

Sunday School Lesson
Exodus 18:1-27
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Delegating Responsibility



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In this second character study on the life of Moses, we examine the visit of Moses' father-in-law Jethro to the encampment of the Israelites in the Sinai desert. Interestingly, Moses alludes to the advice given him by Jethro in one of his farewell speeches in Deut. 1:9-18.

This event, covered in all of chapter eighteen of Exodus, stands as an early scriptural model for power sharing by a leader. In a day when power consolidation is more the name of the game, this passage challenges us to become inwardly secure enough to turn loose of power and control through entrusting appropriate portions of it to other people and then turning them loose to do their job. In religious life, especially Baptist life, this message is desperately needing to be heard, because the power consolidation mentality is especially dominating Baptist life. The so-called SBC Controversy in the 1980s and 90s was focused precisely on that very issue, far more than anything else. This mentality still prevails inside the SBC now dominated by an ultra-conservatism that is suspicious of any alternative viewpoint from its own. Many churches over time go through painful internal struggles with various groups inside the congregation seeking to impose their particular viewpoint on the entire congregation. Often, these days with a power hungry Baptist "clergy" these struggles become the pastor struggling to control the congregation and their resisting this. Consequently, passages like Exod. 18 take on new significance and relevancy. We have much to be learned from Moses' example.



I. Context

Relevant background materials from the previous study in Exod. 14:10-18 will be summarized here. For the details, see this study posted online at *Cranfordville.com* under *OT Bible Studies*.

a. Historical

External History. Although it is very likely that various records, oral for sure, and probably written as well, were made of the experiences of the Israelites as they left Egypt and arrived at Mt. Sinai, the final compiling of the materials in the book of Exodus did not take place until the Babylonian Exile / Post-Exile eras several centuries later. Moses most likely supervised the creation of the earliest strata of

this material, but unnamed scribes are responsible for its final shape that we know in the book.

Internal History. Inside the passage, we encounter one episode that encompasses all of chapter eighteen: the visit of Moses' father-in-law while the Israelites were camped "at the mountain of God" (v. 5). Jethro was "the priest of Midian" (v. 1) and brought Moses' wife, Zipporah, and his two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, to Moses. They had been sent

back to Jethro after Moses had returned to Egypt to begin the process of liberating the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. Once the visit was completed, Jethro returned “to his own country” (v. 27), leaving Moses’ wife and sons with him. Thus, little movement from point A to point B takes place inside the passage. The Israelites have moved from [Rephidim](#) (17:8) to “[the mountain of God](#)” prior to Jethro’s arrival at the camp. Jethro is the traveler here, while Moses stays put at the campsite. [Exodus 19:1-2](#) provides a summary of their movement from Egypt to Mt. Sinai:

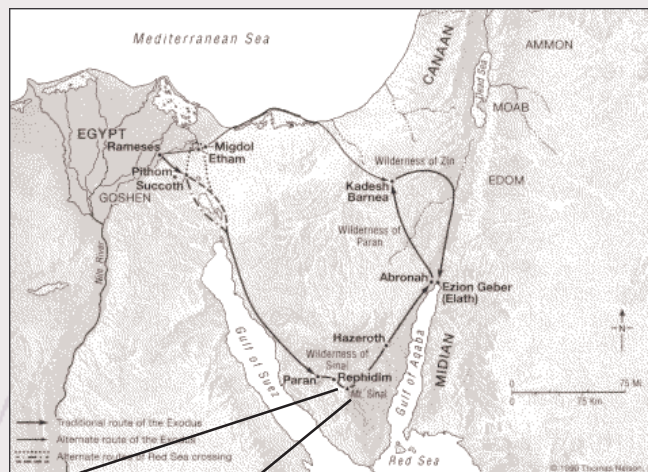
1 On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. 2 They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.

It is helpful to locate, as much as is possible, these places in order to have a more realistic understanding of what took place at the campsite. The above map assumes the traditional route of the exodus.

One of their camping sites, Rephidim was the location of several events, although its exact location is unclear, as is described in the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

Camping place of Israel in the wilderness of Paran following their exodus from Egypt. Exodus 17:1 lists Rephidim as Israel’s stopping place after the wilderness of Sin; Numbers 33:14, 15, however, specifies that after the wilderness of Sin, they camped at Dophkah and Alush then Rephidim before they journeyed on to the Sinai wilderness.

Several incidents occurred at Rephidim during the wilderness travels of Israel. Upon arriving at Rephidim,



and provision (Ex 17:1–7). Rephidim was the site near which the Israelites led by Joshua engaged the Amalekites in battle. The Lord promised to grant Israel victory as long as Moses kept his hands in the air. With the assistance of Hur and Aaron, Moses held up his hands for the duration of the day, and the Israelites prevailed over the Amalekites (vv 8–16). This place was perhaps also the desert setting where Moses was visited by Jethro his father-in-law (ch 18).

The location of Rephidim is uncertain. Some suggest Wadi Refayid in southwest Sinai. Others variously place it near modern Jebel Musa at Wadi Feiran or at Wadi es-Sheykh.

The “mountain of God’ is but another way of indicating [Mt. Horeb](#), or as it is sometimes called, [Mt. Sinai](#). Although traditionally linked, [no real concrete evidence](#) establishes with certainty that this connection is accurate. Everything depends upon the exact route of the exodus. Only if the traditional route is accurate does Mt. Horeb become Mt. Sinai. The important aspect, however, is that this mountain was where God revealed the Law to Moses.

[Midian](#) is the territory located on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba, quite some distance from [Horeb](#). [This](#) was where Moses had fled from the Egyptian pharaoh some years before and therefore had met Jethro there. He lived there with Jethro some 40 years tending his sheep.

b. Literary

Genre. The basic literary nature of 18:1-27 is that of a episodic narrative. One particular event is described: the visit of Jethro with Moses while the Israelites were camped at Mt. Sinai. The duration of the visit is undefined in the text. From the nature of what is described it would appear that the visit lasted for at least a period of several months, if not longer. The single specific time-frame mentioned is in verse

13, where Jethro observed Moses sitting as judge over the people the “next day” after the welcoming banquet held in his honor sometime after his arrival at the campsite (v. 12). One trait that typifies ancient narratives in contrast to modern ones is the lack of concern with the flow of time in an event. It will be mentioned if the time frame plays some significant role in the narration, but ancient readers didn’t live in the hurried life-style that we do. So time wasn’t nearly

as important to them. The narration is content to leave us with the impression that Jethro brought Moses' family back to him after a lengthy separation. He offered wise advice to Moses about how to be a better leader over the people. He spoke words of blessing to Moses and the people that glorified God. Then, he went back home to Midian. How long this took is not particularly important to the narrator.

Literary Setting. The literary context for 18:1-27 is well described by Walter Brueggemann (*New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach):

These chapters [15:22-18:27] articulate a subordinate theme in the book of Exodus: the wilderness sojourn. With the book of Numbers, the wilderness sojourn will come to occupy a much larger place in the completed narrative.

Here the wilderness sojourn functions primarily as a geographical device for the larger narrative. It provides a way to move action from one place to another, or to indicate the passage of time. Specifically, these materials and this theme help move the action from the "Sea of Reeds" to Mt. Sinai. Careful attention has been given by scholars to the historical, geographical, and archaeological elements of the narrative.⁷³ It is, however, completely impossible to assess the "historical" reliability of any of these narratives.

