

Igbo Torah Thoughts

Parashah #17: Yitro: “Jethro”

Shemot/Exodus 18:1-20:23, Jer. 34:8-22

Rabbi Yehudah “Tochukwu” ben Shomeyr

Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. 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. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves. – Exd. 18:19-26

Chapter 18 speaks of Moses appointing Judges to help him carry the weight of leadership and this is similar to the way Igbos rule the people prior to the institution of Kings and warrant chiefs appointed by the British oppressors.

Ancient Igbos had Eze’s and Igwe’s and chiefs. Eze’s ruled territories and Igwe’s helped the Eze’s rule sections with in the territories, and chiefs ruled villages and each ruler had a committee of cabinet of elders to help them make wise decisions. Whatever the chief could not handle was taken to the Igwe’s and what they could not handle, that was taken to the Eze for a final ruling. Very much like what we read in Exodus 18.

Exodus 20 deals with the 10 Commandments which the ancient Igbos also followed.

Although they did not have a 7 day week there was a rest day in the market day week.

Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. – Isa. 6:2

The Ikenga which is likened unto the angels on the Ark of the Covenant or one's own guardian angel. In Judaism, as in Igbo culture, one's home (obi) is considered a temple, modelled after the Tabernacle or Temple in Jerusalem; it is not uncommon to see replicas of what is found in the Tabernacle/Temple such as Menorahs or even images of angels. Angels were in the Temple, In the Igbo obi there is an image called the Ikenga and it is a type of guardian angel mistaken by outsiders as one's personal household deity.

SHABBAT SHALOM! IGBO KWENU!

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