

The story at this point is considering how gentiles react to Israel's salvation. Now a different kind of reaction is told to us in the story of Jethro's visit to Moses.

• *A contrasting response to Israel's redemption*

• *Jethro's encouragement and support*

Actually the story is told to us out of chronological order! It is a story taken from the time when the Israelites had arrived at Mount Sinai. This is related to us in Exodus 19:1–2, but in Exodus 18:5 the Israelites are at Mount Sinai already! The story comes from a time after their arrival at Sinai but has been brought forward to be presented to us at this point. The reason for the sequence of stories seems to be that the writer is presenting two gentile reactions to Israel's redemption. The story has been brought forward to be a contrast to that of the Amalekites' hostility. If some people reacted to Israel with hate, others will react with approval and will want what Israel has. It often happens this way. When we are discouraged by unexpected opposition, God sends a friend to support us. When the Israelites faced the unexpected aggression of the Amalekites it would not be long before they were given an encouraging convert in the person of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law.

1. What led to Jethro's conversion

1. First, we see what led to Jethro's conversion. He discovered what God had done for Moses. He had known Moses for years. Now he hears of the wonderful things God had done for Moses^{□1}. Yahweh had brought the people out of Egypt. Moses had sent his wife home, presumably at the time of his dangerous visits to Pharaoh^{□2}. Now the family hear of what has happened, and his family come to him including Jethro^{□3}. Moses goes out to meet him and tells him the whole story^{□4}. Jethro is delighted. He is not a pagan who opposes God's people – like the Amalekites. Rather he is converted and fully accepts the message of what God has done.

□1 18:1

□2 18:2-4

□3 18:5-6

□4 18:7-8

• *Stage one – he hears what happened*

There were two stages to Jethro's conversion. First he heard generally the good news of what had happened to Israel. This is often the start of the way people are saved. They get a general impression that there is something good about what God has done. The message rings out in a general way^{□1}.

□1 1 Thess 1:8

• *Stage two – he talks person to person*

The second stage is involves talking face-to-face. Moses is given the opportunity to talk person-to-person with Jethro. It is wonderful when we are allowed to talk in this way about what God has done in redeeming us.

2. What his conversion consisted of

2. Next, we see what his conversion consisted of. He came to faith in the God of Israel. At one stage it seems he had been the priest of a pagan religion. Now he knows that Israel's God is the one and only God. He hears that Yahweh – the God of Israel – has acted^{□1}. He rejoices 'over all the good things that Yahweh had done for Israel'^{□2}. He accepts it heartily^{□3}. He has come to a sure knowledge that Yahweh is greater than all rivals^{□4}.

□1 18:1

□2 18:9

□3 18:10

□4 18:11

• *Faith in the God of Israel*

His salvation consists of faith in the blood of a lamb. He offers a burnt-offering speaking of total consecration to God^{□1}. He offers a peace-offering which involved a meal. He has a peace-offering meal with the leaders of Israel; he is joining the people of God. These are the ingredients of true conversion.

□1 18:12

• *Faith in the blood of a lamb*

3. What followed Jethro's conversion

3. Next, we see what followed Jethro's conversion. He immediately was given gifts of wisdom. He became a sensible and observant person. He sees Moses doing his work as the one-and-only judge of Israel. Cases come to Moses all day^{□1} and Jethro sees it^{□2}. Immediately he sees that what is happening lacks wisdom. He protests: 'Why do you alone sit as judge?' he asks^{□3}. Moses explains^{□4}, and Jethro makes a suggestion.

□1 18:13

□2 18:14a

□3 18:14b

□4 18:15-16

• *Gifts of wisdom*

• *God is concerned about the physical side to our work*

God is concerned about the physical side to our work. Moses is only flesh-and-blood. There is a limit to how much physical strain we can take. Jethro sees this and instantly, as a new convert, but as a wise person, suggests that Moses gets helpers to assist him in his work. As the work of God grows the number of people in the work must multiply. God gave Moses prayer-partners in Rephidim¹. He gives Moses assistants at Sinai². A sensible servant of God will look after his body. He or she will see that they have enough sleep, enough rest, enough food. Jesus was concerned about these things during His ministry. 'Come apart and rest awhile', He could say to His disciples.

1 17:8-16
2 18:13-27

• *When God's work goes forward it involves delegation*

When God's work goes forward it involves delegation. Jethro puts it to Moses. 'What you are doing is not sensible', he says¹. Moses will wear himself out physically². 'You be for the people their organiser in the sight of God', Jethro says³. Moses must teach the commands of God⁴. When it comes to administering the commands and dealing with cases that arise he must have the help of judges who will work with a hierarchy of lesser courts⁵. A meeting with Moses will be the final court of appeal. In this way Moses will stay healthy and the people's need will be met⁶.

1 18:17
2 18:18
3 18:19
4 18:20
5 18:21-22
6 18:23

• *The moment people come to salvation they are capacities to contribute to the kingdom*

It is good advice, and Moses does as Jethro suggests¹. After that Jethro goes home². He was a man who became useful in God's work as soon as he came to faith. God's people are given gifts. The moment they come to salvation God has planted within them capacities that will contribute to His kingdom. Jethro instantly had a gift of wisdom, and used it straightaway in the kingdom of God.

1 18:24-26
2 18:27

• *Later in the story... a covenant relationship established, then the giving of God's law*

Exodus 18 is jumping ahead in the story. The people of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai¹. God had fulfilled His word. This was the very place where Moses had taken his flocks to find pasture. It was on the slopes of Mount Sinai or Horeb that God had manifested Himself as a burning fire that needed no fuel. God had saved His people by the blood of the lamb. The flame of holiness that had appeared to Moses² had followed them all the way. Now God will enter into a covenant relationship with them. They have been saved by the blood of the lamb, but that has to be worked out in their lives and their future. They are saved for fellowship, saved for worship, saved to walk in obedience to God's commands. Fifty days after their redemption by the blood of the lamb God gave the people His law.

1 19:1-2
2 3:2

• *A similar pattern with Jesus – blood shed then the giving of God's Spirit*

It is similar in pattern with the salvation of Jesus. Fifty days after the blood of Jesus was shed the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples. We too are saved in order to walk by the Spirit and so fulfil the law of God given to Israel. We first experience passover: not an animal but a divine Saviour who has died for us. Then we are brought to our Sinai: not a mountain that may be touched and a blazing fire outside of us, but a Holy Spirit that is experienced and a fire blazing within us that we may fulfil the law of Christ.



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