

12.13 Jethro (Exodus 18:1–27)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools

- “Life of Moses” Series 2 Flash-a-Cards from A Beka Book and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) *Herein Is Love Commentary Series; Exodus, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Reuel, Jethro, Hobab*: three names for the same man, Moses’ father-in-law—his wife’s father. This lesson uses only the name *Jethro*.
- *sojourner*: a person who temporarily lives in a land not his own
- *priest*: a person who is a go-between, representing God to the people and the people to God. Many religions have priests. Born-again believers now have only one priest, Jesus Christ.

Scripture (NASB)

Exodus 18:1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took Moses’ wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away, 3 and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.” 4 The other was named Eliezer, for *he said*, “The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.”

5 Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was camped, at the mount of God. 6 He sent word to Moses, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her.” 7 Then Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, all the hardship that had befallen them on the journey, and *how* the LORD had delivered them. 9 Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 So Jethro said, “Blessed be the LORD who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, *and* who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people.” 12 Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses’ father-in-law before God.

13 It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. 14 Now when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit *as judge* and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?” 15 Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws.”

17 Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, 20 then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the

way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. 21 Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 22 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. 23 If you do this thing and God *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace.”

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 26 They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge. 27 Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.

Introduction/Review:

When Moses had been a shepherd for his father-in-law, Jethro, he had married and had had two sons. First was Gershom, which means “sojourner,” for Moses said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.” How had he been a sojourner? What had been his home country? [Egypt.] Where had he sojourned? [Midian; Arabia.]

The second son, Eliezer, meaning “help,” was so named because, as Moses said, “The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” How had Moses been delivered from the sword of Pharaoh? [Pharaoh had wanted to eliminate Moses after Moses had slain an Egyptian, but Moses had escaped to the land of Midian.]

When Moses had left Midian after being called by God, he had taken his family with him. However, before he reached Egypt, ✓he sent his wife, Zipporah, and his two sons back to Jethro, Zipporah’s father.* They had been with Jethro for ✓up to a year but probably less while the ten plagues, the escape of Israel from Egypt, and the ensuing travels had taken place.

Story:

Message

The people were moving along as God led them with the pillar of cloud and of fire. They were nearing Mount Horeb in Arabia, called the “mount of God.” This is where Moses had kept the sheep of his father-in-law and where God had appeared to him at the burning bush that didn’t burn up. God had called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt at this “mount of God.”

Being so close, guess who sent a message that he was coming to see Moses? Yes, it was Jethro. This was his message: “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her.” Jethro, the priest of Midian, had heard about all that God had done for Moses and for Israel—how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. Isn’t it interesting how news traveled before telecommunications?

Meeting

Moses went out to meet his father-in-law. When they met, Moses bowed down and kissed him. They asked each other, ✓“How are you? How have you been? What has happened since we last saw each other?” That last question would take more time than their initial greeting, so they went into ✓Moses’ tent and sat down to visit. Moses rehearsed for his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake. He told him all the hardship they had had on the journey and how the LORD had delivered them. What a blessed message that was!

Confession

All this news about all that the LORD had done for Israel rejoiced the heart of Jethro. He responded by saying, “Blessed be the LORD who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh and who delivered the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater

than all the gods.” This was an amazing confession for a ✓formerly pagan man.

Being a priest of Midian, Jethro now performed a priestly duty, not for the god of his people but for the true God. He made sacrifices to God. Then Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat a meal with Moses’ father-in-law before God.

Work

The next day, Moses needed to get back to work. This is what he was doing: All day he sat to judge the people. I mean, all day! People came and stood around Moses from morning until evening while Moses determined how disputes should be settled.

Jethro observed Moses, and he observed all the people standing with Moses all day. He spoke to Moses, saying, “What are you doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand around you from morning until evening?”

Moses answered, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me. I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I let them know God’s statutes and His laws.”

Advice

“Oh,” Jethro responded, “what you are doing is not good. You and these people will surely wear out, for the task is too heavy for you. You cannot do it alone. Now listen to me, your old father-in-law, and I will counsel you. May God help you to continue to be the people’s representative before God. Teach the people the statutes and laws, and tell them how they should behave and the work they are to do. In addition, choose able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain to place over the people. Some will be leaders of thousands, some of hundreds, some of fifties and some of tens. Let *them* judge the people at all times. If something major comes up, they will bring that problem to you, but every minor dispute they will judge. That way it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If doing this is God’s will, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace.”

