

# Exodus 18 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [Exodus 18:1](#)
- [Exodus 18:2](#)
- [Exodus 18:3](#)
- [Exodus 18:4](#)
- [Exodus 18:5](#)
- [Exodus 18:6](#)
- [Exodus 18:7](#)
- [Exodus 18:8](#)
- [Exodus 18:9](#)
- [Exodus 18:10](#)
- [Exodus 18:11](#)
- [Exodus 18:12](#)
- [Exodus 18:13](#)
- [Exodus 18:14](#)
- [Exodus 18:15](#)
- [Exodus 18:16](#)
- [Exodus 18:17](#)
- [Exodus 18:18](#)
- [Exodus 18:19](#)
- [Exodus 18:20](#)
- [Exodus 18:21](#)
- [Exodus 18:22](#)
- [Exodus 18:23](#)
- [Exodus 18:24](#)
- [Exodus 18:25](#)
- [Exodus 18:26](#)
- [Exodus 18:27](#)

Irving Jensen (Online) - Used by Permission  
 Click to Enlarge  
 View Chuck Swindoll's chart of Exodus.

Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus									
<b>DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION</b>					<b>PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP</b>				
Redemption from Egypt Ex 1:1-18:27					Revelation from God Ex 19:1-40:38				
Getting Israel Out of Egypt					Getting Egypt Out of Israel!				
Narration					Legislation				
Birth of Moses Ex 1-2	Call of Moses Ex 3-6	Conflict with Pharaoh Ex 7-10	Exodus from Egypt Ex 11-12	Red Sea Crossed Ex 13-15	Journey To Sinai Ex 16-18	Law Given Ex 19-24	Tent Plan Ex 25-31	Idol Worship Ex 32-34	Tent Built Ex 35-40
<b>Subjection</b>			<b>Redemption</b>		<b>Instruction</b>				

<b>Suffering and Liberation of People of God</b>				<b>Guidance of God</b>		<b>Worship of God</b>			
<b>Moses and Burdens of Israel</b>		<b>Pharaoh and Plagues Upon Egypt</b>		<b>Red Sea Deliverance</b>	<b>Wilderness Provision</b>	<b>Sinai Instructions</b>			
<b>Bondage and Oppression</b>				<b>Deliverance and Provision</b>		<b>Law Pattern and Construction</b>			
<b>Israel in Egypt Ex 1:1-13:16</b>				<b>Israel to Sinai Ex 13:17-18:27</b>		<b>Israel at Sinai Ex 19:1-40:38</b>			
<b>God's People Enduring Bondage</b>				<b>God's Grace Revealed in Redemption</b>		<b>God's Glory Manifested in Worship</b>			
<b>Egypt 430 Years (15% of Exodus)</b>				<b>Wilderness 2 Months (30% of Exodus)</b>		<b>Mt Sinai 10 Months (55% of Exodus)</b>			
<b>From Groaning</b>									<b>To Glory!</b>

[Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament - online](#)

[Click to Enlarge](#)

[Click for Excellent Map of Route of the Exodus](#)

[Click another Exodus from Egypt](#)

[Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

<b>GENESIS</b>	<b>EXODUS</b>
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

**SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH**  
(from Believer's Study Bible)

**Exodus 18:1 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.**

- **Jethro** - Ex 2:16,21 3:1 4:18 Nu 10:29 Jud 4:11
- **heard** - Ps 34:2 44:1 77:14,15 78:4 105:5,43 106:2,8 Jer 33:9 Zec 8:23 Ga 1:23,24
- **God** - Ac 7:35,36 14:27 15:12 21:19,20 Ro 15:18
- **done** - Ex 7:1-15:27 Jos 2:10 9:9 Ne 9:10,11 Ps 77:14,15 78:50-53 Ps 105:36-41 106:8-11 136:10-16 Isa 63:11-13
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JETHRO MOSES' FATHER-IN-LAW**

**NET Note** introduces this passage - This chapter forms the transition to the Law. There has been the deliverance, the testing passages, the provision in the wilderness, and the warfare. Any God who can do all this for his people deserves their allegiance. In chap. 18 the Lawgiver is giving advice, using laws and rulings, but then he is given advice to organize the elders to assist. Thus, when the Law is fully revealed, a system will be in place to administer it. The point of the passage is that a great leader humbly

accepts advice from other godly believers to delegate responsibility. He does not try to do it all himself; God does not want one individual to do it all.

**Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law** - We first see the name of Jethro as **Moses' father-in-law** in Ex 3:1 "Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his **father-in-law**, the priest of Midian." Then in Ex 4:18 "Moses departed (FROM THE BURNING BUSH ENCOUNTER) and returned to Jethro his **father-in-law** and said to him, "Please, let me go, that I may return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

**Jethro** is called the **priest of Midian** in Ex 2:16+, Ex 3:1+ and here in Ex 18:1. The question arises regarding the title was Jethro a priest of the true God While we can speculate, from this chapter we no longer need to speculate because Jethro clearly come to "know that the LORD is greater than all the gods." (Ex 18:11) and he gave a "burnt offering and sacrifice to God" In Ex 18:12. So whether he was a genuine believer in Ex 2:16+ is not absolutely certain, the fact that the same title, **priest of Midian**, is used of him in Exodus 18 suggests he was a believer in Ex 2:16+. Secondly, the fact that Moses (a believer) married his daughter Zipporah (Ex 2:21+) would tend to substantiate this interpretation. Finally, the fact that Zipporah seems to have understood the importance of circumcision which was a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (cf Ge 17:10,11), would support the premise that she had been taught the truth about God.

**Guzik** - Jethro was the priest of Midian—likely a descendant of one of Abraham's other children through Keturah named Midian (Genesis 25:1–2). Because of this connection with Abraham, we have good reason to believe he was a true priest, and worshipped the true God.

**Wiersbe** feels that "Like Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17–24), Jethro was a Gentile priest (Ex. 2:16) whose testimony indicates that he knew the true and living God."

It is interesting that Jethro is referred to as Moses' **father-in-law** more than by his given name. Clearly, the Holy Spirit emphasizes the relationship of Jethro to Moses as his **father-in-law**. This would also tend to support the premise that Jethro was to some degree an authority figure to Moses. In any case Moses reveals his great humility by willingly submitting to Jethro, even when he was planning to return to Egypt and sought Jethro's permission = "Moses departed and returned to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please, let me go, that I may return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." (Ex 4:18+).

**Jethro** - 9x in 9v - Ex 3:1; Ex 4:18; Ex 18:1; Ex 18:2; Ex 18:5; Ex 18:6; Ex 18:9; Ex 18:10; Ex 18:12

**Father-in-law** is repeated in 12x Exodus 18 - Ex 18:1; Ex 18:2; Ex 18:5; Ex 18:6; Ex 18:7; Ex 18:8; Ex 18:12; Ex 18:14; Ex 18:15; Ex 18:17; Ex 18:24; Ex 18:27;

Note that **Jethro** is also called **Reuel** in Exodus and Numbers. Many people in history have more than one name.

When they came to **Reuel** their father, he said, "Why have you come back so soon today?" (Ex 2:18)

Then Moses said to Hobab the son of **Reuel** the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out to the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us and we will do you good, for the LORD has promised good concerning Israel." (Nu 10:29)

**Heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people** - No email. No text. No pictures of the Red Sea closing on the Egyptians on Instagram. And yet the word of Yahweh's deliverance spread. Yahweh was glorified by this great deliverance. The Song of Moses stated "The peoples (pagans, Gentiles) have heard, they tremble." (Ex 15:14-15+), so the word of Yahweh's victory over the most powerful nation in the world at that time spread to all of the other nations in the area of Palestine. This news presumably spread even farther but the nations mentioned in Ex 15:14-15+ were those that would specifically interact with the nation of Israel in the future.

**John MacArthur** points out that "The intelligence-gathering ability of ancient peoples should not be underestimated. Quickly and thoroughly the news of significant events in other lands passed from one place to another, very often via the merchant caravans which traversed the Fertile Crescent, or through ambassadors and other official contacts between nations. In Jethro's case, whatever knowledge he had gleaned of Israel's progress had been supplemented with information from Zipporah and her sons after Moses sent them ahead to her home (Ex 18:2). (MacArthur Study Bible)

**How the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt - Brought out** (used in same sense in Ex 3:10, 11, 12+, Ex 6:26+, Ex 14:11+, Ex 16:3+) in the Septuagint is the verb [exago](#) which means to lead out, conduct out, bring out (used in the Lxx of Ex 6:6, 7+, et al, cf Dt 4:37, Jer 31:32+). While some passages in Exodus point out Moses' role in leading out the people (Ex 3:10-13+), here Jethro seems to have understood that it was Jehovah **Who brought Israel out of Egypt**. (cf Ex 6:6, 7+, Ex 7:4, 5+, Ex 12:17+, Ex 12:42+, Ex 12:51+, Ex 13:3+, Ex 13:9+, Ex 13:14+, Ex 13:16+, Ex 16:6+, Ex 16:32+, Ex 18:1) As a father-in-law he could have proudly pointed

out it was his own son-in-law who lead them out but Jethro pointed to Yahweh as the One deserving the glory.

**THOUGHT** - There is a good lesson here for all of us in ministry (and we are ALL in ministry of one type or another). Anything we do that is of eternal value is (1) accomplished by the Spirit of Christ in us (cf Jn 15:5, Jn 15:8) and (2) should always point to Jesus as the One Who Alone deserves the glory and honor. We are but a bunch of "cracked pots" the Creator has redeemed to use in various supernatural ways that point to Himself, the God of all glory. Question - When men praise me for what God has privileged me and empowered me to do for His glory, do I humbly, honestly point them to the true Source of successful, supernatural ministry? Ouch! I am continually reminded of Proverbs 27:21 "The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, And each is tested by the praise accorded him." The Spirit frequently reminds me of the words of Paul "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (AND THE SPIRIT CONTINUALLY POINTS TO JESUS - SEE Jn 16:14, Jn 15:26)." (2 Cor 3:5-6+)

**Brought** ([yatsa](#)) is used some 113 times in Exodus - Ex 1:5; Ex 2:11; Ex 2:13; Ex 3:10; Ex 3:11; Ex 3:12; Ex 4:6; Ex 4:7; Ex 4:14; Ex 5:10; Ex 5:20; Ex 6:6; Ex 6:7; Ex 6:13; Ex 6:26; Ex 6:27; Ex 7:4; Ex 7:5; Ex 7:15; Ex 8:12; Ex 8:18; Ex 8:20; Ex 8:29; Ex 8:30; Ex 9:29; Ex 9:33; Ex 10:6; Ex 10:18; Ex 11:4; Ex 11:8; Ex 12:17; Ex 12:22; Ex 12:31; Ex 12:39; Ex 12:41; Ex 12:42; Ex 12:46; Ex 12:51; Ex 13:3; Ex 13:4; Ex 13:8; Ex 13:9; Ex 13:14; Ex 13:16; Ex 14:8; Ex 14:11; Ex 15:20; Ex 15:22; Ex 16:1; Ex 16:3; Ex 16:4; Ex 16:6; Ex 16:27; Ex 16:29; Ex 16:32; Ex 17:6; Ex 17:9; Ex 18:1; Ex 18:7; Ex 19:1; Ex 19:17; Ex 20:2; Ex 21:2; Ex 21:3; Ex 21:4; Ex 21:5; Ex 21:7; Ex 21:11; Ex 21:22; Ex 22:6; Ex 23:15; Ex 23:16; Ex 25:32; Ex 25:33; Ex 25:35; Ex 28:35; Ex 29:46; Ex 32:11; Ex 32:12; Ex 32:24; Ex 33:7; Ex 33:8; Ex 34:18; Ex 34:34; Ex 35:20; Ex 37:18; Ex 37:19; Ex 37:21;

#### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Jethro](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Jethro](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Jethro](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Jethro](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Jethro](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Jethro](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Jethro](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Jethro](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Jethro](#)

---

#### Question: "Who was Jethro in the Bible?"

**Answer:** Jethro was the father-in-law of Moses and father of Zipporah. Jethro is first mentioned in the Bible in Exodus 2:16 where he is described as "a priest of Midian." He is also referred to as Reuel (verse 18), which could indicate the equivalent of a last name. The name Reuel means "friend of God," so the fact that the Bible calls him first by this name may mean that he was a priest of the Most High God, rather than a pagan deity as some have suggested. Many people in the Bible were called by two names such as Jacob (Israel, Genesis 35:10), Simon (Peter, Luke 6:14), Matthew (Levi, Mark 2:14; Matthew 9:9), and Paul (Saul, Acts 13:9). Sometimes the name change was due to an encounter with God. Other times it may have simply been a second name, in the way that a man named Ben Jones may be called both "Ben" and "Jones."

Exodus 2 details the account of Moses' first encounter with Jethro. When Moses was on the run from Pharaoh, after having killed an Egyptian, he found himself in Midian by a well. Jethro's seven daughters were shepherdesses who came to the well to water their sheep. However, some men chased the women away, and Moses came to their defense. In gratitude for Moses' care of his daughters, Jethro invited him for dinner.

Over the course of time, Jethro gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses for a wife, and they had two sons (Exodus 2:21; 4:20). Moses stayed with the Midianites for forty years until God called to him from the burning bush (Exodus 3). Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, gave him his blessing to return to his people in obedience to God (Exodus 4:18).

