



## Yitro

*Shemot* (Exodus) 18:1 - 20:23

Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, hears of the great deliverance of the Jewish people, and understands that the time is right to reunite him with his family. He brings Moses' wife and two sons, Gershom and Eliezer to Moses in the desert. After Moses recounts the story of the *Y'tziat Mitzrayim* (liberation from Egypt) Jethro praises G-d by use of the Divine name, and offers sacrifices.

Jethro later observes Moses as he settles disputes among the Israelites. He advises Moses to delegate some of these responsibilities to others and only judge the most difficult of cases. Moses heeds Jethro's advice, setting up a system of higher and lower courts, and Jethro returns to his own land. The great Bible scholar, Professor Nachum Sarna, points out that given the hostility which would later characterize relationship between the Israelites and the Midianites, this advice, and Moses' acceptance of it, is all the more remarkable.

The people enter the wilderness of Sinai and encamp by Mount Sinai. G-d tells the people through Moses that if they will obey G-d's teachings, they will be for G-d a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation". The people respond as one, saying "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." After a three day period of purification, G-d appears to them in a cloud of smoke and fire on the mountain and proclaims the *Aseret HaDibrot*, the Ten Commandments.

It is important to remember that although they are the most famous, the *10 Commandments* are only a portion of the 613 *Mitzvot* (*Taryag HaMitzvot*) that we are commanded to observe. Their great distinction is they were the *mitzvot* communicated directly by G-d to the Jewish people. The others were communicated to Moses for him to instruct the Jewish people.



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