

JETHRO'S METHODS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN EXODUS 18:17-23: LESSONS FOR DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Despite enjoying official freedom for over 60 years, Africa's expectations and aspirations are still primarily unfulfilled. Leadership has been a recurring theme in the conversation around the African initiative. In order to rebuild a long-lasting atmosphere of peace and tranquility that will encourage growth and affect the leaders and the led in the continent, this paper analyses why the African system of governance has a flawed process for developing leadership and interpersonal relationships. The paper employs an eclectic exegetical approach of both diachronic and synchronic, which allows the exegete to be flexible in data presentation to purposefully achieve the studies and draw lessons for sustainable governance in Africa. The latter aspect of the approach allows the exegesis to accept Exodus 18:17-23 text as the final matured text accepted by the Israelite religious community. The paper reveals that sustainable governance in Africa is possible if the principles shared in this paper are followed. The principles were taken and extracted from Jethro's advice to Moses as recorded in the passage. These include; the principle of electing mature leaders, which must be traced through their track records; the principle of representative leadership, which allows an inclusive system, not nepotism; last but not

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least, the principle of shared leadership, which gives room for other to participate in the governance not one person becoming a monopoly of knowledge and power.

Introduction

As claimed by Princess Diana, the princess of Wales, “Intolerant behaviour is currently the biggest issue on the planet. Everyone is very unkind to one another.” This statement made by Diana seems to perfectly reflect the fundamental causes of the ongoing issues and misunderstandings that have plagued Africans for the past few decades. It appears from the researcher's discovery that the once highly esteemed and prestigious Africa is now, as it were, living in past glories in her present-day realities, and much of this is because of the numerous misunderstandings and intolerance that have predominated in the lives of several of her governing system and leadership on top of the global economic meltdown that has affected the economy of several nations and organizations.

Leadership is one of the most studied phenomena and is the least well-understood. Given the worldwide push toward political and economic freedom, a call for a focus on governance and leadership is topical, significant, and unquestionably current. Many people and governments worldwide urgently wanted unification, justice, peace, and stability. The resurgence of this desire can be attributed to not just their political initiatives but also their social and economic ones.²²⁸ Most African countries are experiencing a severe and worsening political and economic crisis. African political, social, and economic instability and frequent ethnic, communal, and religious crises have led to concerns with leadership and governance. In other words, the staggering surge of violence, insecurity, rising crime wave, economic downturn, and the breakdown in law and order are characteristics of Africa's leadership and governance issues. Therefore, sound government and sustained development depend on good leadership.

228 K.E. Obansanjo, “Leadership in Religious Organizations and Societies: Traditional Yoruba Perspective,” in *CASTALIA*, 12, 2 (2002): 9.

In order to rebuild a long-lasting atmosphere of peace and tranquility that will encourage growth and affect the leaders and the led in the continent and their various nations, this paper analyses why the African system of governance has a flawed process for developing leadership and interpersonal relationships. The paper employs an eclectic exegetical approach of both diachronic and synchronic, which would allow the exegete to be flexible in data presentation to purposefully achieve the studies and draw lessons for sustainable governance in Africa. The latter aspect of the approach would allow the exegesis to accept Exodus 18:17-23 text as the final matured text accepted by the Israelite religious community. At the same time, the former approach would allow the exegete to dig into the wealth of the text's historical background. The researcher's goal is to examine the issue critically, analyze why things appear to have broken down, and suggest potential ideas and approaches that the researcher may have discovered as lasting approaches and solutions to these silent challenges in the continent that have hampered growth and adversely affected the continent in various ways.

This paper will act as a catalyst for reorienting the general way of life of the leaders and the led as it relates to their interactions across the continent. Once more, this study aims to reorganize African leaders' priorities by demonstrating to them where they have come from, how long they have fallen, and the physical, spiritual, and psychological ramifications of their state of bad relationships and performances have brought about.

Africa and the Challenge of Sustainable Governance

Despite enjoying official freedom for over 60 years, Africa's expectations and aspirations are still primarily unfulfilled. Leadership has been a recurring theme in the conversation around the African initiative. Seteolu remarked that the ruling class had been the target of slander, vilification, condemnation, and contempt because of the pervasive and ongoing socioeconomic and political catastrophe.²²⁹ In addition to an

229 D. Seteolu, "The Challenge of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria," in S. Odion-Akhaine, eds. *Governance: Nigeria and the World* (Lagos: CENCOD, 2004), 70.

excessively devalued national currency and unpopular, restrictive, and alienating economic policies, he continued, the economic sphere has been characterized by a significant external debt overhang, net capital flight, disinvestments, the collapse of social infrastructure, a food crisis, and widespread insecurity.²³⁰ Most scholars agreed that Africa's problems were primarily brought on by, among other things, the continent's growing estrangement from the general public and the leadership's inadequate training for the duty of managing their country.