Jethro is highlighted again in Exodus chapter 18. Moses had sent Zipporah and their sons back to Midian, rather than take them to Egypt, perhaps due to the dangers he would face in leading an entire nation out of slavery. Moses clearly trusted Jethro to take good care of his family and use wisdom in knowing when to reunite them. In Exodus 18, Jethro brings Zipporah and the children to

Moses at Sinai. The relationship between Moses and Jethro was always cordial (verses 7–8), and Jethro offers some fatherly advice when he sees the overwhelming responsibility facing his son-in-law (verses 13–27). Moses takes Jethro's advice on how to delegate authority: "Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said" (verse 24). Moses then sends Jethro back to Midian with his blessing (verse 27).

From all we can tell in the Bible, Jethro was a godly man of integrity who played a small part in God's great story of deliverance for the Israelites. He is a good role model for in-laws. He offered wise counsel, stepped in to help when needed, and then got out of the way. (Source: [Gotquestions.org](http://Gotquestions.org))

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

- **Zipporah** - Ex 2:21 Ex 4:25,26
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A FAMILY REUNION

**Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away** - Earlier Moses recorded that he "took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand." However at some point Moses sent his wife and sons back to his father-in-law Jethro. Now they are returning with Jethro to meet Moses after the defeat of the Amalekites. It is interesting that there is no further mention of the reunion of Moses with his family.

---

### Exodus 18:2-5 A Family Reunion - Woodrow Kroll

Beau Arceneaux was 15 months old when he was kidnapped by his father and taken from Louisiana to live in Austin, Texas. Years later, as he visited a chat room on the Internet, a couple of people became curious about this boy who had no contact with his mother. So they informed the police. In December 1995, the FBI showed up at Beau's home to tell him his mother had been searching for him for the past 12 years. On December 20, mother and son were joyfully reunited.

Have you ever been separated from your family? If you have ever been apart from your family for any length of time, you know how difficult it is. I was apart from my wife and children during my last semester of seminary while I was studying in France. I was thousands of miles away, living in a foreign country, knowing I would not see them for months. It wasn't easy.

Moses also had been separated from his family. Zipporah, his wife of 40 years, and his two sons had been sent back to the land of Midian while he returned to Egypt to lead Israel to freedom. With that challenge behind him, Moses was ready to be reunited with his loved ones and Jethro was gracious enough to bring this about. While Scripture gives no details, you can imagine what a joyful reunion it was.

As Christians we also have the joy of anticipating a very special reunion. Scripture says, "And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17+). Now that's a family reunion! Someday we'll experience a reunion that never ends. Hallelujah! [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

Christians never say "good-bye"; just "until we meet again."

---

### D A Carson - Exodus 18; Luke 21; Job 36; 2 Corinthians 6

ONE CAN ONLY IMAGINE the conversations that Moses had enjoyed with Jethro, his father-in-law, during the decades they spent together in Midian. But clearly, some of the talk was about the Lord God. Called to his extraordinary ministry, Moses temporarily entrusted his wife and sons to his father-in-law's care (Ex. 18:2). Perhaps that decision had been precipitated by the extraordinary event described in Exodus 4:24–26, where in the light of this new mission Moses' own sons undergo emergency circumcision to bring Moses' household into compliance with the covenant with Abraham, thereby avoiding the wrath of God.

But now Moses learns that Jethro is coming to see him, restoring to him his wife Zipporah and their sons Gershom and Eliezer. Soon Moses continues the old conversation. This time he gives his father-in-law a blow-by-blow account of all that the Lord had done in rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt. Doubtless some of Jethro's delight (18:9) is bound up with his ties with his son-in-law. But if his final evaluative comment is taken at face value, Jethro has also come to a decisive conclusion: "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly" (18:11). And he offers sacrifices to the living

God (18:12).

All this material is provided as background for what takes place in the rest of the chapter. The next day, Jethro sees Moses attempting to arbitrate every dispute in the fledgling nation. With wisdom and insight he urges on Moses a major administrative overhaul—a rigorous judicial system with most of the decisions being taken at the lowest possible level, only the toughest cases being reserved for Moses himself, the “supreme court.” Moses listens carefully to his father-in-law, and puts the entire plan into operation (18:24). The advantages for the people, who are less frustrated by the system, and for Moses, who is no longer run ragged, are beyond calculation. And at the end of the chapter, Jethro returns home.

In some ways, the account is surprising. Major administrative structures are being put into place among the covenant community without any word from God. Why is Jethro, at best on the fringes of the covenant people, allowed to play such an extraordinary role as counselor and confidant of Moses?

The questions answer themselves. God may use the means of “common grace” to instruct and enrich his people. The sovereign goodness and provision of God are displayed as much in bringing Jethro on the scene at this propitious moment as in the parting of the waters of the Red Sea. Are there not contemporary analogies? (For the Love of God)

---

**Before the Face of God** - When Israel came out of Egypt, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, came out to meet them. When he saw that Moses was spending the entire day teaching the people and judging disputes, he told him that what he was doing was unwise. Jethro’s advice was to organize the nation with elders over tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, and to leave only the toughest cases for appeal to Moses himself. The importance of such organization can be seen in the history of World War II. A tiny and impoverished nation, already defeated in World War I, Germany challenged France, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—and almost won. One reason Germany was so successful was a strong military organization that resembled what Jethro set up for Moses.

Being organized, however, is not enough. Just as an organized army needs armaments as well, so the church also needs power. The battle we fight is not just against flesh and blood, but primarily against principalities and powers. Human resources alone will not prevail. We see this in Numbers 11, where the people complained about the manna. Moses responded by telling God he could no longer bear the burden of carrying the people alone. God responded by distributing to seventy elders of Israel the Spirit that had formerly been exclusively with Moses. Some of Moses’ loyal supporters were upset when they saw others prophesying, but Moses said, “I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” (Nu 11:29). Moses’ wish became a prophecy in Joel 2, when the prophet predicted that, in the new covenant, all people would be given the Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost the empowering of God’s army became a reality.

**Coram Deo** - Evangelism is a worldwide effort on the part of God’s Spirit-empowered army, the church. God gives wisdom to organize and strength to perform. Take some time to pray for worldwide evangelism—specifically for missionaries you know. If you do not have a list of missionaries to pray for, take steps to make one.

**Exodus 18:3 and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."**

- **two sons** - Ac 7:29
- **Gershom** - Ex 2:22 Ps 39:12 Heb 11:13 1Pe 2:11
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land-** Ex 2:22 has his name is "**Gershom**, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.” As is often seen in the OT, the name of a person is explained in the same passage. In this case Gershom means something like "a sojourner in a foreign land" or "a stranger there."

It is sad to read of **Gershom's** descendants in Judges 18:30+ "The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, **the son of Gershom**, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land."

**Related Resources:**

- American Tract Society [Gershom](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Gershom](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Gershom](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Gershom](#)

- Hitchcock Bible Names [Gershom](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Gershom](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Gershom](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Gershom](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Gershom](#)

**Exodus 18:4 The other was named Eliezer, for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."**

- **Eliezer** - Ps 46:1 Isa 50:7-9 Heb 13:6
- **delivered** - Ex 2:15 Ps 18:1 Ps 18:48 34:4 Da 6:22 Ac 12:11 2Co 1:8-10 2Ti 4:17
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MY GOD IS HELP!

**The other was named Eliezer, for he said, "The God of my father was my help** - Eliezer means something like "my God is help," "God is help." Note again the name is explained in the last part of the passage. **Help** is the great word **ezer** (as in the name "**Ebenezer**" = stone of help). The **Septuagint** translates help with the great word [boethos](#) which describes one who runs upon hearing a cry to for help (cf related verb [boethos](#) from **boe** = a cry + **theo** = to run). It is used once in the NT as a description of God our Helper. ("we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" - Hebrews 13:6+).

**Wiersbe** on Gershom and Eliezer - Like the names Joseph gave to his two sons (Gen. 41:50–52), the names of Moses' sons reflected his own experience: an alien in the land, but with God's help, a conqueror.

**NET Note** - Not mentioned earlier, the name has become even more appropriate now that God has delivered Moses from Pharaoh again. The word for "help" is a common word in the Bible, first introduced as a description of the woman in the Garden. It means to do for someone what he or she cannot do for himself or herself. Samuel raised the "stone of help" (Ebenezer) when Yahweh helped Israel win the battle (1 Sam 7:12).

**Help** ([05828](#))(**ezer**) means aid, help, support, succor, assistance. **Ezer** refers to aid or assistance that is given, whether material or immaterial. It is often Jehovah Who helps His people (see verses below). Jehovah is called the shield or protection of Israel's help (Dt 33:29). The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **ezer** most often with the word group that includes: boáo, boetho, boethos, all conveying the general idea of running to the aid of one who cries out for help.

The Lord as Israel's chief Helper (Ex 18:4; Dt 33:7; Ps 33:20; Ps 115:9, 10, 11). Israel spurns Jehovah's help in (Ho 13:9)

**Ezer** - 21x in 21v - help(18), helper(2), helpers(1). - Gen. 2:18; Gen. 2:20; Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7; Deut. 33:26; Deut. 33:29; Ps. 20:2; Ps. 33:20; Ps. 70:5; Ps. 89:19; Ps. 115:9; Ps. 115:10; Ps. 115:11; Ps. 121:1; Ps. 121:2; Ps. 124:8; Ps. 146:5; Isa. 30:5; Ezek. 12:14; Dan. 11:34; Hos. 13:9

**See also** [Jehovah Ezer: The LORD our Helper](#)

Play [Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing](#)

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise  
Teach me some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it  
Mount of Thy redeeming love

**Here I raise my Ebenezer**  
**Here there by Thy great help I've come**  
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure

Safely to arrive at home  
 Jesus sought me when a stranger  
 Wandering from the fold of God  
 He, to rescue me from danger  
 Interposed His precious blood  
  
 Oh, that day when freed from sinning  
 I shall see Thy lovely face  
 Clothed then in the blood washed linen  
 How I'll sing Thy wondrous grace  
 Come, my Lord, no longer tarry  
 Take my ransomed soul away  
 Send Thine angels now to carry  
 Me to realms of endless day  
  
 Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
 Daily I'm constrained to be  
 Let that goodness like a fetter  
 Bind my wandering heart to Thee  
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it  
 Prone to leave the God I love  
 Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it  
 Seal it for Thy courts above  
  
 Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it  
 Seal it for Thy courts above

**And delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh** - Eliezer's name is linked directly with Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The idea of **delivered** ([natsal](#)) is clearly a [key word](#) in Exodus 18 where it is repeated five times - Ex 18:4, 8, 9, 10 (2x in v10 with reference to Pharaoh).

**Delivered** (05337) ([natsal](#)) means primarily to deliver, often by the power of one entity overcoming another. Deliverance from the hand or power (Ge 32:11, Hos 2:10). Idols and human might cannot deliver (1 Sa 12:21, Ps 33:16). This verb was first used in Exodus of Moses when the daughters of Jethro told their father "An Egyptian **delivered** ([natsal](#)) us from the hand of the shepherds." (Ex 2:19+). Later, when Moses met Jehovah in the Burning Bush the LORD gave Moses this prophetic promise "I have come down to **deliver** ([natsal](#)) them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite." (Ex 3:8+, cf similar promise in Ex 6:6+). Later in Israel's history God reminded Israel who was downtrodden by Midian (context - Jdg 6:1-8) "I **delivered** ([natsal](#)) you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land." (Jdg 6:9+) Again after God gave Israel a king (Saul) "Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah; and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I **delivered** ([natsal](#)) you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.'" (1 Sa 10:17-18) David used this verb in Ps 51:14 pleading for deliverance from the guilt of his sin with Bathsheba "**Deliver** ([natsal](#)) me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness."

**Delivered** is used several times in Exodus - Ex 2:19; Ex 3:8; Ex 3:22; Ex 5:23; Ex 6:6; Ex 12:27; Ex 12:36; Ex 18:4; Ex 18:8; Ex 18:9; Ex 18:10; Ex 33:6;

All 4 uses of **deliver** are translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) by the verb [exaireo](#) (**ek** = out + **aireo** = to take, remove, seize) literally means to take out (used literally in Lxx of Jdg 14:9KJV "he **took** the honey **out** of the mouth of the lion"). In some context it means tear out or pluck out (Mt 5:29, 18:9, Lxx = Lev 14:40). To take out from a number. To select. In the [middle voice](#) (most of the uses in the Lxx and NT are middle voice) it means to take out **for oneself** and hence **to rescue or deliver someone from a perilous or confining circumstance, setting them free**. [Spicq](#) adds that "This idea of extracting or removing is indicated by the reflexive meaning of the **middle voice**, which places the beneficiaries of the act of deliverance in the hands of the agent of deliverance (**Ed**: Which in Gal 1:4+ is Jesus!)." [Vine](#) says that "the middle voice, suggests that He who thus delivers us has an interest in the result of His own act. The words in Gal 1:4 may be paraphrased,



“Who gave Himself for our sins, in order that He **might deliver us out** of this present evil age that so we might belong to Him.” **Exaireo** signifies to deliver by rescuing from danger which certainly applies to Israel's situation before the Pharaoh in Egypt!

#### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Eliezer](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Eliezer](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Eliezer](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Eliezer](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Eliezer](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Eliezer](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Eliezer](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Eliezer](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Eliezer](#)

**Exodus 18:5 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.**

- Ex 3:1,12 19:11,20 24:16,17 1Ki 19:8
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### AT THE MOUNT OF GOD

**Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife** - Clearly they had been back to Jethro at some point during Moses' interactions with Pharaoh (or before they began - the text does not tell us).

