

TEN GREAT LAWS, ONE GREAT IN-LAW

YITRO

Exodus 18:1-20:23

Cast of Characters

Yitro

Zipporah

Gershom

Eliezer

Moses

Aaron

Elder #1

Elder #2

Israelite #1

Israelite #2

(Yitro enters with Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer.)

YITRO: Hello. Today, we'll be taking a journey through one of the most important sections of the Torah, Parashat Yitro . . . which was named after . . . me. It's quite an honor to have a parashah named after me. But, I have to admit, I deserve it. Because in this parashah, I come up with one of the greatest ideas of all time.

ZIPPORAH: Dad . . . there are other important things that happen in this portion, too.

YITRO: *(To audience.)* That's my daughter, Zipporah. Her husband is also a famous man. You might have heard of him. Moses.

GERSHOM: Of course they've heard of him, Grandpa! Practically the entire Torah is about our Dad!

ELIEZER: Why do you think they call it the Five Books of Moses?

YITRO: Well, this part is named after me. And so I get to tell the story. *(To audience.)* After my son-in-law led the Israelites out of Egypt, I took Moses' sons, Gershom and Eliezer, and my daughter Zipporah, to meet Moses in the wilderness.

ZIPPORAH: Moses had sent us to live with my father, Yitro, in Midian, because he thought we'd be safer there.

GERSHOM: We didn't even get to see the Sea of Reeds part!

ELIEZER: Yeah! No fair!

ZIPPORAH: Stop it, you two. Here comes your father.

(Moses enters.)

MOSES: Yitro . . . how good to see you. *(Moses bows down to Yitro.)*

YITRO: Oh, Moses, you don't have to bow. *(To audience.)* He must have heard they were naming the parashah after me.

MOSES: And look . . . my remarkable wife and handsome sons. How have you been?

ZIPPORAH: Fine, my dear. How about you?

MOSES: Same old, same old. God spoke to me a lot, then brought plagues upon Egypt . . . stuff like blood, locusts, and darkness . . .

GERSHOM: Hey, Dad, did you bring us anything from Egypt?

MOSES: Sorry, boys, I had no time to shop. There wasn't even time to bake bread when we left. We had to make matzah.

ELIEZER: Matzah, what's that?

MOSES: It's like a cracker. Only bumpier. And with less flavor.

GERSHOM: Sounds yummy . . . I think.

MOSES: You should try it with cream cheese. Anyway, then God parted the sea so that the Children of Israel could cross. And when the Egyptians tried to follow us, God brought the waters back together and the Egyptians drowned.

ZIPPORAH: That must have been quite an experience!

MOSES: You should have been there, Zip. We made up a song. Miriam and all the women danced with timbrels. You'd have loved it.

YITRO: Moses, I am very impressed. Now I know that your God is the only true God. Come . . . let us make sacrifices to God.

MOSES: Yes. And let us break bread together.

(Aaron enters with two Elders.)

AARON: Did someone say bread?

ELDER #1: Are we talking whole wheat or white?

MOSES: Yitro, I'd like you to meet my brother Aaron and two of our Elders. They'll be joining us for bread and sacrifices.

AARON: As the High Priest, it's my duty to be present for all religious occasions.

ELDER #2: Yeah . . . and we can't resist a free meal.

YITRO: *(To audience.)* And so, we ate a meal together. *(All exit except Moses, Yitro, and the Elders.)* The next day, I was hoping to spend some time with my son-in-law. But he was very busy!

(Elder #1 and Elder #2 now stand before Moses.)

ELDER #1: Moses, when God speaks to you . . . does God sound like a man or a woman?

MOSES: Neither.

ELDER #2: How can that be? God has to be one or the other.

MOSES: As God said to me from the burning bush: God is what God is. Next! *(Elders exit.)*

(Israelite #1 and Israelite #2 enter.)

ISRAELITE #1: Moses, he stole my cow.

ISRAELITE #2: It wandered into my tent. Finder's keepers, right?

MOSES: I will settle this according to the laws of God.

ISRAELITE #1: You better hurry . . .

