

# WONDERFUL COUNSELOR!

(Scripture: Exodus 18:13-23)

**Introduction:** There are times we do things the hard way. We don't realize it. We work very hard, and strive hard to take a large bite out of our work, yet all we see is a mountain of more work. How would you like it if God brings someone, and he gives us a very nice advice which reduces our work drastically? That is exactly what happened to Moses. Sometimes, God sends angels in the form of human beings to pull us out of our tough hard labor. This story is a good example!

*Exodus 18:1-4* **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."

Now Jethro, (pronounced Yithro) the father in law of Moses, shows up with Moses' children and his wife Zipporah! How did they show up here in this wild, remote, wilderness? We tend to forget the very beginning of Moses' spiritual journey! This is the mountain where Moses took his sheep, and saw the burning bush. Yithro's (Jethro) family actually lived within few miles of this mountain range. Yithro heard all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel, and how the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt!

The names of Moses' children are specifically mentioned. The eldest son's name is Gersham, which means, "I have been sojourner in a foreign land!" It is very true for all of us who are the children of God.

Jim Reeves song goes as follows:

This world is not my home I'm just a passing through  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue  
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

We must not feel at home in America, nor in India! Heaven is our home!! We are all strangers in this strange land, and we are just passing through!

The second son was named as Eliezer which means God is my help (and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.) When did this second son arrive? The whole Zipporah story seems to be a mystery! Moses was 40 years old when he knew Zipporah. Moses was eighty years old when he was commissioned to Egypt back again through a burning bush. Then something strange happened on the way to Egypt.

*Exodus 4:24-26.* **24**Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. **25**Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." **26**So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood"—because of the circumcision.

Every detail is so bizarre and crazy in this passage. God trying to kill Moses? Zipporah has just one child, and he was so small, and she circumcised him herself? So Moses may have been seventy to seventy five

years when he got his first child? Some scholars suggest that it was not Gersham, but his brother Eliezer.

These two stories only strengthen the theory that they were added by scribes, who lived after Moses, perhaps during Ezra time. Their motive was to convince their generation that even Moses' children were circumcised, as in Exodus 4:25, and they were not pagans. The doubt of Moses' wife and children being gentiles will linger throughout Torah, and the circumcision story tries to correct that doubt.

Second, the story of one child or two children had to be rectified because in 1 Chronicles 23:15 it is mentioned that Moses has two children. So the same author has made sure that two is the right number. But then the question will come, what happened to the other son in chapter 4, and the answers are not convincing.

*Exodus 18:7-9. 7Then 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. 8Moses 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. 9Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians.*

After the stay in Inn, Moses might have sent back his wife and children, before he left for Egypt. Now they came back to visit, him or stay with him for good? Moses received his father in law with respect and warmth. Moses told his father in law everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and Egypt. Yithro rejoiced to hear that!

*Exodus 18: 10-12 10So 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." 12Then 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.*

Yithro was a pagan priest. We are not sure about his past beliefs. But here he makes a genuine confession: "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods!" He points out why God acted that way. When Egyptians dealt proudly against vulnerable people, God intervened. It is a warning for all haughty people who prey on vulnerable people. God will intervene and punish them! Yithro not only confessed, but offered himself to the Lord in the form of burnt offering! There may have been other sacrifices also. Or part of the animal may have been a burnt offering, and part of the meaty portions for meal. Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat the sacrificial meal with Yithro, The first priestly thanksgiving sacrifice ever took place in the wilderness for The Lord God! How come Israelites never thought of this thanksgiving sacrifice. They did offer the sacrifice of praise, but a lamb sacrifice of thanksgiving would have been more appropriate.

*Exodus 18:13-16. 3It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. 14Now 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?" 15Moses 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."*

The next day, Moses went back to his usual job, acting as a judge to decide various complicated issues among the people. There were over two million of them. He had to sit from morning till evening to hear them! Yithro saw what was going on and he was stunned! Yithro questioned Moses' way of handling the matter. He was surprised at Moses handling such a big job all by himself. Moses replied that people come to him to inquire of God! It was God who gave him all the answers, including the future statutes and laws that were supposed to come from Mt.Sinai soon.

*Exodus 18:17-20. 17Moses' 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, 20then 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.*

The father in law warned that the task is too heavy for him, and it will wear him out. Even though Moses was doing it by himself, the father in law warned that he cannot do it alone forever, and it would wear him out in the long run! What a wise father in law! He said, "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, 20then 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."

In other words, he told Moses," you play the role of the prophet. You take the issues to the Lord in prayer, and bring back the Lord's answer in the form of statutes and laws. Focus on the over all policy, and not on every individual's issue and try to solve each specific issue."

He gave another great advice to resolve this monumental task!

*Exodus 18:21-23 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."*

Yithro told Moses to choose a leader every 10, every 50, every 100, and every 1000. The issues that these leaders cannot handle should only come to Moses. So only complicated, difficult issues will come to Moses for judgement! What a great advice!

Please note the qualifications for these leaders. You don't choose just any leader.

able men - who can handle the job! qualification and experience is a must!

who fear God - fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Do you want to choose a wise person? Choose the one who fears the Lord and avoids even the appearance of evil.

men of truth - This is so critical. Suppressing truth is the most wicked thing to do. It is high time, Christians support people of integrity and truth, irrespective of their party affiliation. Nowadays, we are

all interested in our party winning the issue. We don't care if they are carrying the truth in that matter or not.

Last, Those who hate dishonest gain". We tend to install, crooked, Mafia gangsters in the name of party loyalty. If you don't have the right person in both parties, write in someone else who fits these qualifications. Please do not vote for a perverse, wicked person, who is greedy for money. Do not vote for frauds, and snake oil sales people!

*Exodus 18:24-27. 24So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 26They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge. 27Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.*

Moses listened to wise counseling, and followed it. He installed various leaders. They judged the people all the time. But when there was difficult dispute, they brought it to Moses! What a relief for Moses!

Moses said good bye to his father in law. Does that mean that his wife and children stayed with him?

Another important question. God was speaking to Moses face to face. How come, God did not give this effective counseling to relieve the problem of Moses? He seems to make us learn from our mistakes and correct our mistakes on our own most of the time. Why? What do you think?

## **Conclusion:**

Moses was a great hero. Through God, he brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and brought them this far! Yet he was so humble. He listened to his father in law advice.

Yithro was a very wise man. He gave a very nice advice.

Moses heeded to the advice and implemented the idea.

God sent Yithro to make Moses' yoke Light.

*Prov. 1:5. A wise man will hear and increase in learning,  
And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.*

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