Afegbua and Adejuwon claim that African politicians usually entered the office without professional experience. Even though most of them have persisted in the face of significant obstacles to growth and nation-building, sometimes unprepared and unsupported, their efforts have, at best, produced inconsistent results. There are no organizations in Africa that focus on producing future leaders with a global outlook, leaders able to collaborate within and outside institutional, regional, and national boundaries. Finding up-to-date information on the great majority of national, regional, and worldwide matters is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, in many African countries.²³¹

The problem that Africans are most concerned about is the absence of competent political leadership. There are, of course, failures in other areas, but they are all, in the perceptions of the public, connected to ineffective political leadership. According to Seteolu's description of the problem from a Nigerian viewpoint, the political elites are not a producing class but rather depend on controlling state processes to obtain economic gains.²³² It is easier to see how over-politicized the African republics have become when one considers the context of the unfettered struggle for influence, patronage, and power. Due to the nature of the political rivalry, a local ruling class devoid of

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Salami Afegbua Issa & Kehinde David Adejuwon, "The Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Africa," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Science*, Vol. 2, No. 9 (2012): 141-147.

²³² Seteolu, "The Challenge of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria," 74.

ideological commitments evolved. Instead of engaging in political conflict inside intellectual frameworks, politics has evolved into a contested field for immediate, selfish political benefits.

Due to the de-ideologization of African politics, aspiring political leaders do not feel a pressing need to express their macro-vision for the continent. There is no precise specification of any system values. A predatory political elite interested in power struggles, consolidation, alignment, and realignment related to hegemonic rule emerged due to the characteristics of the African states. The lack of ideology in politics, the commercialization of politics, the expansion of the bases of political participation, and the promotion of alternative policy agendas are all factors in this.

Because of the individualized nature of rule in so many African countries, governance structures are essentially informal and subject to arbitrary change, in addition to missing the logic and empirical content that typically characterize such activity in order circumstances. Most African leaders assumed their positions without thoroughly understanding the art and science of administering a current state's operations. African leaders must therefore have the skills necessary to strike a balance between the goals of African communities and the principles of government to which their nations must adhere. However, rather than seeing the two as mutually exclusive, the emphasis must be on merging them.²³³

Eventually, one political party and its leader held all of Africa's political power. The office of the President has expanded to become the absolute authority over all government departments as a result of the majority of African Presidents being reelected without any opposition. In addition, Kamuntu points out that more severe violations of human rights were employed to

233 Salami Afegbua Issa & Kehinde David Adejuwon, "The Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Africa," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Science*, Vol. 2, No. 9 (2012): 141-147.

brutally suppress opposition to the President's attempt to consolidate power, which resulted in massacres, the emigration of millions of Africans, and the search for personal security in employment of many capable Africans in other countries.²³⁴ The ongoing African crisis presents a tremendous challenge for the region and its leaders.

Sadly, African political leadership aspirants do not feel forced to describe their long-term goals for the continent. There is no exact formulation of systematic values. African political leadership is local, employing national resources for its corrupt goal of primitive accumulation instead of being national.

According to the assertion above, the African leadership and its allies have privatized the state to benefit themselves. African leadership traits include clientelism, privatized state apparatuses, ethnic rivalries and cleavages, political brigandage, and parochial, individualistic, selfish inclinations. Renowned, visionary figures must lead the nations of the continent with a solid reputation for honesty; these figures of the people must possess both vision and mission. He should be able to keep his word to the people and be a living example of every virtue his party supports.²³⁵ Some claim that Africa's leadership, or lack thereof, is its worst challenge. The lack of competent leadership in Africa is the fundamental problem preventing progress, making it a vital issue even during democratization. According to Adeola, great nations have a history of having creative and intentional leadership, whether in the developed industrialized nations or the developing ones. Such leaders have significantly contributed to their countries political and social development. Leadership and ideology are intimately intertwined. A nation will continue to lack commitment and direction without a visionary leader who can articulate a unique philosophy. As a result, the leadership has not used people's creativity and resources for the country's growth.²³⁶

²³⁴ E.R. Kamuntu, "Leadership Challenges in Consolidating Democracy and Good Governance in Africa," (A paper presented at conference of The Leadership Forum, Nairobi, Kenya: 1993, March 10-12), 109.

²³⁵ G.L. Adeola, "Politics and Democratization Process in Nigeria: The Prevailing Issues," *LASU Journal of Social Sciences*, 6, 1&2 (2007):110-111.

²³⁶ Adeola, 107.

An apparent lack of leadership is Africa's issue. The African spirit and the functional political structure are both inherently good things. Most political leaders had character issues because they lacked control or demonstrated ineffective leadership. As a result, state resources were split up and juggled to fulfill various needs.

