

Exodus 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

Analysis

And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace (וַלֵּךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵלכָה נָא וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֶל־אֶחָי אֲשֶׁר־בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶרְאֶה) —Moses returns to Jethro, showing proper honor and requesting release from family obligation. **Let me go... and return unto my brethren**—Moses frames this as family concern: **see whether they be yet alive**. He doesn't reveal the burning bush encounter—either from humility, concern Jethro wouldn't understand, or divine instruction to maintain discretion. **Go in peace** (וַיֵּלֶךְ לְךָ לְשָׁלוֹם)—Jethro's blessing releases Moses with שָׁלוֹם (shalom, peace/wholeness). This proper departure contrasts with Moses' flight from Egypt (2:15). God's servants leave well, maintaining relationships and honor.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture required adult sons-in-law to request release from family obligations before departing. Moses' courtesy toward Jethro honored his father-in-law and received blessing in return. Jethro will later reunite with Moses (18:1-12), bringing Moses' wife and sons, suggesting their separation was understood as temporary mission, not permanent abandonment.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Moses' respectful departure from Jethro model appropriate handling of family and relational obligations when God calls to new mission?
2. When has God called you to leave a season or place, and how did you honor those relationships while obeying the call?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּלֶךְ	לְמֹשֶׁה	וְאֶשׁ וָבָה	אֶל	יֶתְרוֹ	חֹתֵנוֹ
H1980	And Moses	I pray thee and return	H413	And Jethro	his father in law
	H4872	H7725		H3503	H2859
וַיֹּאמֶר	לּוֹ	נָא	וְאֶשׁ וָבָה	אֶל	אֶחָיו
and said	H0	H1980	I pray thee and return	H413	unto my brethren
H559		H4994	H7725		H251
אֲשֶׁר	בְּמִצְרַיִם	וְאֶרְאֶה	הֲעוֹדִים	חַיִּים	וַיֹּאמֶר
H834	which are in Egypt	and see	whether they be yet	alive	and said
	H4714	H7200	H5750	H2416	H559
יֶתְרוֹ	לְמֹשֶׁה	לֵךְ	לְשָׁלוֹם:		
And Jethro	And Moses	H1980	in peace		
H3503	H4872		H7965		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 3:1 (Word): Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

