

Drash on V'et'channan (Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11)

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David L. Craig

The name of Parashat [V'et'channan](#) is derived from the first Hebrew word which, according to its Wikipedia article, means *and I pleaded*, I being Moses. V'et'channan is the second parashat within the Book of Deuteronomy (*Devarim*), the final book of the Torah that in many ways summarizes the first four. The summary in V'et'channan's Wikipedia article states:

The parashah tells how [Moses](#) asked to see the [Land of Israel](#), made arguments to obey the law, recounted setting up the [Cities of Refuge](#), recited the [Ten Commandments](#) and the [Shema](#), and gave instructions for the [Israelites'](#) conquest of the Land.

This parashat thus concludes the first of Moses' three Devarim speeches which ends with the portion regarding the cities of refuge, then the second speech is briefly introduced starting in chapter 4 verse 44 with the familiar statement, "This is the *Torah* which Moses placed before the people of Isra'el." The second speech starts with restating the Ten Words as well as the declaration of the Great Commandment within the Shema. This is my third big parashat in a row. The LORD highlighted one verse as paramount.

Yah-a-mod, Karen bat George. Karen will read for us, in Hebrew from the Torah and in English from the Complete Jewish Bible translation, Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 9, which is within the first speech:

Only be careful, and watch yourselves diligently as long as you live, so that you won't forget what you saw with your own eyes, so that these things won't vanish from your hearts. Rather, make them known to your children and grandchildren –

Thank you, Karen.

The essence of this verse and drash is the need to remember and share what you see with your own eyes.

A little earlier in verses 3 and 4 Moses had made it clear to what sights he was referring:

³ You saw with your own eyes what *ADONAI* did at Ba'al-P'or, that *ADONAI* destroyed from among you all the men who followed Ba'al-P'or; ⁴ but you who stuck with *ADONAI* your God are still alive today, every one of you.

Of course, they also saw the faithful cloud by day and pillar of fire by night 24/7 for as many as four decades, as well as what recently became of Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites.

This verse also states *why* we must remember—so those memories won't vanish from our hearts.

Why are vanished memories a problem? As we were reminded in Hilton's drash last week, here's a big example: ten of the spies forgot what they had seen during those few years preceding the spy mission. They had seen a lot: the ten plagues, the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, supernatural provision of water and food, The LORD's awesome Mt. Sinai appearance and direct address, and more. But they forgot it all when it came time to report what they had seen in the Promised Land and what they thought Israel should do with that information. Tragically, it seems nobody reminded them, either.

Do you ever forget what you have seen? Does your mind ever "draw a blank"? At the worst possible time?

But notice it's not enough to remember for yourself. You must tell your children and grandchildren what you have seen, to help them remember what's important when faced with big challenges.

So *how* do we remember what we've seen? A look at the Hebrew words in the verse provides clues.

The two verbs "be careful" and "watch yourselves" have the same Hebrew root: sha·mar, Strong's Hebrew Dictionary #8104. The use of sha·mar twice as a compound verb projects greater intensity. Sha·mar is also the root of the noun Cain used to ask if he was his brother's *keeper*. So start your project to remember what you've seen with purposing to seriously be your own keeper or watchman with the intention of preventing forgetfulness of what God has shown you.

The verse includes the clause, "as long as you live". So you're never done keeping yourself from being forgetful while in this realm. Could it be possible working at remembering such things can prevent you from getting Alzheimer's Disease? That would be an interesting medical study.

Next consider the highly significant adverb translated "diligently" which is "me·od" in Hebrew, Strong's Hebrew Dictionary #3966. The first appearance of me·od in the Tenach is at the end of the sixth day of Creation. With the addition of Adam and Eve, the evaluation of Creation changed from a consistent "good" to "very good". Other English translations of me·od include muchly, greatly, exceedingly, violently (regarding The LORD's arrival on Mt. Sinai), richly, mightily, etc.

So how muchly does me·od mean in *this* verse? The Septuagint provides a big clue.

Out of 300 instances of me·od in the Tenach, the 70 Jewish scholars who produced that popular Greek translation rendered 94.3% (including this verse) as sfod·ra, Strong's Greek Dictionary #4970. *Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, in agreement with *Thayer's Lexicon*, tells us the root indicates "restlessness" and is equivalent to "excessive, violent". For various New Covenant verses Vines assigns "very, very much, exceedingly, sore, and greatly." Perhaps with insufficient rigor, the HELPS word studies in *The Discovery Bible* include "all-out, exceeding; very much," "done to the max," and "going 'wide-open' with total effort – like doing something 'with a vengeance!'" Thus sfod·ra is somewhere within in the superlative half of the [degrees of comparison of languages](#).

