
Day 38 – February 7

Establishment of a Nation (1525 – 1400 BCE)

The Journey Begins

Doubts and Murmurs

Readings: *Numbers 9:15-23; 10:1-36; 11:1-35; Exodus 40:36-38*

Reflections:

- The silver trumpets are both function and symbolic. It shows us again how practical God is being at this stage. He is taking spiritual principles and creating external expressions to teach vital lessons. He uses very practical things like trumpets to help teach the people about calling out to him and then how he will respond. He is teaching them to seek his leadership and then to follow what he says.
- The side note about the son of Reuel (Jethro) is a very interesting one that people often miss. Jethro was a priest of Midian. Remember these texts?
- “Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.” (Exodus 3:1-2)
- Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, “I have become an alien in a foreign land”; and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, “My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.” Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the desert, where he was camped near the mountain of God. Jethro had sent word to him, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons.” So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to

Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them. Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God. The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves. Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country. (Exodus 18:1-27)

- Jethro is a source of God's wisdom and blessing to Moses. He represents this mysterious Priest of the true God that comes at specific times to speak into Moses' life.
- Jethro's son, Hobab, is symbolic of his ongoing role in Israel in helping to quietly lead the community and help Moses. It is easy to miss this connection but it is important from a leadership perspective. God establishes "Jethros" or prophetic voices that leaders are meant to listen to. And even when they are gone, we need to look for their "sons" or those who follow in their foot steps to keep in our lives to help lead us in the write

direction. It is a part of how God works. It is interesting that Moses speaks face to face with God but he still wants Hobab to help him. Hobab could say, “who am I?” But Moses says, “No, I need you to help lead us...God will use you and you will be blessed!”

- The cloud of guidance teaches us one thing: God moves in his own way and his own time. Just be ready to go whenever God is ready to go. It may be one day, one week or one month but when ever it is, be ready to go. This is active submission.
- Doubts and Murmurs: Any time the people start complaining look out! Someone is going to die. You can see how God seems a lot better with moral weakness than he does with people with a bad attitude against him. A person can legitimately struggle and God—and it seems that God understands this. Yet God obviously doesn't like people complaining against him when he is in the process of saving them. Glad we are under grace though.
- It is interesting though how Moses can complain to God about the role he is in. Moses is very bold in his complaint and God just responds by taking care of his needs as a leader. The role of the seventy Elders with the Spirit finds parallel when Jesus sends out the seventy disciples. Jesus’ twelve disciples finds parallel with the twelve sons of Israel who become twelve tribes. The seventy disciples that go out are like the seventy elders of Israel. Jesus intentionally makes a parallel connection to the experience of Israel in launching the new Kingdom.
- The seventy Elders prophesying may be like “speaking in tongues.” It is the connection of God's prophetic word coming out of them. When God's presence fills a person, out of that person comes God's revelation or his word. This is paralleled in Acts 2 when the Spirit is poured out on all people to reveal God's heart and word to all nations, not just the Jews. Moses references this when he says, “I wished that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on all people.” This is exactly what happens in Acts 2.
- This passage ends with more people dieing for complaining. Again, we should be glad we are under his grace!

Bonus Material – Intimacy with God

- Question: Why does God not get angry at Moses the way he does the Israelites?
 - Interestingly, there seems to be two ways God relates in the Old Testament. The first and primary way is displayed through the Tabernacle. No one can come near God and if you do you die. Everything about the Tabernacle is set up to show you very clearly that only perfect people can come near God. If you have any defect you must stay away. Even then, only the High Priest with a perfect sacrifice can come near God into the Holy of Holies once a year and if he did

anything wrong, he was struck dead. So for everyone the way God relates is be perfect or be dead.

- Then there is Moses with a completely opposite set of rules.
 - The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. (Exodus 33:11)
 - [God] said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:6-8)
 - Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt--to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. (Deuteronomy 34:10)
- So Moses lives by a completely different set of rules like another friend of God's, Abraham (2 Chron. 20:7). The famous verse for him was: "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)
- Jacob gets this experience really only once in his life. See Genesis 32:30, "So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.'"
- So why are there these exceptions? Why do Moses and Abraham get this kind of relationship with God?
- While God is forming the nation and setting up the law (the diagnostic tool to show all of humanity that they are spiritually sick) he is also displaying before them the kind of relationship that he desires with all people. Moses and Abraham for the most part actually show the end goal of the kind of relationship God desires to have with all people.
- So with the coming of Christ it says:
 - "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will

forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

- “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29)
- This is why when Jesus died it says in Mark 15:38, “The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” We all get to be like Moses now. We all have the opportunity to draw near to God and be his friend.
- The writer of Hebrews puts it this way:
 - Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:19-24)
- Now do we all have the same level of intimacy and have the same level of power to do the miraculous? Not everyone has that experience but the real potential is there for everyone. It is something we can seek after without fear because he has made us perfect in his sight. There is no reason for us to fear any longer because the mercy of God has triumphed over his judgment through Christ.
- So people like Paul the apostle model for us what is more normative now: God will speak to us at key times in our lives. And as we respond to God’s leadership, his power will enable us to complete his will.
- Having said this, he speaks when he wants to. The majority of people only hear him on rare occasions. So although Moses was one of the ultimate examples we should not measure ourselves against Moses’ experience. Paul only clearly heard the Lord on rare occasions. We should remember to keep our standard for confirming the voice of the Lord very high and not blindly trust gut feelings without there being some confirmation from other Christians that indeed God is speaking. This is the principle behind 2 Corinthians 13:1 and establishing every matter with two or three witnesses.