**NET Note on Mount of God** in comparison to Ex 19:1-2 - The mountain of God is Horeb, and so the desert here must be the Sinai desert by it. But chap. 19 suggests that they left Rephidim to go the 24 miles to Sinai. It may be that this chapter fits in chronologically after the move to Sinai, but was placed here thematically. W

**To Moses in the wilderness where he was camped, at the mount of God** - Recall that when Moses was still in Midian he "was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God," (Ex 3:1), so Jethro's residence must have been close or otherwise how could Moses have led a flock there if it had been a great distance. The phrase Mount of God is used only here, the more common name being the "mountain of God" (Ex 3:1; Ex 4:27; Ex 24:13; 1 Ki 19:8; Ps 68:15; Ezek 28:14; Ezek 28:16)

**The Mount (Mountain) of God** - Also know as...

1. **Horeb** (Ex 3:1; Ex 17:6; Ex 33:6; Dt. 1:2; Dt. 1:6; Dt. 1:19; Dt. 4:10; Dt. 4:15; Dt. 5:2; Dt. 9:8; Dt. 18:16; Dt. 29:1; 1 Ki. 8:9; 1 Ki. 19:8; 2 Chr. 5:10; Ps. 106:19; Mal. 4:4)
2. **Sinai** (Ex 19:2, 11, 18, 20, 23; Ex 24:16; Ex 31:18; Ex 34:2, 4, 29, 32; Lev. 7:38; Lev. 25:1; Lev. 26:46; Lev. 27:34; Nu 1:1; Nu 1:19; Nu 3:1; Nu 3:4; Nu 3:14; Nu 9:1; Nu 9:5; Nu 10:12; Nu 26:64; Nu 28:6; Nu 33:15; Nu 33:16; Dt. 33:2; Jdg. 5:5; Neh. 9:13; Ps. 68:8; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:30; Acts 7:38; Gal. 4:24; Gal. 4:25)

**Exodus 18:6 He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."**

- said - i.e. by means of messengers sent beforehand, Mt 12:47
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**He sent word to Moses** - Why did he need to send word? If there were 2 million Israelites, this was like the city of Houston, Texas. So it would not necessarily be easy to find Moses.

**I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her** - This is the message that was

conveyed to Moses from Jethro. This would be the first time he had seen them in several months (cf. Exodus 4:20), and they would not have experienced the Passover redemption by blood or the Red Sea deliverance by water.

**NET Note** - This verse may seem out of place, since the report has already been given that they came to the desert. It begins to provide details of the event that the previous verse summarizes. The announcement in verse 6 may have come in advance by means of a messenger or at the time of arrival, either of which would fit with the attention to formal greetings in verse 7. This would suit a meeting between two important men; the status of Moses has changed. The LXX solves the problem by taking the pronoun "I" as the particle "behold" and reads it this way: "one said to Moses, 'Behold, your father-in-law has come....'"

**Exodus 18:7 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.**

- **went** - Ge 14:17 46:29 Nu 22:36 Jud 11:34 1Ki 2:19 Ac 28:15
- **bowed down** - Ge 18:2 Ge 19:1 Ge 33:3-7
- **and kissed him**- Ge 29:13 31:28 33:4 45:15 Ps 2:12 Lu 7:45 Ac 20:37
- **welfare** - Ge 43:27 2Sa 11:7
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES BOWS IN RESPECT TO JETHRO

In the middle eastern culture bowing down and kissing were not acts of worship but acts demonstrating one's respect for the other person.

**Then Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him** - Notice that Moses does not wait for Jethro to come to him, but he goes out to meet Jethro and in so doing, demonstrated his respect for his father-in-law, respect which underscored by his willingness to bow and kiss him. It is also notable that Jethro is mentioned before Zipporah and the sons. **Moses** now a man of considerable esteem ("a prophet of the Lord, a great prophet, and king in Jeshurun" - Matthew Henry) was still a humble man and expressed his respect and reverence for a man presumably older than himself. Moses' greeting would support the thought that Jethro, a priest in Midian, was a godly man and not a pagan priest. We see Abraham bowing down to the three men (one very likely a Christophany) who came to meet him in Genesis 18:2. In Ge 19:1 Lot bowed down to the angels.

**NET Note on bow down** - This is more than polite oriental custom. Jethro was Moses' benefactor, father-in-law, and a priest. He paid much respect to him. Now he could invite Jethro into his home

**Matthew Henry** - God in his providence is pleased to advance us, we must make conscience of giving honour to whom honour is due, and never look with disdain upon our poor relations. Those that stand high in the favour of God are not thereby discharged from the duty they owe to men, nor will that justify them in a stately haughty carriage. Moses went out to meet Jethro, did homage to him, and kissed him. Religion does not destroy good manners. Even the kind How-do-you-do's that pass between them are taken notice of, as the expressions and improvements of mutual love and friendship.

**Bowed down** (prostrated) ([07812](#))([shachah](#)) means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship. The idea is to assume a prostrate position as would in paying homage to royalty (Ge 43:28) or to God (Ge 24:26, Ps 95:6). The Septuagint uses the verb [proskuneo](#) (**pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate oneself in homage before another and represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect.

The English word **prostrate** is defined as being stretched out with one's face on the ground in adoration or submission. It is not just that the person has fallen down but pictures them lying at length or with their body extended on the ground and so lying in a posture which is reflective of genuine humility and/or adoration.

**And they asked each other of their welfare**- They ask about the other's "shalom," which we normally translate as "peace" but which in the Hebrew culture had a far deeper meaning (see below).

**Welfare** ([07965](#))([shalom](#)) refers to sense of well-being and harmony both within and without - Completeness, wholeness, peace, health, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, fullness, rest, harmony; the absence of agitation or discord, a state of calm without anxiety or stress.

**And went into the tent** - This would have been a time of fellowship and reunion. In the Middle East hospitality is an important practice and so Jethro was invited into his tent

---

### Exodus 18:7-8 Respecting Your Elders - Woodrow Kroll

Rodney Dangerfield is the original "I don't get no respect" man. No matter how hard he tries, to hear the comedian tell it, no one shows him any respect. Some of the elderly could voice the same complaint. As more people are living longer, they are becoming the victims of everything from physical abuse to con artists' scams.

This differs significantly from the respect Moses showed his father-in-law. Even though Moses was the leader of a great host of people, he bowed before Jethro as a sign of humility and kissed him as a sign of affection. And in the midst of the many needs of a demanding people, he took time to share with Jethro all the events that had transpired since he had seen him last.

As we deal with the elderly, we must do so with patience and compassion. Most of them have made significant sacrifices to raise their families, to defend their country and to make an honest living. In their golden years they deserve to be treated with respect.

If you have elderly parents, take time to be involved in their lives. Listen to their stories (even if you've heard them a hundred times before); sympathize with their aches and pains; look for opportunities to make their lives a little easier. If your parents are no longer alive, perhaps there is an elderly neighbor or someone at church who could benefit from your attention. We are not judged by how we treat the strong and powerful but by how we respect the weak and helpless. Besides, having made an investment of time and interest in an elderly person, you may discover that the return on your investment was greater than the investment itself.

Treat the elderly as a nonrenewable resource; they are! - [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

**Exodus 18:8 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.**

- **told** - Ex 18:1 Ne 9:9-15 Ps 66:16 71:17-20 105:1,2 145:4-12
- **all the** - Ex 15:22-24 16:3
- **that had befallen them** Ge 44:34 Nu 20:14 Ne 9:32 \*marg:
- **how the Lord** - Ps 78:42,43 81:7 106:10 107:2
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES EXTOLS THE GREAT THINGS GOD DID FOR ISRAEL

To **extol** means to praise highly, to praise lavishly (I like that one! Holding nothing back!), to exalt, to laud, to glorify, to honor, to pay tribute or homage to.

It wasn't a report of what Moses had done but what the Lord had done!

--Warren Wiersbe

**Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake**- Told is [saphar](#) translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the Greek verb [diegeomai](#) which means to give a narrative from beginning to end, recounting it in full and with great detail, a nuance not easily seen with the verb "**told**." The point is that Moses went into considerable detail with Jethro regarding the manifold miraculous workings of Jehovah! Notice Moses' priority was first exalt the Person of Jehovah and to explain what He had accomplished for the sake of His chosen people, Israel.

I love when someone says "let me tell you what the Lord did for me..." for I know I will likely hear something supernatural and that it will focus my attention on the Almighty God.

**Matthew Henry** - Conversation concerning God's wondrous works is profitable conversation; it is good, and to the use of edifying, Ps. 105:2. Compare Ps. 145:11, 12. Asking and telling news, and discoursing of it, are not only an allowable entertainment of conversation, but are capable of being tuned to a very good account, by taking notice of God's providence, and the operations and tendencies of that providence, in all occurrences.

These God honoring words by Moses recall the great exhortation of the psalmist...

**Let the redeemed of the LORD say sq whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary. (Ps**

**Comment** - Note repetition of the verb **redeemed**, the Hebrew word **ga'al** (both uses translated in the **Lxx** by the great verb **lutroo**) which means to buy back, to restore to an original state (in this case freedom experienced before Egyptian bondage). **Adversary** is translated in the **Lxx** by the **echthros**, the same word used to describe the Egyptian enemy of Israel in Exodus 15:9+ where "The **enemy** (**echthros**) said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake....'" As an aside, how much more apropos is this exhortation to every blood bought, heaven bound believer in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer! May our Father's Spirit give us holy boldness to "**say so**" to speak of and even proclaim to others the truth about our great redemption and our even greater Redeemer Christ Jesus Who plucked us out of the hands and power of Sin, Satan and Death, to be His personal possession forever and ever. In Jesus' mighty Name. Amen (Play this modern worship song [Let the Redeemed of the Lord](#) or this old version I first heard when I was saved some 30+ years ago [Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So](#))

**Spurgeon** comments "Whatever others may think or say, the redeemed have overwhelming reasons for declaring the goodness of the Lord. Theirs is a peculiar redemption, and for it they ought to render peculiar praise. The Redeemer is so glorious, the ransom price so immense, and the redemption so complete, that they are under sevenfold obligations to give thanks unto the Lord, and to exhort others to do so. Let them not only feel so but say so; let them both sing and bid their fellows sing. **Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.** Snatched by superior power away from fierce oppressions, they are bound above all men to adore the Lord, their Liberator. Theirs is a divine redemption, "he hath redeemed" them, and no one else has done it. His own unaided arm has wrought out their deliverance. Should not emancipated slaves be grateful to the hand which set them free? What gratitude can suffice for a deliverance from the power of sin, death, and hell? In heaven itself there is no sweeter hymn than that whose burden is, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

**All the hardship that had befallen them on the journey - Hardship** describes the weariness from the difficulties, the condition of lacking necessities or comforts, circumstances that cause ongoing or persistent suffering or difficulty, in this case including Pharaoh's army coming on them giving them thoughts of impending destruction, of the trials of no water, then the bitter trial of bitter water at Marah, then the no food situation and finally a second no water situation. And of course this would include the personal **hardship** which Moses had experienced from the rebellious people (Ex 14:11, 12+, Ex 15:24+, Ex 16:2-3+. Ex 17:2-4+).

**Hardship** (08513)(**telaah** from **laah** = to be weary - runner in Jer 12:5, Sodomites in Ge 19:11!) means that which makes one exhausted, that which produces weariness, whether physical and emotional. When Moses asked the king of Edom for safe passage through his land, Moses told of all the hardships Israel had endured in the wilderness (Num. 20:14), seeking the king's sympathy and help. Jeremiah lamented the hardship that had overtaken Israel when they were taken captive and their cities were destroyed (Lam. 3:5). Nehemiah prayed that God would view the hardships of Israel with mercy in face of the threats of their enemies (Neh. 9:32).

**Telaah** is translated in the **Septuagint** with **mochthos** (from **mógos** = labor, toil) which means toil, painfulness, travail, afflicting and wearisome labor, hardship, struggle, strenuous toil. It refers to hard and difficult labor involving suffering and implying an unusual exertion of energy and effort. The word refers to the trouble and pain of arduous work and the leading notion is that of struggling to overcome difficulties.

**Telaah** - 5x - Exod. 18:8; Nu 20:14; Neh. 9:32; Lam. 3:5; Mal. 1:13

**And how the LORD had delivered them** - Notice the pattern of Moses -- he began and ended with exaltation of the LORD! To God be the glory from beginning to end. Amen! Is this not a good pattern for all of us to [emulate](#)?

**Delivered** (05337) see study of this [key word](#) in note on [natsal](#) (and the verb used in the Septuagint - [exaireo](#))

**D L Moody** - "There is a great deal more said in the Bible about praise than prayer, yet how few praise-meetings there are!"

**Exodus 18:9 Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians.**

- Isa 44:23 Isa 66:10 Ro 12:10,15 1Co 12:26
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE ECSTATIC EFFECT OF YAHWEH'S REDEMPTION

Moses **exaltation** of Jehovah's redemption of Israel stimulated **exultation** in Jethro's heart which poured forth from his mouth in rejoicing! What filled his heart came forth from his mouth. Note the striking contrast of Moses' words **all the hardship** and Jethro's declaration of **all the goodness**. The goodness of God will always trump the hardship He allows. As **Scott Grant** says "Scripture affirms these two truths: 1) Life is hard. 2) God is good. To us, they seem contradictory. But in a way perhaps beyond our total comprehension, hardship in no way means that God is not good. The Lord is good, and remains good through the hardship. He never stops being good."

**Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel**- NLT and NIV say "Jethro was delighted." The Septuagint (see below) says "Jethro was amazed." **Rejoiced** is the rare Hebrew verb [chadah](#) (2 other uses - Job 3:6, Ps 21:6) which is rendered in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the verb [existemi](#) (literally to stand outside oneself, to be beside oneself) which means **Jethro** was amazed and astonished beyond comprehension. In a word Jethro is [ecstatic](#)! You might be surprised to learn that this is the first use of the Hebrew word for **goodness** ([tob](#)) in the Old Testament.

Jethro's joy was not like the world's sense of joy, which is based on circumstance but his joy was focused on the Person of Jehovah and His unchanging goodness. Jethro's joy emanated from his inner being as he came to appreciate the **goodness** of Jehovah.

**Matthew Henry** - While the Israelites were themselves **murmuring**, notwithstanding all God's goodness to them, here was a Midianite **rejoicing**. This was not the only time that the faith of the Gentiles shamed the unbelief of the Jews; see Mt. 8:10. Standers-by were more affected with the favours God had shown to Israel than those were that received them.

**Scott Grant** - When someone is legitimately excited about something that is happening in our lives, it makes our hearts sing. It must have made Moses' heart sing to see Jethro rejoicing.

**Steven Cole** on **goodness** of **Jehovah** - It is essential that you derive your understanding of God from the Bible. And at the root of who God is, you must affirm that He is **good**. This means that He "deals well and bountifully with His creatures" (Stephen Charnock). A W Tozer put it, "The **goodness** of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men." The Bible attests to God's **goodness** in His creation (Ge 1:31); in His salvation and deliverance of His people (Ex 18:9; Nu 10:29, 32); in His provision for His people (Neh 9:25); and, in His Word, which instructs us in how to live so as to be blessed (Ps 25:8; Dt. 30:15-16), even in affliction (Ge 50:20). (Sermon on Ps 100)

### Related Resource:

- [Goodness of God](#)

**In delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians** - **Hand** signified power but Yahweh's hand was and is always able to deliver His people.

What kind of influence did Moses' life have on his father-in-law, Jethro?

**Delivered** ([05337](#)) see study of this [key word](#) in note on [natsal](#) (and the verb used in the Septuagint - [exaireo](#))

**Exodus 18:10 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.**

- Ge 14:20 2Sa 18:28 1Ki 8:15 Ps 41:13 106:47,48 Lu 1:68 Eph 1:3 1Th 3:9 1Pe 1:3 Rev 5:11-13 19:1-6
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JETHRO BLESSED THE LORD

Stop studying for a moment and worship Him as Jethro did 2500 years ago - [Blessed be Your Name!](#)

**So Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD** - People do not have to be direct recipients of God's actions to praise Him. **Jethro** echoed the blessing Melchizedek spoke after Yahweh had given Abram victory over the four kings declaring "**blessed** be God Most High ([Elyon: Most High God - Sovereign Over All](#)), Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." What is a bit ironic is that the first use of [barak](#) in the book of Exodus was from the mouth of the pagan Pharaoh, beseeching Moses to ask God to **ble**ss" him! (Ex 12:32).

Even the most foolish pagans are not so foolish that they would not desire a blessing from Jehovah! [Barak](#) is used next in Exodus when "the LORD **blessed** the sabbath and made it holy." (Ex 20:11). Noah was the first to bless Jehovah declaring '**Blessed** ([barak](#)) be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant." (Ge 9:26)

**Scott Grant** - Jethro blesses the Lord. This is the same word that is used when it is said that the Lord blesses man. When God blesses man, he gives to him in some way. When man blesses God, he recognizes God as the source of blessing. So when Jethro "blesses" the Lord, he's praising the Lord. The Apostle Paul does the same thing in Ephesians 1:3±: "**Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has **blessed** us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

**Blessed** (01288) ([barak](#)) is a verb which literally can mean to kneel (to go to one's knees - Camel in Ge 24:11, Solomon in 2Chr 6:13) as contrasted with standing position or even a bowing at the waist). And so **barak** can refer to an act of adoration sometimes on bended knee. To give divine blessings (Ge 1:22, Ge 9:1-7) To esteem greatly or adore God for His blessings (Ge 24:48, Ps 103:1).

The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **barak** in Ex 18:10 with [eulogetos](#) (Eng - [eulogy](#)) which means to be well spoken of or inherently worthy of praise and all the uses of [eulogetos](#) refer to God as the One "well spoken of". **Eulogetos**, used of God indicates praise and adoration on the part of the creature, in recognition of the power and prerogatives of the Creator, and the privileges enjoyed at His hands. In Ps 103:1-2 when David says "**Bless** ([barak](#); [Lxx](#) = related verb [eulogeo](#)) the Lord O my soul" he is praising God, speaking well of God. All the uses of [eulogetos](#) refer to God as the One "well spoken of". **Eulogetos**, used of God indicates praise and adoration on the part of the creature, in recognition of the power and prerogatives of the Creator, and the privileges enjoyed at His hands. In [Psalm 103:1, 2](#) when David says "**Bless** ([LXX](#) = the related verb form [eulogeo](#)) the Lord O my s-oul" he is praising God, speaking well of God.

**Who delivered ([natsal](#)) you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh** - **Jethro** acknowledges it was Jehovah Who Alone rescued Moses from danger. **The hand** is a frequent metaphor or figure of speech in the OT which stands for the power of the one mentioned, here the Egyptians and Pharaoh. If you are in someone's hand, you are in their "grasp," under their power to dispose of as they please. The verb [natsal](#) can mean snatch away, so in Exodus 18:10 we have the picture of the all powerful hand of Jehovah reaching down and "snatching" His people Israel out of the hand of the worldly powerful Pharaoh and the Egyptians!

**And who delivered ([natsal](#)) the people from under the hand of the Egyptians** - Who but the omnipotent power of Jehovah's hand could deliver from the hands of the most powerful nation and ruler on earth? None but the mighty hand of Jehovah. Indeed, all who have been rescued from darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of His Beloved Son are now safe forever "in the hands of God." (play and praise Him today with the song below by the Newsboys!)

**Delivered...delivered** (05337) see study of this [key word](#) in note on [natsal](#) (and the verb used in the Septuagint - [exaireo](#)).

Sometimes we see a miracle,  
And faith in God revives;  
Yet eyes of faith can see God's hand  
At work throughout our lives.  
—Hess

#### Related Resource:

- [The Hand of God](#) - Sometimes the good hand of the LORD, but sometimes the judgment hand of the LORD.

There is an insurance ad which says "You're in good hands with Allstate!" An far better "insurance plan" is to be in the good hand of Jehovah. Indeed, every believer is in good (God's) hands! Listen to "[In the Hands of God](#)" by the Newsboys

We have raised our hopes and our cities high  
We have followed fragile dreams  
But only One could take the measure of our goals  
And we've stumbled over the trials of life  
And we've wrestled the unseen  
But only One can calm the storm inside our souls

In the hands of God we will fall

Rest for the restless, and the weary  
Hope for the sinner  
In the hands of God we stand tall  
Hands that are mighty to deliver  
Giving us freedom

When our strength gave way to the weight of guilt  
'Til we strained for every breath  
Only One could lift our shame and make us well  
And when all is finished and we face  
The fearsome power of death  
Only One has overcome the gates of hell

You're amazing  
You're amazing, You are  
And we praise You, Lord  
For what Your hands have done

---

### **Exodus 18:10-11 Great is the Lord - Woodrow Kroll**

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev once boasted that he would display the last Soviet Christian on television by 1965. Khrushchev is long dead; Christianity is more alive than ever in Russia. Karl Marx called a belief in God "the sign of the oppressed creature, the opium of the people." Marx also has gone to his eternal destiny, but the "opium" he spoke of continues to spread throughout the world. And so it has been. Leaders rise up, shake their fists at God, and then sink back into the oblivion from which they came. In the meantime, God continues to work out His plan for the world, undisturbed by their puny efforts against Him.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, observed the same truth about Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. Arrogantly they had shaken their fists at God, but "He was above them." Like an ant trying to stop a locomotive, they challenged the Almighty and lost. Once again God proved "that the Lord is greater than all the gods."

Throughout history, God has demonstrated that He is greater than any person, any movement, or any situation. It is obvious why the psalmist could confidently boast, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills--from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1). God Himself declares, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jer. 32:27).

If you are fearful about some godless person, some anti-Christian movement, or some threatening situation, remember where your help comes from. The God who is above all other gods will never be overwhelmed by your difficulties. The God who delivered Moses will deliver you as well. He's just that kind of God.

Trouble never troubles God.- [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

**Exodus 18:11 "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people."**

- **Now I** - Ex 9:16 1Ki 17:24 2Ki 5:15
- **the Lord** - Ex 15:11 1Ch 16:25 2Ch 2:5 Ps 95:3 97:9 135:5
- **indeed, it was proven** - Ex 1:10,16,22 5:2,7 14:8,18
- **proudly** - Ex 9:17 10:3 1Sa 2:3 Ne 9:10,16,29 Job 40:11,12 Ps 31:23 Ps 119:21 Da 4:37 Lu 1:51 Jas 4:6 1Pe 5:5
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JETHRO EXPERIENCES JEHOVAH ABOVE ALL "GODS"**

As discussed below with verb **know**, the truth about Jehovah disclosed by Moses energized in Jethro a greater sense of the Person of Jehovah so that he now could relate to Him on a more personal, intimate level.

**Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods**-Jethro acknowledges the superiority of the Lord. We do well to keep in mind that GOD WANTS TO BE KNOWN! **Now I know** suggests that before this revelation by Moses, Jethro did not fully know the

truth about **the LORD**. However, I do believe that prior to this revelation, Jethro was a believer in the one true God, but now Jehovah's presence and power and provision in the deliverance of Israel confirmed and/or strengthened Jethro's faith. This recalls Ro 10:17+ that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

Keep the cultural context in mind regarding the phrase **greater than all the gods**, for Jethro's culture was a time of prolific pagan [polytheism](#), wherein men worshipped many gods, with a little "g." Things have not changed that much, have they? The practice of **Idolatry** (any "g" god other than the God, Jehovah) was, as we say today, "in your face," (that is, an affront to the one true God) unlike the subtle idols of our age (money, prestige, power, sports figures and teams, etc)! Augustine was right when he said "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Take a moment to worship the One True God Who Alone is above all by singing [Above All](#).

**I know** (03045)([yada](#)) means to know, to learn, to perceive, to experience, to confess, to know people relationally (used of Adam knowing Eve - Ge 4:1KJV). Septuagint translates [yada](#) in Ex 18:11 with the verb [ginosko](#) which conveys the sense of to know by experience and/or to know intimately, both senses being applicable in the case of Jethro.

**THOUGHT** - We do well to keep in mind the basic (incredible) truth that God desires to be known by His creatures! In Exodus Jehovah desires not only the Israelites to know Him but even Pharaoh and the Egyptians (cf 2 Pe 3:9+). Study the uses of **know** in Exodus that relate to knowing the LORD which will give you a good sense of the heart of God for all fallen mankind - note who is to know and how they are to know? - Ex 6:7; Ex 7:5; Ex 7:17; Ex 8:10; Ex 8:22; Ex 9:14; Ex 9:29; Ex 10:2; Ex 14:4; Ex 14:18; Ex 16:6; Ex 16:12 Ex 18:11 Ex 29:46 Ex 31:13;

Do you know Jehovah as the One Who is greater than all the gods? Jesus declared...

**"This is eternal life, that they may KNOW YOU, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."** (Jn 17:3)

**Scott Grant** asks "What is it that has caught Jethro's attention? It is what the Lord has done to Egypt on behalf of the Israelites. This shows Jethro not only how powerful the Lord is but how loving he is as well. The Lord hasn't delivered us from bondage to Egypt, but he has delivered us from bondage to sin (Romans 6:6+), and he continues to deliver us (**ED**: DAILY SAVING US - SEE [Three Tenses of Salvation](#)). And so people will have the opportunity to view God's great work of deliverance in our lives, as we become less dominated by sin and more like Jesus. Often times we don't see it, because we live with ourselves day to day. But if the Spirit of the living God is dwelling inside you, amazing things are happening, even now (cf 2 Cor 3:18+). And once in a while the Lord will bring a Jethro into our lives to take notice, rejoice and praise the Lord (cf 1 Pe 3:15+). And that leads us to worship the Lord."

**Indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people**- This is difficult to translate.

**NET Note** - The end of this sentence seems not to have been finished, or it is very elliptical. In the present translation the phrase "he has destroyed them" is supplied. Others take the last prepositional phrase to be the completion and supply only a verb: "[he was] above them." U. Cassuto (Exodus, 216) takes the word "gods" to be the subject of the verb "act proudly," giving the sense of "precisely (yKi, ki) in respect of these things of which the gods of Egypt boasted – He is greater than they (~h,yle[], 'alehem)." He suggests rendering the clause, "excelling them in the very things to which they laid claim."

