

Some Advice from Dear Old Dad

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It's easy to forget that Moses was married. The first time he left Egypt, Moses was taken in by a priest from the land of Midian named Jethro, and Moses married his daughter Zipporah. They had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush caused considerable problems between the couple, and Moses finally sent her and the boys to live with Jethro when he went back to Egypt.

But after the Exodus, word of all that God had done through Moses reached Jethro, and apparently that was enough to smooth things over. When Moses sent for Zipporah and the boys to join him, Jethro came with them.

The story of their reunion is told in Exodus 18.

The arrival of Jethro, Zipporah and the boys
was a cause for celebration in the Israelite camp.
The family of the man who spoke for God,
who had only recently led them out of Egypt
and even now led them to the Promised Land,
would be an even greater blessing to them all.

Moses was overjoyed at their arrival.

While the Israelite women attended to the rest of his family,
Moses took his father-in-law to his tent
so they could catch up on all that had happened.
And as Moses told Jethro about all the wonderful miracles
God had done through him to save the Israelites,
Jethro was overcome with joy.

"Moses, my son, I have served many gods in my life
but none have done the miracles your God has done for you!
Your God is clearly greater than any other,
and I will serve Him as well!"
Then Jethro offered a sacrifice to the God of Israel,
and Aaron and the other leaders of Israel joined him
to share the sacrificial meal together.

The next morning, Moses went to work, as he did every day.

Guiding thousands of Israelites was not an easy job!
Every day, there were thousands of problems to be solved,
thousands of questions to be answered,
thousands of disputes to be settled.

So each day, Moses went to a central place in the camp
where he sat down and waited
as those thousands of people lined up in front of him,
each wanting him to solve their problems and
answer their questions and, most important to them,
settle their disputes against each other.

With so many people wanting his help,
Moses was there from sunup to sundown.

When the day was done, Jethro pulled him aside and asked,
"What do you think you're doing, son?
This is too much work for one man to do alone!"

But Moses said, "It's my job to give these people guidance.
When they come to me with their arguments,
I'm the one who tells them what God wants them to do,
and that's how I teach them how God want them to live."

And Jethro said, "This is not good, not good at all!
It's too much work for one man, even one like you,
and it will soon wear you out... and your people too!

Let me give you some advice, and perhaps God will use it to help you all.

"Yes, you should continue to be God's voice to the people,
bringing their questions to Him and then bringing them His answers.
You should continue to teach them the ways of God.

But surely—*surely, my son!*—
not every problem needs God's voice to settle it for them!

Surely there are wise men among your people,
men who want to serve God and will not take bribes.
Let these men handle the smaller problems.

Appoint them to serve as judges—
some over groups of one thousand people,
some over groups of one hundred,
some over groups of fifty, and
some over groups of ten.

They can bring the important problems to you
and solve the smaller ones themselves.

Then the people will get their answers more quickly
and the burden will be lifted from your shoulders."

Moses thought about what his father-in-law said,
and found his words to be wise.

So he chose capable men from all the people of Israel
and put them in charge of judging their cases—
some over groups of one thousand people,
some over groups of one hundred,
some over groups of fifty, and
some over groups of ten.

They did as Jethro suggested,
solving the smaller complaints themselves
but bringing the more important ones to Moses.

And just as Jethro said, the problems of the people
stopped being such a burden to Moses or his people.

Shortly thereafter, having reunited Moses with his family
and also having given him such wise advice,
Jethro said his goodbyes to Moses and the Israelites
and went back to his home,
leaving many grateful people who were sorry to see him go.

There's a reason God is so often portrayed as a father.
It would also appear that even a leader as great as Moses
could still learn much from his father.
Perhaps we would be wise to listen to Moses
and do likewise.