

Exodus 18:5-12

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-18/exodus-185-12/>

Verses 5 – 12 describe the time when Jethro came to visit Moses in the wilderness near Mount Sinai. He was accompanied by Moses' wife Zipporah and Moses' two son, Gershom and Eliezer. After joyfully greeting Jethro, Moses described all of the events from the deliverance to the Red Sea onward. Jethro responded by praising the LORD and offering sacrifices to the God of Israel.

The Scriptures do not state whether Moses invited Jethro to visit him or Jethro initiated the visit. In any case, *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.* The “mount of God” was identified in [Exodus 3:1](#) as “Horeb,” which was another name for Mount Sinai. Given the language of [Exodus 19:1 – 2](#), which cites a specific date when the Israelites reached Horeb, the material in chapter 18 is likely placed in logical order rather than a chronological order. To alert Moses of his arrival, *Jethro sent word to Moses, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her.”*

Verses 7 – 8 describe what happened when Jethro and Moses met. First, *Moses went out to meet his father-in-law.* Next, in deference to Jethro being his father-in-law, *he bowed down*, and then, as was custom in eastern cultures, *Moses kissed him.* Once the formalities were out of the way, *they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent.* Their conversation in the tent was a recollection of what happened when the Israelites exited Egypt. Specifically, *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.*

Interestingly, there is no mention of Moses talking about himself in his report to Jethro. This is consistent with [Numbers 12:3](#), that calls Moses the most humble man on the entire earth. The central theme was the LORD's deliverance – how He delivered them using things He had “done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians” and during their journey, how He delivered them repeatedly through His provision of food and water in the wilderness, as well as protecting them against their enemies, the Amalekites. To be sure, the LORD tested their faith, but He also graciously met their needs.

Verses 9 – 12 describe Jethro’s response to what Moses had just said. First, he *rejoiced over all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians*. The word translated “rejoiced” (Heb. *khadah*) is rare (used only here, [Job 3:6](#), and [Psalms 21:7](#)). The LXX (Greek Old Testament) used a word that can mean “be amazed” or “be astounded.” Overwhelmed by all that he had heard, *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*. He praised the LORD for what He had done for Israel. To “bless” someone (or something) is to declare that the one (or One) being blessed possesses special powers and abilities.

Verse 11 is a confession of sorts. Jethro proclaimed, *Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people*. Jethro stated that the LORD of Israel was the sovereign One of the universe, His power exceeding any and “all the gods.” To which “gods” was Jethro referring? It could be the gods of the Midianites. This could mean this is a sort of change of heart for Jethro, realizing the LORD is God over all. It is also possible that Jethro has in mind the gods of Egypt who “dealt proudly against the people” during the plagues and who were put to shame by the LORD.

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. Jethro, a priest, offered a burnt offering and other sacrifices to the LORD. This could indicate Jethro was already, or became a priest to the true God. Aaron, a soon-to-be priest, and the “elders” (the leaders of the tribes) were invited to share the sacrificial meal in order to honor God. This meal could have been accompanied with the making of a covenant between Jethro and Moses and the leaders. This was quite a contrast with the Amalekites in chapter 17, who were afraid of what the LORD was doing on Israel’s behalf.

Notice that the word “God” (Heb. *elohim*), not “the LORD” (Heb. *Yahweh*), is used in this section. This is probably done because *Yahweh* is the name used by His covenant people the Israelites. All others use the generic name for the Creator, *Elohim*. Jethro was a non-Israelite and is thus an outsider, so it was proper for *Elohim* to be used when describing a non-Israelite who presented sacrifices to God.

There is a stark contrast between the animosity of the Amalekites in [Exodus 17:8 – 16](#) and the statement of faith given by Jethro here. The Midianites later

become enemies of Israel ([Numbers 22:7, 31:7 – 9](#); [Judges 6 – 8](#)), but Jethro was a friend, not an enemy.

Biblical Text:

⁵Then 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.⁶He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."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.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.¹¹Now 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.