✓I don’t know about you, but to me this sounds like great advice. Will Moses act on it? Yes. The Bible tells us, “Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. ** They judged the people at all times. The difficult disputes they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge.” Whew! Moses and the people won’t wear out.

Jethro’s visit was over. He left Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer with Moses. He and Moses said goodbye to each other, and Jethro went his way into his own land.

*“Because there is no mention of Zipporah and the boys after the circumcision until the reunion, nearly everyone agrees that they likely returned to Jethro right after that event. . . . [T]hey were probably reunited with Moses within a year. . . . 1. The time period between when Moses separated from Zipporah and confronted Pharaoh seems to be fairly short. 2. The 10 plagues started, which [probably] lasted about 4-5 months. . . . 3. They reunited at Mt. Sinai (Ex 18:5), and this was three months after the Israelites had left Egypt (Ex 19:1).

“The reason why Moses sent his wife and children back to Jethro is not mentioned in Scripture. There are several guesses though.

“To protect them from the dangers that he knew awaited him in Egypt. (This is the most common thought)

“He did not want them to distract him from the mission he had ahead.

“He did not want to delay his mission while waiting for his son to recover from his circumcision.

“He was angry at his wife for her words. (This seems unlikely)

“Aaron urged him to. (Also unlikely)” (<https://jesusalive.cc/ques337.htm>).

**“According to the Targum of Jonathan, the rulers of thousands were six hundred, rulers of hundreds 6000, rulers of fifties 12,000, and the rulers of tens 60,000; and so . . . where the whole is summed up, amount[s] to

78,600.” Some dispute this number; it is based on the 600,000 men who left Egypt (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/exodus-18-25.html>).

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Jesus is our great High Priest; He goes between God the Father and us.
- It is usually a good idea to take advice from older people.
- Notice and seek to have the qualities of the leaders Moses appointed. They were capable, God-fearing, truthful, and those who hated getting things dishonestly.

Activities:

- Play dough: numerals 1, 0, and 5 so that the students may show 1000, 100, 50, and 10
- Snack: For each student prepare sugar cookies in the shape of numbers zero (three times as many as the other numbers), one, and five. Give each student 3 zeroes, 1 one, and 1 five for a total of five cookies. Before eating these cookies, have students choose the cookies to display 1000, 100, 50, and 10.
- Sing “Holding Up Hands” found in Lesson 12.12 or at teachingthebibletochildren.org, where an audio is also available.
- Count by tens to fifty and 100.
- Among the students appoint a ten-person problem solver, a fifty-person, a one-hundred-person, a thousand-person problem solver, and a Moses. One student will pretend to have a problem and go to each of the appointed people and then to Moses.
- Review questions: (Game: Students place felt numbers, one at a time for each correct answer, on a flannel board. The numbers are 10, 50, 100, and 1000. Outline numbers found below may be colored, backed with paper towel, and placed on a flannel board instead of felt numbers.)
 1. Where had Moses’ wife been since Moses had left Midian? [With her father.]
 2. Why did Moses name his first son Gershom, which means “sojourner”? [Because he had sojourned in Midian.]
 3. Why did Moses name his second son Eliezer, which means “help”? [God had helped him escape from Pharaoh.]
 4. What was the name of Moses’ wife? [Zipporah.]
 5. Who was Zipporah’s father? [Jethro/Reuel/Hobab.]
 6. What had Jethro heard about Israel? [That God had helped Moses and Israel.]
 7. What did Jethro say about God after hearing Moses’ report? [He blessed God and said, “Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods.”]
 8. Who ate with Moses and Jethro after Jethro offered sacrifices? [Aaron and the elders of Israel.]
 9. What troubled Jethro about Moses’ work? [Moses would wear himself out by hearing all disputes.]
 10. What was Jethro’s advice? [To set able men over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens who would settle minor disputes before being sent to Moses for major disputes.]
 11. Where did Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer go? [Stayed with Moses.] Jethro? [Went home.]

Memory Verse[s]: (NASB)

- Exodus 18:11— “I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods.”