Exegetical Analysis of Exodus 18: 17-23

According to Gary North, the book of Exodus is about a daring escape, which is reflected in the name "Exodus," which implies "a quick exit." North noted that God's grace and mercies delivered the Israelites' Egyptian bondage. Nevertheless, the book is also about Israel's newly established alliance with God after their departure and rescue from Egypt.²³⁷ It continues the patriarchal narrative introduced in Genesis. The Egyptian city of Goshen was home to the people of God when the curtain closed on Genesis, but by the time the Exodus got underway, they had grown to the size of a nation and were being cruelly oppressed by Pharaoh and the Egyptian taskmasters.²³⁸

Exodus' author is not identified directly, but tradition, Jewish Hellenistic, Rabbinic, and early Christian writers all credited Moses with writing Exodus and the entire Pentateuch, despite current researchers' differing opinions.²³⁹ Exodus was written down historically to preserve the stories of how the Israelites became enslaved in Egypt, their liberation, and their preservation in the Sinai desert. Theologically, the book's primary goal is divine self-disclosure because God has revealed Himself to Israel as Yahweh (Ex. 6:2-3), a name that means that Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, will take Israel for His people and will be their God. God has not only remembered His covenant promises to the Hebrew Patriarch (Ex. 6:7).²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Georgia: America Vision, PowerSprings, 1980, 2010), 79.

²³⁸ J. P. Fokkelman, "Exodus, in the *Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode (Harvard, 1987), 56-61.; Tremper Longman III & Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 1994, 2006), 67.

²³⁹ Paul N. Benware, *EveryMan's Bible Commentary: Survey of the Old Testament Revised* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988, 1993), 62.

²⁴⁰ Andrew Hill, 179.

Exodus outlines the events that led to Israel's enslavement in Egypt and how they were ultimately freed from Egyptian rule by the intervention of Yahweh. The book also discloses the identity of the Yahweh-named God and describes how His people, the Israelites, first encountered his heavenly presence.²⁴¹ Exodus contains a variety of literary genres, such as law, poetry, and storytelling. The book of Exodus is generally categorized as prophetic or theological history. The book aims to educate readers about God's extraordinary past deeds.²⁴²

Assuming that the tyranny started soon after the eighteenth dynasty came to power (about 1350 BCE) and that the admission to Canaan began a few years before Ramasses reign ended, most researchers choose to date the (main or final) Exodus in the early reign of Pharaoh Ramesses II (ca. 1290 BCE) (ca. 1230 BCE). Another theory holds that the Hebrews arrived in Egypt from Canaan when Hyskos was in power, just as the eighteenth dynasty rose to power (about 1580 BCE), and that the Exodus must have taken place when Thutmose III reigned (ca. 1450 BCE). This is consistent with the claim made in I Kings 6:1 that Solomon's temple was built around 970, 480 years after the Exodus.²⁴³

a. Background of Exodus 18:17–23.

The context focuses on two of the children of Israel's wilderness trek experiences (Exodus 17:1-16). The first experience centres on what Israel went through in Rephidim right after leaving the Wilderness of Sin. The children of Israel fought against Moses in Rephidim. Rephidim, the historic location of Mount Sinai, is considered the modern Wadi Refayld close to Jebel Musa.²⁴⁴ When the Israelites reached Rephidim and saw there was no water in the oasis, they once more muttered about Moses and berated him for rescuing them from Egypt (cf. Ex. 16:3). They complained about Moses and Yahweh in Rephidim, which was

²⁴¹ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Michigan: Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1990, 2009), 161.

²⁴² Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (FCI 3: Zondervan, 1987)*, n.p.; I. Provan, V. P. Long and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel (Westminster: John Knox, 2003)*, n.p.

²⁴³ Mark Allen Powell (General Editor), *The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, Third Ed.*, (Australia: Sydney, Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 631.

²⁴⁴ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition*, Electronic Database, Translated by James Martin, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Peabody 2006), n.p

even worse than their mutterings at Marah (Ex. 15:24) or in the Desert of Sin (Ex. 16:2) since, according to Ex. 17:2, they even wanted to stone Moses (v. 4).²⁴⁵ When the people complained to God, He instructed Moses to take the staff he had used to strike the Nile River and hit a rock near Horeb (Ex. 7:20; Ex. 17:6). As Moses obeyed and stroked the rock, the Lord miraculously provided water to quench His people's thirst. However, Moses gave the area two names: Massah (testing) and Meribah because the people in Rephidim tested the Lord (quarreling).²⁴⁶

