



“Open Church – Open Bible”

Min. Marossa Davis



Sunday Church School

September 27, 2020

“God Provides Judges to Help Moses”

Exodus 18:13-26

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Exodus 18: 13-26

v.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.

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

v.15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:

v.16. When they have 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.”

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Exodus 18:13-26

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

v.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.

v.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:

v.20 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.”

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v.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:

v.22 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.

v.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.”

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

v. 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.

v. 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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As God was preparing Israel for life as His chosen people and nation, He provided Judges to help Moses. Moses was His appointed leader and was given the responsibility to teach Israel God’s ways and laws. **But, he needed help** in the daily administration of the rule of law and justice for all the people. Moses could only be in one place and could only handle one dispute or problem at a time. He had a limited amount of energy for working with such a large company of people and their problems. **Dividing the work into manageable portions** and delegating it to others was crucial to Israel’s prospects for success.

“Burnout” is defined as exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation, usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration. Almost anyone is susceptible. The demands and pressures of life can challenge people physically, mentally, and emotionally. One of the primary means of dealing with stress and avoiding burnout is delegation- assigning authority or responsibility to others.

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Stress and burnout are nothing new, of course. And neither is the mechanism of delegation to relieve stress and **improve efficiency**. That is lesson we are to review today that was learned some 3,400 years ago in the Sinai wilderness.

Today’s Aim

1. **Facts:** to clearly understand God’s direction through Jethro regarding delegation of responsibilities.
2. **Principle:** to see that God’s work done in God’s way, has God’s support, which leads to its success.
3. **Application:** to seek God’s direction in any task He sets before us.

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Jethro, the priest of Midian, who is sometimes called Reul was Moses' father in law. After working for him for 40 years, Moses departed for Egypt. Now that Moses and the people of Israel had come out of Egypt, Jethro came to greet him bringing Moses's wife Zipporah and their two sons. Not much is known of Jethro's faith other than it is said he was the priest of Midian. Having heard of the victory over the army of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, he rejoiced in the goodness and greatness of Jehovah. He gave praise to the God of Israel. The events of the exodus confirmed for Jethro that the Lord was greater than all the gods of Egypt v.11. Though he had not personally seen all the things Moses and the Israelites had, he believed them and acknowledged the Lord as the God who had delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. In contrast, many of the Israelites who were eye witnesses to

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these miraculous events were quick to turn against the Lord and His appointed leader, Moses. (Ex.14:11-12; 16:2-3;17:2-3).

The morning after Jethro arrived, Moses sat to judge the people.v.13. It is clear that he was hearing disputes among the people and judging criminal cases. As the nation's leader he would naturally be looked to for such service. While Moses may have been carrying on this work in this way for some time, **on this day** people were waiting in line from early morning until the evening for a chance to speak with him. Moses gave the entire day to hearing matters brought before him. Some state the number of Israelites as 600,000 others up to 2 million. A group that size would have a lot of concerns.

As a leader of the Midianites, Jethro was undoubtedly familiar with the job. When he asked Moses why he judged the people 'alone' he was not saying that he should not be doing so but that it was **too great a task for one man**.

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Moses explained to Jethro that the people came to him to inquire of God. He was serving as an intermediary for the people, seeking the Lord's answers to their disputes. He was more than a civil judge, he was a Prophet. Deut.18:15; 34:10 It was natural to **seek guidance** from God's prophet. The **law of God** had not yet been formally given on Mount Sinai. Such a large number of people passing through the wilderness required and may have already possessed some body of laws to govern them. These along with the revelation God gave Moses, were passed onto the people and applied to the cases they brought to him.

It may be that Moses saw no alternative to his current practice. He acted **alone** as God's Prophet, and he knew the **Laws** under which the nation was presently functioning. It was **his responsibility** to settle civil disputes.

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Jethro bluntly told Moses that what he was doing was not good. It was clear to Jethro that the system he was using was not good. It was broken. It was too great a **burden** for Moses alone. He warned that if Moses continued on this path it would wear him out **and the people as well**.

