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Zipporah

...the fire and the fear

based on Exodus 2:15-4:20

by Ralph Milton

from [Is This Your Idea of a Good Time, God?](#)

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Zipporah's soliloquy:

There was fire in his eyes when I first saw him. Fire and fear.

My sisters and I had gone to water our sheep at the well, but a gang of men came with their own sheep and wouldn't let us anywhere near the well. That's when this Hebrew came out of nowhere, yelled at them, fought with their leader, and drove them away.

"Come," he said to my sisters and I. "You can water your flock now."

Father wanted to know how come we got home so much earlier than usual. When we told him, he sent us right back to the well.

"Our father would be honoured if you would break bread with us," we said. That's when I saw the fire in his eyes. And the fear.

"And what is your father's name?"

"Our father is Reuel, the priest of Midian, And may we tell him your name?"

"I am Moses. I am a Hebrew."

I wondered about that. Because the Hebrews were slaves and Moses wasn't wearing the clothes of a slave, he was wearing the garments of nobility. But of course I said nothing.

Moses came and ate with us. Father invited him to stay and live, and soon Moses was part of our family, and one day Father announced that he had given me to Moses as a wife.

He was a good husband, Moses was. And I learned to know and love the fire and the fear that shone through his dark eyes. I saw the fire when he told me of his Hebrew people, how they groaned under the slavery of the Egyptian Pharaohs.

"Someday," he said to our first child when he was born, "Someday we shall be free."

I saw the fear when Moses fell sick with fever – sick and near to death. "Why does God attack me?" he demanded. "Why, Zipporah?"

"Moses," I said to him. "I have learned the ways of our desert god. I know the sacrifice of blood. The circumcision of our son shall save you from the wrath of God." This I did, and Moses lived.

He lived, but he was not at peace. The Hebrew slaves in Egypt were always on his mind. Sometimes Moses raged at Pharaoh, raged at all the gods who let the Hebrews suffer under Pharaoh's cruel whip. "Why do the gods permit this?" he would ask.

"Perhaps there is one God of all the gods, Moses," I said to him one day. "My father says that may be so. Could it be that if you called on such a God, this God of gods might come to free your people from their pain?"

Again, the fire and the fear in Moses eyes. He said nothing to me then, but my thoughts had found their way into his hear – this I could tell. The thought that one great God of gods might lead his people into freedom brought fire into Moses' eyes and fear into his heart.

One day Moses came home out of the desert, his face was dark and burned as from too much noonday sun. But through that darkened face the fire and the fear burned in his eyes as I had never seen it burn before, and have never seen it since.

"There is a God of all the gods, Zipporah, just as you said there might be." Moses' whisper fairly crackled through our tent. "And I have met this God. I met this God there in the desert, in a bush that burned but was not consumed."

Moses was silent for a long, long time. I knew that he would speak to me when he was ready. Finally, "I am going down to Egypt, Zipporah. I am going to Egypt to tell Pharaoh, 'let my people go.'"

"No, Moses. We'll all be killed."

"You will stay here with your father, Zipporah. I must go to Egypt alone."

"But, but, Moses, why you? Why does it have to be you?" I cried.

"That's what I asked this God. 'Who am I? Why me?' But this God just said, 'I will be with you.'"

"What kind of an answer is that, Moses? You don't even know this God's name."

"I AM!" Moses said that with a fierceness that startled me. I had no idea what he was talking about.

"I AM WHO I AM. I WILL BE WHO I WAS AND WHAT I WILL BECOME. That is God's name."

Again, there was a long silence. I saw the fire and the fear in Moses eyes. I felt the fire and the fear in my own heart.

"I must go to Egypt, but I am so afraid, Zipporah. I must go, but I don't want to go. Why me? Why did this I AM God call on me?"

Again the silence. I could see through Moses' eyes that this time the fire was the fire of the burning bush that he had seen, and it would overcome his fear.

This time I spoke. "Go Moses. Go to Egypt to confront the Pharaoh. Your child and I will go there with you. Go, Moses. The God who is called I AM will go with you – will give you strength and courage and wisdom—and this God I AM will bring you and your people back to Midian. Go Moses!"

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,
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