**Exodus 18:12 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.**

- **took** - Ex 24:5 Ge 4:4 8:20 12:7 26:25 31:54 Job 1:5 42:8
- **Aaron** - Ex 24:11 Lev 7:11-17 De 12:7 27:7 1Ch 29:21,22 2Ch 30:22 1Co 10:18,21,31
- **eat** - Ex 2:20 Ge 43:25 2Sa 9:7 Job 42:11 Da 10:3 Lu 14:1,15
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JETHRO STIRRED TO WORSHIP GOD**

**Then** - The word [then](#) is an [expression of time](#) which marks an advancement in the sequence of events. In this case Jethro's enhanced knowledge was not just head knowledge but evoked in Jethro a heart response of worship.

**Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God** - Knowledge led to rejoicing which led to blessing God



which led to greater knowledge which led to worship of God in fellowship with other believers. Regarding the burnt offering, it is the one and only sacrifice that was totally consumed in the flames when described in Leviticus.

**THOUGHT** - In the Septuagint the word translated **burnt offering** is [holokautoma](#) which refers to a wholly-consumed sacrifice, whole burnt offering, whole victim burned. **Holokautoma** gives us our English word "**holocaust**". It is a picture of one offering themselves wholly to the Holy LORD, and reminds us of Romans 12:1+ "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies** (THIS IS ALL OF OUR BODY - OUR MIND, HEART, STRENGTH) a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

**Scott Grant** - A **burnt offering** was representative of full devotion to God. In making these sacrifices, then, Jethro is offering up his life to the Lord. Based on what he has seen the Lord do in the lives of the Israelites, he devotes himself to the Lord. This is the kind of thing that can happen when others get a good look at what the Lord is doing in our lives....This story also offers strong encouragement for us to be a Jethro in others' lives - to legitimately ask of another's welfare, to watch for the Lord's activity in the life of another, to rejoice over another, to praise the Lord in another's presence, to acknowledge the greatness of the Lord, to enter into intimate fellowship with another in the presence of God. So the Lord will send us Jethros, but we can also be Jethros. And what was it that Jethro did? He took notice of the greatness of God, as seen in the lives of Moses and the Israelites, and he extolled his greatness. He extolled the greatness of the Lord. He lifted up the Lord, and everyone was able to see his greatness more clearly. A few months ago, a Jethro wandered into my life to proclaim the greatness of God. He made no observations about God's activity in my life, because he didn't know me. I just heard him speak for two hours. His name is John Piper, who I had never heard of before. A pastor from Minnesota, he is the author of "Desiring God." He spoke to a group of pastors about "expository exultations," encouraging pastors to see the greatness of God in every biblical text and to preach the greatness of God in every sermon. Essentially, I listened to him extol the greatness of the Lord for two hours. He simply showed me who the Lord is. That's what Jethro did for Moses.

**NET Note** - Jethro brought offerings as if he were the one who had been delivered. The "burnt offering" is singular, to honor God first. The other sacrifices were intended for the invited guests to eat (a forerunner of the peace offering).

I am reminded of David's words in Psalm 68:3

But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God; Yes, let them rejoice with gladness.

**Spurgeon** comments - **But let the righteous be glad** The presence of God on the throne of grace is an overflowing source of delight to the godly; and let them not fail to drink of the streams which are meant to make them glad. **Let them rejoice before God.** The courtiers of the happy God should wear the garments of gladness, for in his presence is fulness of joy. That presence, which is the dread and death of the wicked, is the desire and delight of the saints. **Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.** Let them dance with all their might, as David did, for very joy. No bounds should be set to joy in the Lord. "Again, I say, rejoice," says the apostle, as if he would have us add joy to joy without measure or pause. When God is seen to shine propitious from above the mercyseat in the person of our Immanuel, our hearts must needs leap within us with exultation, if we are indeed among those made righteous in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit. Move on, O army of the living God, with shouts of abounding triumph, for Jesus leads the van.

## **SHARING A MEAL IN GOD'S PRESENCE**

**And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before God** - Sharing a meal was the highest form of fellowship. A **meal** in Moses' day was a symbol of the highest form of fellowship, intimate fellowship, and this meal was not just any meal but it had a "special Guest" for it was **before God** (See also [covenant meal](#)).

**Before** ([panim/paniym/paneh](#)) means face in Hebrew and this word is translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with [enantion](#) which means to be in front of, to be in the sight of, to be in the presence of, so in the present context indicates mortal men ate their meal as in the presence of God, as if God Himself were present and partaking of the meal with them. This is an incredible picture of fellowship of fallen men with the Faultless God.

**NET Note** on **eat a meal** - The word [לֶחֶם](#) (lekhem) here means the sacrifice and all the foods that were offered with it. The eating before God was part of covenantal ritual, for it signified that they were in communion with the Deity, and with one another.

**The elders** have been mentioned several times in previous passages - Ex 3:16; Ex 3:18; Ex 4:29; Ex 12:21; Ex 17:5; Ex 17:6; Ex 18:12; Ex 19:7; Ex 24:1; Ex 24:9; Ex 24:14;

**Before** (06440)([panim/paniym/paneh](#)) occurs over 2000x always in the plural, perhaps indicative of the fact that the face is a combination of a number of features. The face identifies the person and reflects the attitude and sentiments of the person. As such, pānim can be a substitute for the self or the feelings of the self.

**Exodus 18:13** 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.

- Jdg 5:10 Job 29:7 Isa 16:5 Joe 3:12 Mt 23:2 Ro 12:8 13:6
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES ACTING AS ARBITER ALL DAY

**It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people**- Hebrew literally = “and it was/happened on the morrow.” Note this time phrase **the next day**, which begs the question the next day after what? From the context it is clear that this is the day after his family reunion. Moses does not take week off to enjoy his family and fellowship with Jethro, but immediately is back dealing with disputes. He was a faithful shepherd of sheep in the wilderness for 40 years and this surely prepared him to be a faithful shepherd of the sons of Israel and he took his job seriously. It was a good thing Moses was seated as he was obviously making decisions for the people the entire day.

**NET Note** - This is a simple summary of the function of Moses on this particular day. He did not necessarily do this every day, but it was time now to do it. The people would come to solve their difficulties or to hear instruction from Moses on decisions to be made. The tradition of “sitting in Moses’ seat” is drawn from this passage.

**And the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening** - Picture the magnitude. This is a picture of fallen, sinful flesh on display! Two million sinners living together in a hot desert would generate many and variegated disagreements. So the line before Moses was longer than the line outside the Apple store when a new Iphone is about to be released!

---

### Exodus 18:13-27

#### WILLING HEART, WISE HEAD

“Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out” (Exodus 18:18).

Over the years, social service jobs have drawn concerned young people into careers of helping others. In time, many of them become what some psychologists call “burned-out Samaritans.” After listening to so many people’s problems and trying to help, they get to the place where they can’t take any more. This happens to doctors, ministers, social workers, psychiatrists, and policemen. To save themselves emotionally, they must either quit, stop caring, or readjust.

As Christians, we too are subject to burnout because helping others is part of our calling. We may feel overwhelmed by the complexity, intensity, and sheer volume of human need. We discover that we can’t keep burying ourselves in all the pain without paying the price. We too have to quit, stop caring, or readjust. If we stop trying to help others, we break our fellowship with Christ. If we become unfeeling, we fall far short of His example. But we can readjust by making changes that will ease our burden. Like Moses who heeded the good counsel of his father-in-law Jethro and began delegating responsibility, we must recognize our human limitations and learn to act wisely.

Some believers assume that the more godly we are, the more we will keep pushing until we just “wear out for the Lord.” And some devout Christians do just that. But according to the Bible, it’s wiser to adjust our service. Then we won’t become burned-out Samaritans.—M. R. De Haan II ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A willing heart must always be kept under the control of a wise head.

---

### Exodus 18:13-27 Wearing Yourself Out

You will surely wear yourselves out. —Exodus 18:18

My friend Jeff was asked by his daughter to officiate at her wedding. This would be a great joy as they traveled to an exotic and

romantic location for the ceremony. But there was one major problem—because the wedding party was very small, Jeff would have to perform three separate roles that could be in conflict. He would be the officiating minister, the father of the bride, and the wedding photographer!

Have you ever felt as if you were wearing too many hats? Jethro thought his son-in-law Moses was (Ex. 18). Leading the Israelites, arbitrating personal disputes, and handing down legal judgments for a great multitude was taking its toll. Finally, Jethro approached Moses, telling him: “This thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself” (Exodus 18:18). He wisely counseled Moses to delegate smaller disputes to other advisors and take the more challenging cases himself (Exodus 18:22).

Whether you’re a mother with small children, an overwhelmed business executive, or an overworked church volunteer, you too can take a lesson from Moses. Why not prayerfully discern if there may be tasks you can delegate to others or even discontinue—so that you don’t wear yourself out. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Father, we need help with our priorities. Teach us to understand what’s most important and needs to be accomplished, and to let go of what we can so that we are at our best for You. Amen.

If we don’t come apart and rest awhile, we may just plain come apart! —Havner

---

### **Exodus 18:13-24 Minister Mentor**

Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. —Exodus 18:24

In 1959, when Lee Kuan Yew assumed the position of Prime Minister of Singapore, his leadership began a long process of national transformation. Initially, disagreements between ethnic groups and a weak economic base made the future of this tiny nation uncertain. By 1990, when Lee stepped down from his position, Singapore had become a model country for ethnic harmony and a thriving economy. After serving as Senior Minister, Lee became Minister Mentor in 2004. Since then he has been an invaluable resource to Singapore’s cabinet and to other leaders around the world.

Insights from the older generation can greatly benefit the younger generation. Although Moses had been used by God to perform miracles and deliver Israel out of bondage in Egypt, he still listened to the advice of his father-in-law Jethro (Ex. 18:24). Jethro had watched his son-in-law care for the concerns of the people and observed: “Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you” (Exodus 18:18). Moses followed Jethro’s advice to select, train, and delegate others to share the workload (Exodus 18:22-24).

Whom has God placed in your life to advise you as a “minister mentor”? [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Following Through

- What are your weakest character traits?
- Do you know a fellow believer who is strong in these areas?
- Could that person become your spiritual mentor?

Those who are mature in the faith can help others to mature in their faith.

---

### **Exodus 18:13-24 A Time For Good Counsel**

So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. —Exodus 18:24

Because of the busy lives many of us lead, it’s not hard to recognize ourselves in the over-extended situation of Moses in Exodus 18. As the sole judge for the masses, he was surrounded “from morning until evening” (v.13) by people who needed his help.

In fact, I’ve had people—particularly young parents—tell me that they identify with Moses. It seems that we need to learn two life skills for survival: an eagerness to listen (v.24) and the willingness to accept help (v.25). Sometimes we don’t accept help because of pride, but that’s not always the case.

With Moses, and often with us, it’s simply that life is moving so quickly and making so many demands on us (Exodus 18:13-15) that we barely have time to react—let alone to contemplate or go to someone else for advice. Perhaps this is one reason the Scriptures remind us to surround ourselves with counselors who will offer their experience and wisdom even when we’re too busy to ask for it. We see this in the story of what Jethro did for Moses when he told his son-in-law to delegate some of his responsibilities (Exodus

18:17-23).

Don't be overwhelmed. Instead, seek godly counsel and then follow through on what you are told. ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, give us ears to hear advice  
From loved ones wise and humble;  
So when life's challenges appear,  
We will not have to stumble.  
—Sper

He who will not be counseled will not be helped.

---

### **Exodus 18:13-27 Exhausted?**

If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure. —Exodus 18:23

People who kill time and waste opportunities create problems for themselves. "They're irresponsible!" we complain. On the other hand, some people encounter problems because they are over-responsible. They say to themselves, "If I don't do it, no one will. Even if others would do it, they wouldn't get it right." This attitude has been called "the perfectionist's myth," and those who live it are labeled "exhausted martyrs."

Perhaps you know someone like this. Perhaps it's you.

Exodus 18 describes Moses as a dedicated, over-responsible person. Day after day he was the sole judge of the people and their countless questions. His father-in-law Jethro said, "This thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself" (v.18). He advised Moses to concentrate on teaching. He said he should judge only big problems and appoint reliable men to judge smaller matters (Exodus 18:19-22). "If you do this thing," Jethro concluded, "and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure" (Exodus 18:23).

Are you exhausted because you've been trying to do everything by yourself? Ask God for wisdom and the strength to do what He wants you to do. Don't try to do it all yourself. Then you too "will be able to endure." ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help me know from day to day  
The work I cannot carry through;  
Then grant me wisdom to discern  
The tasks that You would have me do.  
—DJD

Don't try to do everything—do only what God wants you to do.

---

### **Exodus 18:13-27 Delegating Responsibility - Woodrow Kroll**

As I have studied the Word of God concerning leadership, I have come to certain conclusions about spiritual principles of good leadership. These principles can be applied not only by leaders of organizations but by Sunday school teachers or by anyone with responsibility.

First, God uses people to do His work. When He has a job to do, He calls an individual to do it. Remember, however, that it took Moses a long time to become prepared for his task, and it sometimes takes leaders today a long time to be prepared for their tasks.

Second, when the task becomes too much for the one person God originally called, He calls others to work with the first individual.

Third, God holds the first individual responsible for the work done by the other individuals. This principle applies especially to the spiritual aspects of the work.

This principle was particularly evident in Moses' leadership. Even though responsibility and authority could be delegated to others, he was still directly responsible before God.

God knows what work He wants accomplished, and He gives individuals responsibilities in order to accomplish that work. The only way that God's work can be done effectively is for individual believers to know what God wants them to do.

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18). [-Back to the](#)

**Exodus 18:14** 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?"

- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

What kind of influence did Jethro have on Moses? Write how Jethro advised Moses. Why did he advise him this way?

