

January 14, 2018 - Ex. 18:1 – 19:5 - Jethro's advice
Torah Readings: Exodus 18:1 – 19:5 - Jethro's advice
Psalm 55
Haftarah: Isaiah 33:13-22
Jeremiah 2:4-11 + 4:1-2

Exodus 18:1 - "When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt;

See **Exodus 2:16**

Rashi - Jethro: He was called by seven names: Reuel, Jether, Jethro [i.e., Yithro], Hobab, Heber, Keni, [and] Putiel (Mechilta). [He was called] Jether (יֵתֶר) because he [caused] a section to be added (יִתֵּר) to the Torah [namely]: "But you shall choose" (below verse 21). [He was called] Jethro (יֵתְרוֹ) [to indicate that] when he converted and fulfilled the commandments, a letter was added to his name. [He was called] Hobab (חֹבָב) [which means lover] because he loved (חָבַב) the Torah. Hobab was indeed Jethro, as it is said: "of the children of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law" (Jud. 4:11). Others say that Reuel was Jethro's father. [If so,] what [is the meaning of] what it [Scripture] says [referring to the daughters of Jethro]: "They came to their father Reuel" (Exod. 2:18)? Because [young] children call their grandfather "Father." [This appears] in Sifrei (Beha'alothecha 10:29).

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

Moses had sent Zipporah back to her own relations, either in anger, on account of the scene described in **Exodus 4:24-26**, or simply that he might not be encumbered with wife and children during the dangers and troubles which he anticipated in Egypt. Jethro assumed that, as the main troubles were now over, he would be glad to have his wife and children restored to him.

Exodus 18:3 - "And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:"

Gershom = "foreigner"

Eliezer = "God is help"

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

Jethro, like the Israelites, "believed" after God had saved them.

Jethro's 'Addition'

Exodus 18:13-27 - Jethro's "addition" to the Torah

Rashi says this discussion happened the day after Moses' descent from Sinai the second time. Before the giving of the Torah it was impossible to say (verse 15), "and I make known the statutes, etc.," [since the statutes had not yet been given].

This is in keeping with the rule that "there is no earlier and later in Torah"—i.e., that the Torah does not necessarily recount events in their chronological order (Mechilta on Exodus 18:13)

Exodus 18:21 - "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:"

The Jews call this Jethro's "addition" to the Torah.

Shemoth Rabbah states:

Why was he called Yithro ("his addition")?... Because he added a chapter to the Torah — [the chapter] "You shall discern from all the people..."

With his suggestion, the Torah becomes something the whole people interpret and incorporate for themselves into their everyday lives, applying it to every situation.

Moses delegated his own capacity to interpret the Torah to the sages of his generation, and by extension, to the sages of all generations. Because it was Moses who established this system, it was incorporated as a section in the Torah, making it an integral part of the divine communication to man.

(See discussion here at chabad.org - <https://buff.ly/2mCIVP0>)

See also **Numbers 11:16** - "And the LORD said to Moses, Gather to me seventy men of the elders ..."

And Jehoshaphat's appointment of judges: **2 Chronicles 19:6**

The smallest division - "rulers of tens" - would become the Jewish minyan of 10 men at rest, which constituted the size required for public prayer and Torah reading.

"provide" - chazah - an unusual word for this. A poetic term usually referring to seeing God, or to having something revealed to you by God. To prophecy, "to see as a seer in the ecstatic state."

Rashi - "But you shall choose": with the holy spirit that is upon you. — [from Mechilta]

Choosing of these judges and sages would be by spiritual discernment. Compare this with the similar process of choosing and ordaining deacons (**Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3:8-13**), pastors and overseers (**1 Timothy 3:1-7**) in the church, which incorporates Jethro's inspired suggestion.

1 Timothy 4:13-14 - "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given you through the prophecy spoken over you at the laying on of the hands of the elders."

The Holy Spirit raises up elders (**Acts 20:28**), who are then "seen" or spiritually discerned by the congregation, chosen by a show of hands, and ordained or appointed for their position by other elders.

The Jews put a positive spin on this incident, but later commentators saw this as an unneeded change in God's original plan. Arthur W. Pink in "Gleanings in Exodus" points to a passage that expands on Jethro's (Hobab's) departure, and notes "The ties of nature counted more with him than the blessings of Jehovah.":

Numbers 10:29-30 - "And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred."

God 's Message to Israel

Exodus 19:3 - "And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;"

Rashi - "to the house of Jacob": These are the women. Say it to them in a gentle language. — [from Mechilta]

"and tell the sons of Israel": The punishments and the details [of the laws] explain to the males, things that are as harsh as wormwood. -[Mechilta, Shab. 87a]

Exodus 19:4 - "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."

Rashi - "on eagles' wings": The eagle fears only man, lest he shoot an arrow at it, because no other bird flies above it. Therefore, it places them [its young] on its wings. It says, "Rather the arrow pierce me and not my children." I [God] too did that: "Then the angel of God...moved, ...And he came between the camp of Egypt, etc." (Exod. 14:19, 20), and the Egyptians shot arrows and catapult stones, and the cloud absorbed them. — [from Mechilta]

Exodus 19:5-6 - "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my

covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

"A peculiar treasure" - cēgullah - from a Chaldean root, signifying "to earn," or "acquire," and means primarily some valuable possession, which the owner has got by his own exertions.

Titus 2:14 - "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

1 Peter 2:9 - "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."