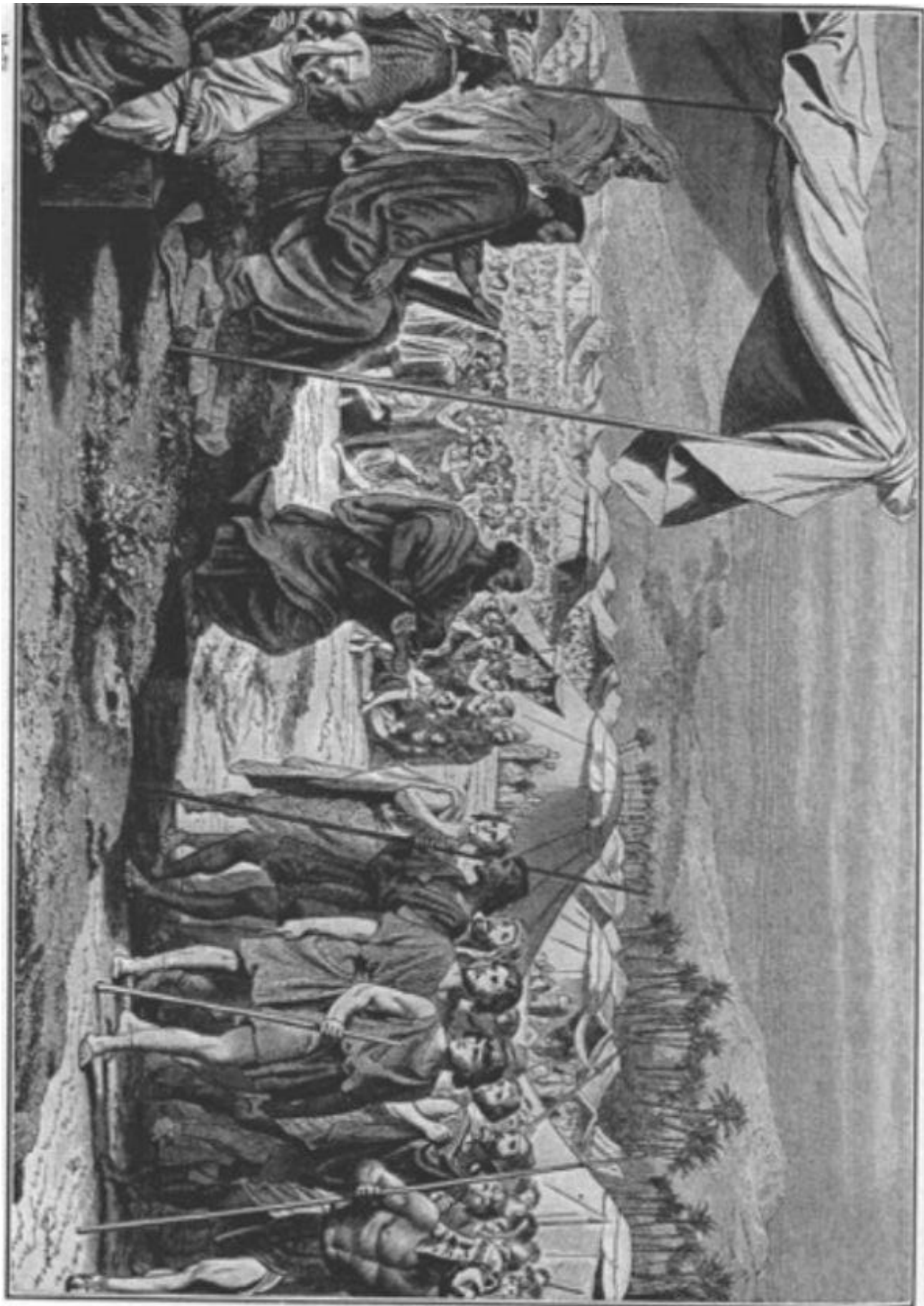
Handwork:

- Go to <http://childrensbiblelessons.blogspot.com/2014/05/jethro-has-great-idea.html> for instructions for this craft. Words and circles may be printed (found below) and cut out before gluing to background.

**Reuel, Jethro,
Hobab
sojourner
priest**



<http://www.rockyespy.com/Old%20Testament/Exodus/Exodus%2018.html>





Ultimate Bible
Picture Collection

<http://webutante07.blogspot.com/2013/10/wise-advice-from-exodus-18-how-to.html>

1 1 1 5

0 0 0 0

0 0 0

100

50

**Jethro's
Advice to
Moses
Exodus 18**

