



Zipporah, Wife of Moses

Marek Halter

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From the internationally bestselling author of *Sarah* comes the riveting story of the remarkable woman who walked beside Moses.

Although she is a Cushite by birth—one of the people of the lands to the south—Zipporah grew up as the beloved daughter of Jethro, high priest and sage of the Midianites. But the color of Zipporah's skin sets her apart, making her an outsider to the men of her adopted tribe, who do not want her as a wife. Then one day while drawing water from a well, she meets a handsome young stranger. Like her, he is an outsider. A Hebrew raised in the house of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Moses is a fugitive, forced to flee his homeland. Zipporah realizes that this man will be the husband and partner she never thought she would have.

Moses wants nothing more than a peaceful life with the Midianites, but Zipporah won't let Moses forget his past—or turn away from his true destiny.

She refuses to marry him until he returns to Egypt to free his people. When God reveals himself to Moses in a burning bush, his words echo Zipporah's, and Moses returns to Egypt with his passionate and generous wife by his side.

A woman ahead of her time, Zipporah leaps from the pages of this remarkable novel. Bold, independent, and a true survivor, she is a captivating heroine, and her world of deserts, temples, and ancient wonders is a fitting backdrop to an epic tale.

Look for the Reader's Group Guide at the back of this book.

Also available as an ebook

Zipporah, Wife of Moses Details

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From Reader Review *Zipporah, Wife of Moses* for online ebook

Debbie says

*"You are my garden, my myrrh and honey, my nightly tonic, my black dove.
Oh Zipporah, you are my love and the words that save me."*

A wonderful story of blind love, romance, passion and destiny's bittersweet fulfillment.

This is only the second book I've read by author Marek Halter and I must say, I'm extremely impressed. What an artful and romantic way he has with words.

The mention of Moses wife Zipporah in the Bible is actually so few I think it can be counted on one hand. Of course, the Historical Fiction addict that I am, I had to do a little research. I read all of those limited verses. I also read through the entire account of the Moses story to re-familiarize myself in preparation for the reading of this book. What I confirmed was exactly what I thought. There is not much written about Zipporah and what is, is so limited that one must get extremely imaginative in order to create a whole novel around her. Thus is the skilled art of Marek Halter. What we do know is this. She is his wife. They have two sons together: Gershom and Eliezer one of which she circumcises on the way to Egypt. We know she is the daughter of Jethro a Midianite wise man who gives her in marriage to Moses a stranger in their land. Moses meets her at a well near Midian where she lives with her father Jethro yet she is described as Cushite and having dark skin. (Researchers dispute that ancient Cush could be modern day Somalia or Ethiopia, nevertheless, it seems as if she's being distinguished by this title.) We know she is with him at some point when he goes to Egypt and then at a later point we see her with her father once the people are free, going to meet him, therefore, giving the assumption that at some point she left and is rejoining her husband. That's it. If you think I just gave you spoilers, please go pick up a Bible and read the story. Those are the facts and the rest are a beautiful tale of romance that could only be brought into existence by the fancy of Marek Halter.

"I am Zipporah the Black, the Cushite, who came here from beyond the Sea of Reeds, and I have had a dream."

This is the story of a burning passionate love that was always meant to be. Zipporah, always a stranger in every circle dreamed of a stranger coming into her life who would fulfill her destiny and their love, their lives were destined. It was a dream until it finally manifested one day while her and her sisters were at the well at Irmana. Moses became her dream come true. Her passion realized. She became his strength, his burning desire, his encouragement. Zipporah was the quintessential example of the appearance of a strong man only being possible because of the upholding strength of a supportive stronger woman.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again, Without Zipporah, Moses wouldn't be Moses. Her thoughts are my thoughts. That's why she became my wife."

This is the inside story of the great woman who was called to stand behind her great man. God called Moses for the task of leading the people of Israel out of Egypt but he also called Zipporah to lead Moses to Him and then stand firm behind him when no one including his own feet were not sure of his own destiny. Only a love so pure and true could be so unselfish and giving. On so many levels this was such a luscious passionate, romantic love story.

"When you see me, Zipporah the Cushite, the adopted daughter of Jethro, you see a stranger. A black woman who isn't a daughter of Abraham, or Jacob, or Joseph. All of that is true. But I'm not a creature of Pharaoh. I'm not your enemy. I'm your brother's wife!"

