

Exodus 18

Verses 1-4

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. ² Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away, ³ and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." 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."

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.

In chapter 4, The Lord told Moses to return to Egypt so Moses and his family said their goodbyes to Jethro and left. But when they stopped for the night God sought to kill Moses, and Zipporah had to circumcise the boys to save the life of her husband. In the morning Moses sent his wife and children back to Jethro, and Moses went on to Egypt.

It is now 31/2 months after the Exodus, so if the 10 plagues took place over a period of 8 months, then Moses has been separated from his family for about a year. When Jethro heard the good news about the Exodus, he decided to reunite the family so he brought Zipporah and the 2 kids to Moses.

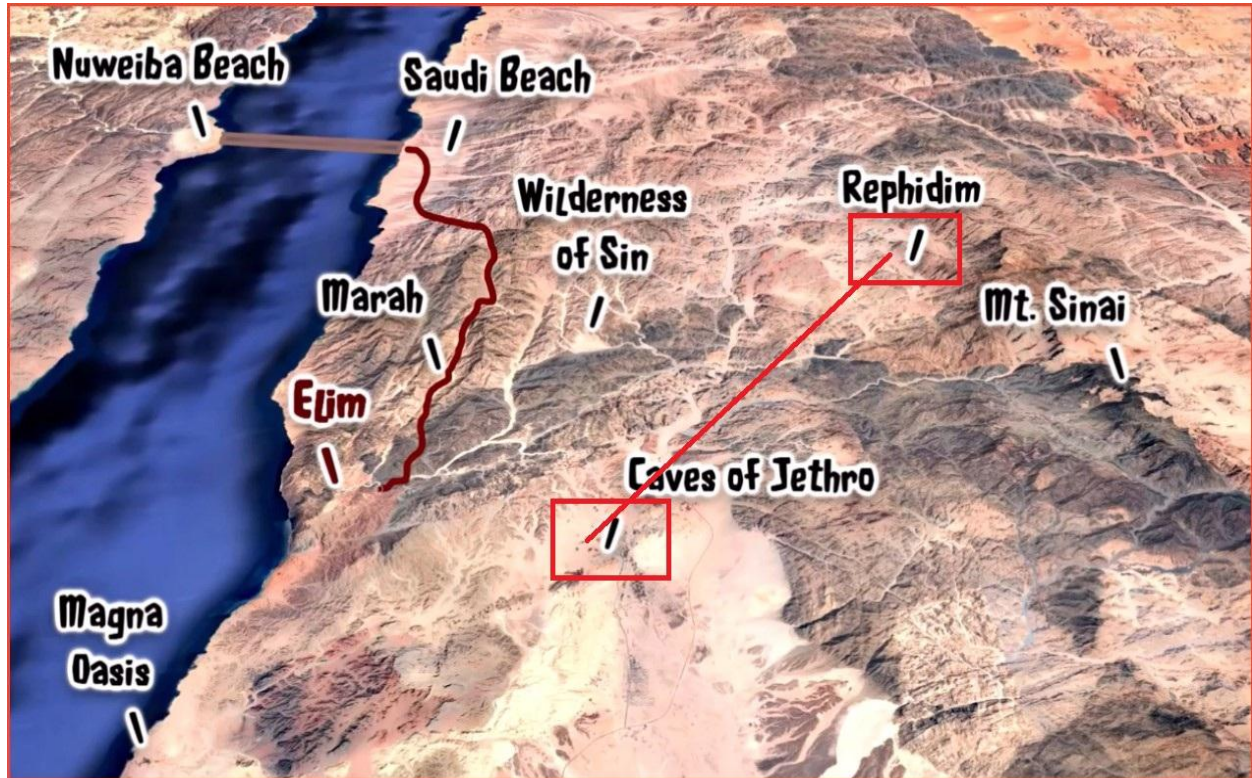
Verses 5 - 7

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. 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." 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.

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.

Since Jethro lived in Midian, it was only a trip of about 20 miles, a day's journey, to Rephidim.

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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.

Moses respected Jethro and gave him the honor than a tribal leader deserved.

Verses 8 - 10

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. ⁹ Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, in delivering them from 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.

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.

Even though God had delivered Israel from slavery through great miracles the people still had hardships in the days that followed.

1. Lack of water at times.
2. The lack of food was an issue.
3. They had just experienced a battle with the Amalekites.
4. They were not use to traveling from place to place and living in tents.

But the Lord had delivered them thru all of the difficult times before and after leaving Egypt.

1. The Lord defeating a world power thru 10 plagues.
2. God provided a 10 mile path thru a sea that was 2,400 feet deep.
3. God destroyed the Egyptian army so they would not be a threat to Israel.
4. Then the Lord took 2.5 million people and animals into a desert and met their needs for water and food.
5. He also provided help their battle against the Amalekites.

Verses 11-12

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

This seems to indicate that Jethro is still a believer in many gods, but he has come to know The Lord as the greatest of all the gods.

Some of the sacrifices were burnt offerings (not eaten by the people) and other sacrifices were eaten in a fellowship meal before God. This included the 70 elders of Israel, Jethro, Aaron, and Moses.

Verses 13 - 16

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

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?"

The question posed by his father-in-law got to the heart of the problem. Why would anyone try to be the lone judge for 2.5 million people? Moses was a great leader but he lacked the skill of delegating authority.

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

The statutes of God and His laws is not a direct reference to the 10 commandments or the laws set down at Sinai because that hadn't taken place yet. However, as noted previously there were many laws already in existence that will be incorporated into the law that will be given at Sinai.

These laws that already existed were given to mankind by God during the 3,700 years from creation to the time of the patriarchs (the information recorded in the Book of Genesis) that had been passed down verbally from generation to generation. There were plenty of specific laws and a general knowledge about right and wrong that Moses could use to make fair judgments.

Also, Moses probably gained some experience about judging by having access to the courts in Egypt and by being the son-in-law of a tribal leader in Midian for 40 years.

In addition, Moses spoke to God face to face which gave him the opportunity to inquire of God if he had a difficult case that required special consideration.

Verses 17- 23

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

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. 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, 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. 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. 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. 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."**

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

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.**

Good people can hurt themselves and others by trying to do too much. Many Godly people have learned this lesson the hard way. There is a lot of work to be done, but no one should think themselves to be so important that it cannot be delegated.

²¹ **Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain;**

There are 4 important qualifications for a judge

1. Able men

An incompetent person should never be trusted with authority. Among those who are competent, there are some who are more capable than others and they should be leaders of a larger group

2. Who fear God

Only people of faith belong in a position of authority, especially in the courts

3. Men of truth

Truth is the cornerstone of justice.

4. Those who hate dishonest gain

In other words, men who could not be bribed.

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.

Moses was the Supreme Court judge, and the others were district court judges.

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.”

Moses was under no obligation to take his advice but if he did, the final decision should be based on a command from God.

Verses 24 - 27

²⁴ So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 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. ²⁶ They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge. ²⁷ Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.

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

Jethro made a huge impact on Moses and Israel.

1. Moses got his family back after being separated from them for about one year.
2. He alleviated the heavy burden that was pressing on Moses.
3. All of Israel was better off because justice was not delayed.