## **JETHRO OBSERVES MOSES**

**Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people-** Jethro sees the scene with eyes of wisdom. It is interesting that Jethro in the first section of Exodus 18 Jethro saw all that the LORD had done for Israel (Ex 18:1, 8, 9). and now he sees all that Moses is doing for the people. This is parallel to his observations about what the Lord had done for the people.

**Scott Grant** observes that "This story also has Jethro in common with the previous story. Therefore, the author intends us to understand them as related. The previous story, in Ex 18:1-12, is therefore important in our understanding of this story. Jethro uses the same words in his observations of both the Lord and Moses. Both were "doing" something "for the people." Moses, then, is acting just like God, but not in a good way. He is putting himself in the position of God, trying to be God. Whereas Jethro was thrilled with what the Lord had done, he is not thrilled with what Moses is doing. He asks, in so many words, "What are you doing?" and "Why are you doing it?"

**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?"** - Jethro begins by asking a question. When you are about to give advice it is probably good to engage your subject's mind before you give then the advice.

**Scott Grant** - There are at least 600,000 men in the Israelite camp at this point (Ex 12:37+). But it apparently has never occurred to Moses to ask even one of them to help him with this burdensome task. Apparently it had never occurred to any of the Israelites to suggest that someone help Moses. Oftentimes, it would just never occur to us to do something another way, even if another way would be obviously better. We become culture-bound. We can't see. We do things simply because we've always done them this way. For us to change our tired old way of doing things, sometimes it takes a fresh pair of eyes. In this story, those eyes belong to Jethro. What Moses is doing immediately strikes Jethro as odd.

**NET Note** - This question, "what are you doing for the people," is qualified by the next question. Sitting alone all day and the people standing around all day showed that Moses was exhibiting too much care for the people—he could not do this.

---

### **Exodus 18:14,17 The Test of a True Friend** - Woodrow Kroll

Antisthenes, the cynic philosopher, use to say, "There are only two people who will tell you the truth about yourself--an enemy who has lost his temper and a friend who loves you dearly." The true test of a friend is not how frequently he is with you but how honest he is with you.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was a true friend. When he saw Moses wearing himself out doing something that others could do just as well, he plainly said, "The thing that you do is not good." His concern for his son-in-law's health would not allow him to stay quiet.

Telling our friends the truth has its hazards because the truth often hurts. Their initial reaction may not be a positive one. Yet Scripture says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" ([Prov. 27:6](#)). The role of a faithful friend is not always an easy one.

If you find it necessary to share a potentially hurtful truth with your friend, approach the situation only after much prayer. Pray that your attitude would be one of humility and servanthood. Ask God to provide the right situation in which to share the truth. Seek wisdom in how to best express yourself so that what you say will be viewed by your friend as constructive rather than destructive. Pray, prepare, then just do it. Faithfulness is not gauged by your intentions but by your actions. You never help your friend with good intentions alone, but with good intentions that result in good actions.

A faithful friend is a truthful friend. - [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

## Exodus 18:15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

- **to inquire** - Ex 18:19,20 Lev 24:12-14 Nu 15:34 27:5
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### MOSES' ANSWERS BECAUSE THEY COME

**Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God** - Moses answers Jethro by saying essentially "I'm just doing what the people want me to do!" The Israelites know that Moses had the connection with God and thus was the one who could solve their disputes.

Moses clearly recognized God had given him a leadership role. He had been trained for 40 years in the desert dealing with unruly, stubborn sheep and now he was putting his experience into practice. And he was doing so willingly. The fact that they came to Moses to **inquire of God** clearly indicates that now after a few grumbling episodes, the nation had come to esteem and respect Moses role as their leader and their representative before God.

Some writers accuse Moses of doing it by himself because he wanted to be in control (so-called "control" idol). That could be, but I am not convinced.

**NET Note on inquire of God** - The form is שִׁרַּח (lidrosh), the Qal infinitive construct giving the purpose. To inquire of God would be to seek God's will on a matter, to obtain a legal decision on a matter, or to settle a dispute. As a judge Moses is speaking for God, but as the servant of Yahweh Moses' words will be God's words. The psalms would later describe judges as "gods" because they made the right decisions based on God's Law.

## Exodus 18:16 "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."

- **they have a dispute** - Ex 23:7 24:14 De 17:8-12 2Sa 15:3 Job 31:13 Ac 18:14,15 1Co 6:1
- **between a man and his neighbor** - Ex 2:13
- **make** - Lev 24:15 Nu 15:35 27:6-11 36:6-9 De 4:5 5:1 6:1 1Sa 12:23 Mt 28:20 1Th 4:1,2
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### JUDGING DISPUTES BETWEEN NEIGHBORS

Moses had some prior experience for some 40 years earlier in Ex 2:13+ he encountered two Hebrews "fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your **companion** (the same word *rea/reya'* translated here as neighbor)?" That experience resulted in him being forced to flee Egypt (cf Ex 2:14, 15+).

**When they have a dispute** - In light of Moses' first experience as arbitrator, it is a bit ironic that after 40 years with the sheep, he is now given the role he had initially tried to fulfill in his own strength in Egypt.

**It comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor** - This would be a heavy burden on Moses, making numerous decisions that affected the lives of the people. Notice the phrase **between a man and his neighbor**, indicating the dispute occurred with those who were in close proximity. It is notable that the Hebrew word translated neighbor is translated friend almost 50x (out of 173v).

**Judge** (08199)([shaphat](#)) means to judge. In the present context **shaphat** referred to the arbitration of civil, domestic, and religious disputes. The implication of course is that Moses had both the authority to punish and finality of the decision. The Septuagint uses the verb [diakrino](#) which in the NT was a legal technical term for arbitration of a dispute in order to settle difference.

**NET Note** adds - The verb שָׁפַט (shafat) means "to judge"; more specifically, it means to make a decision as an arbiter or umpire. When people brought issues to him, Moses decided between them. In the section of laws in Exodus after the Ten Commandments come the decisions, the מִשְׁפָּטִים (mishppatim).

**Neighbor** (friend, another) (07453)([rea/reya'](#) from *ra'ah* = to associate with) means friend, neighbor, associate

—close or occasional. Often it is used in the phrase, one to another. It refers in context to a person who has a personal and official attachment to another person.

Uses of **rea/reya'** in Exodus - Ex 2:13; Ex 11:2; Ex 18:7; Ex 18:16; Ex 20:16; Ex 20:17; Ex 21:14; Ex 21:18; Ex 21:35; Ex 22:7; Ex 22:8; Ex 22:9; Ex 22:10; Ex 22:11; Ex 22:14; Ex 22:26; Ex 32:27; Ex 33:11

**And make known the statutes of God and His laws** - Clearly **the statutes of God and His laws** had been revealed in some manner to Moses, because these statutes and laws were the basis for his judgments. We recall that long before the Law was given at Mt Sinai, God had ordained commandments, statutes, and laws to Abraham and that he had obeyed them (Ge 26:5).

**NET Note** - The “decrees” or “**statutes**” were definite rules, stereotyped and permanent; the “laws” were directives or pronouncements given when situations arose.

**Wiersbe** has an interesting comment that "Judicial codes are necessary for order and security in society, but they always have to be interpreted, even if they come from the Lord. Later, the priests would assist in this task (Mal. 2:4–7); but the priesthood hadn't yet been established. From the time of Ezra (Ezra 7:10), the scribes became the students and interpreters of the Law." (Be Delivered)

**Exodus 18:17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good.**

- **not good** - Ex 18:14 De 1:12 1Ki 3:8,9 13:18 2Ch 19:6 Mt 17:4 Joh 13:6-10
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JETHRO'S WISE ADVICE**

**Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good** - In effect Jethro was saying "The stress is going to kill you Moses!"

**Scott Grant** - Jethro's first response to what the Lord was doing was to rejoice over the Lord's "goodness" (18:9). His first response to what Moses is doing is to tell him that what he is doing is "not good." Again, the grammatical parallel is clear. The Lord does something for people, and it's a good thing. Moses does something for people, and it's a bad thing. That's because the Lord is God, and Moses is not.

---

### **G Campbell Morgan - Ex. 18:17**

This is an arresting story. It is almost certainly quite out of its chronological place here. It most probably happened later, as the people were about to depart from Sinai. Compare Num. 11.14-17 and Deut. 1.7-14. It has been suggested that it was inserted here in order to show that while Jethro lived among the Amalekites he was not under the curse pronounced upon them (see Exodus 17.16). The arresting thing is that this advice as to the administration of the affairs of the people came from a man outside their borders, and that Moses acted upon it. A well-known expositor, writing of this story, says: "Jehovah entirely ignored this worldly-wise organization, substituting His own order." I think that is hardly warranted. It would be nearer the mark to say that Jehovah approved the principle, and instituted His own order. Two matters strike us as being significant. The first is that the principle is a good one. No man is warranted in attempting to carry more than he is able to carry. One of the greatest signs of capacity for leadership is the ability to call others into fellowship in responsibility and service. The second is that God has many ways of making known His will to His servants. He at times speaks through a Jethro to a Moses, as surely as through a Moses to His people. Perhaps to these two, we should add a third, namely, that all advice which we receive from men should be tested by remitting the same to God for ratification or amendment.

**Exodus 18:18 "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.**

- **You will surely wear out** - 2Co 12:15 Php 2:30 1Th 2:8,9
- **you cannot do it alone** - Nu 11:14-17 De 1:9-12 Ac 6:1-4
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES WOULD WITHER**

**You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you-** Here Jethro explains why what Moses is doing is not good! And keep the context in mind - Moses was responsible for 2 million people and he would not survive long without help! The meaning of **surely wear out** is described in the word study below, but the point is that Jethro is warning Moses he would lose heart, wither away like a leaf falling to the ground. The Hebrew word **nabel** is repeated for emphasis meaning something like "Moses fading you will fade away!" It is fascinating that this word **nabel** is the root of the word **nebela** which means corpse, something devoid of life! This gives us quite a picture of what might happen to Moses if he kept up this insane pace!

**Surely wear out** (05034)(**nabel**) has an underlying sense of that which is useless and means to wither, languish, fade. Literally **nabel** pictures something as wearing out, drying up, dying, falling off - of grass = Ps 37:2; of leaves = Isa 1:30, Jer 8:13, Ezek 47:12; of flowers = Isa 28:1, 4; of the earth withering = Isa 24:4. Figuratively it speaks of Moses wearing out from overwork (Ex 18:18), of losing heart from fear (2 Sa 22:46; Ps 18:45); of a falling mountain that crumbles away (Job 14:18). In Ps 1:3 the man of God who meditates on the word daily is like a tree whose "leaf does not wither." Of the host of heaven withers (3 uses - Isa 34:4). In Ps 18:45 it is used figuratively of foes fading away, failing in strength and courage

The Septuagint translation of Ex 18:18 actually uses two words, one meaning to corrupt, destroy, ruin and the other meaning unbearable.

Isa 40:7-8 The grass **withers**, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass **withers**, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

Isa 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us **wither** like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

**NAS** - 16v - crumbles away(1), fade(1), fade away(1), fades(2), fades away(1), fading(2), lose heart(1), surely wear(1), wither(4), wither away(1), withers(4). Ex 18:18; 2 Sa 22:46; Job 14:18; Ps. 1:3; Ps. 18:45; Ps. 37:2; Isa. 1:30; Isa. 24:4; Isa. 28:1; Isa. 28:4; Isa. 34:4; Isa. 40:7; Isa. 40:8; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 8:13; Ezek. 47:12

**KJV** - 21v - It has more verses because it includes the second sense of the word **nabel** as foolish, while NAS does not have this meaning - A verb meaning to be foolish, to act disdainfully. It is used of treating someone with disapproval or as unworthy (Deut. 32:15; Jer. 14:21; Mic. 7:6; Nah. 3:6); or of acting in contempt toward something or in a foolish way (Prov. 30:32).

**For** - Term of explanation. **Jethro** will explain why Moses will eventually fade away if he keeps judging the disputes from morning to evening!

**The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone** - The literal picture is "heavier than you is this thing." The same Hebrew word **kabed** was used to in Exodus 17:12+ "Moses' hands were **heavy** (**kabed**). Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set." It seems here in Exodus 18 that Moses had not learned his need for and the value of helping hands which were provided by Aaron and Hur. Instead, Moses was (so to speak) "trying to hold his hands up by himself **from the morning until the evening**". Jethro insightfully says this task is too heavy which may have recalled in Moses' mind the battle with the Amalekites!

**THOUGHT** - Moses is learning that he needs people to lighten his load. This is probably a lesson many of us need to learn. I have known pastors who were running well, but as the load got bigger (more attendees, etc), they simply tried to shoulder the load themselves and the result was that they burned out and some even left the ministry entirely! If you are a pastor, the question is simple - have you learned to share the load with other godly men? If not, your hands may become very **heavy** at the least or you may even decide to leave ministry at worst. Remember the line of the John Donne poem that "No man is an island." We all need people around who support us and us them!

Jethro's words **You cannot** in the Septuagint read "you are **absolutely not able** to do it alone." Boy, do these words fly in the face of many of our independent spirits! Some even think to ask for help is a sign of weakness! More to the truth is that to not ask for help may be a sign of us having delusions of deity! Only the great "I Am" does not need help. We need help.

