

Administering the Law - Tony Pearce

Exodus chapter 18 and **chapter 19** are actually the preparation for Israel to receive the Torah.

At the end of **chapter 18** Moses' father-in-law, whom we've already mentioned in chapter three, Jethro, appears. Jethro is a priest of Median, who Moses stayed with after he fled from Pharaoh. And Moses marries Jethro's daughter Zipporah and has two sons by her, Gershom and Eliezer. Apparently, Moses sent his family back to Median, perhaps sometime during the plagues of Egypt, and now he is being reunited with them as Jethro comes to meet with him.

Jethro is a believer in God. He is a wise man; he is pleased to see how God has delivered on His Word. And he confirms his faith in God as He speaks to Moses. **Chapter 18 verse 10** says **And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹ Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.**

So, Jethro recognises that what has happened is a testament to the fact that the Lord, the God of Israel, is the true God. He is greater than the gods of Egypt, He is the one true God who you must follow. Jethro has confirmed his faith and he's giving a testimony to it, and his testimony to the power of God over the false gods. And so, Jethro confirms what has happened, that it is something which God has done.

Next thing that happens is that he sees Moses sitting all day long, settling the disputes among the children of Israel and he says 'it's not good, it's too much for him.'

Just thinking about Steve who was talking about having all these Kovol people coming outside his door and having to try and settle all their disputes. I mean, it gets too much for you, right Steve? [watch 'Mission to Kovol people report' here: <https://youtu.be/B3wzFYTBqd4>]

It can be difficult if you've got the burden of a whole lot of people coming to you to deal with their problems. Moses had enough trouble with them complaining and now he's got them complaining to each other and he's trying to sort out their issues, it's a big problem for him.

And in **verse 17**, we find that Jethro comes and gives him some advice. So, Moses' father-in-law said to him (this is **verse 17 chapter 18**) **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 shalt 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: 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...**

It is an interesting passage because it tells you something about the need for what's going to come next: The Ten Commandments. What does Jethro say? He says: 'you've got to teach them God's laws.'

Now, at this point, Moses did not have the written law of God, he didn't have the 10 Commandments. He knows something about God's ways. He certainly knows much about God. One of the things that is said in the Psalms is: **He made known His ways to Moses. His deeds to the people of Israel.**



SHARE THE BURDEN

Moses had learned a lot about God but, at this point, he was perhaps repeating what he had understood himself. He needed something external to himself which he could refer to saying: *'this is what God actually says.'*

That's an important thing for a preacher as well because, you know, if I come here and preach to you my understanding of my experiences, some of them might be true and some of them might be relevant, but I've also got to refer them particularly to what God says in His Word, what's written. So, I'm not just telling you my opinion, I'm telling you what God Himself says. We have to base what we believe on what God has said, on what is written. We have the Bible which is the written Word of God, which tells us how God wants us to live.

¹ The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

ZECHARIAH Chapter 12 verses 1

And so, for Moses to teach the people, His laws, really, he needs to have something he can refer to which is not just his own understanding of God but which is actually what God Himself has written. And what we see when we come to the Ten Commandments is that they weren't actually written by Moses, they were written by *'the finger of God'*. It is something which God Himself has written down and says: *'This is my Law'*.

Jethro also tells Moses that he needs help to deal with the issues. He needs men such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.

In any fellowship, we need people who God can raise up to help in the work of the ministry, men of character, suitable for the ministry in the church, and who can then be those who can help to share the burden of the work.

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