

Moses: did God seek his life on the way to Egypt? – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D. - 2020

- Exodus 4:19 And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.
- 20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.
- 21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.
- 22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:
- 23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.
- 24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.
- 25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.
- 26 So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

Almost all commentaries, scholars, pastors, and laymen miss the intent of the above incident in the life of Moses. Believing the two pronouns “him” in vs. 24 both apply to Moses, most understand verses 24-25 to mean God was going to slay the patriarch because he had failed to have his son circumcised. True, this would normally be the natural sense of the verse; however, here such fails (and at numerous other places in God’s Word) for it does not take into account other relevant scriptures or the remote context which the above history demands. As we shall soon prove, the first *him* is indeed Moses, but the second is not!

Verse 20 is a major key for understanding the story. Here we read Moses placed Zipporah his wife and his sons – *plural* – upon “an” ass. Now Exodus 18:2-5 and Acts 7:29 record that Moses had two sons: the elder being Gershom (Exo. 2:21-22), the younger Eliezer. For one ass to carry three people indicates the two boys were very young – and so they were.

Moses’ rod in Exodus 4:17 is the same as 4:2. God having invested His power upon it, Verse 20 elevates its status to “the rod of God”. With it, Moses performed *wonders* upon the land of Egypt (vs. 21; Exo. 3:20, 11:9-10). Such was the Lord’s method used in hardening Pharaoh’s heart. The *wonders* (plagues etc.) showed the king precisely and unmistakably with whom He was dealing: the true and great God who had power over all the so-called gods of Egypt. Such light rejected always results in the hardening of one’s heart. Pharaoh was without excuse.

Verses 22 & 23 bring us to our correct understanding, which is found in the term *first-born* – an epithet that looks forward to our Lord Jesus (Col. 1:15). The issue in this narrative is over God’s first-born – who must be an Israelite (vs. 22). And Moses’ firstborn is Gershom who has not the token of circumcision. Hence, he is not in *covenant* with Jehovah and therefore not of Israel! (Gen. 17:9-14) So whom does God decree must die over this? Is it the father? No! It is the *uncircumcised* male child (Gen. 17:14) Gershom, the second *him* in vs. 24. Moreover, from the account God never intended to kill Moses (“all the men are dead who sought thy life”, vs. 19) and had already even selected his shepherd’s rod. Indeed, a year or more earlier Moses had not circumcised this son, so why chose him and then slay him before he reaches Egypt? Illogical!

Now Zipporah was not of Israel. She was a Midianite (Exo. 2:16-22) and as such had opposed the circumcision of eight-day-old Gershom (4:25-26). Obviously rather than obey God, to keep the peace Moses had given in to her. To save her son’s life, she now performs the act, but because of her rage Moses sends her and the sons back to her father (who later brings them to Moses at Mt. Sinai, Exo. 18:1-5). Finally, as only Gershom the first-born was circumcised Eliezer was not yet eight days old, thus God’s confrontation occurred very shortly after the family left Midian. This also reveals how Zipporah and the two sons could all ride one donkey.

DISCLOSURE

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