

### In the Presence of God

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. <sup>2</sup> Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, <sup>3</sup> along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), <sup>4</sup> and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). <sup>5</sup> Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. <sup>6</sup> And when he sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her," <sup>7</sup> Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. <sup>8</sup> Then 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 come upon them in the way, and how the LORD had delivered them. <sup>9</sup> And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

<sup>10</sup> Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. <sup>11</sup> Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people." <sup>12</sup> And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

<sup>13</sup> The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. <sup>14</sup> When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" <sup>15</sup> And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; <sup>16</sup> when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws." <sup>17</sup> Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. <sup>18</sup> You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. <sup>19</sup> Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, <sup>20</sup> and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. <sup>21</sup> Moreover, 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. <sup>22</sup> And let them judge the people at all

times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. <sup>23</sup> If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.”

<sup>24</sup> So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. <sup>27</sup> Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country. (Ex 18:1-27)

#### Notes:

Jethro or Reuel? Jethro may be a title and Reul (2:18) may be his name. Jethro means “his excellency” and Reul “friend of God.” Or he may have gone by two names.

Gershom sounds like the Hebrew word for sojourner; Eliezer does mean My God (el) is help. Lot of Hebrew names have el in them....Immanuel, Israel, Samuel, Ezekiel, from Elohim (god).

The priest of Midian is a catalyst in the narrative much like priest Melchizedek. With him comes an encounter with God Ex. 3:1-2; 19:3, 16-19, and especially 19:20.

#### Questions:

1. See Ex. 3:18. Just as the elders of Israel listened to Moses, who else heard about the LORD through Moses? See Ex. 18:1. How did he hear from Moses? See Ex. 18:2.
2. Yet here, the listening takes a turn. What is it that Moses heard from his father-in-law? See Ex. 18:6, 19-23. What kind of men does Jethro suggest Moses get for the job?
3. How does Moses respond to such a command as “Now obey my voice...”? See Ex18:24-26.
4. What is it that Moses was doing? Why did Jethro suggest he get helpers? See Ex. 18:13-17, especially 18:18.
5. Who else mentioned that Moses was a judge? See. Ex. 2:14. How did that man’s complaint become a reality?
6. How did the other part of this man’s statement come true, namely: “...as you killed the Egyptian...” (from Ex. 2:14)? What did God do to the Egyptians through Pharaoh? Hint: consider the Red Sea episode.

## God on the Mountain

“Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” (Gen 50:25-26)

What is the book of Exodus about? By the title one would be tempted to say an exit...and exodus from Egypt by the people of Israel. Others would focus on the Ten Commandments give by God to his people. Still other would draw attention to the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. Or Exodus could be seen as the exploits of Moses. After all the word Moses is found 266 times! But the key component of Exodus is God visiting his people.

“Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Ex 3:7-8)

### Exodus 19:1-25

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. <sup>2</sup> They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, <sup>3</sup> while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

<sup>7</sup> So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. <sup>8</sup> All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. <sup>9</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”

When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD, <sup>10</sup> the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments <sup>11</sup> and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. <sup>12</sup> And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. <sup>13</sup> No hand shall touch him,

but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." <sup>14</sup> So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. <sup>15</sup> And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."

<sup>16</sup> On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup> Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. <sup>19</sup> And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. <sup>20</sup> The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

<sup>21</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to look and many of them perish. <sup>22</sup> Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them." <sup>23</sup> And Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us, saying, 'Set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.'" <sup>24</sup> And the LORD said to him, "Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest he break out against them." <sup>25</sup> So Moses went down to the people and told them.

1. What is the first thing God says his people should do? See Ex. 19:4-6. How do the people respond? See Ex. 19:7-8.
2. In the relationship between God and people, who is the one who closes the distance? See Ex. 19:9-11.
3. Considering the way God also acted through Moses, what does this say about how our God operates? Considering Moses' work, what else have we learned about how God operates?
4. Again, consider God: what do you learn about God from Ex. 19:12-15, 20-24? There are at least two things.

### The Relationship Between God and His People

#### Ex. 20:1-21

And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> "You shall have no other gods before<sup>[a]</sup> me.

<sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands<sup>[b]</sup> of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

<sup>12</sup> "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> "You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup> "You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup> "You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup> "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup> "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

<sup>18</sup> Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid<sup>[c]</sup> and trembled, and they stood far off <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." <sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has

come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”<sup>21</sup> The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

### Questions:

1. Consider Ex. 3:12, 4:23, 7:16, 8:1,20; 9:1, 13; 10:3,7; 12:31. What was the reason God delivered his people? Consider Ex. 3:12 again. Did God keep good on his word? Remember... the people are on a mountain -- Mt. Sinai, and what are they here to do?
2. Consider Ex. 1:13 in the King James Translation: “And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to *serve with rigor*.” The ESV of this verse takes it as “to work as slaves.” Either way, do you see the connection between how the people lived under Pharaoh and how they will live under God? What does this tell us when we are tempted to think that the Exodus was all about individual freedom? Paul picks up on this in Romans 6:6-7, 15-23. What does this say about your relationship with God?
3. What does this service look like? There are two sides of it. Consider the first side in Ex. 20:1-2. What is the second side of their service to God? See Ex. 20:3-17. Note especially 20:5
4. How do the people respond to God when he comes to them and speaks? See Ex. 20:18-19. How is this similar to the way God speaks through his people today?
5. What is Moses' word of counsel? See Ex. 20:20.

### Take Away

1. Meditate on God's revelation at Mt. Sinai and how he worked through Moses to get his people to this point.
2. Consider how you have been delivered from another house of slavery, namely the house of sin. Always remember how Jesus Christ's atoning death has delivered you from that service and given you a new life and new service under God.

### Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for being our God. How incredible is it that you revealed yourself to the Israelites through your wonders and signs, through delivering them from the Egyptians, and at Mount Sinai. Just so, you revealed yourself even to we, who are Gentiles, through Jesus Christ. Thank you for delivering us also from sin in Christ. Help us to be reminded of this this week. In Jesus' name, amen.