

LESSON 4 SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

EX. 18:13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

14 And when' Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

15 And Moses sac his father in law, Because come unto me to enquire ci •cd:

16 When they '-save a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his Laws.

17 And Moses' in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.

18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee: thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

20 And thou shaft teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

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

2 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.

25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

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God Provides Judges to Help Moses

Lesson Text: Exodus 18:13-26

Related Scriptures: Numbers 1 1:11-17;

Deuteronomy 1:9-18; Acts 6:1-7

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Rephidim

GOLDEN TEXT—"And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do" (Exodus 18:20).

Preparing to Teach the Lesson

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to clearly understand God's direction through Jethro regarding delegation of responsibilities.

Principle: to see that God's work, done in God's way, has God's support, which leads to its success.

Application: to seek God's direction in any task He sets before us.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Having delivered the people out of slavery, God was now bringing them through the desert into the Promised Land, and He set up a system that would help the people live with one another and honor Him as their God.

DEVELOPING THE LESSON

1. **The problem addressed** (Ex. 18:13-16) Moses' father-in-law Jethro may have had a talent for organization, or God may simply have given him insight. Either way, as he looked at the situation, he saw both the problem a-z the solution.

The lesson we can learn here is to be open to the leading of the Lord and accept His solution, even if it comes from an unlikely source. We must consider the wisdom that God bestows on His people (cf. Prov. 11:14; Jas. 1:5). Have we sometimes missed the Lord's blessing by refusing to accept His leading, thinking it was coming through the wrong person or at the wrong time? Our pride or sense of position might keep us from seeing the Lord's provision of a solution.

2. **Jethro's analysis of the situation** (Ex. 18:17-18). All this may seem rather obvious to us, but remember that when we are in such a situation, we may be a bit overwhelmed. We may not see things clearly.

3. **Moses' place in the plan** (Ex. 18:19-20). Notice how Jethro sets it all up: Moses is to represent the people to God, and they are to bring

him all the big problems that cannot be solved by other judges. Moses is to teach the people all that God teaches him about how they are to walk (everyday conduct) and work. That should just about cover everything!

4. **Jethro gives Moses the methodology** (Ex. 18:21-23). Doesn't this all make sense? Isn't it all logical? Why didn't Moses think of this? Because he was stuck in the problem. When our church is stuck in a problem, let's remember this: The pastor needs help; he cannot do it all alone.

Jethro suggests that Moses choose men of upright character, spiritual outlook, and proven ability and give them responsibility that fits them. In our churches today we need to find those among us of such character to be elders, deacons, and helpers of all kinds.

5. **Moses follows through** (Ex. 18:24-26). Moses followed the plan Jethro had laid out. The men found were appointed as judges over groups of various sizes and were carefully organized. This time God had spoken through Jethro; Moses was the listener. Thank God that Moses was willing and able to take direction.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Our next lesson continues with God's first instructions to Israel. There was a lot to do, and only God knew what would be right for them and their situation.

Studying the Text

PERCETIVE CONCLUSION-

Ex. 18:13-18

Observation (Ex. 18:13-14). Jethro, the priest of Midian who is sometimes called Reuel (Ex- 2:18), was Moses' father-in-law. After working for Jethro for forty years, Moses had departed for Egypt in obedience to the Lord's command. Now that he and the people had come out of Egypt into the wilderness, Jethro came out to greet them. Accompanying him was Moses' wife, Zipporah, and the couple's two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

We do not know a great deal about Jethro's faith, but he seemed to have faith in Israel's God. 'The victory over the army of Egypt had undoubtedly reached the ears of Jethro and he was anxious for details concerning that event. Having heard of the goodness and the greatness of Jehovah, he rejoiced and gave praise to the God of Israel (vv. 9-10). The events of the exodus confirmed what Jethro apparently had previously believed; namely, that the Lord was greater than all the gods (v. 11)" (Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt, Baker). Jethro even offered sacrifices in worship of the Lord.

