

Notes on Parshah Yitro Exodus 18:1-20:23

## FATHER IN-LAW AND FAMILY

Yitro (Jethro), Moses' father in-law and priest of Midian finds the Israelites in the wilderness having heard of the miracles in Egypt.

Yitro brings Moses wife and children to join him. When they meet Yitro blesses Adonai, the God of Abraham and makes sacrifices on behalf of the people.

As an outsider Yitro sees Moses is involved in the details of the people problems, no matter how strong. Yitro teaches Moses to set up judges at different levels leaving the only the most serious cases for him.

Yitro leaves to go back to Midian, leaving Moses to continue the journey.

## THE PEOPLE AT SINAI

Three months after leaving Egypt the people reached the Sinai and camped at the base of the mountain.

Moses spoke with God on the mountain and God shared the covenant with the Moses for the people to hear. God promised to make them a kingdom of priests.

When Moses told the people of his encounter with God, the people agreed to do what God says.

The people prepared themselves for Moses to go up the mountain to get the tablets of the law. No one was allowed to get near the mountain except for Moses.

The mountain was covered in cloud and loud thunder. God came down onto the mountain.

With Moses on the mountain, God gave the 10 commandments:

1. I am God.
2. Have no other gods.
3. Do not misuse the name of God
4. Keep the Shabbat.
5. Honor your parents
6. Do not murder
7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal
9. Do not witness falsely against your neighbor
10. Do not be jealous of what others have.

When God started to utter the commandments the Israelites feared they would die due to the power of God. So Moses was to transmit the commandments after learning them from God.

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## GOD REITERATES SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

As the parshah closes God reminds people not to build idols and makes rules for building an altar of sacrifice.

God also makes clear that the people should remember they have a special responsibility to follow the law as they had direct connection to God at Sinai.

This Torah portion seems to start what will be a series of chapters that seem to be mixed up in the timeline. The Torah jumps in and out of the narrative and repeats much of the story. In doing so sometimes adding new pieces. Rashi, the commentator on the Talmud from the Middle Ages, famously said there is no before and after in the Torah. Each story builds on the other.