The Israelites' military triumph over the Amalekites, which Yahweh granted to His people, is the second experience in the immediate setting. The Amalekites, who descended from Esau through Eliphaz (Gen. 36:12), were nomads in the southern Canaanite wilderness at the time of Israel's entry at Rephidim (cf. 1 Sam 15:7; 27:8). The Amalekites were nomads who made an effort to drive out the Israelites and defend their lands from Israel's incursion. Joshua was finally acknowledged in the scene as Moses called out to him. Joshua enthusiastically engaged in combat with the Amalekites after receiving orders from God through Moses. However, the way the Amalekites were defeated was extraordinary and showed the strength of God. The Bible Knowledge Commentary states that Israel's complete reliance on God's strength is shown by the staff of God that Moses is holding firmly above his head with both hands (cf. Ex 4:20). The Amalekites started to gain the upper hand over Israel as Moses' hands grew tired and lowered, which symbolizes a lack of dependence on Yahweh. The assistance of Aaron and Hur, who lifted Moses' hands, allowed him to score a great victory over the Amalekites. Moses constructed the LORD as my Banner altar in honour of Yahweh's triumph over the Amalekites in his lifetime. Although Moses must have kept some journal during the trip, it is significant that the passage's records contain the earliest reference to official written records by Moses in the Bible (Num. 33:2).²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, n.p.

²⁴⁶ Jeremiah Burrough, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, PDF, (www.preachtheword.com), 115

²⁴⁷ John F. Walvoord, and Roy B. Zuck, eds. *Bible Knowledge Commentary*,

Published as a 2-volume set, (Colorado: Colorado Springs, Cook Communications Ministries 1983, 2000), n.p

b. The Text and Translation

עָשָׂה: אַתָּה אֲשֶׁר הַדָּבָר לֹא-טוֹב אֵלָיו מִשֶּׁה חָתַן וַיֹּאמֶר¹⁷
עָשָׂהוּ לֹא-תוֹכַל הַדָּבָר מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי-כָבֵד עֲמֹד אֲשֶׁר הִזָּה גַם-הַעַם גַּם-אַתָּה תִּבְלֵ נָבֶל¹⁸
לְבַדָּהּ:
אַתָּה וְהַבָּאִתָּ הָאֱלֹהִים מוֹל לְעַם אַתָּה הִנֵּה עֲמֹד אֱלֹהִים וַיְהִי אֵי-עֲצָף בְּקִלְלֵי שָׁמַע עֲלֶיךָ¹⁹
אֱלֹהֵי-אֱלֹהִים: אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים
כִּי יֵלְכוּ אֶת-הַדָּרֹךְ לְקִם וְהוֹדַעְתָּ וְאֶת-הַתּוֹרָה אֶת-הַחֻקִּים אֶתְּהֶם וְהוֹזַרְתָּה²⁰
יְעִשׂוּ: אֲשֶׁר וְאֶת-הַמַּעֲשֵׂה
שָׂרֵי עֲלֵהֶם וְשָׂמַתָּ בְּצַע שְׂנָאִי אֶמַת אֲנָשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים יִרְאִי אֲנָשֵׁי-חֵיִל מִכָּל-הָעָם תַּחֲזֶה וְאֶתָּה
21: עֲשֵׂרֹת וְשָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי אֶלְפִים
הַקְּטָן וְכָל-הַדְּבָר אֱלֹהֵי יִבְיֵאוּ הַגָּדֹל כָּל-הַדְּבָר וְהָיָה בְּכָל-עֵת אֶת-הָעָם וְשָׁפְטוּ²²
אִתָּךְ: וַיִּשְׂאוּ מֵעַלֶיךָ וְהָקֵל יִשְׁפְּטוּ-הֶם
כִּבְּא עַל-מִקְמוֹ הִזָּה כָּל-הָעָם וְגַם עֲמֹד וַיִּכְלַת אֱלֹהִים וְצוֹנָה תַעֲשֵׂה הִזָּה אֶת-הַדְּבָר אִם²³
בְּשָׁלוֹם:

¹⁷Moses's father-in-law said to him, "Not good is the thing you are doing. ¹⁸For sure you will wear yourself out, yourself and also this people with you, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. ¹⁹Now listen to me. I will advise you, and may God be with you. You be to the people in front of God, and it is you who shall bring concerns to God. ²⁰You shall enjoin upon them the statutes and teachings, and you shall make known to them the way in which they should go and the practices that they are to do. ²¹As for you, seek out from all the people competent men, God-fearers, truthful men, haters of ill-gotten gain, and place them as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens. ²²They shall judge the people continually. Every major concern they will bring to you, but every minor concern they themselves shall judge. Ease up on yourself, and they will carry the burden with you. ²³If you do this thing, and God so commands you, you will be able to stand, and also each one of these people will go to his place in peace."