In addition, we find only eleven instances of *sfod·ra* in the New Covenant. Dividing the number of appearances of *sfod·ra* and *me·od* by the number of words in the Brit HaDashah and the Tenach, respectively, we see both appear less frequently than a tenth of a percent. They are not at all common. So, if you see “diligently”, “carefully”, “very,” etc. in The Bible, stop and highlight the grammatical component being modified thereby. While all Scripture is important, some Scripture is muchly more important.

I suggest Smith Wigglesworth’s habits may have some association with the level of watchfulness expected in this verse. According to the book, “*Smith Wigglesworth: The Secret of his Power,*” by Albert Hibbert, he came to the point in his walk where, if 15 minutes had passed without any reading from The Bible, he would stop in the middle of whatever he was doing, take out his don’t-leave-home-without-it Bible, and start reading. He wasn’t going overboard, being legalistic, or seeking to appear to be holy, he was just being obedient to what he perceived to be commanded and necessary. It is interesting that a non-charismatic pastor who [reviewed](#) the book expressed conviction of the need to do likewise in his reading of Scriptures.

Continuing this Hebrew study, we now consider the “from generation to generation” component of the verse. But first understand Adonai is not only concerned about you forgetting what your eyes have seen. He is also concerned that your descendants likewise know and do not forget what *you* have experienced and learned.

The Hebrew verb translated as *make them known* is *ve·ho·dah·tam* from the root *ya·da* which is assigned #3045 in Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary. This is the same verb as in Genesis chapter 18 verse 19 when Adonai is talking about Abraham (citing the KJV here):

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

The LORD told us here *why* He chose Abraham. It is not merely that Abraham would teach his children of keep the Way of The LORD, but that they would *implement* what they learned, particularly Isaac. Parents, do your children know Biblical truths as well as you yourselves do? Will they make the correct hard choices as young Isaac did on Mt. Moriah? Yes, I *am* preaching to myself—I sincerely wish I’d put this drash together 40 years ago. That story is often called the test of Abraham, but wasn’t it really the test of Isaac? Yes and no. Certainly, Isaac was tested, but at the same time, Abraham’s training of Isaac was likewise put to the test. But consider there was no chance of failure according to what God had said He knew Abraham would do. So “test” in this case meant *proving* for all to see what was within Abraham and Isaac as opposed to *discovering* what was in there. Thus the verb “make them known” in Deuteronomy 4 verse 9 means your descendants know as well as you do what you have taught, just as Isaac knew equally as well as Abraham what God had done for Abraham, the covenants established, and everything expected by those covenants, including total submission to God’s Sovereign Will.

Now let's jump into Moses' second speech, still in this parashat, to see how The Shema illuminates this drash.

First, notice that in verse 5, which Yeshua called the Greatest Commandment, we read me·od, but it is used here as a noun meaning "might":

love The LORD your God [...] with all your might

Next, consider verse 7 begins with the single Hebrew word v·shi·nah·tan translated in the CJB as *and you shall teach them diligently*.

Neither me·od nor sfod·ra is in this word, not even in the entire verse, yet the words "diligently" or "carefully" are usually included in English translations. It is reasonable to wonder why. The rest of verse 7 does make it clear this teaching should happen anywhere and anytime people are not sleeping, thus suggesting diligence. More importantly, however, the root of v·shi·nah·tan is sha·nan, which has Strong's Hebrew Dictionary #8150, and means *to sharpen* or *to whet* (that's double-you, *ach*, ee, tee). Abraham Lincoln, aka The Railsplitter, helped us appreciate the diligence inherent in this verb when he said:

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the ax.

Four hours of scraping an ax head against a properly oiled whetstone is an exercise in diligently repeating over and over again and again. Over a decade of effective teaching sharpens the student's mind and probably the body as well.

Also notice in verse 6 the phrase *these words which I am commanding you this day* is referring to all 16 chapters of the second speech. That's a *lot* of teaching, especially when multiplied by all the repetitions.

Now allow me to suggest you be wary of coming across as an ever-present monotonous audio loop when so teaching your children—that's likely muchly counterproductive. Find the boundaries of their attentiveness and respect them. And while I'm on the subject of counterproductive, it should go without saying the do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do approach to training is intellectually bankrupt and very few children are so lacking in common sense as to be persuaded positively thereby. The fact is, for all the emphasis on speaking in these verses, most learning by children is caught, not taught. The LORD designed them to learn by aping their parents, both the good behavior and the bad. So always be diligently mindful of the *examples* you are setting.

Lastly, consider Psalm 127 verses 4-5:

⁴ The children born when one is young
 are like arrows in the hand of a warrior.
⁵ How blessed is the man
 who has filled his quiver with them;
 he will not have to be embarrassed
 when contending with foes at the city gate.

Fathers, how much more will this be true of you if you have diligently sharpened the arrows in your quiver so they are muchly effective in the tasks The LORD assigns them? So remember and testify what The LORD has done for you and shown you.

The next parashat is *Ekev* which spans Deuteronomy chapter 7 verse 12 through chapter 11 verse 25.