



Yitro

Every child is the one and only

Parshat Yitro famously gives us a commandment relating to how we should be good children to our parents. However, it also offers a hint as to how we can be good parents to our children.

It is well known that in the Ten Commandments, presented to us in this Parsha, the fifth of the mitzvot is “Kabbed et-avicha ve’et-immecha”—honour your father and your mother.

But in addition, there is a wonderful lesson relating to parenting in the Parsha. Close to the beginning, we are given details of the names of the two sons born to Moshe and Tziporah. The Torah presents it as follows: “Shem ha’echad Gershom” – “the name of the one is Gershom”.

“Veshem ha’echad Eli’ezer” – “and the name of the one is Eliezer.”

This is extraordinary.

Everywhere else in the Torah, when there is a list, you find “Shem ha’echad” — the name of the first one — and “Shem hasheni” — the name of the second. Similarly, for example, with regard to the days of creation, and so on.

How can you have “the one” and “the one”?

I believe that Moshe and Tziporah recognised that, in order to create a

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healthy home environment, they needed to avoid all the pressures, tensions, enmity, bitterness, and even hatred that existed in nearly every family we are introduced to in the Book of Bereshit that preceded them — including the very first family on earth, within which, one brother killed another.

Moshe and Tziporah recognised that there should be no room for jealousy or for the question of who the senior is, who will command respect and attention, or the subordination of others.

That’s why, they let their children know that in their eyes: “Gershom — you’re echad, you’re the one and only Gershom,” and “Eliezer, you too are echad, you’re the one and only Eliezer.”

And so too, for all parents: in order that, please God, we should succeed in building and maintaining a healthy home environment, we should let each and every one of our children know that, in our eyes, they are the one and only.

Shabbat Shalom.