However, on so many other levels, this was also the account of struggle for Zipporah to be accepted and not prejudiced by the color of her skin. To many it set her apart. But to those who accepted her it was a testament to love that knows no boundaries for those who saw the beautiful wise woman that she was inside and out.

Of course knowing that this is Biblically based fiction, one knows generally what this book is going to be about. But I can't say enough about the delivery of this author. He is truly now one of my favorites. Such stirring romance and passion. His descriptions of a young Moses will have the ladies not thinking of the old white haired paintings or made for T.V. renditions but put in mind of the curly haired Eric Bana avatar from the Troy movie. Holding his staff and wearing his pleated Egyptian loincloth, Marek Halter makes you think Moses was kinda hot. Yes, my *Zipporah, Wife of Moses* movie stars Eric Bana as Moses and the regal looking Lupita Nyong'o as the lovely Zipporah. I would love to see this as a film. I think it would be a hit. I found myself glued to every page. I found myself stopping to smile, sigh and re-read romantic scenes. I rolled my eyes at stubbornness. I felt akin to the husbandly and wifely support they gave to each other until the bitter end. I shed a tear at the bittersweet end.

Marek does it again for me. 5 stars. I enjoyed every bit. Engrossing, addictive, seductive and so much more. This second novel in the series I do believe is better than the first. Maybe they just get better and better. We shall see with book #3. I do recommend to Historical fiction readers, Romance readers and Biblical fiction readers who can deal with it. By that I mean, that understand only one individual in the Bible stories was "divinely" impregnated. Everyone else made love and there is some of that in this book. Very sweet and beautiful. I love this view of the Moses story with the inclusion of his wife Zipporah. I enjoy the way these stories are told as not these solitary men but with their wives and loves it shows them as more rounded characters. More real. Lastly, for those who might stray away for fear that it might be too "religious" this second book is not as heavily as the first book.

Adrienna says

I may not believe all his biblical/historical accounts with this story, however, the writing is brilliant and keeps me reading in one to two sittings.

I love this line, "She is the seed of my future life." I take the sentences and phrases seriously (maybe because I am a writer). I enjoy reading historical/romance fiction when it gives the reader modern terms and speeches that was a time before Christ. I would love to tackle on such a style of writing that also requires research and flow of characters, incidents, and events.

I will read his other books! I love the women of the Bible. Another book that was even better read is the "The Shadow Women" by a female author, Angela Elwell Hunt.

Notes: p. 201, Yokeved greets Moses as her "firstborn" when I believe it was Aaron and then his sister, Miriam are older than Moses. This is an error in the storyline. The cover also does not represent the skin-tone of Zipporah as mentioned in the book numerous times. Why does the author have to state this so many times, we got it the first one or two times?

Julia says

This is a biblical, historical novel that brings to life the story of Zipporah, a black skinned Cushite woman who became the wife of Moses, the Israelite.

I realize that the author has taken liberties of filling in the gaps in the story of Moses from the Bible. I think

that is O.K. in order to bring new meaning and understanding to some of the old stories of faith. Halter portrays Zipporah as a very strong and supportive wife to Moses and encourages and even pushes him to listen to Yahweh's directives for his life. We do know from the Bible that Moses felt himself "timid" or incapable of convincing the Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt and the oppression they were under.

It made me realize anew just how difficult life was for this group of people. O.K., I can't really understand how difficult it was - I have never known such suffering and abuse. But, it struck me how even after Pharaoh let them go, and they were free from the work of slaves and the beatings, they still complained about how awful life in the desert was. They "roamed" the desert for 40 years, were without a place they could call home. Why did Yahweh let them despair for so long? And then, in the end, Moses wasn't even allowed to see the land "flowing of milk and honey" which they were promised.

It would be interesting to read a novel on this same story in the perspective of Moses. There was romance weaved into this book, which kept the story interesting too! Moses was shown as a very "hot" looking guy!

The ending was very sad and perhaps disappointing. I will have to read from the Bible to see if there is anything mentioned about the end of Zipporah's life.

