

## Hobab – Numbers 10:29 – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel. (Num. 10:29)

The above verse unmistakably reads, Hobab was the son of Moses' father-in-law Raguel (or Reuel at Exo. 2:18). Raguel was the priest of Midian, and he gave Zipporah, one of his seven daughters, to Moses as his wife (Exo. 2:16-21). Raguel was also known as Jethro (Exo. 3:1, 4:18). Now this should be no problem for our reader as Jacob was also known as Israel and Joshua as Hoshea (Num. 13:16). The problem arises at Judges 4:11:

Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites,

Obviously, Numbers 10:29 says Hobab is the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, but Judges 4:11 gives Hobab as the father-in-law of Moses – which is taken by many as an undeniable error in the Holy Writ. If he is the son of Raguel as in Numbers 10:29, then he is the brother of Zipporah and thus the brother-in-law of Moses – not his father-in-law as stated in Judges 4:11.

This is either a clear mistake or simply a paradox. Now the unwavering position of this disciple is that Scripture is the verbal (word-for-word), plenary (complete, nothing is to be added or removed) Word of the Living God. Hence, we neither offer nor accept any resolution that includes changing the words found in the Authorized Bible.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we understand the above “contradiction” is merely a mirage: one in appearance only.

To resolve the Gordian knot, we begin by observing that when 40 year old Moses' came to Midian (Acts 7:23), Zipporah's father was called Raguel in Exodus 2, but 40 years later when Moses had his encounter with the Lord at the burning bush in Exodus 3 (Acts 7:30), for some unstated reason he was then known by Jethro. About 213 years later, it was *recorded* in Judges 4:11 that this same father-in-law of Moses had also been called Hobab – a name of endearment meaning ‘beloved’.<sup>2</sup> These are the recorded facts.

With them before us, we understand from Numbers 10:29 that Moses' father-in-law cherished this last designation so much that he gave it to a son – a brother-in-law to Moses. The difficulty is resolved as simple and straightforward as this.

Finally, just before Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai, Hobab senior came and returned Zipporah with their two sons to Moses (he had sent her back to her father in Midian, Exo. 18:1-7; cp. 4:24-26). After a brief stay of only a few days (cp. Exodus 16:1 with 19:1), Moses' father-in-law returned home (Exo. 18:27). Around a year later, the patriarch invited his brother-in-law, Hobab junior, (cp. Num. 10:11) to accompany Israel and himself into the Promise Land. The mirage has been lifted and the so-called error vanishes with it.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some note that the Hebrew root of *hōtōn* (nth) does not always reference a father-in-law but can refer to any “in-law” relationship. Thus, they change Judges 4:11 to read “Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses”. Upon his ordination, the author of this paper proclaimed a commitment to the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. As a result, he deems altering the Word of God in order to resolve such paradoxical problems as unworthy.

<sup>2</sup> Such is not farfetched. This author was known as Floyd by most, but his mother and wife called him “Floyd Nolen” when frustrated with him. Moreover, he was called “Jonesy” by his high school football teammates, Jones by his college coaches and Grand Da Da – a name of endearment – by his great grandchildren.