

# Yitro

## Exodus 18:1-20:23

*This translation was taken from the JPS Tanakh*

### Chapter 18

<sup>1</sup> Jethro priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the Lord had brought Israel out from Egypt. <sup>2</sup> So Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after she had been sent home, <sup>3</sup> and her two sons — of whom one was named Gershom, that is to say, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land"; <sup>4</sup> and the other was named Eliezer, meaning, "The God of my father was my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." <sup>5</sup> Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought Moses' sons and wife to him in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. <sup>6</sup> He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons." <sup>7</sup> Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed low and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent.

<sup>8</sup> Moses then recounted to his father-in-law everything that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. <sup>9</sup> And Jethro rejoiced over all the kindness that the Lord had shown Israel when He delivered them from the Egyptians. <sup>10</sup> "Blessed be the Lord," Jethro said, "who delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. <sup>11</sup> Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, yes, by the result of their very schemes against [the people]." <sup>12</sup> And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to partake of the meal before God with Moses' father-in-law.

<sup>13</sup> Next day, Moses sat as magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. <sup>14</sup> But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" <sup>15</sup> Moses replied to his father-in-law, "It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. <sup>16</sup> When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God."

<sup>17</sup> But Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing you are doing is not right; <sup>18</sup> you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. <sup>19</sup> Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, <sup>20</sup> and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. <sup>21</sup> You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and <sup>22</sup> let them judge the people at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with

you. <sup>23</sup> If you do this — and God so commands you — you will be able to bear up; and all these people too will go home unwearied."

<sup>24</sup> Moses heeded his father-in-law and did just as he had said. <sup>25</sup> Moses chose capable men out of all Israel, and appointed them heads over the people — chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; <sup>26</sup> and they judged the people at all times: the difficult matters they would bring to Moses, and all the minor matters they would decide themselves. <sup>27</sup> Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way to his own land.

## **Chapter 19**

<sup>1</sup> On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai. <sup>2</sup> Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the wilderness. Israel encamped there in front of the mountain, <sup>3</sup> and Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: <sup>4</sup> 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. <sup>5</sup> Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, <sup>6</sup> but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel."

<sup>7</sup> Moses came and summoned the elders of the people and put before them all that the Lord had commanded him. <sup>8</sup> All the people answered as one, saying, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the people's words to the Lord. <sup>9</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, "I will come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after." Then Moses reported the people's words to the Lord, <sup>10</sup> and the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and warn them to stay pure today and tomorrow. Let them wash their clothes. <sup>11</sup> Let them be ready for the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, on Mount Sinai. <sup>12</sup> You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Beware of going up the mountain or touching the border of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death: <sup>13</sup> no hand shall touch him, but he shall be either stoned or shot; beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain."

<sup>14</sup> Moses came down from the mountain to the people and warned the people to stay pure, and they washed their clothes. <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 third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup> Moses led the people out of the camp toward God, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain.

<sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the Lord had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently. <sup>19</sup> The blare of the horn grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder. <sup>20</sup> The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain and

Moses went up. <sup>21</sup> The Lord said to Moses, "Go down, warn the people not to break through to the Lord to gaze, lest many of them perish. <sup>22</sup> The priests also, who come near the Lord, must stay pure, lest the Lord break out against them." <sup>23</sup> But Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us saying, 'Set bounds about the mountain and sanctify it.'" <sup>24</sup> So the Lord said to him, "Go down, and come back together with Aaron; but let not the priests or the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them." <sup>25</sup> And Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

## Chapter 20

<sup>1</sup> God spoke all these words, saying:

<sup>2</sup> I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: <sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods besides Me.

<sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, <sup>6</sup> but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments. <sup>7</sup> You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by His name. <sup>8</sup> Remember the sabbath day and 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 of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work — you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

<sup>12</sup> Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.

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

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>14</sup> You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

<sup>15</sup> All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance. <sup>16</sup> "You speak to us," they said to Moses, "and we will obey; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." <sup>17</sup> Moses answered the people, "Be not afraid; for God has come only in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be ever with you, so that you do not go astray." <sup>18</sup> So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

<sup>19</sup> The Lord said to Moses:

Thus shall you say to the Israelites: You yourselves saw that I spoke to you from the very heavens:

<sup>20</sup> With Me, therefore, you shall not make any gods of silver, nor shall you make for yourselves any gods of gold. <sup>21</sup> Make for Me an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your sacrifices of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be

mentioned I will come to you and bless you. <sup>22</sup> And if you make for Me an altar of stones, do not build it of hewn stones; for by wielding your tool upon them you have profaned them. <sup>23</sup> Do not ascend My altar by steps, that your nakedness may not be exposed upon it.