Teresa Thompson Arcangel says

I listened to the audio edition of this book, narrated by Bernadette Dunne. This story held my attention better than "Sarah", the first book in "The Canaan Trilogy". I liked the characters better too, especially Jethro. One flaw that had me complaining out loud to myself - every two or three minutes I was reminded that Zipporah had dark or black skin, and that this was a problem for her. It was so annoying for the author to constantly bring this up! Did Mr. Halter never notice the dark skin and African features on the paintings and statues of ancient Egyptians? I hardly think a Nubian or Cushite woman would've been so exotic that her skin color would need to be mentioned throughout the story. This went on until the very end.

Jennifer says

A fictionalized account of Zipporah's life. For me, it was just OK. I knew it was fiction, but it still bothered me when the author took liberties with Biblical (read historical) text. In terms of imagining what life would have been like for these nomadic people, it was fairly interesting. The writing was a bit awkward, and very repetitive. For instance, after the author establishes that Zipporah is a Cushite woman, and black, I think it would be OK for it to be assumed and not brought up nearly every time Zipporah is mentioned. After all, that's going to be a lot in this story.

Lori says

Meh! Every now and then, I get in the mood for a bit of independent bible study. And I love that there are

books in the biblical fiction genre that I can use as companion reads when, for instance, I want to re-read Exodus. So, I fell for the cover art on this book and decided to give it a go. This imaginative story of Zipporah, the woman who became the wife of Moses, is not exactly what I expected. It deviates a great deal from scripture but not necessarily in a good way. I realize there is not much to go on in The Old Testament. She isn't mentioned all that much. I knew there would have to be some fiction inserted in order to piece together a portrait of her. However, I cannot account for Jethro's indifference when his daughter shacks up with Moses and births two illegitimate sons in defiance of the moral values and traditions of the time. I guess she couldn't resist the temptation of Moses' hot bod. (Saucy little minx!) By the way, if you are into steamy love scenes that revolve around your favorite biblical heroes this book is for you! (Personally, I felt kind of uncomfortable, I mean this is Moses!)

But the ending is what pulled me out of the three star camp. I don't want to be overly critical but I think I can contradict the part where the sons of Moses are trampled to death by stampeding Hebrews in the desert. (There is after all, some mention in 1 Chronicles 23:14-16 of the SONS of Moses the man of God, and THEIR descendants. I looked it up.) Like I said, this story is inventive and imaginative. There is more bad news at the end of this book but after this bit, I felt a little numb.

Having said that, I plan to keep reading this genre because it brings these historical people to life and gives me insight into their daily lives. All silliness aside, Zipporah truly amazed me with her courage and her faith. Even though I find this book to be flawed, I am glad I read it.

Julie says

This book was much better than Sarah, the first book in the Canaan Trilogy. Zipporah was a much more sympathetic character than Sarah, and Moses more so than Abraham.

Zipporah was a proud woman who knew her destiny with a defiant certainty. She knew her role besides Moses, even before they had met. Their courtship is passionate (apparently Moses was a sexy thing) and Moses is accepted into Zipporah's family with great trust and love. Her father, Jethro, is a wise and influential figure throughout the novel. It is easy to see where Zipporah gets her wisdom and patience.

When Moses realizes his mission to free the Hebrews, Zipporah is his most trusted advisor, his strength and encouragement, though no one would accept her as anything other than a stranger because of her dark skin. She bears the weight of Moses' doubts, his troubled past, and his lack of confidence. Moses becomes the hero he is because of Zipporah's love and trust in Yahweh. However, the Hebrews will always be slaves in their hearts, and once they are free they cannot accept their lives or Zipporah's influence. It is a tragic conclusion to what should have been a glorious liberation.

This novel was much more emotional and well-written than Sarah, and I'm looking forward to the next in the series, in hopes that Halter's momentum continues.

To see my opinion of the entire trilogy, view my review of Lilah.

Jean Marie says

Really 4 1/2 stars.

I have a soft spot for anything Moses related, which I blame on my being raised on the yearly television showing of The Ten Commandments which I've always loved for it's pagentry and drama, and there really isn't anything more beautiful than old school technicolor.

