

Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2021 9:17 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Exodus 18

"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, 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!" (Exodus 18:19-20)

Remember last week's lesson on Exodus 17? How, as the children of Israel were heading to Mt. Sinai, they continued to be "tested" by the LORD, to see if they would trust Him as their God and "be careful to follow" His instructions! They thirsted for water again, this time at a place called Rephidim--and grumbled and questioned again whether Moses (but really God!) had brought them out of Egypt for them to die in the wilderness! Then they watched as Moses took his staff--the same staff he had stretched over the Red Sea before God parted the waters--but this time, as he, at the LORD's command, used it to "strike the rock at Horeb," and caused water, miraculously, to come out of it for all the people to drink! Wow!

But then (in another test) they were attacked by the Amalekites, and Moses asked Joshua (first mentioned here in the Bible) to choose men to fight against them, while he, accompanied by Aaron, and a guy named "Hur" (Miriam's husband), went "to the top of the hill"--with the "staff of God" in hand--to watch as the battle ensued. And Exodus 17:11 says, as long as Moses held up his hands (with the staff), Israel prevailed in the battle, but when his arms grew "heavy" and came down, the Amalekites prevailed! And so, Aaron and Hur "supported his hands" (symbolic of "intercessory prayer") and, verse 13 says, Joshua "overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword"! Then the LORD told Moses to "write in a book" what happened that day--as a memorial--and "recite it to Joshua"! Also, to build an altar and name it, "The LORD is My Banner" (Jehovah-Nissi)! Indicating that "the battle was the LORD's! But the "war with Amalek" was not over! And Moses noted that the LORD had "sworn" that He would "war against Amalek" (symbolizing the "enemy"--Constable says, "the flesh"! from generation to generation"! (And so, to this day!)

God was teaching the children of Israel (and is teaching us today)--as we can see in our study of Exodus so far--how dependent they were (and we "are"! on Him! And demonstrating that He alone was, and is, our Deliverer (Savior), and our Provider, and our Protector!

But there is more, in Exodus 18, that applies to us as we are introduced to a man named Jethro!

Jethro, we learned, was Moses' father-in-law (we are reminded 12 times in this chapter alone), but also "the priest of Midian," who we learned was also named "Reuel"--meaning "friend of God" (and so, like Abram and Jacob, and Simon, and Saul, and others in the Bible who had their names, and lives, dramatically changed)! Moses had lived in Midian for 40 years, married Jethro's daughter, Zipporah, and was pasturing Jethro's sheep when God appeared to him in a "burning bush," and called him to go back to Egypt and stand before Pharaoh and compel him to "let My people go"! When he shared his life-changing "encounter with God," with Jethro, Jethro "believed," and told him to "go in peace"! Moses would later be used of God to bring about the great "exodus" of the children of Israel from Egypt and, somewhere along the line, would send Zipporah and his two sons back to be with Jethro while he was "sojourning in a foreign land" (indicating his trust in him)! Then, Exodus 18:5 says, Jethro brought them back to Moses when he was "camped at the mount of God" (Mt. Sinai), and an amazing story follows!

Moses greeted Jethro, his father-in-law, with great honor and respect, and when Moses told him "all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake... and how He had delivered them from all the hardships along the way," verse 9 says, "Jethro rejoiced" over the "goodness of the LORD," and "blessed" the LORD, and declared that he "now knew that the LORD was greater than all the gods" (acknowledging God's sovereignty, and his own new-found faith)! He then "took burnt offerings and sacrifices for God (evidencing his belief) and ate a meal "before God" (verse 12 says) with Moses and Aaron and all the elders of Israel (signifying in that culture, according to Constable, the establishment of an alliance, and a "covenant relationship")!

We next see Jethro carefully observing Moses as he "judged" the people "from the morning until the evening," concluding that what he was doing was "not good"--in essence, that it would result in "burnout" for Moses--and that while he needed to be "the people's representative before God, he needed to "select out of all the people able men who feared God," to deal with all the "minor" disputes and bring only the "major" ones to him. This, he said, would lessen the "burden" on him, and allow the people "to go to their places in peace"! Good practical advice, it would seem! But Moses, he said, should do it--"only if God so commands you"!

Verse 24 says Moses "listened to his father-in-law"--and Deuteronomy 1:9-15 confirms that it was implemented, although perhaps, as MacArthur notes, not until the law had been given on Mt. Sinai. (G. Campbell Morgan once wrote that, "the fact that Moses acted on Jethro's advice is almost certain evidence that he recognized that God was speaking to him through Jethro!")

And yet, some raise the question (including the likes of J. Vernon McGee) as to whether Jethro was, in fact, a "God-send," and whether Moses acted appropriately in listening to, and following, his counsel--and particularly since he was a Midianite! (The Midianites would prove to be one of Israel's greatest enemies!) But the overwhelming evidence from this passage, and related Scripture, seems to be that Jethro was (became) a true "believer," and that he offered sound, practical advice that was of great benefit to Moses and Israel--and that Moses did the right thing in listening, and following his counsel!

As we discussed last nite, the story of Jethro, the "priest of Midian," has remarkable parallels with the account of Melchizedek, the "priest of Salem," in Genesis 14-15. Constable notes, for example, that "just as Abraham was met by Melchizedek the priest (in Genesis 14) before God made a covenant with him in Genesis 15, so Moses is met by Jethro the priest (Exodus 18) before God made a covenant with him at Sinai (Exodus 19)!"

The principles, and the wisdom, demonstrated in this passage are also replicated by the apostles in Acts 6 and, as MacArthur notes, have also been "lauded as an example of delegation and management organization by efficiency experts for centuries--and still is"! (Management "101"!)

But, most importantly, Exodus 18 shows how God continues to "lead His dear children along,"--including, by His sovereign acts of bringing not only events and things, but people into our lives--and sometimes people and events, and things we would not expect, or desire--for a reason, for "testing," for "counsel," but always to accomplish His eternal purpose! And so, for us! Proverbs 1:5 says, "A man of understanding will acquire wise counsel!"

May God be with you this week, as you receive counsel, maybe are tested, and are called to represent Him in your world!

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