even though Moses had asked for permission from Jethro to return to Egypt (presumably with his family, 4:18-20), he must have sent his family back to Jethro following this encounter at the inn (18:1-5).³⁴ They are not mentioned at all in the story of Moses' dealings with Pharaoh in Egypt. Given the attitude of Zipporah, she may well have separated from her husband. She saved his life when he was under threat by God, but she was not present when he by the mercy of God saved the nation.

This view may also explain why Moses married again (Num. 12). Many commentators have assumed that Zipporah died before he married a second time. But it may be that she remained with her father Jethro even after the events in Exodus 18. Although Zipporah came with Jethro to Moses, nothing is said about their reunion. Was it perhaps out of respect for his wife that Moses did not detail the nature of their estrangement? And was it out of personal shame that he did not make this passage clearer?

Moses' sin of not having circumcised his second son calls to mind the concept of a "sin to death" in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:27-30; 1 John 5:16). Exodus 4:24-26 becomes an example of this in the Hebrew Scriptures. If the proposed view is correct that Zipporah touched the feet of the preincarnate Christ with the bloody foreskin, whose thoughts are not thereby driven to the cross on which His feet would one day bleed?

The rite of circumcision was the foremost symbol of Israel's relationship to God (Gen. 17:9-14). Involving the shedding of blood, it ultimately pointed to the shedding of the blood of the most innocent Son. But He did not merely bleed a few drops; His very life was bled away. And His death is memorialized in the Lord's Supper by the cup, a symbol of blood.

³³ Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1:26.

³⁴ Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, 2:13.

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