



Jethro

Responds In Faith To God

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OVERVIEW

JETHRO'S RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND PREPARED HIM FOR RESPONDING IN FAITH TO GOD

Jethros story is told in Exodus 2:15-3:1; Exodus 18:1-27. He is also mentioned in Judges 1:16.

People such as Jethro and Melchizedek—not Israelites, but nevertheless worshipers of the true God—play an important role in the Old Testament. They remind us of Gods commitment to the world. God chose one nation through which to work, but his love and concern are for all nations!

Jethros religious background prepared him for, rather than prevented him from, responding in faith to God. When he saw and heard what God had done for the Israelites, he worshiped God wholeheartedly.

We can guess that for 40 years as Moses father-in-law, Jethro had been watching God at work, molding a leader.

Moses and Jethro's relationship must have been close, for Moses readily accepted his father-in-law's advice. Each benefited from knowing the other. Jethro met God through Moses, and Moses received hospitality, his wife, and wisdom from Jethro.

The greatest gift one person can give another is an introduction to God. But that gift is hindered if the believers attitude is, "I have the greatest gift to pass on to you, while you have nothing to give me in return."

Real friends give to and receive from each other. The importance of introducing a friend to God does not make the friend's gifts to us insignificant.

Rather, the believer is doubly blessed—first by receiving the gifts the friend wishes to give; then by growing in knowledge of the Lord. For we discover that in introducing another person to God, we increase our own awareness of God. As we give God away, he gives himself even more to us.

Moses Slays an Egyptian, and Flees to Midian

Exodus 2:11.15

Moses boldly owned the cause of God's people. It is plain from Hebrews 11 that this was done in faith, with the full purpose of leaving the honours, wealth, and pleasures of his rank among the Egyptians.

By the grace of God he was a partaker of faith in Christ, which overcomes the world. He was willing, not only to risk all, but to suffer for his sake; being assured that Israel were the people of God. By special warrant from Heaven, which makes no rule for other cases, Moses slew an Egyptian, and rescued an oppressed Israelites.

Also, he tried to end a dispute between two Hebrews. The reproof Moses gave, may still be of use. May we not apply it to disputants, who, by their fierce debates, divide and weaken the Christian church? They forget that they are brethren. He that did wrong quarreled with Moses.

It is a sign of guilt to be angry at reproof. Men know not what they do, nor what enemies they are to themselves, when they resist and despise faithful reproofs and reproves.

Moses might have said, if this be the spirit of the Hebrews, I will go to court again, and be the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

But we must take heed of being set against the ways and people of God, by the follies and peevishness of some persons that profess religion. Moses was obliged to flee into the land of Midian. God ordered this for wise and holy ends

Moses tried to make sure no one was watching before he killed the Egyptian. But as it turned out, someone did see, and Moses had to flee the country. Sometimes we mistakenly think we can get away with doing wrong if no one sees or catches us. Sooner or later, however, doing wrong will catch up with us as it did with Moses. Even if we are not caught in this life, we will still have to face God and his evaluation of our actions.

To escape punishment for killing the Egyptian, Moses ran away to Midian. He became a stranger in a strange land, separated from his home and family. It took many years after this incident for Moses to be ready to serve God.

But he trusted God instead of fearing the king (Hebrews 11:27). We may feel abandoned or isolated because of something we have done. But though we feel afraid and separated, we should not give up. Moses didn't. He trusted God to deliver him, no matter how dark his past or bleak his future.

A priest of Midian

Moses spent forty years of exile with Jethro and married his daughter

Exodus 2:15-22

And sure enough, when Pharaoh heard about it, he gave orders to have Moses arrested and killed. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and escaped to the land of Midian.

When Moses arrived in Midian, he sat down beside a well. Now it happened that the priest of Midian had seven daughters who came regularly to this well to draw water and fill the water troughs for their father's flocks.

But other shepherds would often come and chase the girls and their flocks away. This time, however, Moses came to their aid, rescuing the girls from the shepherds. Then he helped them draw water for their flocks.

When the girls returned to Reuel, their father, he asked, "How did you get the flocks watered so quickly today?"

"An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds," they told him. "And then he drew water for us and watered our flocks."

"Well, where is he then?" their father asked. "Did you just leave him there? Go and invite him home for a meal!"

Moses was happy to accept the invitation, and he settled down to live with them. In time, Reuel gave Moses one of his daughters, Zipporah, to be his wife.

Later they had a baby boy, and Moses named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

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How did Moses handle these shepherds so easily? As an Egyptian prince, Moses would have been well trained in the Egyptian military, the most advanced army in the world. Even a large group of shepherds would have been no match for the sophisticated fighting techniques of this trained warrior.

Reuel is also called Jethro in Exodus 3:1.

Moses Marries the Daughter of Jethro

Exodus 2:16-22

Moses found shelter in Midian. He was ready to help Reuel's daughters to water their flocks, although bred in learning and at court.

Moses loved to be doing justice, and to act in defence of such as he saw injured, which every man ought to do, as far as it is in his power. He loved to be doing good; wherever the providence of God casts us, we should desire and try to be useful; and when we cannot do the good we would, we must be ready to do the good we can.

Moses commended himself to the prince of Midian; who married one of his daughters to Moses, by whom he had a son, called Gershom, "a stranger there," that he might keep in remembrance the land in which he had been a stranger.

Moses was tending sheep for Jethro.

Exodus 3:1

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he went deep into the wilderness near Sinai, the mountain of God.

What a contrast between Moses' life as an Egyptian prince and his life as a Midianite shepherd! As a prince he had everything done for him; he was the famous son of an Egyptian princess.

As a shepherd he had to do everything for himself; he was holding the very job he had been taught to despise (Genesis 43:32; Genesis 46:32-34), and he lived as an unknown foreigner.

What a humbling experience this must have been for Moses! But God was preparing him for leadership. Living the life of a shepherd and nomad, Moses learned about the ways of the people he would be leading and also about life in the desert.

Moses couldn't appreciate this lesson, but God was getting him ready to free Israel from Pharaoh's grasp.

Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where God would give the people his revealed law (Exodus 3:12).

Moses speaks with Jethro concerning his departure.

Exodus 4:18

Then Moses went back home and talked it over with Jethro, his father-in-law. "With your permission," Moses said, "I would like to go back to Egypt to visit my family. I don't even know whether they are still alive."

"Go with my blessing," Jethro replied.

Moses clung tightly to the shepherd's staff as he left for Egypt to face the greatest challenge of his life.

The staff was his assurance of God's presence and power. When feeling uncertain, some people need something to stabilize and reassure them. For assurance when facing great trials, God has given promises from his Word and examples from great heroes of faith. Any Christian may cling tightly to these.

Moses invites the Midianite to go with them to the Promised Land

Numbers 10:29

One day Moses said to his brother-in-law, Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, "We are on our way to the Promised Land. Come with us and we will treat you well, for the Lord has given wonderful promises to Israel!"

By complimenting Hobab's desert skills, Moses let him know he was needed. People cannot know you appreciate them if you do not tell them they are important to you.

Complimenting those who deserve it builds lasting relationships and helps people know they are valued. Think about those who have helped you this month. What can you do to let them know how much you need and appreciate them?

Life Application

Do you have a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ? Only with a vital relationship can you pass on to others the excitement of allowing God to guide your life. Have you reached the point of saying, with Jethro, "I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods" (Exodus 18:11)?

As father-in-law to Moses, Jethro came to recognize the one true God. He was a practical troubleshooter and organizer. Supervision and administration are team efforts. God's plan includes all nations.

Key verse:

“Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians” (Exodus 18:9)

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: Life Application Study Bible.

Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print