As Jethro saw it, Moses would be exhausted from the work and it would 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**. A key point here is that as leaders, we must periodically **examine our motives and our methods** to make sure we are making the best use of our time for the Lord. We are also wise to **listen** to the sincere evaluations of those we respect, while always seeking the wisdom that only God provides. It does us no good if our zeal leads us to burn out which

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results in no ministry at all. **Jethro did not just express his judgment** on the faulty practice, he also **offered a solution** and said by implication may God help you carry out this advice. The first piece of advice was for Moses to **still represent the people** before God.v,19. He was not advocating for him to give up his unique prophetic office. Indeed, he was to continue to bring their cases before God, seeking His guidance. Jethro then advised Moses to teach the people the laws and ways. Jethro saw a better way to carry out these priorities. He advised his son in law to appoint qualified men to aid in the task he was shouldering alone. They needed 4 qualifications: 1) must be ‘**able**’ have the strength (physical and moral strength) to do it; 2) They must **fear God**- be sincere followers of the Lord; 3) must be **men of truth** and; 4) they must hate covetousness or unjust gain- and not be men that could be

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influenced by material gain. Men that could not be bought. According to this plan they would be delegated authority over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. These represented various judicial levels with only the most important cases being brought to Moses. The **appointed leaders** would not be prophets like Moses but they could relieve him of much time and effort dealing with lesser matters.

Jethro’s proposed plan showed much wisdom, Moses would not be burdened with petty cases but he would be freed to focus on more important cases and other responsibilities. A very similar plan was adopted by the early Church when the apostles were in danger of becoming overburdened with the care of widows (Acts 6: 1-7). Delegating responsibility is a biblical model. Jethro made his proposal contingent upon the Lord’s approval.

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“If the Lord command thee so...” Jethro encouraged Moses by saying that Moses would endure as leader **if** he followed his advice and **if** the lord commanded him to do so. He realized Moses would want God’s approval before adopting a new leadership model. Jethro believed though that his plan would allow Moses to **hold up physically** while the people would go back to their daily lives in peace, **satisfied that they had received a swift and fair hearing.**

Moses had a priority problem. He was exhausting himself by letting his time and energy be drained **while dealing with every problem** that came up in the whole nation. Through dealing with his problem, God would help His infant nation start to **develop a system of government** that would meet their needs and yet not wear out their leadership. Also, Moses multiplied his

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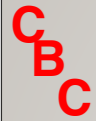
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effectiveness as a leader. Jethro pointed out a basic principle of leadership. **Good leadership is shared, delegated leadership.**

Moses was humble enough to heed (listen to) his father in law’s sound advice. The Lord can send instruction and help through any means He sees fit. He followed his father in law’s counsel and appointed judges at various levels throughout Israel. **Advice is usually easy to give, but difficult to receive.** It is a good thing that Moses was not stubborn; he showed his humility and wisdom by following his father in laws wise counsel.

For the follower of God, many things have changed since these judges served the children of Israel. Rather than learning from judges, the Christian learns from Pastors- human shepherds who represent the ultimate Shepherd and Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. We also have access to the full written revelation of God, The Holy Bible.

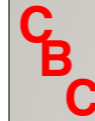


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In our Churches today our Pastors need help. They cannot do it alone. We need to look among us and find those of upright character, strong spiritual outlook, proven ability and to give them responsibility that fits them. We need them to be Deacons, leaders and helpers of all kinds. Let them be instructed from the Word of God. Let them be recognized and respected by the all people and be prayed for and supported in their work; and then we will all benefit. We are even more accountable to pursue a life acknowledging God’s Word than the Israelites were and we are constantly in need of reminders from Scripture.

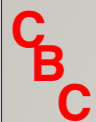
As mere mortals who are prone to sin, we are continually in need of God’s direction. Consistent study of Scripture can truly help God’s people know “ the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do”.



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Practical Points

1. Effective leaders will accept honest observations and evaluations without taking personal offense. vss. 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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For Further Reflection

1. What do you know about Moses that helps you understand his view of leadership before this intervention by Jethro?
2. Was Moses wise to accept Jethro’s advice? Why or why not?
3. What are some sound principles this incident highlights?
4. Name an area of your life or ministry as a spouse, worker, parent or friend in which you have made yourself indispensable?
5. What responsibilities could you prayerfully distribute to your spouse, fellow workers, children or friends that might ease your own emotional load?

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