What may have been a transitional literary convenience, however, has become a freighted theme that makes its own contribution to the larger theological claims of the completed tradition. The wilderness through which Israel traverses comes to be a metaphor for a zone of life not properly ordered and without the usual, reliable life-support systems. The several narrative episodes characteristically revolve around the need of Israel, the distrust of Israel (which becomes an attack on Moses' leadership), and the generous, life-sustaining gifts of Yahweh (cf. Ps 78:19-20). Thus the theological issues regularly come to the fore, and the narrative exhibits little interest in geographical, historical details. Moreover, the wilderness metaphor serves as an effective cipher for exile, thus being crucial for the exilic and postexilic community that brought the text to its final form.

The paradigmatic narrative in this small grouping of texts is, of course, chapter 16. In that story about manna, the need of Israel is more than met by the powerful generosity of Yahweh. The derivative themes of the sabbath and the fearful hoarding of bread suggest the broad range of issues present in the theme of the wilderness sojourn. The brief episodes concerning

Marah, Elim, and Rephadim witness to the same suppleness of the tradition.



Two narratives

do not fit this general pattern of need and gift. First, the encounter with the Amalekites is odd in this context and serves a quite distinct ideological interest (17:8-16). Second, chapter 18, with its reference to Jethro, stands all alone and does not seem to relate to anything in its context. Both 17:8-16, concerning perpetual war, and 18:13-27, concerning judicial procedures, portray Moses as devising new institutional practices (war and justice) in the process of nation building.⁷⁴

Thus our passage stands as something of an interruption to the flow of the story of the Israelites' sojourn in the wilderness. It does get Moses' family reunited with him and affirms a positive relationship with his father-in-law. There is a touch of humility in someone regarded as great as Moses in being willing to take advice from a relatively obscure individual like Jethro, who is mentioned only nine times in the Bible and all of those are contained in the book of Exodus.

But one other important role of chapter 18 is well described by J. I. Durham (*Word Biblical Commentary*):

The nuclear theme of the whole of Exod 18 is the integration of the traditions of the Sarah/Isaac/Jacob/Joseph side of Abraham's family with those of the Keturah/Midian side. Moses, the descendant of the Sarah-Isaac side, becomes the divinely chosen medium of connection with Jethro, the descendant of the Keturah-Midian side. Moses, bereft of his family in Egypt by his flight from the justice of Pharaoh, has found a family in Midian. By one of those remarkable connections so recurrent in the Bible, however, Moses' new family is, in a quite literal sense, just another branch of his old family. And Moses becomes the guide and the bridge-person who links the two parts of the family separated since Abraham's day (Gen 25:1-6).

Thus in the larger setting of the pre-Sinai story of Israel, chapter 18 brings us to remember a larger bridge-building role of Moses between Abraham's descendants. His larger challenge lay in front of him as he sought to become a bridge builder between Israel and God.

II. Message

Literary Structure. If one analyzes the text according to narrative scene movement, then chapter eighteen flows around 1) Jethro travels to the campsite, vv. 1-6; 2) greetings between Moses and Jethro,

vv. 7-12; 3) Jethro's advice to Moses after watching Moses judge the people, vv. 13-26; 4) Jethro leaves to return home in Midian, v. 27. The one possible addition is v. 12 which may imply a worship service of sacrifice subsequent to the meeting in Moses' tent. But the text seems to place it as the worship climax of the tent meeting as a subsequent phase, where the private meeting between Jethro and his son-in-law is opened up for all of the leaders of the people along with Aaron. The worship experience becomes a climax to the meeting.

We will plug into this narrative with a close look at 1) the tent meeting, vv. 7-12, and 2) Jethro's advice to Moses, vv. 13-26.

a. Greetings and Welcome, vv. 7-12

LXX

ἔξῃλθεν δὲ Μωυσῆς εἰς συνάντησιν τῷ γαμβρῷ αὐτοῦ καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐφίλησεν αὐτόν καὶ ἠσπάσαντο ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰσήγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν σκηνήν ⁸ καὶ διηγήσατο Μωυσῆς τῷ γαμβρῷ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν κύριος τῷ Φαραῶ καὶ τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις ἕνεκεν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ πάντα τὸν μόχθον τὸν γενόμενον αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ καὶ ὅτι ἐξείλατο αὐτοὺς κύριος ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ⁹ ἐξέστη δὲ Ἰσθὸρ ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς οἷς ἐποίησεν αὐτοῖς κύριος ὅτι ἐξείλατο αὐτοὺς ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ ¹⁰ καὶ εἶπεν Ἰσθὸρ εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὅτι ἐξείλατο τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ ¹¹ νῦν ἔγνω ὅτι μέγας κύριος παρὰ πάντας τοὺς θεοὺς ἕνεκεν τούτου ὅτι ἐπέθεντο αὐτοῖς ¹² καὶ ἔλαβεν Ἰσθὸρ ὁ γαμβρὸς Μωυσῆ ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ θυσίας τῷ θεῷ παρεγένετο δὲ Ααρων καὶ πάντες οἱ πρεσβύτεροι Ἰσραὴλ συμφαγεῖν ἄρτον μετὰ τοῦ γαμβροῦ Μωυσῆ ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ

NASB

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. 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. 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.

NRSV

7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed down and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent. 8 Then 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 beset them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. 9 Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in delivering them from the Egyptians. 10 Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians, when they dealt arrogantly with them." 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

NLT

7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law. He bowed to him respectfully and greeted him warmly. They asked about each other's health and then went to Moses' tent to talk further. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to rescue Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He also told him about the problems they had faced along the way and how the LORD had delivered his people from all their troubles. 9 Jethro was delighted when he heard about all that the LORD had done for Israel as he brought them out of Egypt. 10 "Praise be to the LORD," Jethro said, "for he has saved you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. He has rescued Israel from the power of Egypt! 11 I know now that the LORD is greater than all other gods, because his people have escaped from the proud and cruel Egyptians." 12 Then Jethro presented a burnt offering and gave sacrifices to God. As Jethro was doing this, Aaron and the leaders of Israel came out to meet him. They all joined him in a sacrificial meal in God's presence.

Notes:

The introductory scene in vv. 1-6, sets the stage for the narrative by introducing us to Jethro, whom we have briefly met earlier in Exodus 2:11 - 4:18 when Moses fled to Midian to escape the wrath of the Pharaoh over the killing of an Egyptian. During the next forty years Moses lived with his father-in-law after taking Zipporah as his wife. After the “burning bush” encounter with God, Moses took his family and headed back into Egypt to seek the release of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.

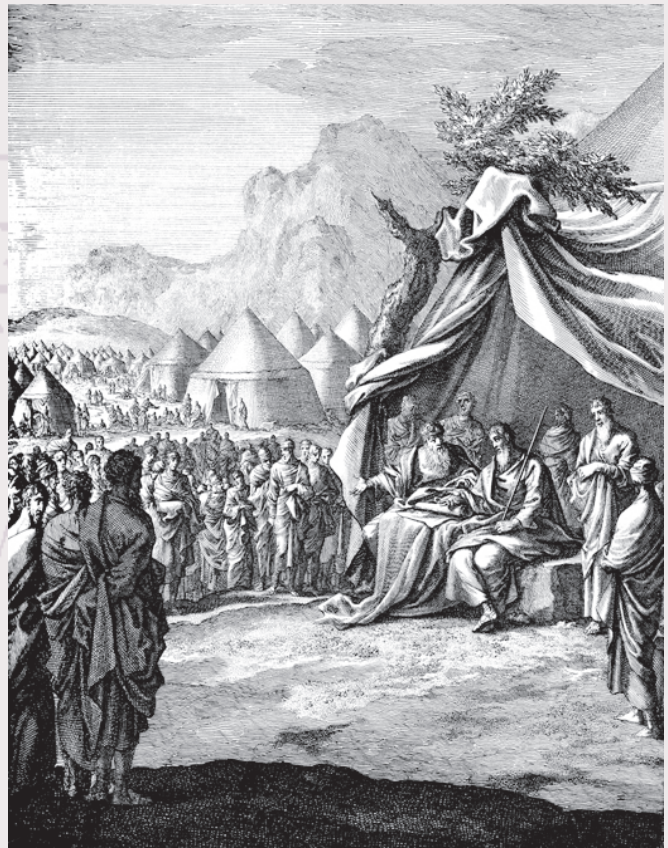
Now we are reintroduced to Jethro who comes bringing Moses’ family to him at the campsite at Mt. Sinai:

1 Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro took her back, 3 along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been an alien in a foreign land"), 4 and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). 5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came into the wilderness where Moses was encamped at the mountain of God, bringing Moses' sons and wife to him. 6 He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons."

