

# The Jethro Principle

Long Beach Alliance Church • January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**Let them judge the people at all times;  
and let it be that every major dispute  
they will bring to you, but every minor  
dispute they themselves will judge. So  
it will be easier for you, and they will  
bear the burden with you.**

**~Exodus 18:22 (NASB)**

## 1) Family Reunion

- A) Word reaches Moses' wife and children (Exodus 18:1-4) regarding the miraculous defeat of the Amalekites (17:8-16, sermon from 11/27/2011), which leads Jethro\*, Moses' father-in-law, to return with Moses' family to the Israelite encampment (18:5-7).
  
- B) Jethro, who has heard about God's goodness to Moses and Israel (18:1), hears Moses' first hand report about all God has done, leading Jethro to worship God (18:8-12).

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\* You might recall that earlier in the text Moses' father-in-law was named Reuel (2:18), and then he is identified as Jethro (3:1) and in Numbers 10:29 as Hobab (see Judges 4:11). The ambiguity with these multiple names can be resolved once the varied terminology is recognized. The Hebrew term designating male in-laws is nonspecific. The term referred to a woman's male relatives and could be used for her father, brother or even grandfather. Most solutions take account of this. Perhaps Reuel is the grandfather head of the clan, Jethro is the father of Zipporah and technically the father-in-law of Moses, and Hobab is the brother-in-law of Moses, Jethro's son. Alternatively (but highly doubtful given Exodus 18), Jethro and Hobab could both be brothers-in-law, and Reuel the father. Collected from *The IVP Bible Background Commentary on the Old Testament*, ©2000, by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas.

- C) It is hard to determine if Jethro has become an authentic follower of God, but the evidence in this account indicates that Jethro experienced a “conversion” from the gods of Midian to worship of God (18:9-12), even providing counsel to Moses as God’s agent (18:23).

## 2) No Lone Rangers In God’s Kingdom

- A) Like the previous story (17:11-12) of the community of Israel coming around Moses to “uphold his arms,” Jethro challenges Moses’ “lone ranger leadership” for the growing Israel “family” which Moses leads (18:13-18).
- B) Like the task of showing inspiring and miraculous leadership for the fighting men of Israel against the Amalekites, the job of the ministry in Israel was not designed for Moses to bear alone. Moses needed help, and Jethro was in a unique position to both confront and help his son-in-law.

## 3) The Jethro Principle

- A) Jethro comes to Moses in humility, and in submission to the LORD (18:19), providing needed counsel for distributing the work of the ministry in Israel to others who have been disciplined in the “statutes and laws” of God (18:20).
- B) Out of those who are disciplined, Jethro counsel’s Moses to “see” or “observe” (‘select,’ NASB or ‘look for,’ ESV) those men who show true character as co-workers (18:21-22).
- C) This counsel is not just from Jethro, but it is “as God commands” (18:23), laying a foundation for all of Israel’s organization for the nation in tribes, clans, and families.
- D) Moses follows the counsel of Jethro and God, which prospers Israel, and mobilizes many for service (18:24-27).