Moses uses this same word **kabed** in Numbers 11:14 declaring "I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too **burdensome** (**kabed**) for me." In Deuteronomy, Moses adds another reason the task was too heavy -- their **strife**! Dt 1:12 "How can I alone bear the load and burden of you and your **strife** (Heb = **riv/rib/riyb**; Lxx = **antilogia**)?"

**Heavy** (severe, large, difficult,) (03515)(**kabed**) is an adjective something heavy, great, grievous. Uses in Exodus - Ex 4:10; Ex 7:14; Ex 8:24; Ex 9:3; Ex 9:18; Ex 9:24; Ex 10:14; Ex 12:38; Ex 17:12; Ex 18:18;



Ex 19:16;

It is interesting that at some point God had placed His Spirit upon Moses for in Nu 11:17 we read "Then I will come down and speak with you there, and **I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them**; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone."

**Exodus 18:19 "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,**

NET Exodus 18:19 Now listen to me, I will give you advice, and may God be with you: You be a representative for the people to God, and you bring their disputes to God;

NLT Exodus 18:19 Now listen to me, and 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 their disputes to him.

ESV Exodus 18:19 Now obey 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,

- **Now listen** - Ex 18:24 Pr 9:9
- **God be with you** - Ex 3:12 4:12 Ge 39:2 De 20:1 Jos 1:9 2Sa 14:17 Mt 28:20
- **You be** - Ex 18:15 4:16 20:19 De 5:5
- **bring** - Nu 27:5
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JETHRO'S AUTHORITATIVE DIRECTIVE**

**Now listen to me** - Literally "hear my voice." Jethro issues an imperative to his son-in-law. This is not a suggestion because the situation is serious.

**I will give you counsel** - Human reasoning. Godly counsel and advice from the priest of Midian.

**And God be with you** - Divine enablement. This divine provision is explained in the next phrase.

**You be the people's representative before God** - First, Jethro tells Moses to keep arbitrating the disputes. Here we begin to see Moses portrayed as a mediator, an intermediary, standing before God interceding for them, appealing to God on their behalf. Jethro is saying in essence "I understand that you cannot delegate this to anyone else, so continue doing it."

**And you bring the disputes to God** - Second, Jethro tells Moses to take the disputes to God which would seem to be saying pray about these disputes.

---

### **Exodus 18:19 THE WISDOM OF AGE**

No matter how long you've been at this thing called life, it's wise to turn to older people for advice. I know I feel more comfortable about making big decisions if I first talk to my dad and my father-in-law about them. When they confirm my fears or affirm my decisions about something, I feel I'm on solid ground.

Moses was no spring chicken when he got some much-needed advice from his father-in-law Jethro. He observed that Moses was about to suffer burnout if he continued to try to do all the work of judging for the children of Israel by himself. So he told Moses, "The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone" (Ex 18:18). Moses could easily have said, "Look, Dad, I'm in charge here. I know what I'm doing. After all, I've been around for a while, and I've gained a little wisdom too." Instead, he listened carefully and divided the work just as Jethro suggested. As a result, things went more smoothly, and the work got done more efficiently.

In God's design of things, He has provided for each of us a powerful, wise resource in the older people in our lives. Let's never neglect their insight and good advice. We can learn from the wisdom of age. -- J. David Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The older saints who trust God's Word  
Have fought the battles you now fight;  
They've trod the paths that you now walk --

Their wisdom teaches truth and right.

--JDB

To avoid the mistakes of youth, draw from the wisdom of age.

**Exodus 18:20 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.**

NET Exodus 18:20 warn them of the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.

NLT Exodus 18:20 Teach them God's decrees, and give them his instructions. Show them how to conduct their lives.

- **teach** - Ex 18:16 De 4:1,5 5:1 6:1,2 7:11 Ne 9:13,14
- **the way** - 1Sa 12:23 Ps 32:8 143:8 Isa 30:21 Jer 6:16 42:3 Mic 4:2 1Th 4:1
- **work** - De 1:18 Eze 3:17 Mt 28:20 Mk 13:34 2Th 3:6-12
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then** - "This continues the sequence of instruction for Moses. He alone was to be the mediator, to guide them in the religious and moral instruction." (NET)

**Teach them the statutes and the laws**(torah) - So **first** keep being Israel's arbiter (Ex 18:19), **second** take the disputes to Jehovah (Ex 18:19) and now **third teach** the people **the statutes and laws**. Where did Moses receive these teachings? The text does not say specifically but clearly they were divinely revealed to him (cf Ex 15:25-26+). The word **teach** (zahar - below) means to warn and is translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the verb [diamarturomai](#) which means to solemnly charge or warn (cf Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Ti 4:1+). This was not the first time Israel was presented with **statutes** for earlier we read regarding the Passover "you shall observe this event as an **ordinance** (choq) for you and your children forever." (Ex 12:24+) And then in Exodus 15 at the bitter water test sweetened by the tree, God gave **statutes** (as well as commandments and regulations) that Israel was to obey and in obeying would not have the diseases put on them which were put on the Egyptians. (Ex 15:25-26+).

**Statutes** (decrees, ordinances)([02706](#))([choq/hog](#) from **chaqaq** = to engrave in stone) is a masculine noun that means regulation, law, ordinance, decree, custom. The primary sense of choq is an expectation or mandate prescribed by decree or custom. See [Statute](#) in the Baker Evangelical Dictionary.

**Teach** ([02094](#))(**zahar**) means to teach, to admonish or to warn. For example in Ps 19:11+ David says that "Moreover, by them (**judgments** in Ps 19:9) Your servant is **warned** (zahar); In keeping them there is great reward." In Da 12:3+ the sense is different = "Those who have insight will shine (zahar) brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven."

**Semantic Domains** - "(nif) warned, take warning (Ps 19:12; Ecc 4:13; 12:12; Eze 3:21b; 33:4, 5,6); (hif) give warning, dissuade, i.e., tell one of a future happening which is dangerous and having consequences, implying a future event may change in some way based on contingent present behavior (Ex 18:20; 2Ki 6:10; 2Ch 19:10; Eze 3:17, 18,19, 20, 21a; 33:3, 7, 8, 9)"

**Summary** - 1) to admonish, warn, teach, shine, send out light, be light, be shining 1a) (Niphal) to be taught, be admonished 1b) (Hiphil) 1b1) to teach, warn 1b2) to shine, send out light (in Da 12:3)

**Zahar** - give them warning(1), receive instruction(1), take warning(2), taken warning(1), teach(1), took warning(1), warn(6), warned(7), warns(1). - Ex 18:20; 2 Ki. 6:10; 2 Chr. 19:10; Ps. 19:11; Eccl. 4:13; Eccl. 12:12; Ezek. 3:17; Ezek. 3:18; Ezek. 3:19; Ezek. 3:20; Ezek. 3:21; Ezek. 33:3; Ezek. 33:4; Ezek. 33:5; Ezek. 33:6; Ezek. 33:7; Ezek. 33:8; Ezek. 33:9; Dan. 12:3

**and make known to them** - Moses would take the revelation from God and communicate or report it to the people.

**the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do**- The way...they are to walk speaks of obedience. Notice the order is watch your walk before you focus on your work.

**Exodus 18:21 "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate**

NET Exodus 18:21 But you choose from the people capable men, God-fearing, men of truth, those who hate bribes, and put them over the people as rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

NLT Exodus 18:21 But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten.

ESV Exodus 18:21 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.

- **Furthermore** - De 1:13-17 Ac 6:3
- **you shall select out of all the people able men** - Ex 18:25 De 16:18 1Ki 3:9-12 Pr 28:2
- **men who fear Gods** - Ex 23:2-9 Ge 22:12 42:18 2Sa 23:3 1Ki 18:3,12 2Ch 19:5-10 Ne 5:9 7:2 Ec 12:13 Lu 18:2,4
- **men of truth** - Job 29:16 31:13 Isa 16:5 59:4,14,15 Jer 5:1 Eze 18:8 Zec 7:9 Zec 8:16
- **those who hate dishonest gain** - Ex 23:8 De 16:18,19 1Sa 8:3 12:3,4 Ps 26:9,10 Isa 33:15 Eze 22:12 Ac 20:33 1Ti 3:3 6:9-11 2Pe 2:14,15
- **leaders of thousands** - Nu 10:4 De 1:15 Jos 22:14 1Sa 8:12
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DIVISION OF LABOR

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

This Jethro's **fourth** recommendation (see above for other three). These men must be able, God fearers ("not fear man because the judgment is God's" - Dt 1:17, cf Pr 29:25), who hold fast to truth ("judge righteously" Dt 1:16) and abstain from bribery or partiality (cf Dt 1:17).

**Select (chazah)** is translated "choose" or "look for" in other versions and the idea of the verb (see below) is to look carefully for men with these qualities. The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **chazah** with **skeptomai** which means to look carefully, examine, think about beforehand, all of these meanings giving us a good sense of what Jethro is telling Moses to do. He is to look carefully for qualified men who can assist in this task and then Jethro gives the specific qualities that Moses should be looking for in these men.

**Scott Grant** makes a great point (and I have seen this in my experience) - In choosing leaders today, often these qualities are not at the top of the list. We're easily impressed by flash and image and personality, which are readily discernible at first glance. But true competence, a true reverence for God and integrity often are not so readily apparent.

**Shall select** ([02372](#))(**chazah**) means to gaze at; mentally to perceive (usually after taking time for reflection), behold, look. **Chazah** refers to seeing God (Ex. 24:11; Job 19:26, 27; Ps 11:7; Ps 17:15); astrological observations (Isa. 47:13); prophetic vision and insight (Isa. 1:1; Isa. 2:1; Isa. 13:1; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 12:27; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 10:2).

**Chazah** - 50x in 46v - behold(7), envisioned in visions(1), gaze(2), gloat(1), look(3), looked(1), prophesy(3), saw(7), see(12), seeing(1), seen(7), sees(4), select(1). - Ex 18:21; Ex 24:11; Nu 24:4; Nu 24:16; Job 15:17; Job 19:26; Job 19:27; Job 23:9; Job 24:1; Job 27:12; Job 34:32; Job 36:25; Ps. 11:4; Ps. 11:7; Ps. 17:2; Ps. 17:15; Ps. 27:4; Ps. 46:8; Ps. 58:8; Ps. 58:10; Ps. 63:2; Prov. 22:29; Prov. 24:32; Prov. 29:20; Cant. 6:13; Isa. 1:1; Isa. 2:1; Isa. 13:1; Isa. 26:11; Isa. 30:10; Isa. 33:17; Isa. 33:20; Isa. 47:13; Isa. 48:6; Isa. 57:8; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 12:27; Ezek. 13:6; Ezek. 13:8; Ezek. 21:29; Ezek. 22:28; Amos 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Mic. 4:11; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 10:2

**NET Note on able men** - The expression is לַאֲנָשֵׁי־חַיִּיל (ʾanshe khayil, "capable men"). The attributive genitive is the word used in expressions like "**mighty man of valor**." The word describes these men as respected, influential, powerful people, those looked up to by the community as leaders, and those who will have the needs of the community in mind.

**NET on men who fear God** - The description "fearers of God" uses an objective genitive. It describes them as devout, worshipful, obedient servants of God.

**NET on men of truth** - The expression "**men of truth**" (אֲנָשֵׁי־אֱמֶת, 'anshe 'emet) indicates that these men must be seekers of truth,

who know that the task of a judge is to give true judgment (U. Cassuto, Exodus, 220). The word "truth" includes the ideas of faithfulness or reliability, as well as factuality itself. It could be understood to mean "truthful men," men whose word is reliable and true.

**Truth** (faithfulness, faithfully) (0571) ('emeth from the verb aman = to confirm, support, believe, be faithful) is a feminine noun meaning truth, faithfulness, that which gives complete reliability. To walk in truth is to conduct oneself according to God's holy standards (1Ki 2:4; 3:6; Ps. 86:11; Isa. 38:3). Truth was a measure of one's word (1Ki 22:16; Da 11:2) and actions (Ge 24:49; Josh. 2:14).

**NET on hate dishonest gain** - Heb "haters of bribes." Here is another objective genitive, one that refers to unjust gain. To hate unjust gain is to reject and refuse it. Their decisions will not be swayed by greed.

These qualifications remind us of Acts 6 where the newly formed church sought out godly men to assist the apostles Luke recording

"So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of **good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom**, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:2-4+).

**And you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens** - Jethro then breaks the 2 million Hebrews into 4 much more manageable groups headed by the godly men chosen from the people. The point of the division is that every 10 people in the nation would have someone they could go to with a dispute. This would mean that there would be about 200,000 of these lower echelon judges. If that is true, that is amazing that Moses could find that many Israelite men who met the relatively stringent requirements!

After the 40 years of wandering Moses alluded to this past experience and used it to recommend a similar administration be undertaken when they entered the promised land..

"I spoke to you at that time, saying, '**I am not able to bear the burden of you alone.**' 10 'The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars of heaven in number. 11 'May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand-fold more than you are and bless you, just as He has promised you! 12 '**How can I alone bear the load and burden of you and your strife?**' 13 '**Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.**' (APPARENTLY MOSES HAD TOLD THE ISRAELITES TO PUT FORWARD CANDIDATES) 14 "You answered me and said, 'The thing which you have said to do is good.' (IN OTHER WORDS ISRAEL APPROVED JETHRO'S PLAN) 15 "**So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over you, leaders of thousands and of hundreds, of fifties and of tens, and officers for your tribes.** 16 "**Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him.**' 17 '**You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.**' 18 "I commanded you at that time all the things that you should do. (Deuteronomy 1:9-18)

**D.L. Moody** said, "I would rather put 10 men to work than do the work of 10 men."

---

**D L Moody** - ISN'T it extraordinary that Jethro, the man of the desert, should have given this advice to Moses? How did he learn to beware of covetousness? We honor men to-day if they are wealthy and covetous. We elect them to office in church and state. We often say that they will make better treasurers because we know them to be covetous. But in God's sight a covetous man is as vile and black as any thief or drunkard. David said: "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." I am afraid that many who profess to have put away wickedness also speak well of the covetous.