We plug into the narrative as Moses goes out to meet his father-in-law and escort him back to the Israelite campsite as an honored guest. The text in Exodus leaves us somewhat surprised that Jethro is now bringing Moses’ family to him in the wilderness. In Ex. 4:18-20, we were told that Moses took his wife and sons with him back into Egypt:

18 Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, “Please let me go back to my kindred in Egypt and see whether they are still living.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” 19 The LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt; for all those who were seeking your life are dead.” 20 So Moses took his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey and went back to the land of Egypt; and Moses carried the staff of God in his hand.

The narrator somewhat prepares us for this with his statement, (18:2-3a) “After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro took her back, along with her two sons.” Although we’re not told the reason, it seems that Moses had found it preferable to send them back home to Midian after he arrived in Egypt. Perhaps, their safety was the motivating reason. Nothing is really said about the reunion of Moses and Zipporah, and their sons. But one can imagine



what a joyous time that must have been. The symbolical meaning of the names of the two boys are given: Gershom = “stranger there” (cf. 2:22), and Eliezer = “My God is help.” Each name signifies some important perspective of Moses.

The reunion between Moses and Jethro, vv. 7-12, is joyous and inspiring. Jethro is identified several times as a priest of Midian, indicating a religious role. It is unclear whether his worship and religious activity were pointed to the God of Abraham or to some other deity, although the former seems more likely. Some scholars have tried to argue that Jethro is responsible for introducing Yahweh to Moses and thus into the stream of Israelite worship. But the text will not support such a view point. In some ways, here especially, the opposite seems to be the case.

The social actions of the reunion followed ancient customs.

Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed down and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare,...

Moses greeted Jethro with bowing down and a kiss on the cheek. This signaled proper reverence to one older, and especially for the father of his wife. Jethro had been most generous to Moses over the years by taking this stranger into his home and then giving him one of his daughters in marriage. They both inquired of one another’s health and welfare in a typi-



cal friendly greeting.

The next phase became more serious and private:

and they went into the tent. Then 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 beset them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them.

The general "How's it going?" kind of greeting then moved to a private detailed accounting of how God had worked to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. No details of Moses' recounting of these matters is provided. The tone of this, however, focuses attention of how God had worked, rather than what Moses had done etc. As 18:1 indicates, Jethro had previously heard a generalized account of these matters: "Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt." But to now hear a detailed accounting from his son-in-law and leader of the Israelites gave more personal tones to Jethro's understanding.

His reaction is what we would expect from a religious person (v. 9): "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.'" Jethro acknowledges God's central role in liberating the Israelites. The focus here is on the positive actions of God toward the Israelites, while the Moses' description had given emphasis to what God had done to the Egyptians in order to get them to release the Israelites.

The next phase of the narrative moves to a more formal expression of worship (vv. 10-12):

10 Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians,

when they dealt arrogantly with them." 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

The theme of deliverance from the Egyptians is couched in a "blessing," a word of praise to God. Brueggemann (*NIB*, iPreach) has some helpful insights here:

Jethro's response to Moses' testimony is more extended (vv. 9-12). He "rejoices in the good"; that is, he is completely taken with the news and delights as in a victory (Ps 21:1-7) or the birth of a child (Jer 20:15). Jethro delivers a conventional doxological blessing that acknowledges and celebrates Yahweh as the giver of new life. Jethro confesses that Yahweh is more powerful, more reliable, and more worthy of allegiance than any other god, even the gods of Egypt. Jethro fully discerns the power struggle that went on between Moses and Pharaoh and between the gods of Egypt and Yahweh. He understands that in the end, Yahweh will not be mocked, dismissed, or belittled. In his exuberant confession, Jethro uses the word *nAzal* three times (vv. 9, 10, 11), echoing the term Moses used in v. 8. Thus Jethro's speech is a litany of *nAzal* [deliverance], whereby he joins in celebration of the God who can override the power of the empire, giving new life and new possibility to the slave community that has no power of its own. Jethro thus becomes a voice for the celebrative faith of Israel.

The climax of this is a worship service, and a banquet (v. 12):

And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

Durham (WBC) summarizes: "Following his confession, Jethro presided at a sacrifice, then took part in a communion meal involving Aaron and the elders of Israel as the representatives of Israel." This provides an appropriate climax to the reunion of Moses and his father-in-law. Also, a model is set for subsequent generations to follow.

The connection of this to us today? The theme of reunion, present in these initial verses, resonates with most of us today. Separation from family is never easy. So many in the military face this repeatedly in our society these days. Jobs etc. separate us often from loved ones and pose special challenges to maintaining strong family ties. Family reunions then become special times of bonding and reestablishing to ties.

Another theme present here is the acknowledgment of God's role in the wonderful things that have

taken place in our lives. Moses' depiction had not "romanticized" the deliverance from Egypt (v. 8): "all the hardship that had beset them on the way." But there was no "woe is me" tone. The main focus was on (v. 8): "how the Lord had delivered them." The realism of the sufferings was offset with the acknowledgment of God's delivering role in all this. Jethro's praise centered on God's actions as well. The challenge of this model is to keep our perspective balanced. Life can be unbelievably hard and trying. We sometimes are sorely tempted to "throw in the towel" in our emotions and attitudes. But we need to look deeper and see how God is working in our situation. For He is surely present and active. When we can sense this,

the hardships can find resolution in God's blessings and deliverance. Both Moses and Jethro recognized this and praised God for His wonderful works. So must we, as God's people today!

