



# EXODUS

A STORY OF  
**REDEMPTION  
AND COVENANT**



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# Goodness of God

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- Our lives bear testimony to the goodness of God
- Exodus 18:1-12
- Moses' father-in-law came out the wilderness to bring his wife and his two sons to him.
- Zipporah was not an Israelite. Moses had met her in the land of Midian when he fled from Egypt after he had killed the Egyptian for beating a Hebrew.
- Her father was also not an Israelite.

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- He was a Midianite, and a Midianite priest. Moses had lived in the land of Midian for 40 years before God called him to go back to Egypt to rescue His people.
- Originally, Zipporah and his sons had come with Moses on his journey (Exodus 4:24–26). But this passage tells us that at some point, Moses had sent them back to live with her father to keep them safe.
- Jewish extra-biblical literature says he did this before he even got to Egypt. When he met with Aaron in the wilderness, Aaron told him not to bring more people into this terrible situation.

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- In the ancient world, a woman would move in with her husband's family. Families lived together in multi-generational households – the patriarch and his sons and their families and any unmarried daughters all lived together.
- But Moses, because he had fled his homeland, moved in with Zipporah's family and lived with Jethro as his patriarch for 40 years before he was called by God.
- Jethro welcomed him into his family as a son and Moses cared for Jethro's flocks as a son would have.

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- Moses bowed down to Jethro out of respect, honor and submission as a son, even though he was the leader of this whole nation full of people.
- Jethro came to meet Moses “near the mountain of God” (called both Horeb and Sinai), which is where Moses had first encountered God in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–3).
- Moses had been tending Jethro’s flocks when he encountered the Lord, so this area was relatively close to Midian, where Moses’ family was living with Jethro.

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- At this point, the text reminds us of the names of Moses' sons, both related to Moses' escape from Egypt the first time – the first about being a foreigner in Midian and the second, “My father's God was my helper,” about how God had spared him from being killed by Pharaoh when he murdered the Egyptian.
- These names would have also been applicable to Moses' second escape from Egypt – they were now wanderers in the wilderness and the Lord was their helper again, rescuing them from Pharaoh in the Exodus.

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- The story tells us that Jethro had heard of all God had done for Moses and his people, all the way down in Midian. God had said that the purpose of all He did in the plagues was so that the world would know that He is the Lord. Not just Israel, but all nations.
- Rahab will tell Joshua that the Canaanites had all heard about what God had done in the plagues and the Red Sea and all the nations were “melting in fear” of the Lord, and that it made them realize that He is the sovereign God over all things (Joshua 2:9–11). God’s goal was for all the nations to hear of His glory, His redemption and His love.

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- When Jethro arrived, Moses told him even more details about all that God had done for the Israelites. He had already heard from afar, but Moses shared his personal perspective.
- Scripture doesn't tell us what Jethro had thought of all this at that time, when his son-in-law set off to confront the greatest king of the ancient world.
- He now confessed that he knew that Yahweh is greater than all other gods.
- Jethro was converting to Yahweh worship and joining the covenant family of Israel.



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- Through the stories of Jethro, Rahab, Ruth and other examples throughout the Old Testament, we see that from the very beginning, God's mission has always been to rescue people of faith from every nation, not just the Jews.
- God chose Abraham and his family to be a light to the nations; His blessing was never meant for Israel alone (Genesis 12:1–3). Anyone of any nation who confessed faith in God and a commitment to follow Him and His ways could join His covenant family.
- The same is true of the New Covenant in Christ – Jesus came to save all people of faith, anyone who would believe in Him (John 3:16).

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- In this story, we see how Moses' testimony showed his father-in-law the goodness of God.
- Jethro had already heard of God's power through what He had done. But Moses' personal testimony showed him the love, grace and mercy of God for His people, not just His power.
- Those who had heard about the Exodus in Canaan were trembling in fear because of what they heard, but Jethro understood the goodness of God from Moses' personal testimony. In the same way, our personal testimonies can help people see the goodness of God.

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# We All Need Counsel

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- We all need counsel, even the greatest leaders among us
- Exodus 18:13-19a
- The story then describes Moses sitting in the judge's seat, judging disputes between all the people.
- In the ancient world, it was very common for the king and other elders to sit in the city gates to judge disputes between their people.
- This was their version of our courts today.

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# We All Need Counsel

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- But Israel was still wandering in the wilderness; they didn't have cities built yet, so they didn't have a city gate. They did have elders of each tribe, but they didn't have an established court of elders who would judge the people.
- Jethro immediately noticed, the very next day, that Moses was overwhelmed with judging all the people by himself.
- Last week we talked about when Moses needed Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms, Jethro told Moses that he could not do this all alone.

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# We All Need Counsel

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- When Jethro asked Moses why he was doing this, he said, “the people come to me to seek God’s will.”
- He felt a responsibility to be God’s representative for the people. He was the one to whom God spoke directly; he was the only who had heard from God.
- This was before God had given them His law that they could use as a standard to judge disputes between themselves.
- At this point, the only way he felt he could judge between people was to individually bring every conflict before God to seek His will.