Jethro had not seen the things Moses and the people had witnessed and acknowledged the

Lord as the God who had "delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians" (vs. 10).

The morning after Jethro's arrival, "Moses sat to judge the people" (18:13). It is clear that Moses was hearing disputes among the people and judging criminal cases. As the nation's leader, he would naturally be looked to for such service. In the ancient Near East, "to be a political or military leader was also to be a judicial leader, required to render decisions in cases of controversy" (Stuart, New American Commentary: Exodus, B&H Publishing).

While Moses may have been carrying on this work as judge for some time in a satisfactory way, on this day the people were waiting in line from early in the morning till evening for a

chance to speak with him.

Moses' father-in-law was a leader among the Midianites and was familiar with the demands of such a job. Observing Moses as he judged the people, it became clear to Jethro that this practice could not continue—it was simply too much. When he asked why Moses sat to judge the people "alone" (vs. 14), he was not suggesting it was wrong for Moses to judge the people; he was merely recognizing it was too great a task for one man.

Explanation (Ex. 18:15-16). Moses explained to Jethro that the people came to him "to enquire of God-" Moses was serving as an intermediary, seeking the Lord's to their disputes. He was more a civil judge; he was also a prophet (cf Deut. 18:15; 34:10). The "legal process involved the revelatory process" (Stuart); it was natural for the people to seek guidance from God's prophet

Moses also explained that he taught the people the decrees of God and His laws, or instructions. The law of God had not yet been formally given on Mount Sinai. However, such a vast number of people traveling through the wilderness required, and apparently already possessed, some body of laws to govern them. These, along with the revelation God

gave Moses, were passed on to the people and applied to the cases they brought to him.

Judgment (Ex. 18:17-18). Jethro bluntly told Moses that what he was doing was "not good." He did not mean the people did not deserve justice or that Moses should have no role in dispensing that justice. However, it was clear to Jethro that the system was not working and was too great a burden for Moses alone. He warned that continuing on this path would wear Moses out and the people as well.

As Jethro saw it, Moses would be exhausted from the work, and it would

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take him away from other critical responsibilities. In addition, the people would be frustrated because Moses could not possibly hear all their cases in a timely manner.

SOUND ADVICE—Ex. 18:19-23

Intercede and teach (Ex. 18:19-20). Jethro was not satisfied with simply expressing his judgment with regard to the faulty practice. He also offered a solution.

The first bit of advice Jethro offered was "Be thou for the people to Godward" (vs. 19). This was simply a way of saying that Moses should represent the people before God. Jethro was

not advocating that Moses give up his prophetic office. Indeed, he was to continue to bring their cases before God. Second, Jethro advised Moses to teach the people the Laws God had revealed already and show them how to live and work (vs.20)

This advice seemed to reinforce what Moses was already doing and confirmed his priority of seeking the Lord's wisdom and teaching the people. Jethro, however, saw a better way to carry out these priorities.

Delegate authority (Ex. 18:21-22). Jethro went on to advise his son-in-law to appoint qualified men to aid in the task he was currently shouldering alone. What qualities must such men possess? Jethro offered four qualifications. First, they must be "able" men. The word here means "strength." It certainly includes physical strength but suggests moral strength as well.

Second, Moses' helpers must "fear God." They must be sincere followers of the Lord who would take their responsibility before Him seriously, showing utmost reverence for Him.

Third, they must be "men of truth." This means they must be faithful in carrying out their jobs and faithful to the Lord, who is their ultimate Master.

Finally, Jethro said these men must hate covetousness, or

unjust gain. Men who could be influenced by the prospect of material gain must never be allowed to stand in judgment.

According to this plan, these men would be delegated authority over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. These represented various judicial levels. The men would act as judges in minor cases. More serious cases would be passed on to the next level, with only the most important cases brought to Moses.

The appointed leaders would not be prophets like Moses, but they could relieve him of much time by dealing with lesser matters.

Recognize God's sovereignty(Ex. 18:23), For all the obvious wisdom in the foregoing advice, Jethro himself did not presume to speak for God in the matter. He made his proposal contingent upon the Lord's approval: "If . . . God command thee so."