An important part of thanksgiving to God is formal worship of God. Words of thanksgiving are essential. But just as important are acts of concrete worship done in a public manner. We need to utter with our words feelings of gratitude to God. But we must also express those feelings in public, formal worship with God's people. They need to share in our thanksgiving. Both words and worshipful actions are essential.

b. Advice from a father-in-law, vv. 13-26

LXX

¹³ καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὴν ἐπαύριον συνεκάθισεν Μωυσῆς κρίνειν τὸν λαόν· παρειστήκει δὲ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς Μωυσεῖ ἀπὸ πρωῒθεν ἕως ἑσπέρας. ¹⁴ καὶ ἰδὼν Ἰοθὼρ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίει τῷ λαῷ λέγει τί τοῦτο ὃ σὺ ποιεῖς τῷ λαῷ διὰ τί σὺ κάθησαι μόνος πᾶς δὲ ὁ λαὸς παρέστηκέν σοι ἀπὸ πρωῒθεν ἕως δείλης. ¹⁵ καὶ λέγει Μωυσῆς τῷ γαμβρῷ ὅτι παραγίνεται πρὸς με ὁ λαὸς ἐκζητῆσαι κρίσιν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ. ¹⁶ ὅταν γὰρ γένηται αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογία καὶ ἔλθωσι πρὸς με διακρίνω ἕκαστον καὶ συμβιβάζω αὐτοὺς τὰ προστάγματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸν νόμον αὐτοῦ. ¹⁷ εἶπεν δὲ ὁ γαμβρὸς Μωυσῆ πρὸς αὐτόν οὐκ ὀρθῶς σὺ ποιεῖς τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο. ¹⁸ φθορὰ καταφθαρῆση ἀνυπομονήτῳ καὶ σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς οὗτος ὅς ἐστιν μετὰ σοῦ βαρὺ σοι τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο οὐ δυνήσῃ ποιεῖν μόνος. ¹⁹ νῦν οὖν ἄκουσον μου καὶ

NASB

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 sit alone *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." 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

NRSV

13 The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him 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 sit alone, while all the people stand around 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, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God." 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 Now listen to

NLT

13 The next day, Moses sat as usual to hear the people's complaints against each other. They were lined up in front of him from morning till evening. 14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "Why are you trying to do all this alone? The people have been standing here all day to get your help." 15 Moses replied, "Well, the people come to me to seek God's guidance. 16 When an argument arises, I am the one who settles the case. I inform the people of God's decisions and teach them his laws and instructions." 17 "This is not good!" his father-in-law exclaimed. 18 "You're going to wear yourself out – and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. 19 Now let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should con-

συμβουλεύσω σοι καὶ ἔσται ὁ θεὸς μετὰ σοῦ γίνου σὺ τῷ λαῷ τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἀνοίσεις τοὺς λόγους αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ²⁰ καὶ διαμαρτυρῆ αὐτοῖς τὰ προστάγματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸν νόμον αὐτοῦ καὶ σημανεῖς αὐτοῖς τὰς ὁδοὺς ἐν αἷς πορεύσονται ἐν αὐταῖς καὶ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιήσουσιν ²¹ καὶ σὺ σεαυτῷ σκέψαι ἀπὸ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ ἄνδρας δυνατοὺς θεοσεβεῖς ἄνδρας δικαίους μισοῦντας ὑπερηφανίαν καὶ καταστήσεις αὐτοὺς ἐπ' αὐτῶν χιλιάρχους καὶ ἑκατοντάρχους καὶ πεντηκοντάρχους καὶ δεκαδάρχους ²² καὶ κρινούσιν τὸν λαὸν πᾶσαν ὥραν τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα τὸ ὑπέρογκον ἀνοίσουσιν ἐπὶ σέ τὰ δὲ βραχέα τῶν κριμάτων κρινούσιν αὐτοὶ καὶ κουφιοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ συναντιλήμψονται σοι ²³ ἔαν τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο ποιήσης κατισχύσει σε ὁ θεὸς καὶ δυνήσῃ παραστήναι καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς οὖτος εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ τόπον μετ' εἰρήνης ἦξει ²⁴ ἤκουσεν δὲ Μωυσῆς τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ γαμβροῦ καὶ ἐποίησεν ὅσα αὐτῷ εἶπεν ²⁵ καὶ ἐπέλεξεν Μωυσῆς ἄνδρας δυνατοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτοὺς ἐπ' αὐτῶν χιλιάρχους καὶ ἑκατοντάρχους καὶ πεντηκοντάρχους καὶ δεκαδάρχους ²⁶ καὶ ἐκρίνοσαν τὸν λαὸν πᾶσαν ὥραν πᾶν δὲ ῥῆμα ὑπέρογκον ἀνεφέρουσαν ἐπὶ Μωυσῆν πᾶν δὲ ῥῆμα ἐλαφρὸν ἐκρίνοσαν αὐτοῖ ²⁷ ἔξαπέστειλεν δὲ Μωυσῆ

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."

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 fa-

me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; 20 teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. 21 You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace."

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went off to his own country.

tinue to be the people's representative before God, bringing him their questions to be decided. 20 You should tell them God's decisions, teach them God's laws and instructions, and show them how to conduct their lives. 21 But find some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as judges over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. 22 These men can serve the people, resolving all the ordinary cases. Anything that is too important or too complicated can be brought to you. But they can take care of the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. 23 If you follow this advice, and if God directs you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace."

24 Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions. 25 He chose capable men from all over Israel and made them judges over the people. They were put in charge of groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. 26 These men were constantly available to administer justice. They brought the hard cases to Moses, but they judged the smaller matters themselves. 27

ς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ γαμβρόν καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὴν γῆν αὐτοῦ

ther-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.

Soon after this, Moses said good-bye to his father-in-law, who returned to his own land.

Notes:

The next scene in the episode takes place “the next day” (v. 13). The daily routine resumes as the festivities of Jethro’s arrival are completed. Jethro observes Moses well-intentioned effort to assist every Israelite with some kind of issue or conflict. He notices a growing problem that has tremendous destructive potential.

Another version of how the reorganization of administrative structures came about is found in [Deut. 1:9-18](#):

9 At the time I told you, "I can't do this, can't carry you all by myself. 10 God, your God, has multiplied your numbers. Why, look at you - you rival the stars in the sky! 11 And may God, the God-of-Your-Fathers, keep it up and multiply you another thousand times, bless you just as he promised. 12 But how can I carry, all by myself, your troubles and burdens and quarrels? 13 So select some wise, understanding, and seasoned men from your tribes, and I will commission them as your leaders." 14 You answered me, "Good! A good solution." 15 So I went ahead and took the top men of your tribes, wise and seasoned, and made them your leaders - leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, officials adequate for each of your tribes. 16 At the same time I gave orders to your judges: "Listen carefully to complaints and accusations between your fellow Israelites. Judge fairly between each person and his fellow or foreigner. 17 Don't play favorites; treat the little and the big alike; listen carefully to each. Don't be impressed by big names. This is God's judgment you're dealing with. Hard cases you can bring to me; I'll deal with them." 18 I issued orders to you at that time regarding everything you would have to deal with.

As a part of the initial farewell speech of Moses to the Israelites many years later, the Deut. 1:9-18 passage recounts, evidently, only the aspect of Moses’ “sales job” to the people in order to convince them to go along with the plan that Jethro had suggested to him. No inherent contradiction exists between the two accounts, although some have tried to see tension here. The major overlap between the two accounts has to do with the qualifications of those placed in administrative position -- something we will compare at that point in the Exodus text.

The nature of these verses in Exodus is more of a dialogue back and forth between Jethro and Moses. The logic of the narrative moves from problem observed to proposed solution that is accepted and

then the solution is successfully implemented.

The assessment of the problem is found in verses 13-16:

13 The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him 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 sit alone, while all the people stand around 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, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God."

As Moses sought to resolve problems, i.e., “sat as judge,” Jethro noticed that the needs were overwhelming Moses and creating impatience among the people. What is going on in the text to some degree is a portrayal of Moses attempting to reconnect the Israelites to their ancestral roots with Abraham who as the patriarchal head of a clan would arbitrate on all legal issues that arose in the clan. But the logistics of this were too great for one man to handle. Now, how can a functioning legal system be set up that still connects all Israelites to the divine presence so central in their religious focus? Moses was to be the channel of God’s instruction to the people. He saw that responsibility both collectively and individually. But the individual aspect wasn’t working. In steps Jethro with a Midianite solution to the Israelites’ dilemma: delegate this responsibility.

