

Exodus 18 - Jethro Visits Moses, Gives Wise Advice for Judging Israel

I. Exodus from Egyptian bondage: Israel's redemption, liberation, and preservation (Ex 1:1—18:27)

(3) Preservation (Ex 15:22—18:27)

(E) Preserved from judicial chaos through Jethro's advice at Rephidim (18:1-27)

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(E) Preserved from judicial chaos through Jethro's advice at Rephidim (18:1-27)

1 Now **Jethro**, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard about everything that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

1 Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

1 When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt; - "...Jethro" - as a Midianite, he was a descendant of Abraham; Hobab is an equivalent name (Num 10:31,33)

2 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took *in* Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away,

2 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away,

2 Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken back Moses' wife Zipporah after she had been sent away,

2 Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back,

3 and her two sons, one of whom was named **Gershom**, for Moses said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

3 and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

3 along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom, because he used to say, "I was an alien in a foreign land,"

3 And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land:

- "...Gershom" - "alien" or "stranger"

4 And the other was named **Eliezer**, for *he said*, "The God of my father was my help, and saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."

4 The other was named Eliezer, for *he said*, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

4 while the name of the other was Eliezer, because he used to say, "My father's God helped me and delivered me from Pharaoh's sword."

4 And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:

- "...Eliezer" - "helper" or "comforter"

— The names of Moses' two sons reflect his personal experiences in the providence of God

5 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was camped, at **the mountain of God**.

5 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was camped, at the mount of God.

5 Moses' father-in-law Jethro, together with Moses' two sons and his wife, came to Moses in the desert where he was camped at the mountain of God.

5 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God:

- "...the mountain of God" - Mount Sinai

6 And he sent word to Moses: "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."

6 He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."

6 He told Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you along with your wife and her two sons."

6 And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

7 Then Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each other about their welfare, and went into the tent.

7 Then Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent.

7 When Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, he bowed low and kissed him, and they greeted one another. Then they went into the tent.

7 And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.

8 Moses told his father-in-law everything that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had confronted them on the journey, and *how* the LORD had rescued them.

8 Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had befallen them on the journey, and *how* the LORD had delivered them.

8 Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians on Israel's behalf, all the hardships that they had encountered along the way, and how the LORD had delivered them.

8 And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them.

9 And Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done for Israel, in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians.

9 Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians.

9 Jethro rejoiced over all the good that the LORD had done for Israel in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians.

9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

10 So Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, *and* who rescued the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

10 So Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, *and* who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

10 Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from the oppression of the Egyptians.

10 And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they acted insolently against the people."

11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people."

11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, because of what happened to the Egyptians when they acted arrogantly against Israel."

11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.

- Jethro acknowledged the sovereignty of God

12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before God.

12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before God.

12 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to dine with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

12 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God.

- Jethro gave evidence of his faith by offering a burnt offering and by making sacrifices to God

13 And it came about the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moses from the morning until the evening.

13 It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening.

13 The next day Moses sat down to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning until evening.

13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

- Moses was attempting to judge and settle all the disputes in Israel, and was beginning to experience a crisis of overwork (Cf. Acts 6:1-7)

This section explains how he overcame the present crisis; it also explains the beginning of Israel's legal/justice system. Here we see how the requirements and instructions of the

Mosaic Covenant became accessible to the ordinary Israelite, and applicable to the problems that arose as the Israelites oriented their lives to that code

14 Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit *as judge* and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"

14 Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit *as judge* and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?"

14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, with all the people standing around you from morning until evening?"

14 And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

15 Moses told his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will.

15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:

16 When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between someone and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws."

16 When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws."

16 When they have a dispute, it comes to me and I decide between a person and his neighbor, and make known the statutes of God and his instructions."

16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

- Moses was attempting to judge and settle every dispute in Israel, and was beginning to experience a crisis of overwork

17 Moses' father-in-law then said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good.

17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good.

17 Moses' father-in-law told him, "What you are doing is not good.

17 And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.

18 You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, because the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

18 You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

18 You will certainly wear yourself out, both you and these people who are with you, because the task is too heavy for you. You cannot do it by yourself.

18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

19 Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God,

19 Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God,

19 Now listen to me. I'll advise you, and may God be with you. You are to represent the people before God and bring the disputes to God.

19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

20 then admonish them about the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do.

20 then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do.

20 You are to teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they're to go and the things they're to do.

20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

21 Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

21 Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.

21 You are to look for capable men among the people, men who fear God, men of integrity who hate dishonest gain. You are to set these men over them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers

of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

- Demonstrates the importance of integrity (walk matching talk) as an important qualification for leaders

22 Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that they will bring to you every major matter, but they will judge every minor matter themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will carry *the burden* with you.

22 Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear *the burden* with you.

22 They are to judge the people at all times. Let them bring every major matter to you, but let them judge every minor matter. It will lighten your burden, and they'll bear it with you.

22 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

23 If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their places in peace."

23 If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace."

23 If you do this, and God so commands you, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will also go to their homes in peace."

23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

- Evidently people were becoming unruly because Moses was unable to dispense judgment quickly enough

— Moses may not have realized the seriousness of the problem of delayed justice. He seems to be a gifted administrator, who would not have consciously allowed Israel's social welfare to deteriorate.

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything that he had said.

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.

24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.

- The fact that Moses acted on Jethro's advice is evidence that Moses recognized that God was speaking to him through Jethro

25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.

25 Moses chose capable men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

- Moses allowed the people to nominate wise, respected men of integrity from their tribes, whom he appointed as judges (Cf. Deut 1:12-18)

— These men handled routine disputes among Israelites and kept Moses free to resolve major problems

26 Then they judged the people at all times; they would bring the difficult matter to Moses, but they would judge every minor matter themselves.

26 They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge.

26 They judged the people at all times; the difficult matters they brought to Moses, but every minor matter they judged.

26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

27 Then Moses said goodbye to his father-in-law, and Jethro went his way to his own land.

27 Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.

27 Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and he went to his own land.

27 And Moses let his father in law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

- Jethro later visited Moses and Zipporah (and grandchildren) again (Cf. Num 10:29)

Moses recorded seven experiences of the Israelites had during travel from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai:

1. They praised God with the Song of Moses at the Red Sea (15:1-21)
2. They found no good water at Marah in the wilderness of Shur (15:22-26)
3. They found food and drink at Elim (15:27)
4. God provided manna and quails in the wilderness of Sin (16:1-36)
5. They found no water at Rephidim (17:1-7)
6. They defeated Amalek in battle at Rephidim (17:8-16)
7. Jethro advised Moses at Mt. Sinai (18:1-27)