Structural Analysis

1. Good Intention Versus Wrong Process. Vv. 17,18.

Verse 13 presents the scenario of the passage, "Moses took his seat to serve as a judge for the people . . . they stood around him from morning till evening" (Exod. 18:13). It was perhaps the world's first case of judicial backlog. Moses had no end of work to

do. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was surprised to see the extreme expectations made of God's messenger. According to the Bible, he responded:

עֲשֵׂה אֵתָּהּ אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה מִה־הַדְּבָר וַיֹּאמֶר לָעָם עֲשֵׂה כָל־אֲשֶׁר־הוּא אֵת מִשֶּׁה חֲתָנוּ וַיֵּרָא
עַד־עָרֵב מוֹכֵר עֲלֵיךָ נֹצֵב וְכָל־הַעָם לְבִדְךָ יוֹשֵׁב אֵתָּהּ מִדְּוַע לָעָם
*“What is this you are doing for the people? Why do all these
people surround you from daylight to night while you sit
alone in your role as judge? (v. 14).*

It's like saying "Moses, what on earth do you think you are doing?" Moses believed himself to be an expert. He was stating God's will for the people of God. He then attempted to defend himself by saying:

אֵלַי בָּא דְבַר לְהֵם אֱלֹהִים: כִּי־יִהְיֶה לְדָרֵשׁ הָעָם אֵלַי כִּי־יָבֵא לְחֲתָנוּ מִשֶּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר
וְאֶת־חֲוֹרָתָיו: הֵאלֹהִים אֶת־חֲקֵי וְהוֹדַעְתִּי רַעְיוֹ וּבִין אִישׁ בֵּין וְשִׁפְטֵתִי
*“The people come to me to seek God's will. Every time they
disagree, they bring it to me, and I decide between the parties
and let them know about God's laws and judgments (Vv. 15,
16).*

Moses had essential duties to complete. The prophet was aiding Israel in finding solutions to their issues. They sought to understand God's will, as do most of humanity. They also desired assistance in settling their conflicts. So, to get advice from Moses, they brought all of their problems to him. Moses assisted them by teaching them God's word and discerning God's will. They had a judge and a counselor in the prophet. He has an educational component to his work. He imparted the message of God to the people so they would understand what God demanded. He also assisted them in using the truth of God's word in actual circumstances.

Moses was carrying out a responsibility that was so crucial – the expository and practical teaching of God's word – that it was reasonable to assume his in-laws would be impressed. After all, Jethro had only ever observed him tending sheep until now. Moses was now Israel's most significant individual and the nation's prophet. All day long, he had people begging for his

attention. Jethro, though, was unimpressed. Instead, he understood that what Moses was doing would ultimately be harmful, both to himself and others:

הֲזֶה גַם־הַעֲמֹם גַּם־אֶתְּהָ תִבְלֵ עֲשֵׂה: נֹכַח אֶתְּהָ אֲשֶׁר הִדְבָּר לֹא־טוֹב אֵלָיו מִשָּׂה חֲתָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לְבִקְרוֹ: עֲשֵׂהוּ לֹא־תוֹכַח הִדְבָּר מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי־כִבֵּד עֲמָךְ אֲשֶׁר

Moses' father-in-law said to him, "Not good is the thing you are doing. For sure you will wear yourself out, yourself and also this people with you, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. (Vv. 17, 18).

There was no skepticism regarding Moses' sincerity. The prophet was merely making an effort to follow through on his duty. He was kindly trying to address the spiritual needs of the people. Moses was willing to help, but it was obvious that he had been given a weight too heavy to carry by himself. Jethro had the insight to realize that Moses could not keep up at this speed. Moses will soon be worn out due to the excessive workload. He was on the verge of burnout. Jethro was, therefore, adamant that what Moses was doing was "not good." These words in Hebrew convey a strong dislike. Moses made a grave error by taking on more work than he could handle.

2. Adapting New Insights. Vv. 19-23

Jethro presented a brand-new system of government in his capacity as Israel's management consultant. With Moses functioning as the chief justice, it included elements of a judicial system and a procedure for making legal decisions. It also included an act of leadership care strategy for God's followers. Jethro began by maintaining the prophet's position:

אֶתְּהָ וְהִבְאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים מוֹל לְעַם אֶתְּהָ הִגִּיהָ עֲמָךְ אֱלֹהִים וַיְהִי אֵי־עֲצָךְ בְּקִלְי שָׁמַע עֲלֶיהָ אֱלֹהֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים: אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים
כִּי יֵלְכוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָרֶיךָ לָהֶם וְהוֹדַעְתָּ וְאֶת־הַתּוֹרָת אֶת־הַחֻקִּים אֲתֶם וְהִזְהַרְתָּה יַעֲשׂוּן אֲשֶׁר וְאֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה

Now listen to me. I will advise you, and may God be with you. You be to the people in front of God, and it is you who shall bring concerns to God. You shall enjoin upon them the statutes and

teachings, and you shall make known to them the way in which they should go and the practices that they are to do. (Exod. 18:19,20).

