

30 AMAZING BIBLE STORIES YOU MAY NOT KNOW

#28 Jethro, The World's Most Famous Father-in-Law

MEET JETHRO FROM SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 2:15-21 –
 - V. 15 – Moses and Zipporah met by a well (as had Jacob and Rachel, and where Isaac's wife Rachel was found).
 - V. 16 – 17 – why did the shepherds drive away the daughters of the priest?
 - V. 18 – Why is Jethro called Reuel?
- Exodus 3:1 – He was father-in-law to Moses and a priest of Midian.
 - What kind of priest is Jethro?
 - Why the backside of the wilderness? Wouldn't a priest be afforded a better location?
- Exodus 4:18 – Moses seeks permission to return to Egypt.
 - Why does he need his father-in-law's permission?
 - Why is Jethro called *Yeter* or *Jether*?
- Exodus 18 – Jethro's Return and Advice
 - Vv. 1-6 – Jethro comes to Moses, along with Moses' wife and children. This takes place on the heels of the victory over the Amalekites.
 - Vv. 7-8 – Jethro learns details of the Exodus experience.
 - Vv. 9-12 – Does Jethro convert to Judaism?
 - Based on the word **rejoiced** in v. 9, many believe that Jethro converted to Judaism through circumcision. The word *chadad* is "sharp" and *chadah* is "rejoice," but not the normal word for rejoice. See Job 3:6 where it is also used.
 - Verses 10-12 sure sound like a conversion testimony.
 - Verses 13-26 – Jethro gives advice
 - At this point, the written law was not given. Therefore, Moses was the only one to know the Law. Jethro ends up giving advice that stood in this "mini-dispensation" between the Exodus and the written Law (the Torah).
 - Verse 27 – Jethro departs back to Midian. Was he changing his mind about his conversion?
- Numbers 10: 29-32 – Raguel the Midianite.
 - We now have the *fourth* name used of Jethro in the Scripture.

- Is this return the same as Exodus 18:27, or did he come and depart twice?

- Judges 1:16 – Jethro's Descendants
 - Now Jethro is called **the Kenite**, and his descendants are said to have entered the Promised Land, giving insight to Jethro's previous departures.

QUESTIONS ABOUT JETHRO FROM SCRIPTURE

- Why was he seemingly "a man without a country?" Tradition says that he had been an advisor of the Pharaoh and had sided with the Jews against making them slaves. This had caused him disrespect among the Amalekites and the Midianites. (Note: Jewish sages have differing traditions on this matter).
- What kind of priest was Jethro? Maybe not even a priest at all. See 2 Samuel 8:18 and 20:26, where *kohen* is translated **chief ruler**.
- Why does he have such power of Moses? It appears the two *may* have made a loyalty agreement, Moses serving Jethro in exchange for his daughter and for protection and provision.
- Why did Jethro "come and go" rather than stay with the Israelites? It is unknown, but not hard to speculate that he may have struggled with allegiances.
- Why so many names? We are not fully sure. Jewish teaching would be that each name refers to various aspects of his life.

RANDOM PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JETHRO

- Jethro is a man who is *as good or bad as you want to make him*. His story can go both ways (and often does in various commentaries). We can learn that "what you hear" may not be "what you get," especially when it comes to people.
- Jethro is *certainly* a man that has a surprising role in the exodus of the Hebrew nation into its promised land. One never really knows who God is going to use. Today, *He uses men and women who allow themselves to be used*.
- Jethro *appears to be* a man who operated by convictions, and thus was able to discern the times and the will of God, even though he may have known nothing of that God. God often uses flawed men and women who have strength of conviction. Even a "chameleon" like Jethro can be used of God.