

A Holy Nation

Key Verse: “*Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*”
—*Exodus 19:6*

Selected Scriptures:
Exodus 18:12-27;
19:1-14

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

was founded upon the promises of God and the instructions of his law. While there can be no failure in the plan of God as outlined in his promises, the position of the Israelites in that plan, and the position of all others as well, is conditional upon obedience to the divine will. Our Key Verse point out that the people of Israel would be separated from all other nations.

It was evidently in God's providence that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, gave the great lawgiver the timely advice contained in the first section of today's lesson. (Exod. 18:12-18) Moses was a hard and tireless worker. He was quite willing to lay down his life for his brethren, but his father-in-law, observing the situation from a disinterested standpoint, could see not only that Moses was wearing himself out unnecessarily by his endeavor to hear and judge in all their petty difficulties, but also that the people themselves were not being served efficiently. The work was simply too much for one person to care for properly.

Jethro was evidently a man of wisdom and of high righteous principles, as is revealed in his advice to Moses. He advised his son-in-law to appoint “able men”—rulers or judges—over various numbers of the Israelites, and admonished that these be men of principle, not selfish or covetous. Jethro realized, as Moses certainly must have known, that those of unrighteous principles would seek their own interests before those of the people over whom they ruled. Any of such character would be a curse to the nation rather than a blessing.—vss. 19-27

These “able men” in Israel served the people under the guidance of Moses. When Moses received the Law from God, with the instruction that it be communicated to the people, he called these elders, or representatives, together. He gave them the details of God’s law, so that they would gain the necessary understanding to first instruct, and then judge, the people properly.

Six hundred thousand Israelite men of adult age left Egypt. (Exod. 12:37) This would mean a total of probably a million and a half, counting women and children. It is not difficult to imagine the problems one individual would encounter in endeavoring, unaided, to instruct such a multitude in the Law of God. There was no printed page, radio, television, cell phones, or internet—none of our modern methods of communication. It is apparent indeed that Moses had a well-organized group of men to whom he could assign the important task of relaying to the people the necessary details of the Law as he had received it from God on Mount Sinai. In response, the people said that they would do all of the things that the Lord had spoken.—Exod. 19:8 ■