Jethro did not intend to divert his son-in-law from his vocation. The prophet would still be Moses. He would continue to act as Israel's representative and the covenant mediator, standing between God and his people. He continued to impart the practical application of God's law. He would demonstrate to the populace "the way to walk" or "how to live." Moses would continue to guide the Israelites on their journey by explaining God's word and by setting an excellent example with his own life. Nothing would alter that. However, Jethro also understood that Moses needed assistance, so he proposed an elder-led system of government for Israel. Here was his suggestion:

וְאֶת־הַמְעֵשָׂה כֹּה גִלְכוּ אֶת־הַדָּרוֹךְ לָהֶם וְהוֹדַעְתָּ וְאֶת־הַתּוֹרָה אֶת־הַחֲקִים אֲתָהֶם וְהִנְהַרְתָּה לְעֵשׂוֹן: אֲשֶׁר

וְשָׁמַתָּ בְּצַע שְׁנָאֵי אֲמַת אַנְשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֵי אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל מִכָּל־הָעָם תְּחַנְנֶה וְאֲתָה עֲשֹׂרֹת וְשָׁרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׁרֵי אֶלְפִים שָׁרֵי עֲלֹתָם

As for you, seek out from all the people competent men, God-fearers, truthful men, haters of ill-gotten gain, and place them as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens. They shall judge the people continually. Every major concern they will bring to you, but every minor concern they themselves shall judge. Ease up on yourself, and they will carry the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, you will be able to stand, and also each one of these people will go to his place in peace." (Vv. 21-23).

Jethro had a sound strategy. It required the choice of knowledgeable spiritual figures who would assist Moses in ruling the people. These men would resolve regular interpersonal conflicts and respond to common spiritual queries. However, Moses was available for advice anytime the elders required it and would take on all the challenging issues. This would enable him to continue leading God's flock while protecting his prophetic authority. As said by Maxie Dunnam,

“It was not a matter of taking leadership from Moses; it was a matter of reordering and dispensing leadership in such a way that other people would share the load.”²⁴⁸

The secret is to compare human understanding to God's Word's excellent standard. Jethro, for his part, was cautious not to issue the prophet of God directives that would go against God's command. Instead, he urged Moses to ensure his counsel reflected God's will. “Listen to me now, and I will give you some counsel. May God be with you,” he added (v. 19). Jethro asked God to bless his advice. “If you do this and God so commands,” he continued (v. 23). Some academicians view this assertion as a directive. They quote the verse: “If you do this – God commands you.”²⁴⁹ Jethro, however, was not in a position to command God's prophet. Instead, he subordinated his wise counsel to God's perfect will.

God must have approved Jethro's advice because the Bible states:

אָמַר: אֲשֶׁר כֹּל נִיעַשׁ חֲתָנוּ לְקוֹל מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁמָע
מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי עַל־הַעָם רְאִשִׁים אַתֶּם וַיִּתֶּן מִכָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל מֹשֶׁה וַיִּבְחַר
עֲשָׂרֹת: וְשָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים שָׂרֵי
וְשָׂפוֹטוֹ הַקָּטָן וְכָל־הַדָּבָר אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיְבִיאֵן הַקָּשָׁה אֶת־הַדָּבָר בְּכָל־עֵת אֶת־הָעָם וְשָׁפוֹטוּ
הֵם:

“Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all of Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, the fifties, and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves” (Vv. 24-26).

Moses was teachable, as seen by this. He was ready to receive sound counsel for his ministry as a part of his obedience to God. “Moses sent his father-in-law on his way after receiving it, and

248 Maxie D. Dunnam, *Exodus, The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), p. 229.

249 Peter Enns, *Exodus, NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. 372.

Jethro went back to his own country,” states the Bible (v. 27).²⁵⁰ Moses undoubtedly held this decent man in high regard and was eternally grateful to him for his strategy, which allowed him to carry out his ministry's demands while also appeasing God's people.

Lessons For Developing Sustainable Governance In Africa

Jethro's suggestion was based on six crucial ideas for establishing effective governance for Moses and the Israelites, which, if learned and applied in the African context, would bring about sustainable governance in Africa. These principles include but are not limited to the following:

The Principle of Maturity

Jethro advised Moses to be selective: “Select capable individuals” Israel needed men who could perform the task (v. 21). The word “select” in this context has the meaning of discernment or insight. African leaders must be intelligently picked, selected, or elected since the continent has sensible ones. What specific qualifications were required? Jethro stated nothing concerning these men's employment history, educational background, or monetary earnings. He listed moral and spiritual qualities rather than material or intellectual qualifications. “Men who fear God, trustworthy men who detest dishonest gain” were to be chosen by Moses (v. 21).

