

DR. ERICA BROWN  
MANAGING LEADERSHIP FATIGUE

WEXNER HERITAGE PROGRAM  
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**Reflective Questions:**

1. Think of a time you were really energized in your leadership. Describe it.
2. Now consider a time when you felt overcome by leadership fatigue. What was so exhausting about it?
3. What do you think is the difference between leadership burn-out and leadership fatigue?

**Exodus 18:1-12**

Jethro priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the Lord had brought Israel out from Egypt. So Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after she had been sent home, and her two sons—of whom one was named Gershom, that is to say, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land;" and the other was named Eliezer, meaning, "The God of my father was my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought Moses' sons and wife to him in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons." Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed low and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent. Moses then recounted to his father-in-law everything that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced over all the kindness that the Lord had shown Israel when He delivered them from the Egyptians. "Blessed be the Lord," Jethro said, "who delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, yes, by the result of their very schemes against [the people]." And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to partake of the meal before God with Moses' father-in-law.

**Text Questions:**

1. Jethro or Yitro, in Hebrew, visits his son-in-law. How would you describe the visit?
2. This is a time of shared celebration. Moses seems filled with inspiration. Why?

## **Exodus 18:13-27**

Next day, Moses sat as magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" Moses replied to his father-in-law, "It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God." But Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and let them judge the people at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with you. If you do this—and God so commands you—you will be able to bear up; and all these people too will go home unwearied." Moses heeded his father-in-law and did just as he had said. Moses chose capable men out of all Israel, and appointed them heads over the people—chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; and they judged the people at all times: the difficult matters they would bring to Moses, and all the minor matters they would decide themselves. Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way to his own land.

### **Text Questions:**

1. Inspiration becomes perspiration pretty quickly. What has changed for Moses?
2. Yitro gives Moses important leadership advice. What is it and when would you have benefited in your leadership from heeding it?
3. If Yitro felt inspired and involved, why did he go back to his own land?

## **Numbers 11:10-17**

Moses heard the people weeping, every clan apart, each person at the entrance of his tent. The Lord was very angry, and Moses was distressed. And Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor, that You have

laid the burden of all this people upon me? Did I conceive all this people, did I bear them, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries an infant,’ to the land that You have promised on oath to their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people, when they whine before me and say, ‘Give us meat to eat!’ I cannot carry all this people by myself, for it is too much for me. If You would deal thus with me, kill me rather, I beg You, and let me see no more of my wretchedness!” Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy of Israel’s elders of whom you have experience as elders and officers of the people, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting and let them take their place there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will draw upon the spirit that is on you and put it upon them; they shall share the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear it alone.

### **Text Questions:**

1. In this text, Moses was again burdened by his leadership. What’s different here from before?
2. God, like Yitro, recommends an additional 70 people to share the burden and manage the leadership fatigue. The delegation here is not the same as it was in Exodus 18. How would you describe the difference?

### **Leadership Literature**

“A sacred heart means you may feel tortured and betrayed, powerless and hopeless, and yet stay open. It’s the capacity to encompass the entire range of your human experience without hardening or closing yourself. It means that even in the midst of disappointment and defeat, you remain connected to your people and to the sources of your most profound purpose.”

Martin Linsky and Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*