

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Hobab

Hobab is only mentioned in two passages of Scripture, but there is some confusion as to who he was. Some say he was the father-in-law of Moses while others say he was the brother-in-law of Moses. Let's begin by looking at the only two verses that mention him by the name Hobab.

"Now Moses said to **Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law**, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good things to Israel." **Numbers 10:29 (NKJV)**

"Now Heber the Kenite, of **the children of Hobab the father-in-law** of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh." **Judges 4:11 (NKJV)**

The confusion is caused by three things in particular:

1. The ambiguity of **Numbers 10:29**. Is Hobab or Reuel called the father-in-law of Moses?
2. The translation of "chathan" in some

3. translations like the KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, etc. as "father-in-law" in **Judges 4:11**.
4. The comments of some commentators who seem to be confused on this issue themselves.

The following facts ought to help eliminate the confusion:

1. Hobab is clearly called the son of Reuel in **Numbers 10:29**.
2. Reuel is another name for Jethro. Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of the priest of Midian who is called Reuel. Later, the priest of Midian who is Moses' father-in-law, is called Jethro. Note that "Reuel" is spelled "Raguel" in some translations.

"16 Now **the priest of Midian had seven daughters**. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. 18 When they

came to **Reuel their father**, he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?" **Exodus 2:16-18 (NKJV)**

"Then Moses was content to live with the man, and **he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses**." **Exodus 2:21 (NKJV)**

"Now **Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian**. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God." **Exodus 3:1 (NKJV)**

3. Thus, Hobab is the son of Moses' father-in-law who is called both Reuel and Jethro and was the priest of Midian. This makes Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses, not his father-in-law.
4. The Hebrew word "chathan" can mean brother-in-law or father-in-law. It is true that this is the Hebrew word that is used for Reuel in reference to Moses in both **Exodus 3:1** and **Numbers 10:29**. How-

ever, **Exodus 2:21** makes it clear that Moses was married to his daughter, thus he was Moses' father-in-law. But this is not the case with Hobab in Judges 4:11.

“Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of **Hobab the father-in-law of Moses**, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh.”
Judges 4:11 (NKJV)

Here the word, “chathan”, cannot mean father-in-law as Hobab was the son of Moses' father-in-law. There are a number of translations that render it correctly as “brother-in-law” here like the ASV, BBE, WEB, NCV, NIV, etc. McClintock and Strong, in the article on Hobab, describe the word as, “...merely signifying any *male relative by marriage*, [Emphasis theirs] and rendered even ‘son-in-law’ in Gen. XIX, 14...”

There are commentaries that present Hobab as the father-in-law of Moses. The problem is that this makes him the same as Reuel, who is also called Jethro. But he is clearly the son of Reuel, not Reuel himself in **Numbers 10:29**.

Therefore, it is clear that Hobab is the brother-in-law of Moses and **Judges 4:11** should be translated that way.

Note: The previous article is an excerpt from *Failure of a Generation: Numbers Chapters 1-14* by Terry Carter.