HUMBLE ACTION-Ex. 18:24-26

Moses listens (Ex. 18:24).

Moses was humble enough to listen to his father-in-law. He recognized his words as sound, wise advice.

Some Bible commentators have argued that Moses was wrong to heed Jethro's advice. However, this viewpoint

Moses acts (Ex 18:25-26).

Moses followed Jetho's counsel and appointed able men to serve as judges at various levels throughout Israel.

We might consider this whole episode somewhat trivial and hardly worth recording in Scripture. Considerable space is given to it, however, indicating it has importance to us as an example (cf. I Cor. 10:11).

There are at least three important principles that this incident illustrates. First, it demonstrates the importance of encouragement. Moses had received nothing but grief from his people. It must have been refreshing to receive encouragement and sound advice from Jethro, a non-Israelite.

Second, it shows the wisdom of shared responsibility. There

is danger in one person trying to do too much.

Finally, Jethro's proposal shows that God often supplies needs through other people's abilities and wisdom. The New Testament further emphasizes this truth when it speaks of the church as a body with each part contributing to its proper function (I Cor. 12•.12-25; Eph. 4:11-16).

—Jarl K. Waggoner.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Jethro?
2. What did Jethro observe, and what did he conclude from it?
3. What was involved for Moses in the people?
 4. What did Jethro warn would happen if Moses continued what he was doing.
 5. What did Jethro suggest was Moses' priority?
 6. What advice did Jethro offer in order to help Moses?
7. What qualifications did he suggest Moses' helpers needed to possess?
8. What authority did Jethro say the helpers should be given?

9. Was Moses wise to accept Jethro's advice? Explain.
10. What are some sound principles this incident highlights?

—Jarl K. Waggoner.

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PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Effective leaders will accept honest observations and evaluations without taking personal offense (Ex. 18:13-14).
2. As believers seek advice from one another, God opens a door for them to learn more about Him (vss. 15-16).
3. Leaders should seek help in ministry in order to stay focused and avoid burnout (vss. 17-18).
4. Christian leaders should extend their ministry by training others and delegating (vss. 19-22).
5. Healthy leadership means accepting that no one can do everything (vss. 23-24).
6. Sharing the workload and delegating assignments gives a leader time for more important tasks (vss. 25-26).

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RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

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1. Why do many leaders find it difficult to share the ministry workload with other qualified people?
2. What do you know about Moses that helps you understand his view of leadership before this intervention by Jethro?
3. How do people today respond when asked for advice or help in settling disputes?
4. How should a Christian respond when a friend or family member ignores solid, godly advice?
5. What qualities should be considered when selecting church leadership (cf. Deut. 1:9-18; Acts 6:1-7)?

—Cheryl Y

ILLUSTRATED HIGH POINTS

Provide ... able men (Ex. 18:21)

D. L. Moody died at the age of 62. He said he was born of the flesh in 1837 and born of the Spirit in 1856, so he was able to serve Christ for only forty-three years.

During that time, he did a tremendous amount of ministry at home and abroad. He wrote books, held evangelistic crusades, and started multiple

Adult Bible Teacher

How was it that he was able to do so much? Obviously, it was accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit, who gave wisdom and strength. Moody also followed a basic principle: "I would rather put ten men to work than do the work of ten men."

Moses hearkened (vs. 24)

Our church in New England was a classic white building with green shutters. I suggested that perhaps we could paint the shutters a different color.

Almost immediately a long-time member spoke up: "The shutters should be green because they have always been green." That settled the issue. While a relatively small matter, it shows how entrenched we can become in our ways.

We must give Moses credit he did not fall back on the excuse, "But we've always done it this way!"

And did all that he had said (vs. 24)

There is a German proverb that states: "Everybody knows good counsel except him that has need of it." Many can testify to the general truth of that proverb.

It was a good thing that Moses was not stubborn; he showed his humility and wisdom in following his father-in law's wise counsel.

