

ללמוד וללמד and וְשִׁנְנָתָם - Learning, Teaching, and "Sharpening" in Parashat Va'ethanan
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Nothing conjures tedium and challenge more than the study of grammar. But without an understanding of Hebrew grammar, we won't fully understand the Hebrew text. In this week's Parasha, the root **ל.מ.ד.** (learn/teach) occurs eight times. **ללמוד** (*kal* infinitive) is **to learn**. **ללמד** (*pi'el* infinitive) is **to teach**. Now that Moses is barred from entering the land, he understands that he will no longer be able impart God's instructions in person. What's he going to do? Answer: Teach. As a teacher - **מלמד** - Moses will teach the people what they need to know so that they will be able to live in the land. The greatest challenge of teaching, however, is retention. Without review and comprehension, it is very difficult to keep what we learn in our minds. True, some exceptional people can retain things as soon as they learn them, but most of us are not capable of that. Hence, the Torah's emphasis on learning, remembering, not forgetting. It is fascinating to note that in the Torah, the root **ל.מ.ד.** is found nowhere else but in Deuteronomy (17 times). Teaching and learning are central to Deuteronomy and that in turn shaped all of Judaism. We do not need necessarily to be "learned" but we always need to be "learning." Below are the different grammatical forms of **ל.מ.ד.** in this parasha. Shabbat Shalom!

ל.מ.ד.	Verse in Hebrew	Verse in English
ללמד I am teaching <i>Pi'el</i> - intensive. 1st person masc. singular participle.	(ד:א) ועתה ישראל שמע אליהם חקים ואליהם משפטים אשר אנכי מלמד אתכם לעשות למען תחיו ובאתם וירשתם את הארץ אשר ה' אלהי אבותיכם נתן לכם:	(4:1) <i>And now, O Israel,</i> <i>hearken to the laws and to the regulations</i> <i>that I am teaching you to observe,</i> <i>in order that you may live</i> <i>and enter and take possession of the land</i> <i>that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving to you.</i>
Comment: Moses' appeal to overturn God's verdict barring him from the entering the land has been denied. Having been told <i>not to speak of the matter again</i> Moses changes course and becomes "teacher". The explicit purpose of his teaching is to shape the people and create a sustainable society, so that they will live and thrive in the land based on God's law. But implicitly he is saying that it is the learning is that gives us life. The more learning, the more life.		
למדתי I taught <i>Pi'el</i> - intensive. 1st person masc. singular perfect.	(ד:ה) ראהו למדתי אתכם חקים ומשפטים כאשר צוני ה' אלהי לעשות לך בקרב הארץ אשר אתם באים שמה לרשתה:	(4:5) <i>See, I taught you</i> <i>laws and regulations as the Lord my God has commanded me,</i> <i>to do thus, amid the land</i> <i>that you are entering to possess.</i>
Comment: God commands. But Moses teaches. The people are terrified of God and that is why Moses functions as God's intermediary. But is Moses delivering God's commandments word-for-word, exactly verbatim? How much is God's and how much of is Moses'? We don't actually know. By <i>teaching</i> God's commandments Moses is also <i>interpreting</i> them, even if it is only in the way he intones the words. All teaching is in fact, interpretation. Thus Moses is the first <i>darshan-preacher</i> , the first <i>parshan-commentator</i> , truly, our first rabbi. <i>Moshe Rabbenu</i> .		
ילמדו they may learn <i>Kal</i> - simple. 3rd person masc. plural imperfect. ילמדוהו they are to teach <i>Pi'el</i> - intensive 3rd person plural imperfect.	(ד:י) יום אשר עמדת לפני ה' אלהיך בהר בארמור ה' אלי הקהל לי את העם ואשמעם את דברי אשר ילמדו ליראה אתי כל הימים אשר הם חיים על האדמה ואת בניהם ילמדו:	(4:10) <i>the day that you stood</i> <i>before the presence of the Lord your God at Horev,</i> <i>when the Lord said to me:</i> <i>Assemble the people to me,</i> <i>that I may have them hear my words,</i> that they may learn to hold me in awe <i>all the days</i> <i>that they are alive on the land,</i> —and their children, they are to teach!
Comment: Mount Sinai looms large in the story not only because of the content of the <i>Ten Utterances</i> but because of the overwhelming experience there, the mountain on fire, the billowing smoke, the thunder and the sounds. The purpose of the experience was not only to hear the <i>Utterances</i> , but to <i>learn to fear God</i> . In other words, Sinai would be so powerful that it would imprint them forever, and they in turn, would <i>teach that fear of God</i> to their own children. There is slight rhetorical trick here. The actual people who stood at Horev (Sinai) are already long gone,		