I read Halter's first book of the Canaan Trilogy, Sarah, about a year ago and really enjoyed it. Halter has a great way of saying just enough which is probably why his novels are rather short but completely satisfying. This is the story of Moses' wife, Zipporah, as the title suggests. And it's quite a cleverly elaborated story that draws you in. Zipporah is Moses' pillar of strength and intelligence, which gives a different view of the man himself. The majority of the novel is written in third person, the end is in Zipporah's voice, which is a clever but smooth change. My only reason for not giving it a full five stars is I wish it was longer, as always.

I thoroughly enjoyed this quick read and will certainly read the third and final novel of the trilogy. And I would definitely recommend it to anyone who enjoys proper biblical historical fiction or has a soft spot for those Ten Commandments.

Dora Okeyo says

I liked: Zipporah's determination to see Moses fulfill his quest.

I did not like: How much Miriam and Aaron treated her like she was not one of them, yet she had brought Moses to them with the hope of saving the Israelites from Egypt.

I admired: Jethro's (Zipporah's Father) courage and wisdom. He had three daughters and Zipporah was adopted and dark skinned, but he loved her most and treated them equally and stood by her even when her most cruel sister-Orma did not want anything to do with her.

Story: Flows well. You cannot put it down.

Historical basis: Well researched if you ask me.

Award: 3 Stars

Reason: It left me hanging big time wondering why Zipporah would be doomed to roam the desert with Moses after her own sister, then the Queen of Sheba refused to help them

Annika says

I was hoping this book would be more like "The Red Tent" by Anita Diamont, who took a few lines from the Bible about Dinah (the only daughter of Jacob) and created an entire fiction story about her, using the known culture and traditions of that time. I loved that book.

But this book...I didn't even finish it. I felt the author was showing me a story, instead of telling me a story. I felt the blurb written in the jacket told me more than the author did, and with more emotion. What relationships between the sisters? Why was Jethro such a good father, since the daughters constantly dropped

hints of how good and kind he was.

I like the idea: take a little known person in the Bible and write a story about them.

I just feel this one didn't own up.

Hamisoitil says

Vous connaissez Tsippora ?

L'épouse noire de Moïse, fille adoptive de Jethro, le sage.

Tsippora en 3 mots : forte, intelligente et amoureuse.

Dans ce roman, Marek Halter nous fait découvrir l'histoire d'amour mais compliquée bien avant le grand saut soit la libération des esclaves hébreux en Égypte. On connaît tous l'histoire donc pas besoin de revenir sur ça même si l'auteur l'intègre dans le roman. De toute façon, il est juste impossible de passer outre. Marek Halter nous dévoile cette magnifique histoire bien romancée à la sauce Halter avec une pointe d'érotisme.

Du coup, on plonge dans cette intimité à la fois passionnante et en même temps presque surréaliste. Ben oui, Moïse et Tsippora font des bêtises et ils ont eu deux garçons en plus. Pis avant d'être prophète et femme de, ils sont avant tout des êtres humains.

Faut juste le prendre comme un roman historique avec des faits réels ou pas mais que l'on connaît tous. Par contre, je précise que l'auteur a pris une petite liberté à modifier certains passages. Pour quoi ?! ça, je ne sais pas. Mais bon, si vous connaissez l'histoire, vous comprendrez.

A pars ça, ça reste un très bon roman historique assez bien détaillé, très addictif et instructif. J'ai vraiment bien aimé et je

vous le recommande sans hésitation. Celui-ci est le tome 2 de cette longue série. (Lilah, Sarah, Marie, Bethsabée, la reine de Saba...) Faut maintenant que je me lance dans le tome 1 avec Sarah.

Louise says

Old Testament women certainly deserve biographies, but with information so scanty their stories will have to be imagined in fiction. Marek Halter makes a good try.

He speculates that as adoptees, Zipporah and Moses were attracted, or maybe fated. He also poses that Jethro, Zipporah's father belies the patrifocal stereotypes of desert patriarchs.

Halter illustrates Jethro's caring for his blood and adopted daughters by Jethro's allowing them to chose their husbands and a lack of any mention of paying another family to take them (i.e. dowery). If a suitor is a king, Jethro accepts a daughter's saying no.

It may be his love/respect for his daughters, and this lack of pressure on them to leave, that gives Zipporah the strength to resist marriage until Moses commits to returning to Egypt as she feels he must do. Once in Egypt, Zipporah maintains her dignity, perhaps because her adoptive father respected her in a way that Aron and Miriam (siblings to Moses)never could.

