

Andrew Bonar:

Exodus 18

I. Jethro's name. - His personal name was Reuel or Raguel, 'God's Shepherd.' His father must have been a good man, not an idolater. Jethro is his official title, meaning his highness, or 'his excellency.' So this man was at once a priest of God and a man of high standing. He was a godly Gentile in the heart of a very wicked people, the Midianites. They were a vile, licentious nation, but Reuel kept himself unspotted from them, and in some quiet corner ruled his people, serving God.

II. Jethro's office. - Priest and prince. The word means both. As a priest he would present sacrifice. It is he who proposes to Moses to offer sacrifice. This is the very heart and essence of all true worship. The atoning sacrifice is the essence of all true religion. You have no true religion if it did not begin at the altar.

III. Jethro's personal character. - See him living a holy life in the midst of that licentious people. We have a pleasant picture of his quiet, happy family life. They were a united family, and a busy family. As, one evening, they tell their father the story of the day's work and what had happened to them, Jethro shows the kindness of his heart by sending for the stranger they had met with to his house. He finds - not a wandering idolater, but Moses, the man of God. For forty years Moses goes in and out with him, till one day he comes in with an awful solemnity over him, and his face lighted up with a divine lustre. Then he tells the story of the Burning Bush. Jethro sees at once that Moses must go, and they take a solemn farewell. You know all the great events that happened afterwards, till at last Moses and Jethro meet at the foot of Mount Horeb. What a meeting it would be, as they talked of all that God had done for His people!

IV. The memorable offering that followed the meeting (verse 12). - Round this altar are gathered Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel, and they sit down to 'eat bread.' They had no bread but manna, and Jethro would taste it for the first time. It was a blessed meeting of communion with one another, and with God, the priest and king in the midst. Is this not a picture of our Priest and King at the Table when He spreads bread for us? But it is 'broken' bread.

V. Jethro's memorable advice to Moses (verses 17- 23). - Notice his wisdom, tempering Moses' zeal. At the same time notice his compassion. Is it not like our High Priest? 'He knoweth our frame.' Moses listens and weighs the matter, and makes the change Jethro advises. Our High Priest does not want one man to do every thing. He sent His disciples out two and two. He knew human nature well, and He knew its tendency to self-sufficiency. Then He wanted them to share the work. It is never the duty of any one of God's people to be overburdened or worried, - ;as if the work could not be done without you! Could it not? Has God no other resources? Has He no other arrows in His quiver? God fills our hand with work, but He does not overburden us. When we are overburdened it is time to stop.

The last we hear of Jethro is in the 27th verse, when Moses 'lets him depart,' as if unwillingly, to his own land. His son Hobab (Num. 10: 29), though unwilling at first, seems to have gone with Moses afterwards, for we find some of his descendants mentioned in Judges 1:16. Just as during our Lord's lifetime His brethren did not believe in Him, but afterwards we find them among His followers.

We say to you to-day, 'Come with us and we will do thee good.' Ours is not an oasis in the wilderness, but a land of corn and wine. Our Priest and King - in Him it is we find our portion, a heaven here on earth.