The first requirement is related to a man's relationship with God. A good leader reveres, fears, and wants to glorify God in whatever they do. Such a man is holy and zealous for the name of God. His main objective is to further the glory of God, not his agenda or his fear of what others may think. This indicates that he is prepared to make decisions that people disagree with and to offer advice they do not want to hear when it is essential. A man who fears God is required to do it. The key to all wisdom is known by a man who fears God. The Bible states that “the

250 *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, 5th ed.* (Atlanta: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1990).

beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD” (Ps. 111:10a). Therefore, looking for a man²⁵¹ who fears God is essential to discover an intelligent leader. The second requirement is related to a man's interpersonal interactions. A capable leader may be trusted. He can be trusted. He fulfills his promises. Honesty and integrity are qualities that define him. In particular, he lacks a desire for selfish gain. This has an apparent cause. One of Israel's leaders would attempt to persuade him to rule in their favour as he attempted to settle numerous disagreements. Others could even turn to bribes, while some would attempt to impress him. Only a man who abhorred dishonest gain could be relied upon to keep justice from being tainted. This marks the start of the solution to Africa's problem of weak sustainable governance.

The qualities of good governance that Africa should promote include accountability, transparency, predictability, respect for human rights, etc. The principles that must underpin their government, which must be built on cooperation, tolerance, and adherence to constitutional rules and procedures, can be acquired by African societies.²⁵² As a result, the quality of Africa's future leadership will decide the long-term recovery of the continent. To ensure capable future leadership, the current African leader has a special responsibility to develop a new generation of leaders who are tried and true in our time and to raise the standard of education. Africa's peaceful and prosperous future depends on African leaders passing this new test.

The Principle of Representative Leadership

Put another way; leaders must come from all over the country. Jethro instructed Moses to choose “competent men from all the people” (Exod. 18:21). He should pick leaders from all around the country, not only from his cronies or from one particular group of Israelites. Moses was instructed to “appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, the fifties, and tens” once these individuals were selected (v. 21). The entire country will be set up for sustainable governance in this helpful way.

251 The word “man” is used here and elsewhere in this paper generically to all genders.

252 O. Obasanjo, Keynote Address at Conference of the Leadership Forum, Nairobi Kenya: 1993:100.

Deuteronomy contains more information on this selection procedure. The leaders were not chosen until after God handed the Israelites the Ten Commandments, and they were about to leave Mount Horeb. "Choose some respectful, understanding, and knowledgeable men from each of your tribes, and I will choose them to lead you," Moses instructed the people from the outset (Deut. 1:13). The populace effectively had the power to choose their leaders. However, speaking on God's behalf, the prophet gave them the authority to lead spiritually. As he subsequently said, "I took the leading leaders of your tribes, intelligent and respected men, and appointed them to have control over you," Moses held the last say (Deut. 1:15a).

Africans get a great degree of independence for living and progressing. Many choices they must make involve pragmatic factors that are not explicitly covered in the Bible. God occasionally guides people to the right action by using others, even their constitutions. They occasionally receive sound advice from other sister continents, such as Jethro, or even those they view as adversaries.

It is upsetting to observe that, directly or indirectly, Africa's leadership election processes follow the imposition pattern. Because of Africa's long history of tribe grouping and ethnic aggregations, visionary leaders are frequently overlooked in favour of mediocre leaders who are frequently chosen or imposed on the populace.

The immediate duty of African leadership is to restore optimism. To deliver their people from their plight and the precipice they are currently in. to free the people from the military and the ruling class tyranny. There are enormous, severe, urgent, and significant challenges facing African leadership. A leader in Africa has work to do. He will need leadership skills, planning skills, intelligence, and more.

Leadership in Africa is pursuing social justice, which inherently lessens social injustice. The justice principle has two components: requiring contributions based on equal treatment and paying each person or group what is due. Africans need to learn to interact honestly and sincerely to end the problem of mistrust and suspicion among the different ethnic groups on the continent. Any qualified African could be elected into leadership positions after that, regardless of race or religion.

Jethro counseled Moses to appoint capable men to lead the people in groups of thousands, hundreds, the fifties, and tens while also instructing Moses to continue teaching the people the decrees and instructions of God and to demonstrate to them how they were to live and behave (Ex. 18:20–21).²⁵³ Therefore, attracting the professional, intellectual, business, and industrial elite to run for political office without prejudice is based on leadership development. The cost of political power will undoubtedly decrease due to this process, and issue-based politics will be encouraged as well as improved campaigning standards and the recruitment of new political class members with some level of personal integrity and ancestry.²⁵⁴ The intentional developmental leadership process is more likely to be a good fit for all levels of government where loyalty to the community, honour, and honesty, rather than party influence or dominance, determine the political choice.