Once Moses leads the slaves to freedom, Halter gives practical examples of their ingrained slave mentality. They cannot manage the details of their lives and come to Moses for the petty grievances against each other.

They can be an unruly mob... so unruly that they can trample the weak.

I don't know the accuracy of this account of the death of Zipporah and their sons. She and the sons do disappear from the texts. Halter gives a plausible story as to how it may have happened.

There is a lot of potential to this book. It is heavy in dialog, which I felt was stilted, but then, how else to frame the speech of such hallowed Biblical figures? The unrealistic dialog could be an artifact of what might be a second language for the author.

Selma says

Nije loša knjiga ali nije me oduševila kao prethodna od Halter- Sarah - boginja i robinja.

"Ljudi su lude i sporo u?e."

"Ko ?e pamtiti Seforu, crnu ženu iz plemena Kušita? Ko ?e se se?ati onog što je ona postigla? Ko ?e se se?ati njenog imena? Neka ova knjiga bude njena skromna grobnica."

Aja says

2.5/5 stars

It's rather generous of me to give that little half after the two after reading this. Let me start with the good.

I liked the first half of the book occurring in Midian quite a lot. It typically begins with Zipporah and her sisters (Sefoba & Orma) encountering the Amalekites and Moses rescuing them, aside from the dreamy prologue. The family dynamic, the customs of the Midianites regarding Horeb/Sinai, and Zipporah's personality is pretty wonderful. I like the fact that Zipporah & her family felt pretty genuine in their dynamic for the most part.

As far as Zipporah's dynamic with other characters other than her family (Sefoba & Jethro in particular), I liked her interactions with Joshua and Yokeved. Joshua was kind of like that younger brother Zipporah came to love and depend on in a good way. As far as Yokeved is concerned, I wish there were more positive mother/daughter-in-law moments between them because they were so sweet together, along with Gershom and Eliezer. I wished that there was more details with how Zipporah and Orma interacted in a positive manner other than Orma being sour about Zipporah's actions (view spoiler) to the point of insulting her skin color and "otherness" as a Cushite.

Zipporah's ethnicity as a Cushite/Ethiopian keeps coming up in a way that I don't think truly made all that much sense to me. I am a black woman myself, but it seems that the author's way of dealing with the antiblackness/misogynoir of the cast seems to be very clumsy. Maybe there should have been some explanation of why Zipporah's blackness wasn't appealing to the people growing up around her according to some shallow standard of beauty in the ancient Near East, but I don't imagine the rest of the cast looking extremely pale, either (more like how they look on *The Prince of Egypt*, really!). I feel that Orma (especially) and some of the other Midianites within Jethro's land that view Zipporah negatively in that way should've

gotten over it at some point in time while she was growing up. Within this, I feel that her interactions with Moses as foreigners together could have been more impressive, especially if the author tried cultivating their identities for their sons as a family of their own that isn't limited by being only Midianite, Egyptian, Israelite, or Cushite. It would have produced a very progressive message in an ancient world in a creative and thoughtful way, but it did not go that route.

That leads me to one part of the story really disappointed: her relationship with Aaron and Miriam. Yokeved was easy to love Zipporah. Aaron and Miriam were hardened by slavery in their response to Zipporah as a whole. They cited how the Midianites (also mingled with the Ishmaelites in Genesis) collected dues on Joseph becoming a slave in Egypt as well as Zipporah's general freedom as a non-Israelite to justify hating her. Sure, they had a really hard life, but them being extremely static characters didn't really make me believe that they would rise up to the prophetic role that they would live up to with a holy sense of justice. They were extremely wishy washy to get what they wanted done, especially at Mount Sinai.

