

## CHARGE YOUR CHILDREN\*

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם

שִׂימוּ לְבַבְכֶם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מַעֲיֵד בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם

אֲשֶׁר תִּצְוֶם אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת:

He [Moses] said to them:

“Set your heart to all these words that I testify against you today,  
that you charge your children to observe to do all the words of this law.”

*He [Moses] said to them:*—He imparted to them his role as teacher of Torah for the next generation; as he had taught it to them, so they would teach it to their children. “*Set your heart*”—To set the heart requires that “one must concentrate with all one’s eyes, heart and ears” to fathom the words of Torah (Sifre). We must whole-heartedly take upon ourselves the yoke of learning and living the Torah if we are to successfully bequeath it to another generation. “*To all these words*”—The reference is to all the words, because there is nothing empty or useless in the Torah—and that which appears so is “due to our lack of understanding, our failure to labor to discover its meaning” (N. Leibowitz). “*That I testify against you today*”—We were thus warned from that day to this of the consequences of honoring or abandoning the teaching, that the choice is between “sustenance without suffering,” in which we reap blessings out of proportion to our merit, or destruction if we seek to “frustrate” God’s will (Sforno). “*That you charge your children*”—That from the beginning and throughout the lives of our children we are to ordain and consecrate them to the vision and practice of this teaching of Israel as a holy nation; that upon our deathbed this charge to them will be our “last will and testament” (Sforno); remembering, Moses was grateful that Torah was observed after he taught it, because “had others not accepted the Torah through him, it would have been worthless” (Sifre)—and it would not have been our inheritance. “*To observe to do all the words of this law*”—The survival of our children as Jews in their succeeding generations, the life of Am Yisrael, depends now upon our teaching them, so that they in turn observe to teach their children.

\* Deuteronomy 32:46 (in Haazinu)