Jethro’s proposed solution is found in verses 17-23:

17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people 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 should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; 20 teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. 21 You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you,

and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace."

Several aspects of this merit consideration. First, Jethro verbalizes to Moses the obvious: "What you are doing is not good." I suspect Moses was aware that things were not going as he has expected. But in order to uphold the principle of being God's instructor to the people, Moses persisted in adhering to the beginning model of one on one arbitration. In his limited administrative skills, he saw only one approach to upholding this ideal. His father-in-law readily saw another way to do it.

The reasons for the negative assessment were clear: "You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone." Moses was being dragged along a slippery path into trouble both for himself and for the people. The system could not work in its present structure.

At the heart of Jethro's proposal was a division of responsibilities. Moses would remain God's teacher to the people collectively, but other well trained, trustworthy men would administer that instruction to the people in a one on one basis in deciding legal issues. This would be done on a layered level of responsibility, as verse 21 outlines: "set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens." An ascending tier of responsibility would be the dynamic of the plan (v. 22): "Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves." On those occasions when a legal solution could not be found at the lower levels, then the case would be brought to Moses for final decision. Jethro wisely couched this proposed solution inside God's leadership: "I will give you counsel, and God be with you!" (v. 19) and "If you do this, and God so commands you..." (v. 23). Jethro knew that his proposal had to agree with God's leadership if it were to work.

The heart of the proposal was the caliber of those placed in administrative leadership positions. Only good quality individuals could make it work right. Ex. 18:21 lines out the qualifications:

1) able men among all the people,



2) men who fear God,
3) are trustworthy,
4) and hate dishonest gain.

Deut. 1:13 has a somewhat different listing of qualifications: "So select some wise, understanding, and seasoned men from your tribes, and I will commission them as your leaders." The two lists have no essential differences between

them, and reflect a generalized perspective rather than a minute, detailed check list kind of qualifications. The Exodus list highlights recognized skill, religious orientation and integrity. Pretty much the same traits are stressed in the Deuteronomy listing.

The implementation of the plan is described in verses 24-26:

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves.

This compares favorably to Moses' recounting of the situation in Deut. 1:15-18:

15 So I went ahead and took the top men of your tribes, wise and seasoned, and made them your leaders - leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, officials adequate for each of your tribes. 16 At the same time I gave orders to your judges: "Listen carefully to complaints and accusations between your fellow Israelites. Judge fairly between each person and his fellow or foreigner. 17 Don't play favorites; treat the little and the big alike; listen carefully to each. Don't be impressed by big names. This is God's judgment you're dealing with. Hard cases you can bring to me; I'll deal with them." 18 I issued orders to you at that time regarding everything you would have to deal with.

A solution to the problem had been found and put in place. And it worked.

The narrative then concludes with Jethro's departure back to Midian: "Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went off to his own country." No timeline of this is provided, because the narrator is more concerned to highlight the contribution of Jethro to Moses' leadership of the people.

The relevancy of these verses to our day are substantial, but do have some limitations. The limitation has to do with the difference between the an-

cient Israelite legal system and the US legal system. The ancient system that Moses was administering grew out of a theocratical view of social life. That is, the Law of God covered not just religious life, but all aspects of individual and social life for the Israelites. No division of “church and state” existed. These were a covenant people of God and God’s laws governed every aspect of their life from God’s choosing of their leader to how a man and wife could relate to one another in the bedroom. “Government” controlled everything. The US legal system from the beginning has covered only civil and criminal laws, and studiously sought to avoid religious regulations. “Lady justice” with the balancing scales comes out of the ancient Greek ideal, not from ancient Jewish roots. Government is, by design, to not interfere into religious matters unless those issues impinge on some violation of civil or criminal behavior. Thus, what Moses implemented among the Israelites is limited in its application to our world.

What can be gained from this system? Several things do have application in our day. First, a foundational principle of “delegation of authority” is still very relevant. When the job gets too big, delegate! This is still true in principles of leadership. Whether that is religious, secular, legal or whatever.

And yet it is often one of the hardest things for leaders to do. Sometimes this is because of a personality that craves control over others. Sometimes a perfectionistic drive blocks delegation. “I want it done right, and I’m the only one who can do it right.” Sometimes it’s hard to turn loose of control because of sincere caring for people and the fear they won’t be properly cared for by others. In the last instance, I’ve seen pastors driven by such concern, and in my early years as a pastor was hindered by this concern as well. I suspect Moses was hindered more by the latter dynamic than by the others.

But when responsibilities become too large for one person to handle efficiently, then authority must be delegated to others so that the work load can be shared. Three applicable principles at this point for us. 1) Find good quality individuals to share the load. 2) Set up a structure of responsibility that has accountability ultimately going back to the person at the top. 3) That person should have basic decision making responsibility. That is, layer delegated responsibility. The first principle is the heart of this structure, in my estimation. A “bad apple” in the structure creates all kinds of problems.

To be sure the implementation of these principles

will take on distinctive tones according to the cultural and religious orientation of the organization. Modifications of some points will probably become necessary. This particularly, given different settings.

In our US culture and tradition, this passage will speak most directly to how the church functions. But even here, modifications as reflected in the New Testament idea of “church” will become necessary. [1 Peter 5:1-7](#) reflects some of these differences:

1 I have a special concern for you church leaders. I know what it's like to be a leader, in on Christ's sufferings as well as the coming glory. 2 Here's my concern: that you care for God's flock with all the diligence of a shepherd. Not because you have to, but because you want to please God. Not calculating what you can get out of it, but acting spontaneously. [3 Not bossily telling others what to do, but tenderly showing them the way. 4 When God, who is the best shepherd of all, comes out in the open with his rule, he'll see that you've done it right and commend you lavishly.

5 And you who are younger must follow your leaders. But all of you, leaders and followers alike, are to be down to earth with each other, for - God has had it with the proud, But takes delight in just plain people. 6 So be content with who you are, and don't put on airs. God's strong hand is on you; he'll promote you at the right time. 7 Live carefree before God; he is most careful with you.

[Titus 2:1-10](#) reflects other aspects:

1 Your job is to speak out on the things that make for solid doctrine. 2 Guide older men into lives of temperance, dignity, and wisdom, into healthy faith, love, and endurance. 3 Guide older women into lives of reverence so they end up as neither gossips nor drunks, but models of goodness. 4 By looking at them, the younger women will know how to love their husbands and children, 5 be virtuous and pure, keep a good house, be good wives. We don't want anyone looking down on God's Message because of their behavior. 6 Also, guide the young men to live disciplined lives. 7 But mostly, show them all this by doing it yourself, incorruptible in your teaching, 8 your words solid and sane. Then anyone who is dead set against us, when he finds nothing weird or misguided, might eventually come around. 9 Guide slaves into being loyal workers, a bonus to their masters - no back talk, 10 no petty thievery. Then their good character will shine through their actions, adding luster to the teaching of our Savior God.

The potential, when “everyone is pulling his share of the load,” is enormous. What God could accomplish in and through His church when functioning smoothly is fantastic. Our challenge then is to “do our part,” and do it well according to these basic principles.

