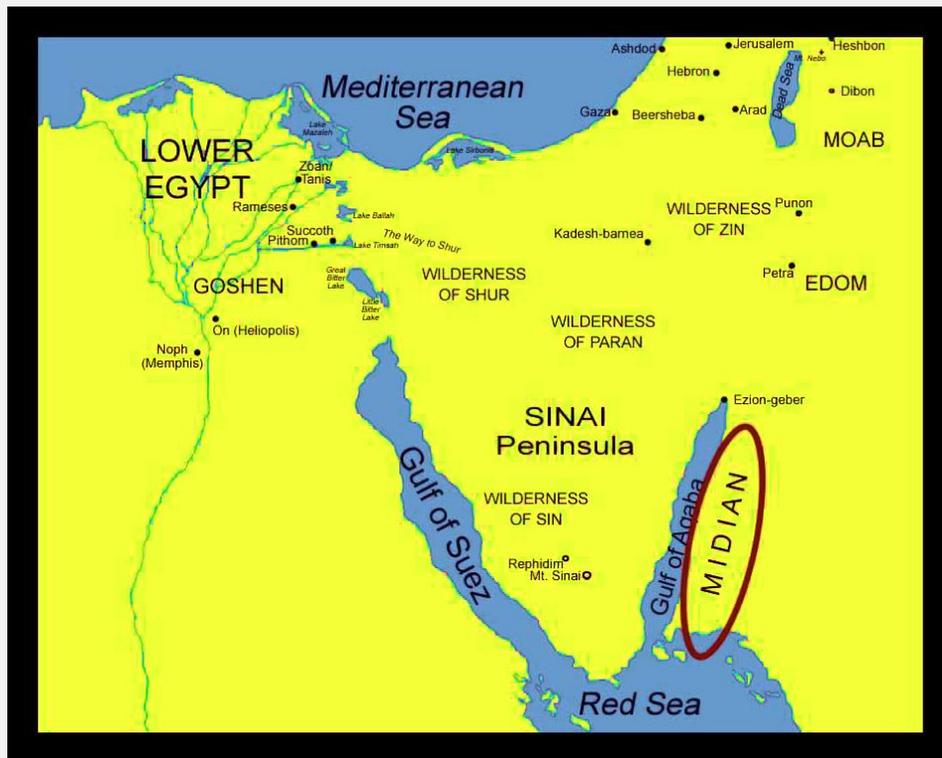


**Shabbat Sermon, Friday January 21, 2022**  
**Congregation Beth Abraham, Buffalo, NY**  
**Weekly Torah Portion – Book of Exodus – Chapter “Yitro”**

1. We learn that Yitro (Jethro), father in law of Moses, travels from his home in Midian (see map below) and reunites with Moses in the Sinai desert after the Exodus from Egypt. Jethro was so impressed to learn about Moses’ leadership in bringing the Jews out of Egypt he made the trek to meet Moses in the desert to both thank him in person and praise God for his liberating the Jews from slavery



2. What is remarkable is that Jethro, Moses’ father in law, is not even of the Jewish tribe. He is a Midianite Priest, someone who serves another god other than the Jewish God. Why is this important? Read on.
3. After reuniting, Yitro watches Moses hold court where he provides legal opinions and judgements brought to him by ordinary Israelites who have claims to be heard. The line up of people waiting to bring their case before Moses, is long, forcing people to wait for many hours before their case can be presented to Moses.
4. Jethro observes these very long lines and the tiredness of the Israelites waiting to meet Moses, and notices Moses own fatigue. Jethro points out to Moses how unfair it is to make all these people wait in line while standing up – so fatigued and so tired.
5. He advises Moses to hire judges to relieve himself of the backlog and to reduce the wait times, reduce the fatigue of the people, and to give Moses a break himself. So why is any of this important? What do we learn from this?

6. ONE – We know that Moses is the most revered and admired Jewish historical figure – a brilliant scholar, mastermind, prophet and leader. But even in his greatness, he defers to an elder. Demonstrating by example, how even the most well recognized and important people must show respect, honor and esteem to the elderly.
7. TWO - But more importantly, by Moses deferring and respecting his father in law – a non Jew – this teaches us the importance of respecting and honoring those who are not Jewish and of other faiths...which lead to another interesting point.
8. The title given to this chapter of the Book of Exodus is “Yitro” or Jethro which is a Hebrew translation of the name of Moses’ father in law. Yet this is also the very same chapter that introduces the Ten Commandments - which are the cornerstone of the Jewish faith – the most fundamental, most important laws given to the Jewish people. Wouldn’t it therefore make sense to title this chapter “The Ten Commandments” instead of titling it in the name of Moses’ father in law? His father in law wasn’t even Jewish! Doesn’t it make more sense that this chapter be named in honour of the 10 pillars of the Jewish faith, instead of a non Jewish person? So, if the Bible did in fact name this chapter after Jethro, and NOT after the “The Ten Commandments,” what does this tell us? Perhaps it is telling us that it is **so** important for Jews to treat non-Jews respectfully and honorably as Moses did to his father in law – that by using the title Yitro (or Jethro), we are reminded that not only must we respect non-Jews, but we can learn from non-Jews too. Perhaps if the title of the Chapter were “The Ten Commandments,” we would ignore and overlook the importance of treating non Jews respectfully and learning from people who are not of our faith.
9. So how does this relate to our lives today? How is there a connection between Moses showing respect to his non Jewish father in law and our modern day lives today?
10. If we are to uphold the importance of Jews giving honor and respect to non-Jews, we can do it right here in Buffalo while at the same time performing a “mitzvah” – a “good deed.”
11. The Buffalo News reported on January 18, 2022, that even more refugees from Afghanistan are able to now resettle in Buffalo. Originally 350 were to come to Buffalo, the number now increased to 465, of which 137 will be resettled by the Buffalo Jewish Federation. See link: [More Afghans than expected to arrive in Buffalo | Local News | buffalonews.com](#)
12. What better way for us as Jews to show our respect and honor and esteem towards non Jews that by performing the “mitzvah” of helping out Buffalo’s newest residents to resettle here?
13. In fact, by donating to the Jewish Family Services of WNY campaign to raise funds to support the resettlement of Afghan refugees, we are not only performing a mitzvah of helping others and showing respect to non-Jews, we are literally emulating and following in the footsteps of Judaism’s greatest hero – the Prophet Moses – who showed respect and honor to his non-Jewish father-in-law.
14. To make a donation to Jewish Family Services of Western New Yor, you can follow this link [Jewish Family Service of Buffalo and Erie County - Buffalo United for Afghan Evacuees \(networkforgood.com\)](#) and click the “DONATE” button.
15. Thank you and SHABBAT SHALOM TO ALL.