

Ex. 18:1 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;

Ex. 18:2 Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back,

Ex. 18:3 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:

Ex. 18:4 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:

Ex. 18:5 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:

Ex. 18:6 And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

They may not have had the technological conveniences to help spread the news—but news did spread. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, had heard of everything God had done for Moses and for His people Israel and how He had brought them out of Egypt. Evidently Moses had sent his wife and two sons back home to Jethro before going back to Egypt after meeting up with Aaron in the desert. (Maybe because of her attitude toward obedience to God re the circumcision of their son.) At any rate, Jethro came to meet Moses in the desert and bring him his wife and sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Gershom's name was a reminder of Moses' status as an alien in Midian and Eliezer's name reflected "God is my helper" for delivering Moses from the hand of Pharaoh.

(3/10) The naming of Eliezer appears to have been an act of faith since he was born before Moses left for Egypt. It also seems to indicate that he was born after Moses' encounter with the burning bush.

Moses was camped at "the mount of God," the same term used to describe where God had appeared to him in the burning bush, which meant he was fairly close to his father-in-law's home.

Ex. 18:7 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.

Ex. 18:8 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.

Ex. 18:9 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.

Ex. 18:10 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.

Ex. 18:11 Now I know that the LORD *is* greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly *he was* above them.

Ex. 18:12 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.

Somehow Moses knew that Jethro was coming, and he went out to meet him and bowed down and kissed him. (I am sure as a sign of respect and gratitude.) After greeting each other, they went into the tent and Moses told him everything God had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians and for Israel as they had faced many hardships on their journey. Jethro rejoiced over God's goodness and deliverance of Israel. He praised the Lord for showing him that He was indeed greater than all other gods. The powers attributed to them were nothing compared to God's power as shown by the actions He took on behalf of His people. Then Jethro brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God as proof of his belief in Him. Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Jethro before God (knowing that God was aware of what was happening). I think this was a sign of acceptance of Jethro as part of the fellowship of faith.

Ex. 18:13 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.

Ex. 18:14 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?

Ex. 18:15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:

Ex. 18:16 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. The next day Moses takes his position as judge for the people who stand around him (evidently waiting their turn) from morning until night. This appears to be a normal day during times they are camped in a specific area. After observing Moses for a day, Jethro questions Moses why he is doing this. Moses tells him that the people come to him to seek God's will when they have disputes between one another. (This evidently seemed a natural thing to do since Moses has been God's chosen leader on their behalf and has been so visibly used by God in providing for them. It is obvious that God talks and Moses listens and obeys.)

Ex. 18:17 And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest *is* not good.

Ex. 18:18 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.

Ex. 18:19 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:

Ex. 18:20 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.

Ex. 18:21 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:

Ex. 18:22 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.

Ex. 18:23 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.

Jethro recognizes that the load is too great for one man. As a priest and a concerned father-in-law, he presumes to give Moses some advice for Moses to choose to accept if it seems pleasing to God. It is obvious that Moses is the people's representative before God. He should teach the people the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. (The only laws and specifics we have read about have been concerning Passover and the consecration of the firstborn. This tells me that they have been given other guidelines and responsibilities to follow.) He is to teach all, then select capable men who fear God and are trustworthy and who hate dishonest gain to help him. He should appoint them as officials over groups of thousands broken into groups of hundreds, fifties, and tens. They can serve as judges for the people and bring only the difficult cases to Moses. If Moses does this with God's approval, it will make the load bearable and still keep everyone satisfied.

Ex. 18:24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.

Ex. 18:25 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.

Ex. 18:26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

Ex. 18:27 And Moses let his father in law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

Moses listened to Jethro and followed his advice. Then Moses said goodbye to Jethro, and Jethro went back home.

As a wife and mom, I'm a bit disappointed that no mention is made of joyful reunion between husband and wife and father and sons. I'm sure it was a happy reunion—but the focus is to stay on Moses as mediator or representative between God and Israel. The thought process in that culture was so different from that of today's. The key truth being taught here is that serving God in obedience is to be the priority in our life.