LXX

¹ ἤκουσεν δὲ Ἰοθρο ὁ ἱερεὺς Μαδιαμ ὁ γαμβρὸς Μωυσῆ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν κύριος Ἰσραηλ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ λαῷ ἐξήγαγεν γὰρ κύριος τὸν Ἰσραηλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ² ἔλαβεν δὲ Ἰοθρο ὁ γαμβρὸς Μωυσῆ Σεπφωραν τὴν γυναῖκα Μωυσῆ μετὰ τὴν ἀφεισιν αὐτῆς ³ καὶ τοὺς δύο υἱοὺς αὐτοῦ ὄνομα τῷ ἐνὶ αὐτῶν Γηρσαμ λέγων πάροικος ἤμην ἐν γῆ ἀλλοτρίᾳ ⁴ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ δευτέρου Ελιεζερ λέγων ὁ γὰρ θεὸς τοῦ πατρός μου βοηθός μου καὶ ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ ⁵ καὶ ἐξῆλθεν Ἰοθρο ὁ γαμβρὸς Μωυσῆ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ καὶ ἡ γυνὴ πρὸς Μωυσῆν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον οὐ παρενέβαλεν ἐπ' ὄρους τοῦ θεοῦ ⁶ ἀνηγγέλη δὲ Μωυσεὶ λέγοντες ἰδοὺ ὁ γαμβρὸς σου Ἰοθρο παραγίνεται πρὸς σέ καὶ ἡ γυνὴ καὶ οἱ δύο υἱοὶ σου μετ' αὐτοῦ ⁷ ἐξῆλθεν δὲ Μωυσῆς εἰς συνάντησιν τῷ γαμβρῷ αὐτοῦ καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐφίλησεν αὐτόν καὶ ἠσπάσαντο ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰσῆγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν ⁸ καὶ διηγήσατο Μωυσῆς τῷ γαμβρῷ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν κύριος τῷ Φαραῶ καὶ τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις ἔνεκεν τοῦ Ἰσραηλ καὶ πάντα τὸν μόχθον τὸν γενόμενον αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ καὶ ὅτι ἐξείλατο αὐτοὺς κύριος ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ⁹ ἐξέστη δὲ Ἰοθρο ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς οἷς ἐποίησεν

NASB

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. 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." 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. 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. 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

NRSV

1 Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro took her back, 3 along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been an alien in a foreign land"), 4 and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). 5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came into the wilderness where Moses was encamped at the mountain of God, bringing Moses' sons and wife to him. 6 He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons." 7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed down and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent. 8 Then 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 beset them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. 9 Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in delivering them from the Egyp-

NLT

1 Word soon reached Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, about all the wonderful things God had done for Moses and his people, the Israelites. He had heard about how the LORD had brought them safely out of Egypt. 2 Some time before this, Moses had sent his wife, Zipporah, and his two sons to live with Jethro, his father-in-law. 3 The name of Moses' first son was Gershom, for Moses had said when the boy was born, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land." 4 The name of his second son was Eliezer, for Moses had said at his birth, "The God of my fathers was my helper; he delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." 5 Jethro now came to visit Moses, and he brought Moses' wife and two sons with him. They arrived while Moses and the people were camped near the mountain of God. 6 Moses was told, "Jethro, your father-in-law, has come to visit you. Your wife and your two sons are with him." 7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law. He bowed to him respectfully and greeted him warmly. They asked about each other's health and then went to Moses' tent to talk further. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the

αὐτοῖς κύριος ὅτι ἐξείλατο αὐτοὺς ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ ¹⁰καὶ εἶπεν Ἰοθορ εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὅτι ἐξείλατο τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ ¹¹ νῦν ἔγνω ὅτι μέγας κύριος παρὰ πάντας τοὺς θεοὺς ἔνεκεν τούτου ὅτι ἐπέθεντο αὐτοῖς ¹² καὶ ἔλαβεν Ἰοθορ ὁ γαμβρὸς Μωυσῆ ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ θυσίας τῷ θεῷ παρεγένετο δὲ Ααρων καὶ πάντες οἱ πρεσβύτεροι Ἰσραηλ συμφαγεῖν ἄρτον μετὰ τοῦ γαμβροῦ Μωυσῆ ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ

¹³ καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὴν ἐπαύριον συνεκάθισεν Μωυσῆς κρίνειν τὸν λαόν παρειστήκει δὲ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς Μωυσέϊ ἀπὸ πρωῒθεν ἕως ἑσπέρας ¹⁴ καὶ ἰδὼν Ἰοθορ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίει τῷ λαῷ λέγει τί τοῦτο ὃ σὺ ποιεῖς τῷ λαῷ διὰ τί σὺ κάθησαι μόνος πᾶς δὲ ὁ λαὸς παρέστηκέν σοι ἀπὸ πρωῒθεν ἕως δείλης ¹⁵ καὶ λέγει Μωυσῆς τῷ γαμβρῷ ὅτι παραγίνεται πρὸς με ὁ λαὸς ἐκζητῆσαι κρίσιν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ¹⁶ ὅταν γὰρ γένηται αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογία καὶ ἔλθωσι πρὸς με διακρίνω ἕκαστον καὶ συμβιβάζω αὐτοὺς τὰ προστάγματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸν νόμον αὐτοῦ ¹⁷ εἶπεν δὲ ὁ γαμβρὸς Μωυσῆ πρὸς αὐτόν οὐκ ὀρθῶς σὺ ποιεῖς τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο ¹⁸ φθορᾶ καταφθαρῆση ἀνυπομονήτω καὶ σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς οὗτος ὅς ἐστιν μετὰ σοῦ βαρὺ σοι τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο οὐ δύνηση ποιεῖ

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. 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.

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." 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The

tians. 10 Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians, when they dealt arrogantly with them." 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

13 The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him 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 sit alone, while all the people stand around 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, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God." 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19

LORD had done to rescue Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He also told him about the problems they had faced along the way and how the LORD had delivered his people from all their troubles. 9 Jethro was delighted when he heard about all that the LORD had done for Israel as he brought them out of Egypt. 10 "Praise be to the LORD," Jethro said, "for he has saved you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. He has rescued Israel from the power of Egypt! 11 I know now that the LORD is greater than all other gods, because his people have escaped from the proud and cruel Egyptians." 12 Then Jethro presented a burnt offering and gave sacrifices to God. As Jethro was doing this, Aaron and the leaders of Israel came out to meet him. They all joined him in a sacrificial meal in God's presence.

13 The next day, Moses sat as usual to hear the people's complaints against each other. They were lined up in front of him from morning till evening. 14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "Why are you trying to do all this alone? The people have been standing here all day to get your help." 15 Moses replied, "Well, the people come to me

ν μόνος ¹⁹ νῦν οὖν ἄκουσον μου καὶ συμβουλεύσω σοι καὶ ἔσται ὁ θεὸς μετὰ σοῦ γίνου σὺ τῷ λαῷ τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἀνοίσεις τοὺς λόγους αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸν θεόν ²⁰ καὶ διαμαρτυρῆ αὐτοῖς τὰ προστάγματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸν νόμον αὐτοῦ καὶ σημανεῖς αὐτοῖς τὰς ὁδοὺς ἐν αἷς πορεύονται ἐν αὐταῖς καὶ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιήσουσιν ²¹ καὶ σὺ σεαυτῷ σκέψαι ἀπὸ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ ἄνδρας δυνατοὺς θεοσεβεῖς ἄνδρας δικαίους μισοῦντας ὑπερηφανίαν καὶ καταστήσεις αὐτοὺς ἐπ' αὐτῶν χιλιάρχους καὶ ἑκατοντάρχους καὶ πενηκοντάρχους καὶ δεκαδάρχους ²² καὶ κρινούσιν τὸν λαὸν πᾶσαν ὥραν τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα τὸ ὑπέρογκον ἀνοίσουσιν ἐπὶ σέ τὰ δὲ βραχέα τῶν κριμάτων κρινούσιν αὐτοὶ καὶ κουφιούσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ συναντιλήμψονται σοι ²³ ἐὰν τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο ποιήσης κατισχύσει σε ὁ θεὸς καὶ δυνήσῃ παραστήναι καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς οὗτος εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ τόπον μετ' εἰρήνης ἤξει ²⁴ ἤκουσεν δὲ Μωυσῆς τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ γαμβροῦ καὶ ἐποίησεν ὅσα αὐτῷ εἶπεν ²⁵ καὶ ἐπέλεξεν Μωυσῆς ἄνδρας δυνατοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτοὺς ἐπ' αὐτῶν χιλιάρχους καὶ ἑκατοντάρχους καὶ πενηκοντάρχους καὶ δεκαδάρχους ²⁶ καὶ ἐκρίνοσαν τὸν λαὸν πᾶσαν ὥραν πᾶν δὲ ῥῆμα ὑπέρογκον ἀνεφέρουσαν

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."