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# We All Need Counsel

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- An outsider to the situation coming in, like Jethro, could see how unhealthy this was, even better than those who were in it.
- Jethro had a unique position of authority in Moses' life, as his father-in-law with whom he had lived for so long as patriarch. Moses bowed to him when he arrived, showing a respect to Jethro that he didn't have with anyone else.
- Jethro was uniquely positioned to speak into his life as an elder, and God brought him back into his life at just the right time to confront him. And now that he had converted to faith in Yahweh, he could speak as a person of faith.

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# We All Need Counsel

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- Jethro said that he would give Moses advice, but also said, “may God be with you.”
- Jethro wasn't claiming to speak for God but offering wise advice and then leaving it in God's hands.
- This story reminds us that even the greatest leaders among us need people to speak truth into their life.
- All of us should seek mentors in the faith who can offer wisdom and a fresh perspective, as well as accountability, rebuke, and correction when needed.

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# We Need A Strong Team

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- No one should be a “lone ranger” leader; we all need a strong team
- Exodus 18:20-27
- Jethro’s advice is the same advice that many secular business leaders and leaders of other organizations have been teaching for generations.
- Once your company, organization or congregation grows bigger than just a few people, the only way to effectively lead is to delegate responsibility to others.
- There was no way for Moses to lead them all effectively by himself.



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# We Need A Strong Team

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- In order for delegation to be effective, you have to choose capable leaders to whom to delegate and you have to train and support them to delegate well:
- First you have to be careful about whom you choose as leaders. Jethro told Moses to choose capable men who feared God, were trustworthy, and hated dishonest gain. People who have the skills and intelligence to lead, but who are also people of integrity.
- People who fear God and will make decisions in alignment with His heart and His character. People who will not be bribed or be in leadership for their own gain but will see it as a position of service.

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# We Need A Strong Team

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- Once you have chosen the right people, train them well.
- Jethro told Moses to teach them God's decrees.
- Even with the best people, you can't give them a task and leave them to do it.
- Effective delegation takes training and equipping for leadership so they have what they need to be successful.
- Then following up to make sure things are going well, seeing if they need support, and holding them accountable for doing their job.

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# We Need A Strong Team

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- Jethro gave them a model for different levels of leadership.
- The lower-level judges would judge the simpler cases and only bring the hard ones to Moses.
- This is like our hierarchy of local courts, state courts, and federal courts.
- As we will see in a moment, this is the model many of the founders of this country used to establish our republican form of government and even our current court system.

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# We Need A Strong Team

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- This same model can be applied to any kind of organization, business or church community. This is just wise leadership, not only to keep the head leader from burning out, but because it makes the whole organization more successful.
- In Corinthians, Paul talks about the Church as a body, each part having its own function. In order for the body to work effectively, each member has to do his or her part (1 Corinthians 12). No organization will work optimally if one person tries to do everything, not only because that person will burn out but also because no one person can fulfill every part of the body.

# Applications

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# Servant Leadership & Exodus 18

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- “Moses is often cited as a biblical example of servant leadership.”
- “Moses demonstrated a deep love for God and others, humility in his approach to God and his own abilities, and an impetus to serve God, and His chosen people.”
- Robert Greenleaf is often called “the father of modern servant leadership.”
- He argued that servant leadership is based on “the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.”

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# Servant Leadership & Exodus 18

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- The problem:
- Jethro asked, “What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?”
- Jethro was not addressing Moses’ physical state (he was surrounded by people all day) but his metaphorical state within the context of leadership.
- Moses was alone in carrying the weight of responsibility and decision-making, and this was a clear problem.

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# Servant Leadership & Exodus 18

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- The solution:
- Jethro said, “I will give you advice, and God be with you.”
- The analysis: “what you are doing is not good, you will certainly wear yourself out, you are not able to do it alone.”
- Moses should “empower other potential leaders and let them judge the people at all times.”
- Jethro’s advice closes with an encouragement to Moses of what God can do if he relinquishes control to others.



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# American Government & Exodus 18

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- Constitution - “The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government” (Article IV, Section 4).
- Exodus 18:21 - “Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.”
- Exodus 18:25 - “Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.”

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# American Government & Exodus 18

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- Noah Webster - “The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws.”
- The Christian religion “enjoins upon men the duty of selecting their rulers from their fellow citizens of mature age, sound wisdom and real religion – men who fear God and hate covetousness.” *Reference to Exodus 18:21.*
- He is also critical of men “who destroy the influence and authority of the Christian religion, sap the foundations of public order, of liberty and of republican government.”

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# American Government & Exodus 18

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- Daniel Dreisbach – “Among the biblical texts that Americans thought offered useful guidance on republican government and political leadership were Exodus 18:13-17, Deuteronomy 1:9-18, and Deuteronomy 16:18-20.”
- In a 1788 New Hampshire election sermon, the Reverend Samuel Langdon, who was a delegate to New Hampshire’s ratifying convention, cited one of these passages as a worthy model of republican government.
- Other eighteenth century election sermons outlined the qualifications for a civil magistrate: (1) an able man, who (2) fears God, (3) is truthful, and (4) hates covetousness. *Reference to Exodus 18:21.*

# Resources

