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Old Testament Literature

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Assignment 1

In Exodus Chapter 18 the Bible tells us about an important encounter when Jethro visits his son-in-law Moses. Scripture explains how Jethro was a priest from Midian, the same place where Moses fled to hide after murdering an Egyptian to save a Hebrew slave in Egypt. When called by God, Moses sent his wife and children to Midian to go to Egypt after receiving directions from God at Mount Sinai. In chapter 18, we witness the reuniting of a family; Jethro brings Moses' wife and children. I can only imagine the joy when Moses sees his wife and his children who have grown since leaving them. During this joyous moment, Moses fellowships with his father-in-law, and they catch up on all that has happened. Verse 1 states that Jethro heard of what God did for Moses and the people of Israel, so it would make sense that Jethro would want to hear firsthand everything that happened. Moses shares the powerful testimony of all that God did to free Israel from bondage in Egypt. Moses shares the difficulties that they endured along the way and all the miraculous victories. In verse 10, being a priest of Midian, and being familiar with the God of Abraham, Jethro responds with great joy after hearing about all God has done. This shows the importance of sharing testimonies. Testimonies reaffirm faith and trust in God. I can only imagine how Jethro felt after hearing about the plagues and the Red Sea! This surely encouraged him in his journey as a priest in Midian and reminded him that God

never fails or abandons His people. After hearing all these wonderful things, Jethro offered sacrifices and a burnt offering to God.

The chapter shifts in verse 13, to the events of the next day where Moses takes his seat as the judge of Israel. Jethro is given a first-row seat to witness Moses operating in his role over Israel. Jethro witnesses Moses tending to the people and sees, firsthand, the straining job. While reading this portion of scripture I attempted to understand the amount of responsibility that was on Moses' plate as judge of Israel. Moses alone leads these people and must deal with everything himself; pleading cases, enforcing rules and regulations, and leading the people all while trying to remain in a position spiritually to hear from God. Jethro, seeing this states with God's wisdom in verse 17, "What you are doing is not good." Jethro provides Moses with a very wise piece of advice concerning the importance of delegation and education. Many times we are unable to take constructive criticism which can hinder growth.

Many times when you are a part of a system it can be hard for you to identify flaws within that system. Scripture never states or hints that Moses saw anything wrong with the system and that he had the desire to change it. Jethro, being there for a small amount of time was already able to identify a large problem Moses had. It is important to have people like Jethro around you when you have a ministry or organization. Individuals that can not only identify a problem but also advise you with wisdom. Jethro did not approach Moses with arrogance and unconstructive criticism. Instead, in verse 14, Jethro asked Moses, "What is this you are doing for the people? why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand to astound you from morning to evening?" Jethro was attempting to understand the train of thought behind the choices that Moses has made in the way he governs. Moses was not offended and did not respond with arrogance either, instead respected his father-in-law's wisdom enough to truly

listen. Jethro could easily see that Moses' leadership skills and time would be better utilized in other areas instead of working on one aspect of Moses' role as judge of Israel. Jethro identified something that many leaders fail to realize today, systems that can cause burnout. Moses' system would easily leave Moses overwhelmed, stressed, and burned out.

Moses spent his entire days operating in one aspect of leading Israel, handling disputes, and passing judgments. After identifying this problem, Jethro shares wise advice to appoint capable men to relieve the burden of judging the people of Israel. Jethro teaches Moses the importance of delegation as a leader and sharing the burden to avoid burnout among other things. Jethro encouraged Moses in verse 20 to, "Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave." Teaching the people the Word of God will help keep the people accountable for their actions. They will understand and know the laws and God's will and they will be able to settle amongst themselves. Jethro advises Moses in verse 21, "select capable men from all the people..." When advising Moses he gives specific qualifications for the men that are to be appointed. The men are to be able, trustworthy, hate dishonest gain and they must fear God. This is very important because Moses may have accepted his father-in-law's good advice but filled those positions with the wrong men. In this case, they would have had a great system however filled with the wrong people. This makes me think of the current state of many of the churches in today's society. So many of our churches have the right structure of a pastor, boards, committees, ministry heads, deacons, assistant pastors, etc however those positions were filled with people who are not able, untrustworthy, lovers of dishonest gain and they do not fear God. After appointing these qualified men, Jethro advises Moses to have these people serve as judges for the people so that Moses' workload would be lighter. Doing this

would allow Moses to have more time to focus on overseeing Israel overall and connecting with God instead of maintaining a healthy relationship with the God of Israel.

Even though Moses has been in direct conversation with God, this encounter in Exodus 18 shows me that God can choose to communicate in different ways. Many times, it may be difficult for us as people of God to humble ourselves and accept God making His perfect will be known to us in different ways. In this situation, God made His will known to Moses through Jethro and Moses accepted it in his wisdom. This chapter helped provide a guide as leaders, especially in ministry about being humble and open to constructive criticism, creating systems that help prevent burnout, and accepting God's will even when it may not be communicated directly to you.