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 hun-

Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; 20 teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. 21 You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace."

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he

to seek God's guidance. 16 When an argument arises, I am the one who settles the case. I inform the people of God's decisions and teach them his laws and instructions." 17 "This is not good!" his father-in-law exclaimed. 18 "You're going to wear yourself out – and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. 19 Now let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people's representative before God, bringing him their questions to be decided. 20 You should tell them God's decisions, teach them God's laws and instructions, and show them how to conduct their lives. 21 But find some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as judges over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. 22 These men can serve the people, resolving all the ordinary cases. Anything that is too important or too complicated can be brought to you. But they can take care of the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. 23 If you follow this advice, and if God directs you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will

ἐπὶ Μωυσῆν πᾶν δὲ ῥῆμα
ἐλαφρὸν ἐκρίνοσαν αὐτοί
27 ἐξ᾿απέστειλεν δὲ Μωυσῆς
τὸν ἑαυτοῦ γαμβρόν καὶ
ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὴν γῆν αὐτοῦ

dreds, 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 fa-
ther-in-law farewell, and
he went his way into his
own land.

went off to his own coun-
try.

go home in peace."

24 Moses listened to
his father-in-law's advice
and followed his sugges-
tions. 25 He chose ca-
pable men from all over
Israel and made them
judges over the people.
They were put in charge
of groups of one thou-
sand, one hundred, fifty,
and ten. 26 These men
were constantly available
to administer justice.
They brought the hard
cases to Moses, but they
judged the smaller mat-
ters themselves. 27
Soon after this, Moses
said good-bye to his fa-
ther-in-law, who returned
to his own land.

Exodus 18:1^{WTT} וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדִּין חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֵת
 פֶּלֶאֱשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ כִּי־הוֹצִיא
 יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם

² וַיִּקַּח יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֶת־צִפּוֹרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ מֹשֶׁה אַחֵר שְׁלוּחִיהָ

³ וְאֵת שְׁנֵי בָנָיהָ אֲשֶׁר שָׁם הָאָחֵר גִּרְשָׁם כִּי אָמַר גַּר הָיִיתִי
 בְּאֶרֶץ נֹכְרִיהָ

⁴ וְשֵׁם הָאָחֵר אֱלִיעֶזֶר כִּי־אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי בְּעֶזְרִי וַיַּצֵּלְנִי מִחַרֵּב
 פְּתָעָה

⁵ וַיָּבֵא יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הַמִּדְבָּר
 אֲשֶׁר־הוּא חֲנֵה שֵׁם הַר הָאֱלֹהִים

⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲנִי חֹתֶנְךָ יִתְרוֹ בֵּן אֱלִיָּדָה וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּשְׁנֵי
 בָנֶיהָ עִמָּה

⁷ וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה לְקִרְיַת חֲתָנוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וַיִּשְׁקֹלֹו וַיִּשְׁאַלֹו
 אִישׁ־לְרֵעֵהוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וַיָּבֵאוּ הָאֱהֻלָּה

⁸ וַיִּסַּפֵּר מֹשֶׁה לְחֲתָנוֹ אֵת פֶּלֶאֱשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה לְפָרְעֹה
 וּלְמִצְרַיִם עַל אֹדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל־הַתְּלָאָה אֲשֶׁר מָצְאתֶם
 בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיַּצֵּלֶם יְהוָה

⁹ וַיַּחֲדֶה יִתְרוֹ עַל כָּל־הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יְהוָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר
 הִצִּילֹו מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם

¹⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם
 וּמִיַּד פְּרָעָה אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיל אֶתְהֶעָם מִתַּחַת יַד־מִצְרַיִם

¹¹ עַתָּה יִדְעֵתִי כִּי־גָדוֹל יְהוָה מִכָּל־הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי בִדְבַר אֲשֶׁר
 זָדוּ עֲלֵיהֶם

¹² וַיִּקַּח יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה עִלָּה וּזְבָחִים לְאֱלֹהִים וַיָּבֵא אֶהֱרֹן
 וְכָל־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֶאֱכֹל־לֶחֶם עִם־חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי
 הָאֱלֹהִים

¹³ וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה לְשֹׁפֵט אֶת־הָעָם וַיַּעֲמֹד הָעָם
 עַל־מֹשֶׁה מִן־הַבֶּקֶר עַד־הָעֶרֶב

¹⁴ וַיִּרְאֵה חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה לָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר
 מָה־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה לָעָם מִדּוֹעַ אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב
 לְבִדָּד וְכָל־הָעָם נֹצֵב עֲלֶיךָ מִן־בֶּקֶר עַד־עֶרֶב

15 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחַתְּנוֹ כִּי־יָבֵא אֵלַי הָעַם לְדַרְשׁ אֱלֹהִים

16 כִּי־יִהְיֶה לָהֶם דְּבַר בָּא אֵלַי וְשִׁפְטֹתַי בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין

רֵעֵהוּ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי אֶת־חֻקֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת־תּוֹרוֹתָיו

17 וַיֹּאמֶר חֲתָן מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיו לֹא־טוֹב הַדְּבַר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה

18 נָבֶל תִּבְלַגְּמָל גַּם־אַתָּה גַּם־הָעַם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עִמָּךְ כִּי־כֹבֵד

מִמָּךְ הַדְּבַר לֹא־תוֹכֵל עֲשֹׂהוּ לְבַדְּךָ

19 עֲתָה שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי אִיעָצֶךָ וְיֵהִי אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ הִיְהִי אַתָּה

לְעַם מִוֶּלַד הָאֱלֹהִים וְהִבֵּאתָ אֹתָהּ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲלֵה־אֱלֹהִים

20 וְהִזְהַרְתָּה אֹתָהֶם אֶת־הַחֻקִּים וְאֶת־הַתּוֹרֹת וְהוֹדַעְתָּ לָהֶם

אֶת־הַדְּרֹךְ יֵלְכוּ בָהּ וְאֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן

21 וְאַתָּה תַּחֲזֹה מִכָּל־הָעַם אֲנָשֵׁי־חַיִל יִרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים אָנָשִׁי

אָמֹת שְׂנָאִי בְּצַע וְשָׁמַת עֲלֵהֶם שְׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שְׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שְׂרֵי

חֲמֻשִׁים וְשְׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת

22 וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעַם בְּכָל־עֵת וְהָיָה כָּל־הַדְּבַר הַגָּדֹל יָבִיאוּ

