

# Family

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

The chapters we read this week include the Ten Commandments, the basic principles of Jewish life and one of its core principles is family. 'Honor your father and your mother.' And I should point out that later on in Leviticus it says, 'Respect your mother and your father.' Notice the juxtaposition. The Torah is anxious to achieve balance. But also to emphasize the significance. The principle to respect and honor one's parents is so important, it is included in the first five, those laws that relate to God rather than those that relate to other human beings. Parents are the agents of God in taking responsibility for their children.

Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses came to visit Moses and brought his wife and sons with. Moses the leader, isolated and under constant pressure, needed to have his family around him for emotional support. Of course he had his brother and sister there, but the special bond of immediate family, wife and children, primary and irreplaceable.

Moses was so concerned about his wife and children that even though when he set out from Midian he took them with, when he met Aaron he realized how difficult the conditions were there and sent them back to Midian for their own safety.

From all this we learn how important family is for one's protection as one grows up. One needs to recognize that debt and try to repay it. But most important are the moral lessons of Torah because they help as we go on to build our own lives and create families of our own. In the end the most important task in our lives is to live the good and a spiritual life. So the text starts with family but goes on to assert the importance of a set of values and good behavior, because in the end each one of us has to stand on his or her own two feet and accept responsibility for one's actions.