When it comes to her and Moses, I understand that the author is doing a lot of unconventional artistic licensing to create their relationship. Most people assume from the biblical account that the two took it step by step in getting married, having children, and then the burning bush happened [spoiler]where the first two are switched [/spoiler]. Their dynamic was somewhat interesting (and kinda funny, I admit), but as much as the author wanted to make Zipporah a strong woman who didn't take Moses' slack so easily (reminding me that Moses traditionally would ascribe the first woman as an *ezer k'negdo*), I would have expected Moses to have a firmer backbone to some degree. I do see that the author wanted a more vulnerable Moses depicted, and that does make sense in light of his adoption by his Egyptian mother Hapshetshut (although the historicity of this is debatable and Jewish tradition calls her Bithiah, even though it's a Hebrew name). I would have rather wanted, however, Moses to gradually validate his own identity by God in the novel than just his wife Zipporah (who does speak God's word to him, which I still think is important!) alone. I suppose that's a crucial conflict in the Exodus story as a whole: believing through someone else instead of having your own faith. But Moses didn't seem ready to stand on his own without Zipporah, and that's what makes it pretty sad as this ends in a tragedy.

Speaking of the ending, I was pretty disappointed that the author took this route with the "treat the immigrant/foreigner/stranger among you as yourself" message. (view spoiler) The way that the prologue is written would make you think that the ending of the book would be positive for her, but the author makes the ending so negative that it leaves a bad taste in your mouth and feel more sorry for Moses' and Zipporah's fates than you did in the beginning.

Ashley Coopriider says

What an interesting perspective - I would have given this book 4 stars, but I felt the author could have been a little more thorough, or perhaps included more of the biblical perspective in Zipporah's story. However, this book is strictly about Zipporah, so I understand why Halter did what he did...it just felt like there could have been more to her story...

So, basically we know very little about Zipporah from the Bible. Sadly, the Holy Bible does not tell us much about women, which is a tragedy in and of itself. However, she must have been worth mentioning, or else she would not have been put in the Bible at all. She was a "Cushite", which apparently means she had black

skin. Not surprisingly, the Hebrews (at least Aaron and Miriam, as well as some of the elders) are portrayed as racist and xenophobic. If one really thinks about it, that description is probably accurate. The text of the Bible talks about the Hebrews being "chosen" by God, and only certain people were chosen...God's love (or more specifically, Yahweh) was not for ALL, but for the people of Israel, namely Abraham and Jacob's descendants. Even Jesus, when he first came to save the world, told a Gentile woman that he didn't come for her, he came for the Jews. She told Jesus she would be willing for "the scraps from the table" (using an interesting metaphor), and Jesus healed her on account of her faith. It wasn't until later (after the resurrection, perhaps?) that the message of Jesus was shared for all, not just the Israelites.

Okay, I digress. Zipporah was an outsider her whole life. How (and why?) did she and her mother end up in Midian? This is never really explained. However, we know that her father, Jethro, adopted her and accepted her, even though she was a foreigner and had black skin. However, some of her adopted sisters and other family members did not accept her, either. Such is her life...she was always an outsider and never thought she would find love.

Enter Moses - they were drawn together from the beginning. I loved watching how their love grew, and thoroughly enjoyed the implication that Zipporah pushed Moses to his destiny. Moses, by all accounts, did not seem worthy. It was also interesting how the author implied that Moses's siblings were weary of Zipporah...one can understand a little of where they were coming from, given the time. However, with our 21st century lens, it's hard to imagine such blatant racism and mistrust. After Moses and Zipporah, along with their children, travel to Egypt, her story is basically over. Upon entering Egypt, Zipporah's story is mostly about how the Israelites mistrust her. She leaves Egypt before Moses approaches Pharaoh...we hear about the wonders and plagues performed by Yahweh second hand (word of mouth by merchants).

How I wish Moses would have listened to the wise words of Jethro after escaping Egypt, but alas he didn't. The story ends a little anti-climatically after Moses travels to the top of Mount Horeb (which I believe is another name for Mount Sinai), and the people of Israel, losing faith, make a golden calf. The author's assertion that the people were delirious from hunger was interesting, and more than likely true. It was also interesting hearing Jethro explain why the former slaves were having such a hard time with freedom...it's easy for us to understand their behavior several millennia after the fact; however, I've never heard it quite so well and simply explained. (Well done, Jethro!)

Simply put, Zipporah was a very interesting and intriguing woman who, like too many people, was unfairly judged simply because she had black skin. Moses, Joshua, and Jethro are portrayed in a positive light, as is Moses's birth mother. Most of the other famous biblical characters are portrayed badly, but there is truth where they are concerned. If you enjoy historical fiction, or like reading stories from the Bible (and don't mind if they don't support what you've been taught), you will enjoy this book.