אֵלֶיךָ וְכָל־הַדְּבַר הַקָּטָן יִשְׁפְּטוּהֶם וְהַקָּל מִלְּעֵיךָ וְנִשְׂאוּ

אֵתְךָ

23 אָם אֶת־הַדְּבַר הַזֶּה תַּעֲשֶׂה וְצִוְּךָ אֱלֹהִים וַיְכַלֵּת עַמּוֹד וְגַם

כָּל־הָעַם הַזֶּה עַל־מִקְמוֹ יָבֵא בְּשָׁלוֹם

24 וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה לְקוֹל חֲתָנוֹ וַיַּעַשׂ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר אָמַר

25 וַיִּבְחַר מֹשֶׁה אֲנָשֵׁי־חַיִל מִכָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם רִאשִׁים

עַל־הָעַם שְׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שְׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שְׂרֵי חֲמֻשִׁים וְשְׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת

26 וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעַם בְּכָל־עֵת אֶת־הַדְּבַר הַקָּשֶׁה יָבִיאוּן

אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְכָל־הַדְּבַר הַקָּטָן יִשְׁפּוּטוּהֶם

27 וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־חַתְּנוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ לוֹ אֶל־אֶרְצוֹ פ

NIV

1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her 3 and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have become an alien in a foreign land"; 4 and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh." 5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the desert, where he was camped near the mountain of God. 6 Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons."

7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the Lord had saved them. 9 Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing

TEV

1 Moses' father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard about everything that God had done for Moses and the people of Israel when he led them out of Egypt. 2 So he came to Moses, bringing with him Moses' wife Zipporah, who had been left behind, 3 and Gershom and Eliezer, her two sons. (Moses had said, "I have been a foreigner in a strange land"; so he had named one son Gershom. 4 He had also said, "The God of my father helped me and saved me from being killed by the king of Egypt"; so he had named the other son Eliezer.) 5 Jethro came with Moses' wife and her two sons into the desert where Moses was camped at the holy mountain. 6 He had sent word to Moses that they were coming,

7 so Moses went out to meet him, bowed before him, and kissed him. They asked about each other's health and then went into Moses' tent. 8 Moses told Jethro everything that the Lord had done to the king and the people of Egypt in order to rescue the Israelites. He also told him about the hardships the people had faced on the way and how the Lord had saved them. 9 When Jethro heard all this, he was happy 10 and said, "Praise the Lord, who

Message

1 Jethro, priest of Midian and father-in-law to Moses, heard the report of all that God had done for Moses and Israel his people, the news that God had delivered Israel from Egypt. 2 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken in Zipporah, Moses' wife who had been sent back home, 3 and her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (Sojourner) for he had said, "I'm a sojourner in a foreign land"; 4 the name of the other was Eliezer (God's-Help) because "The God of my father is my help and saved me from death by Pharaoh." 5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought Moses his sons and his wife there in the wilderness where he was camped at the mountain of God. 6 He had sent a message ahead to Moses: "I, your father-in-law, am coming to you with your wife and two sons."

7 Moses went out to welcome his father-in-law. He bowed to him and kissed him. Each asked the other how things had been with him. Then they went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law the story of all that God had done to Pharaoh and Egypt in helping Israel, all the trouble they had experienced on the journey, and how God had delivered them. 9 Jethro was delighted in all the good that God had done for Israel in delivering them from Egyptian

ESV

1 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 Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, 3 along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land), 4 and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh). 5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. 6 And when 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 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. 8 Then 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 come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. 9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the

them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 He said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

13 The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" 15 Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. 16 Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." 17 Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it

saved you from the king and the people of Egypt! Praise the Lord, who saved his people from slavery! 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods, because he did this when the Egyptians treated the Israelites with such contempt." 12 Then Jethro brought an offering to be burned whole and other sacrifices to be offered to God; and Aaron and all the leaders of Israel went with him to eat the sacred meal as an act of worship.

13 The next day Moses was settling disputes among the people, and he was kept busy from morning till night. 14 When Jethro saw everything that Moses had to do, he asked, "What is all this that you are doing for the people? Why are you doing this all alone, with people standing here from morning till night to consult you?" 15 Moses answered, "I must do this because the people come to me to learn God's will. 16 When two people have a dispute, they come to me, and I decide which one of them is right, and I tell them God's commands and laws." 17 Then Jethro said, "You are not doing this right. 18 You will wear yourself out and these people as well. This is too much for you to do alone. 19 Now let me give you some good advice, and God will be with you. It is right for you to represent

oppression. 10 Jethro said, "Blessed be God who has delivered you from the power of Egypt and Pharaoh, who has delivered his people from the oppression of Egypt. 11 Now I know that God is greater than all gods because he's done this to all those who treated Israel arrogantly." 12 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a Whole-Burnt-Offering and sacrifices to God. And Aaron, along with all the elders of Israel, came and ate the meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

13 The next day Moses took his place to judge the people. People were standing before him all day long, from morning to night. 14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What's going on here? Why are you doing all this, and all by yourself, letting everybody line up before you from morning to night?" 15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me with questions about God. 16 When something comes up, they come to me. I judge between a man and his neighbor and teach them God's laws and instructions." 17 Moses' father-in-law said, "This is no way to go about it. 18 You'll burn out, and the people right along with you. This is way too much for you - you can't do this alone. 19 Now listen to me. Let me tell you how to do this so that

Egyptians. 10 Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people. 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

13 The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till 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 sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening? 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God; 16 when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws. 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, What you are doing is not good. 18 You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. 19 Now obey

alone. 19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. 21 But select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. 25 He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 26 They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves. 27 Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.

the people before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 You should teach them God's commands and explain to them how they should live and what they should do. 21 But in addition, you should choose some capable men and appoint them as leaders of the people: leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. They must be God-fearing men who can be trusted and who cannot be bribed. 22 Let them serve as judges for the people on a permanent basis. They can bring all the difficult cases to you, but they themselves can decide all the smaller disputes. That will make it easier for you, as they share your burden. 23 If you do this, as God commands, you will not wear yourself out, and all these people can go home with their disputes settled."

24 Moses took Jethro's advice 25 and chose capable men from among all the Israelites. He appointed them as leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 26 They served as judges for the people on a permanent basis, bringing the difficult cases to Moses but deciding the smaller disputes themselves. 27 Then Moses said good-bye to Jethro, and Jethro went back home.

God will be in this with you. Be there for the people before God, but let the matters of concern be presented to God. 20 Your job is to teach them the rules and instructions, to show them how to live, what to do. 21 And then you need to keep a sharp eye out for competent men - men who fear God, men of integrity, men who are incorruptible - and appoint them as leaders over groups organized by the thousand, by the hundred, by fifty, and by ten. 22 They'll be responsible for the everyday work of judging among the people. They'll bring the hard cases to you, but in the routine cases they'll be the judges. They will share your load and that will make it easier for you. 23 If you handle the work this way, you'll have the strength to carry out whatever God commands you, and the people in their settings will flourish also."

24 Moses listened to the counsel of his father-in-law and did everything he said. 25 Moses picked competent men from all Israel and set them as leaders over the people who were organized by the thousand, by the hundred, by fifty, and by ten. 26 They took over the everyday work of judging among the people. They brought the hard cases to Moses, but in the routine cases they were the judges. 27 Then Moses said good-bye to his father-in-law who went home to his own country.

my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, 20 and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. 21 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.

24 So Moses listened to the voice of 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, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country.