

Evening Worship September 4, 2016
"The Word, Law, and Justice" Exodus 18:13-27

I. A task worth doing right –

The Hebrew word *dabar* is used 10 times in this passage. The first time in Jethro's question –

"What is this **thing** (*dabar*) that you are doing for the people? (Exodus 18:14 NKJ)

Again the word *dabar* is used in verse 16 –

"When they have a **difficulty**, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." (Exodus 18:16 NKJ)

דָּבָר *dabar* {daw-baw'}

Meaning: 1) speech, word, speaking, thing 1a) speech 1b) saying, utterance 1c) word, words 1d) business, occupation, acts, matter, case, something, manner (by extension)

It will be used again in chapter 20 –

^{NKJ} Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these **words** (*dabar*), saying: (Exodus 20:1 NKJ)

So you might say the ten things, difficulties, cases, words mentioned in chapter 18:13-27 correspond to the ten words (or Commandments) of God in chapter 20!

The word had been used one time previously in chapter 18, in verse 11

- "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; for in the very **thing** (*dabar*) in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." (Exodus 18:11 NKJ)

Under the false, Egyptian gods the Israelites had no justice or fairness, NOW they are hungry for such –

And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. (Exodus 18:13 NKJ)

II. A task beyond one man -

And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening.¹⁴ So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said,

"What is this thing (*dabar*) that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"¹⁵ And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God."¹⁶ "When they have a difficulty (*dabar*), they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."¹⁷ So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing (*dabar*) that you do is not good."¹⁸ "Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing (*dabar*) is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. (Exodus 18:13-18 NKJ)

1. This justice, righteousness, fairness thing is surely worth doing, Jethro is not arguing against the WORTH of the task!
2. Rather he is pointing out the size; weight of the task is beyond one man.

3. In Israel, all would be required to know and do God's laws - He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 NKJ)

4. The task of teaching such would be expected of parents to children –

"And these words (*dabar*) which I command you today shall be in your heart."⁷ "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk (*dabar*) of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."⁸ "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."⁹ "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NKJ)

So we see clearly that Jethro was correct, this was not a one man job!

III. The beginning of spreading the burden –

"Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties (*dabar*) to God."²⁰ "And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do."²¹ "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."²² "And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter (*dabar*) they shall bring to you, but every

small matter (dabar) they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you.²³ "If you do this thing (dabar), and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace." (Exodus 18:19-23 NKJ)

1. Note Jethro speaks confidently about God being with Moses, if Moses takes his advice -

I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: - :19

.²³ "If you do this thing (dabar), and God so commands you - :23

2. He speaks of Moses himself, selecting qualified men –

.²¹ "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.*²² "And let them judge the people at all times.

3. These would ease the burden on Moses –

²² "And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that every great matter* (dabar) they shall bring to you, but every small matter (dabar) they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you.²³ "If you do this thing (dabar), and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace." (Exodus 18:19-23 NKJ)

Many would become teachers and judges and parents would be teaching children God's laws. We see in this the decentralization of Government among men! God rules over all! All our to rule themselves.

IV. Moses agrees, he spreads the word –

So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.²⁵ And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.²⁶ So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases (dabar) they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case (dabar) themselves.²⁷ Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land. (Exodus 18:24-27 NKJ)

1. Moses saw the common sense wisdom of his father-in-law
2. Moses knew the importance of God's law

3. Toward the end of his life, Deuteronomy 32, Moses wrote a song –

So Moses came with Joshua the son of Nun and spoke (dabar) all the words (dabar) of this song in the hearing of the people.⁴⁵ Moses finished speaking (dabar) all these words (dabar) to all Israel,⁴⁶ and He said to them: "Set your hearts on all the word (dabar) s which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe-- all the words (dabar) of this law.⁴⁷ "For it *is* not a futile thing for you, because it *is* your life, and by this word (dabar) you shall prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess." (Deuteronomy 32:44-47 NKJ)

Note Moses last words (dabar) were about God's word (dabar)

- A. The people are told to set their HEARTS on all the word! - :46
- B. They are to command their children to be careful to observe these words - :46
- C. This is not a futile or empty thing - :47
- D. It is your life - :47

4. God starts with Joshua the same way –

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8 NKJ)

5. The Psalms start similarly – (Psalm 1:1-6 NKJ)

6. Jesus also agrees and fulfills –

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.¹⁸ "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.¹⁹ "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20 NKJ)

- A. Jesus fulfilled the law by His righteous life, and for us by His death on the cross...
- B. He expects our righteousness to exceed...
7. He gives gifts – Ephesians 4:7-16 to spread the word, truth, see also Ephesians 6:1-4

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