ISRAELITE #2: Yeah. There are a couple of hundred people waiting for you behind us.

MOSES: Okay, okay, here's what I think . . . *(Moses goes on talking to the Israelites in pantomime.)*

YITRO: And this went on until late at night! When it was over, Moses was very tired.

MOSES: Boy, am I tired!

(The Israelites exit.)

YITRO: Moses, you are a very wise man . . . and a wonderful leader. But you're spreading yourself too thin.

MOSES: Spreading myself too thin? What else can I do?

YITRO: You can't judge all these cases by yourself.

MOSES: But people come to me with questions about God, arguments with their neighbors, matters of law. I need to answer them.

YITRO: How many people are there?

MOSES: Six hundred thousand.

YITRO: That's a lot of possible cases and questions. I have an idea. Why don't you appoint judges from among the most honest, God-fearing men? These judges can decide the arguments between neighbors. Then you will be free to handle the questions about God. What do you think?

MOSES: That's an excellent idea! I will appoint judges right away. Thank you, Father-in-Law.

YITRO: Glad I could help. But now it is time for me to return to my home. (*Zipporah, Eliezer, and Gershom enter.*)

ZIPPORAH: Good-bye, Dad.

ELIEZER & GERSHOM: So long, Grandpa.

YITRO: (*To the audience.*) And so I went back to Midian. But my wonderful idea lived forever . . . for since that day, leaders have chosen judges to help settle arguments among people. And that is why they named this parashah after me — Yitro.

(*Zipporah, Eliezer, and Gershom wave as they watch him go.*)

ZIPPORAH: After Dad left, another important thing happened in this part of the Torah.

ELIEZER: Maybe the most important thing that happens in the whole Torah!

(*Aaron enters with Moses.*)

MOSES: Aaron, God has spoken to me . . .

AARON: As usual.

MOSES: But this time God also wants to speak to all the people . . . to give them the laws they must follow if they want to be a kingdom of priests — a holy nation.

AARON: Wow. It'll take months to prepare the people to meet the Holy One!

MOSES: Well, we only have three days. Then we must bring the people to the foot of Mount Sinai where God will come to them hidden by a great cloud. And the people will hear the voice of God!

AARON: God has some sense of drama!

GERSHOM: (*To the audience.*) And the people washed and made themselves pure, and then gathered by Mount Sinai.

(*Israelites #1 and #2 and Elders #1 and #2 enter.*)

ISRAELITE #1: I can't believe God is going to speak to us.

ISRAELITE #2: I'm kind of scared . . .

ELDER #1: Me, too.

ELDER #2: What if God is angry at us? You saw what happened to the Egyptians . . .

MOSES: (*As if starting a speech.*) Children of Israel . . . (*Stops.*) Wait. (*Pauses.*) Excuse me. God has asked me to come up the mountain alone.

(*Moses exits to go up the mountain.*)

AARON: And Moses went up to Sinai, where God decided to talk to Moses in private, so the people would not be frightened.

ZIPPORAH: And on the mountain, God gave the People of Israel, and the world, the greatest gift of all . . .

ELIEZER: Ten Commandments by which we all should live.

GERSHOM: And my Dad came back down, and God told the commandments to the people.

(Moses enters.)

MOSES: Adonai is your God, who took you out of Egypt. You shall have no other gods. You shall make no graven images . . .

AARON: That means idols . . . or false gods.

MOSES: Do not take God's name in vain . . .

GERSHOM: Don't make an oath in God's name.

MOSES: Remember Shabbat, and keep it holy. Honor your Father and Mother . . .

ZIPPORAH: *(To her sons.)* That's an important one!

MOSES: Don't kill! Stay true to your wife or husband! Don't steal! Don't lie . . . and don't be jealous of what your neighbor has. If you follow these laws, you'll be a holy nation.

ELDER #2: That shouldn't be too hard. There are only ten of them.

MOSES: That's just the highlights. There are plenty more laws . . . and you can find them in the rest of the Torah.

(Yitro enters.)

YITRO: But the Ten Commandments, which may be the most important part of the whole Torah, are in Parashat Yitro . . . the one named after me. I'm so proud.