---

### **Exodus 18:21** Looking for Leadership - Woodrow Kroll

In 1789 an uncertain George Washington was urged to seek the presidency by Governor Morris, a Pennsylvania delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Morris wrote Washington, "No constitution is the same on paper and in life. The exercise of authority depends upon personal character."

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, recognized this truth as well. He knew that his plan to relieve some of the stress in his son-in-law's life depended on the character of the men who were chosen to execute it. That's why he urged Moses to choose men who were not only competent but who also had a healthy fear of God, who spoke the truth and avoided greed.

Unfortunately, this fundamental principle of public service is often not carefully observed. In both church and government, people have been put into positions of leadership based on their abilities with little regard for their character. In fact, one poll found that 67 percent of voters think a political leader can have "substantial flaws in personal character" but still govern effectively. Such a position is contrary to Scripture, experience, and common sense.

As you face the responsibility of electing officials in your church and government, give careful consideration to their character. Select individuals who not only are able, but who also fear God, uphold the truth and reject greed. People of good character who possess no skills in leadership usually do not make good leaders. But people with leadership skills and little character make even worse leaders. They lead us wherever their character will permit, and that is usually not toward God.

What a man is will always determine what a man does. - [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

**Exodus 18:22 "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."**

- **at all times** - Ex 18:26 Ro 13:6
- **every major dispute** - Lev 24:11 Nu 15:33 27:2 36:1 De 1:17 17:8,9
- **every minor dispute they themselves will judge** - Ex 18:18 Nu 11:17
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JETHRO'S DETAILED DIRECTIONS ON JUDGING**

**Let them judge the people at all times**—"in all normal cases" or "under normal circumstances." These men would in a sense be "on call" 24/7 as we say today! The judging would begin within these divisions in groups as small as 10 people.

**And let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you but every minor dispute they themselves will judge** These leaders would bring only the most difficult disputes to Moses which would significantly reduce his "case load."

**So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you** - Literally this begins "lighten it from off thyself." The Hebrew verb (qalal) which means to be small or light and was used literally in Jonah 1:5 of the sailors in the storm lightening the load which gives us a good word picture. So then like a ship with lightened load was less likely to sink, so too Moses with a "lighter load" would be less likely to "sink!" And so the NIV has "That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you." Jethro's logic was to ease Moses' administrative load and spread the load about the selected godly men.

**NET Note on be easier for you** - The expression וְהָקַל מֵעַלְיָךְ (véhaqel me'aleykha) means literally "and make it light off yourself." The word plays against the word for "heavy" used earlier—since it was a heavy or burdensome task, Moses must lighten the load.

**Scott Grant** - Letting go of something that we think is important is difficult, but Jethro offers Moses, and us, three incentives: 1) Simply, it will be "**easier**" for Moses. We make life so much more difficult than it needs to be by obsessing over every detail. Letting go of things, allowing them not to be perfect and allowing other people to help us, is a much easier way to live. 2) The other judges will "**bear the burden with you.**" This is shared leadership, which is so much more exciting than individual leadership. It's so much more fun to do an important task with people than by yourself. People who share something important get to know each other in a deeper way. 3) The people will be able to go home "**in peace**" instead of waiting around all day for a chance to see Moses. Moses is clinging to responsibility because he doesn't want to disappoint the people, but if he lets go of responsibility it will actually be a blessing to people. His thinking has been all wrong, just as ours often is. In the first story, Jethro heard of "all" that God had "done" (18:1, 8, 9), and it was described as "goodness" (18:9). In the second story, Jethro observed "all" that Moses was "doing" (18:14), but it was "not good" (18:17). Finally, Moses "did all" that Jethro said, and although the text specifically doesn't say it was "good," it leaves no doubt that what Moses finally did was good. It is good for him to do all that Jethro said, which means that it's good for him not to do everything. I have found that letting go is easy in theory and excruciating in practice. It's very easy for me to study it and teach it. It's very easy for me to think about letting go of things until a specific thing is before me. Then all my fleshly patterns of perfectionism, obsession and control tie my insides into knots. But the word of God keeps telling me, "Let go." And my painful experience of holding onto things says, "Let go." Ever so slowly, I'm starting to make those difficult decisions to let go. The results are just as Jethro depicted them: a lighter load, the joy of shared leadership and blessing in the lives of others.

**Bear the burden** (Hebrew - nasa) is translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the picturesque verb **sunantilambanomai** which means literally to grasp hold of with someone and hence to helpfully take up a matter with them. This same verb is used to describe our Helper the Holy Spirit, Paul writing

"In the same way the Spirit also **helps** (**sunantilambanomai** in the [present tense](#) and [middle voice](#)) our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;" (Ro 8:26+).

As as aside this same Greek verb is used in a somewhat similar context later in Numbers 11 where even after Jethro's plan has been put in place, Moses has to confess he is by the task saying to Jehovah...

"I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome ("too heavy," = same word [kated](#) used in Ex 18:18) for me. 15 "So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness." 16 The LORD therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. 17 "Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit Who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and **they shall bear the burden** (Lxx = same verb as here in Ex 18:22 = **sunantilambanomai**) of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone. (Number 14:11-17)

---

### Exodus 18:22 Burden Bearers - Woodrow Kroll

Andrew C. Davison wrote about an encounter with Dr. Albert Schweitzer at Lambarene, on the banks of the Ogowe River. It was about noon and the sun was beating down mercilessly as a group walked up a hill with Dr. Schweitzer. Suddenly the doctor strode across the slope to where an African woman was struggling with a load of wood for the cooking fires. The 85-year-old doctor took the entire burden and carried it up the hill for the relieved woman. When they reached the top of the hill, someone asked Dr. Schweitzer why he did things like that, implying that in that heat and at his age he should not. Albert Schweitzer pointed to the woman and said simply, "No one should have to carry a burden like that alone."

That was Moses' problem--he was trying to carry his burden alone. It took the wise insight of his father-in-law, Jethro, to point out the fact that others "will bear the burden with you."

God's people were never meant to carry their burdens alone. That's why we have the privilege of prayer. Peter urged us to cast "all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). Bearing burdens is also the role of the Church. Paul instructed believers, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Are you willing to help others bear their burdens? Perhaps even today there is someone who needs you to pray with him, cook a meal or provide transportation for him. It's not hard to spot burdens that need to be borne when you are looking for them. Our responsibility is to do whatever it takes to make a burden lighter. That's a responsibility that brings great satisfaction now and eternal reward in the future.

A burden shared is a lighter load. - [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

**Exodus 18:23 "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."**

- **God so commands you**- Ex 18:18 Ge 21:10-12 1Sa 8:6,7,22 Ac 15:2 Ga 2:2
- **all these people** - Ex 16:29 Ge 18:33 30:25 2Sa 18:3 19:39 21:17 Php 1:24,25
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **JETHRO'S ADVICE JEHOVAH'S COMMAND.**

**If you do this thing and God so commands you** - The NLT says "If you follow this advice, and if God commands you to do so." Do this if God directs you. The implication of course is that Moses was to take Jethro's advice to the LORD in prayer, a good practice when we get advice on important matters even from godly men!

**George Bush** - An entire freedom from the spirit of dictation, and a tone of the most exemplary and amiable self-distrust, is apparent in those words. Knowing that Moses had a better counsellor than he was, he gives his advice under correction, like a modest and pious man, who knows that all human counsel is to be given and received with an humble submission to the word and providence of God. He would have his suggestions followed only so far as they met with the approbation of him who is 'excellent in counsel and mighty in operation,' and infinite in both.

**Then you will be able to endure** - The Hebrew word for **endure** literally means to take a stand. "Jacob (Exodus, 501) suggests that there might be a humorous side to this: "you could even do this standing up."" (NET) The promise would be that Moses would be able to endure the pressure.

**Currid** - This statement seems to have both figurative and literal qualities. It means, on the one hand, that Moses will be able to stand up to the number of cases brought to him. On the other hand, the word 'stand' is purposely contrasted with 'sit' in verse 13: Moses' strength is preserved so that he may stand before the people.

**and all these people also will go to their place in peace**([shalom](#)) - The second promise is the people would go back to their homes satisfied with the decisions that were rendered.

**Currid** - This clause implies that the court system will function properly and efficiently. The people will not be waiting all day for their disputes to be decided. Thus no social disorder or unrest will result from such a judicial system.

**Wiersbe** comments that "Moses didn't ask Jethro how to build the tabernacle or how to offer the sacrifices, because those matters were revealed to him from the Lord. But in matters of organization and management, God's people can learn from outsiders, for "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8). Of course, we never adopt a practice or policy until we understand the principle behind it and make sure it's in agreement with Scripture (James 3:13-18)." (Be Delivered)

---

### **Exodus 18:13-27 Delegating Responsibility - Woodrow Kroll**

As I have studied the Word of God concerning leadership, I have come to certain conclusions about spiritual principles of good leadership. These principles can be applied not only by leaders of organizations but by Sunday school teachers or by anyone with responsibility.

First, God uses people to do His work. When He has a job to do, He calls an individual to do it. Remember, however, that it took Moses a long time to become prepared for his task, and it sometimes takes leaders today a long time to be prepared for their tasks.

Second, when the task becomes too much for the one person God originally called, He calls others to work with the first individual.

Third, God holds the first individual responsible for the work done by the other individuals. This principle applies especially to the spiritual aspects of the work.

This principle was particularly evident in Moses' leadership. Even though responsibility and authority could be delegated to others, he was still directly responsible before God.

God knows what work He wants accomplished, and He gives individuals responsibilities in order to accomplish that work. The only way that God's work can be done effectively is for individual believers to know what God wants them to do.

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18). [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

---

### **F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily**

**Exodus 18:23** And God command thee so.

It was good and sound advice that Jethro gave his son-in-law. It could hardly have been better. It is always better to set one hundred men to work than attempt to do the work of one hundred men. There is no greater art in the world than to develop the latent capacities of those around us by yoking them to useful service. But good though the advice obviously was, Jethro carefully guarded Moses against adopting it, unless the Lord had been consulted, and had commanded it.

**Let us test human advice.** — There are plenty of voices that advise us, and each has some nostrum for our health, some direction for our path. Some are true guides, whom God has sent to us, as Jethro to Moses. Often an onlooker can see mistakes we are making, and can suggest something better. But we are wise to get alone into the holy presence of God, and ask what He commands, what is his will.

**Let us test human teachings**— So full is the world of voices, so bewildering the din of religious schools and sects! The Apostle was justified in advising us to prove all things, and to try the spirits, whether they were of God. There are four tests for truth what glorifies Christ; what humbles the flesh; what is in accord with the Word of God; and what has stood the trial of Christian experience in the past.

**There is no teacher like God, and we may always detect his voice.** It is small and still; it casts down imagination, and brings our thoughts into the captivity of Jesus; it is definite and distinct. When there is an indistinct murmur of many sounds along the wire, you may be sure that you are not in communication with your Father's person. When He speaks, there is no mistaking his voice or his will.

**Exodus 18:24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said.**

- Ex 18:2-5,19 Ezr 10:2,5 Pr 1:5 1Co 12:21
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES ACCEPTS JETHRO'S PLAN

**So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said** - "The idiom "listen to the voice of" means "obey, comply with, heed."" (NET) This speaks of the heart of Moses, willing to submit and humble to receive the words of wise counsel. These are traits we should all seek to emulate!

**Exodus 18:25 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.**

- Ex 18:21 De 1:15 Ac 6:5
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JETHRO'S PLAN IS ACTIVATED

**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** - Notice Moses carried out Jethro's plan with no complaints, and without adding or taking away from his counsel.

**Exodus 18:26 They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge.**

- **at all times**- Ex 18:14,22
- **the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses** - Ex 18:15,22 De 17:8 1Ki 3:16-28 10:1 Job 29:16
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JETHRO'S PLAN WORKED

**They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge** - Jethro's plan worked as he had described to Moses.

**Exodus 18:27 Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.**

- Ge 24:59 31:55 Nu 10:29,30 Jdg 19:9
- [Exodus 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES SAYS GOOD BYE TO JETHRO

**Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell** - NET Note says "The verb נָשַׁלַּח (vayshallakh) has the same root and same stem



used in the passages calling for Pharaoh to “release” Israel. Here, in a peaceful and righteous relationship, Moses sent Jethro to his home.”

**and he went his way into his own land -**

**NET Note** - This chapter makes an excellent message on spiritual leadership of the people of God. Spiritually responsible people are to be selected to help in the work of the ministry (teaching, deciding cases, meeting needs), so that there will be peace, and so that leaders will not be exhausted. Probably capable people are more ready to do that than leaders are ready to relinquish control. But leaders have to be willing to take the risk, to entrust the task to others. Here Moses is the model of humility, receiving correction and counsel from Jethro. And Jethro is the ideal adviser, for he has no intention of remaining there to run the operation.