

# **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

## **Bible Study Notes**

**9-16-20**

### **Exodus 18**

**Jethro brings Moses' wife and sons back to him - Verses 1-6**

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

**18:1** God had declared His purpose to show He was the real God and the Egyptian gods were not. Jethro had heard of what had happened in Egypt. Even at that time, news traveled pretty fast, probably mostly through merchants and traders. Apparently Moses hadn't had any contact with Jethro yet, but Jethro took the initiative to seek him out based on the news he had heard. This is clear evidence that God's purpose was accomplished.

**18:5** Jethro brought Moses' family back to him. There is no record of how Moses' family went back to Jethro. Very likely Moses sent them back for their safety. Egypt would not have been comfortable or easy at that time. Their lives were constantly threatened. Although Moses needed to be there to accomplish God's plans, he wanted to protect his family during this time.

**Jethro expresses faith in God and offers a sacrifice to Him - Verses 7-12**

<sup>7</sup>So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. <sup>8</sup>Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them. <sup>9</sup>Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. <sup>10</sup>He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. <sup>11</sup>Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." <sup>12</sup>Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

**18:7** We have to respect the person we receive counsel from. We have to be humble and respectful. It is best to ask someone we respect. Moses respected his father-in-law and this was

the foundation for the counseling relationship they would have later. Although he was the leader of all Israel, the prophet from God, had seen God in the burning bush, talked with God face to face, relayed God's messages to people, stood up to and defeated Egypt, he was not prideful. He didn't ask Jethro to bow to him, but instead honored him by bowing to Jethro.

**18:8-11** Moses told his father-in-law all that God had done, convincing him that the Lord was greater than any other god. Our relatives are often the hardest people to tell about God. Yet we should look for opportunities to tell them what God is doing in our lives because we can have an important influence on them.

**18:12** This reunion turned into a large celebration. The Israelites frequently shared a sacrificial meal among themselves. A burnt offering was sacrificed to God, and then the meal taken from the sacrifice was dedicated to God and eaten ceremonially as a fellowship dinner.

### **Moses judges the people – Verses 13-16**

**<sup>13</sup> The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. <sup>14</sup> When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" <sup>15</sup> Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. <sup>16</sup> Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions."**

**18:13** Moses was spending so much time and energy hearing the Hebrews' complaints that he could not get to other important work. Jethro suggested that Moses delegate most of this work to others and focus his efforts on jobs only he could do. People in positions of responsibility sometimes feel they are the only ones who can do necessary tasks; but others are capable of handling part of the load. Delegation relieved Moses' stress and improved the quality of the government. It helped prepare them for the system of government set up in Canaan. Proper delegation can multiply your effectiveness while giving others a chance to grow.

**18:16** Moses not only decided these cases, he also taught the people God's laws. Whenever we help others settle disputes or resolve conflicts, we should also look for opportunities to teach about God.

### **Jethro counsels Moses to employ elders to help settle disputes Verses 17-23**

**<sup>17</sup> Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. <sup>18</sup> You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. <sup>19</sup> Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. <sup>20</sup> Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. <sup>21</sup> But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. <sup>22</sup> Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but**

have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. <sup>23</sup> If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

**18:17-18** Jethro's advice fits with Scripture. At that time the Scripture on this point hadn't come out, but in Jethro's wisdom he perceived these things to be true. Scriptural principles such as two are better than one (Ecc 4:9), everyone getting involved and using their gifts (1 Cor 12), letting the spiritual leaders have more time to attend to spiritual things (Acts 6), and appointing elders to oversee the people (Titus 1-2, 1 Timothy 3) are all in play. Our advice to others and others advice to us should always be based on Scripture. If it is just an opinion it is just that, an opinion. Opinions could be helpful and we might learn from them, but they are non-binding and don't carry God's authority.

**18:19** Jethro was advising Moses in God's way. His goal was for God to be with Moses and bless Moses. He wanted to see God's will done, not Moses' will done. Whenever you give advice, give advice not for what the person wants or would like to hear, but what you know God wants to happen. Sometimes this kind of advice could disappoint people. It doesn't matter. If somebody gives you counsel that you don't like, but know it is what God likes, do it.

#### **Moses follows Jethro's advice and bids him farewell Verses 24-27**

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

**18:24** Listen to counsel. Here is the climax of the whole story. Moses listened to counsel. This doesn't mean he sat there and listened and nodded and said "yes, yes, good" and then walk away without changing anything. He Followed The Counsel. He did what Jethro suggested. There is no point in asking counsel from others just to say you did it if you didn't plan to truly consider the counsel. God touched Jethro's heart to tell Moses for a reason. If somebody comes to you with counsel, be willing to listen and if it seems it is God's will, follow the counsel even if it is difficult, even if it requires sacrifice, even if it is the opposite of what you wanted to do.

**18:26-27** Jethro just appears for a little while in this story, but he has a major impact on the future course of Israel and Moses' life. Counsel is important. Just 10 minutes of counsel or even one sentence could change the course of somebody's entire life. Therefore don't throw it out casually. Think about it. Pray about it. If it is biblical, give it.