The Principle of Shared Leadership

Jethro's primary goal was to achieve this. The amount of work was far too tremendous for one man to handle alone, but once the leaders were chosen, they could assist Moses in carrying the load. They would assess the populace collectively. In actuality, the leaders would undertake most of the labour themselves because they were knowledgeable and holy men, which would resolve the initial issue. Jethro remarked, "That will make your

253 "Leadership at Work" Church Training Programmes for Adults and Young Adults: A Year Book of the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1998, 36-37.
254 Seteolu, 75.

load lighter since they will share it with you” (Exod. 18:22b). Clearly, Jethro gave Moses wise counsel on how to conduct his ministry more successfully and effectively.²⁵⁵

He who divides and shares always takes the better part, says Chile's adage. Shared responsibilities with incompetent hands will result in incorrect execution or trial-and-error work. However, giving responsibility to capable hands results in a division of labour, the rapid achievement of goals, a significant reduction in the weight of leading, and peace of mind for the leader who gave such responsibility to the capable leader (s). Since no one can successfully develop a nation alone, sharing leadership responsibilities must be warmly welcomed by African leaders. Even with all of His superhuman prowess, Jesus Christ involved people.²⁵⁶ It is important to note that Jethro's recommendations for associate judges to Moses were men with spiritual qualities, such as the fear of the Lord, dependability, and a dislike of bribery, rather than men with educational credentials or societal relevance. Although these things may not be wrong because they have their uses and benefits, spiritual virtues were exalted above human abilities, societal relevance, or educational qualifications.

Almost any leadership circumstance can be used for this premise. People will always have wants, so when fulfilling those needs, one will have as much work as one can handle. The issue arises when leaders attempt to bear weights greater than God has ordered them to bear. God never intended for leaders to carry out every task on their own. For this reason, he has entrusted them to the care of the other citizens of the nation. It is utter folly for leaders to think they can do it all alone. This is bad for them and will eventually be bad for the led. This was a significant source of worry for Jethro. Not only was Moses growing weary, but the populace as a whole was as well. Jethro said you and

255 Gregory the Great, “Pastoral Care,” in *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 3:123.

256 *Delegation Church Training Programme for Adults and Young Adults. A Year Book of the Nigerian Baptist Convention 2007*, 39.

these visitors would exhaust yourselves (Exod. 18:18a). The people had to wait all day for Moses because he was the only judge. People would wait in line for hours to see him.

In order to advance the material and cultural aspirations of the majority of its population, Africa needs political leadership with the “mental magnitude” to comprehend the problem and the moral fortitude to act. The main barrier to a violent overthrow of African leadership that possesses courage, tenacity, tolerance, and honesty are the challenges they must overcome, as well as the creation and promotion of a procedure to grant political institutions the necessary legitimacy.²⁵⁷ Africa cannot continue to have unprepared and unsupported leaders. Future leaders must be well aware of the obligations, duties, and responsibilities imposed upon them. They must be exposed to the issues ahead, and leadership preparation must be vital. One option is to routinely host the “African Leadership Forum,” as the African Leadership Forum recommended. The scope of this series may be national, sub-regional, regional, or global, and its duration may vary.²⁵⁸ With a focus on diagnosing past failures that seemed to have failed, as well as their comprehension of the many facets and complex relationships among local, national, regional, and global issues, and looking for potential approaches to offering solutions, the objective is to identify the awareness of young, potential African leaders.

Conclusion

The paper reveals that sustainable governance in Africa is possible if the principles shared in this paper are followed. The principles were taken and extracted from Jethro's advice to Moses as recorded in Exodus 17:17-23. These include; the principle of electing mature leaders, which must be traced through their track records; the principle of representative leadership, which allows an inclusive system, not nepotism; last but not least, the principle of shared leadership, which gives

²⁵⁷ Kamuntu, 109.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

room for other to participate in the governance not one person becoming a monopoly of knowledge and power. When others are allowed to participate, it makes them own the government and contribute to its sustenance, but when others feel marginalized, it brings about an uproar and hullabaloo.

Therefore, the success of leader development is the key to successful African governance. Leadership is essential because it determines whether a government succeeds or fails. For Africa to have a stable government, the issue of leadership development must be treated seriously. The statement made by Henry T. Blackaby that the grandeur of an organization is precisely proportional to the brilliance of its leader is crucial in this context. Great nations rarely surpass their leaders. Pygmy leaders do not create giant organizations. Therefore, developing leaders is essential for firms to grow. Although it requires various skills, leadership is ultimately more about being than doing. Personal and leadership growth go hand in hand. Leaders become more capable of leading as they develop personally. They expand their organization's growth ability as they develop their leadership skills, which should not jeopardize in Africa.

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