



## Teach Your Children Well

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Creating and sustaining a new Jewish family is like painting a picture. You start off with a blank canvas and slowly, carefully begin to add colors, designs and textures. In this week's *parasha*, Moses begins to put the finishing touches on his forty-year masterpiece – the Jewish People. The wisdom Moses shares with the people can help us as we paint our own Jewish family portraits.

After the 43-line *Ha'azinu* poem, which emphasizes God's greatness and generosity, Moses adds four verses which serve as our paint and brushes. "Take to heart all the words with which I have charged you this day. Enjoin them upon your children, that they may observe faithfully all the terms of this Teaching. For this is not a trifling thing for you: it is your very life; through it you shall long endure..."

These few verses contain three elements which can help parents design and create their own beautiful Jewish family. "Take to heart all the words with which I have charged you..." This refers to a PERSONAL COMMITMENT on the part of the parents. Creating a Jewish family requires time, energy and resources. If you *want* it to happen, it will happen. Given that investment, parents need to understand what they want to accomplish and why. What are the goals? What is the payoff? "It is your very life; through it you shall long endure."

The next element of our Jewish family portrait is the importance of TRANSMISSION. As the *Torah* says: "Enjoin them upon your children." Parents are commanded to actively pass along Jewish knowledge to their children. While Jewish schools are important, parental involvement is just as vital. Do your children see you living Jewish values? Do you, yourself, study *Torah*? How does your schedule reflect your Jewish commitments? Without active role-modeling, the colors in our portrait fade quickly.

The final design element is EFFORT. In the verse "for this is not a trifling thing for you" the word "trifling" ("*rayk*" in Hebrew) can also be translated as "empty." What does Moses mean when he tells the people that the *Torah* is not "empty" for them? According to the Jerusalem *Talmud* (*Peah* 1:1), if the *Torah* seems empty to you it's because you have failed to struggle with it. Just as great art is appreciated by those who have studied art history, the *Torah's* beauty and wisdom are available to those who put in the work. Parenting requires wisdom, patience, persistence, inspiration as well as perspiration. Some challenges are easily overcome, others require years of hard work. It is through effort that the colors in the family portrait "set" for the next generation.

Our Schechter community is blessed with hundreds of different “Jewish family portraits.” The colors and design reflect the visions of the many artists. As we move into a New Year, may we all use the paint and brushes which God has given us to paint beautiful masterpieces.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS WEEK’S PARSHA, HAAZINU, TRY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What warning does Moshe give the Jewish people?
2. What will happen if they do not follow Moshe’s warning?
3. What happened on Mt. Nevo?