

Mandates, Deuteronomy 6:6-7; 4:10

Deuteronomy 6:6 - And these words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart.

Deuteronomy 6:7 - And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

The verb translated “*shall teach*” is the piel use of *shanan* and means to sharpen or whet. This verb is used in other passages for sharpening of swords and arrows. Here it is used for the diligent instruction of children in the Word of God.

An implied meaning associated with this process is repetition. You sharpen a sword by a repeated action of whetting such as with a stone. You sharpen the soul of a child by repetition of principles taught every day throughout the day at every opportunity.

The word for “sons” here is *ben* and refers to male children. It is synonymous to the Greek *teknon* which is the general term for a minor.

And so, what we have here is a mandate to inculcate doctrine. The piel stem of the verb means that it is to be undertaken intensively through repetition on a consistent basis.

PRINCIPLE: You train by restraining; you teach by repetition.

Training is primarily negative while teaching is primarily positive. Repetition in both areas is required since those things which are positive contain truth and thus run counter to the natural inclination of the child's sinful nature.

There is another word for teaching children used in other passages which add to our understanding of the requirements placed upon parents. One example is:

Deuteronomy 4:10 - Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me, “Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear me all the days they live on the earth and that they may teach their children.”

The word “*teach*” here is the verb *lamad* which carries with it the ideas of both training and teaching. The training aspect is seen in a derivative from *lamad* which is *malmed*, translated “oxgoad” in:

Judges 3:31 - And after him came Shamgar, the son of Anath/A-nath, who struck down 600 Philistines with an oxgoad.

The term is used in one passage in the New Testament:

Acts 26:14 – “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads [kentron].’”

What is a goad? Learning what it is and how it is used, both literally and figuratively, will give us some insight into the “training” aspect of child rearing.

The isagogics of “goads” is interesting. We look first at: **International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. “goad”**:

Usually, a straight branch of oak or other strong wood from which the bark has been stripped, and which has at one end a pointed spike and at the other a flat, chisel-shaped iron. The pointed end is to prod the oxen while plowing. The flattened iron at the other end is to scrape off the earth which clogs the ploughshare. Goads were kept sharpened by files.

An ox, left to his own inclinations, will drift and wander away from the furrow being ploughed. In order to keep him in the row desired, the farmer will apply the goad to his hind quarters, keeping him oriented to a straight and narrow path, so to speak.

Whenever the ox would stray, the farmer would guide him back in line with a prick from the goad. It was not uncommon for the ox to kick against the goad but such action always proved to be not only futile but also a harmful resistance. The farmer would simply push the goad more deeply into the ox's flesh until he complied with the mandate.

This method of training an ox to pull a straight furrow by narrowing his parameters became the source of the Greek metaphor, “kicking against the goads.”

To research the development of this metaphor and how it became an adage used by our Lord, will add a great deal to our understanding of the verb *shanan* in Deuteronomy 4:10.

Isagogics of The Metaphor, “Kicking Against the Goads”

metaphor

A figure of speech in which one thing ... is referred to by an expression normally denoting another thing ... so as to suggest some common quality shared by the two. Referring to a man by saying that “he is a pig” is metaphorical.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, s.v. "metaphore":

A figure of speech in which one thing ... is referred to by an expression normally denoting another thing ... so as to suggest some common quality shared by the two. Referring to a man by saying that “he is a pig” is metaphorical.

Kohl, Herbert. From Archetype to Zeitgeist. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992, p. 37, s.v. “metaphor”:

This metaphor was first used by the Greek classic dramatist Aeschylus in his play Prometheus Bound. It is the story of how Prometheus was disciplined by Zeus for stealing fire from the gods and giving it to man.

In the story, Prometheus is taken by Hephaestus to a rock in a deep gorge and chained there for his crime. Subsequently, the god Oceanus come to counsel him. We pick up the narrative where Prometheus says to Oceanus:

Aeschylus. “Prometheus Bound.” From Vol. 5 of Great Books of the Western World, p. 43. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952:

Prometheus: How now? Who greets me? What! Are you to come to gaze upon my woes? Come you to be spectator of my evil lot and fellow sympathizer with my woes?

Oceanus: Prometheus, all too plainly I behold: and for the best would counsel you: Learn to know your heart, and, as the times, so let your manners change, for by the law of change a new God rules. But, if these bitter, savage, sharp-set words you vent, it may be, though he sit throned far off and high above you, Zeus will hear; and then your present multitude of ills will seem the mild correction of a babe. Rather, O you much chastened one, refrain your anger, and from suffering seek release. Stale, peradventure, seem these words of mine: Nevertheless, of a too haughty tongue such punishment, Prometheus, is the wage. But you, not yet brought low by suffering, to what you have of ill would add far worse. Therefore, while you have me for schoolmaster, you shall not kick against the goads.

The message from Oceanus to Prometheus is that you can't fight the gods. Once their discipline is imposed it becomes useless and even harmful to fight against them just as it is useless for an ox to kick against the goading of the farmer.

Discipline is designed by the gods to bring wandering subordinates back into line.

There were three dramatists who were considered the first of the original Greek classic playwrights. The other two were Sophocles and Euripides.

Euripides also used this metaphor in his play *The Bacchantes* (ba-KANT-eez). The two characters we will quote are Dionysus and Pentheus. Dionysus is upset with Pentheus because he doesn't believe Dionysus is one of the gods.

To set this one up a little background from:

Grant, Michael and John Hazel. *God and Mortals In Classical Mythology*. New York: Dorset Press, 1979, pp. 118-19:

“DIONYSUS” or “BACCHUS” was the god of wine and of ecstatic liberation ... also known as Bromius. Dionysus was often persecuted by those who refused to accept his divinity.

At Thebes ... Dionysus had to deal with his cousin Pentheus who ... refused to accept Dionysus' divinity. This struggle is the theme of Euripides' play *The Bacchantes*. Dionysus came to Thebes in the form of a handsome young man. Through his powers he infected the women of the city and made them take to the slopes of Mount Cithaeron in Bacchic frenzy.

A messenger informs Pentheus of the goings on at the sacred mountain which includes stories of supernatural power imposed by these demon-possessed women against the wild animals of the area. Pentheus assumes these women to be a threat to Thebes and orders a military mobilization. The resultant dialogue with Dionysus is pertinent to our study.

Euripides. *The Bacchantes*. p. 346:

Pentheus: Order a muster of all my men-at-arms, of those that mount fleet steeds, of all who brandish light bucklers, of archers too that make the bowstring twang; for I will march against the Bacchanals. By Heaven! this passes all, if we are to be thus treated by women.

Dionysus: Still obdurate, O Pentheus, after hearing my words! In spite of all the evil treatment I am enduring from you, still I warn you of the sin of bearing arms against a god, and bid you cease; for Bromius (one of Dionysus' aliases) will not endure you driving his votaries from the mountains where they revel.

Pentheus: A truce to your preaching to me! you have escaped my bonds, preserve your liberty; else will I renew your punishment.

Dionysus: I would rather do him (Bromius) sacrifice than in a fury kick against the goads; you a mortal, he a god.

In these two examples we see the historical development of what was to become a famous Greek metaphor describing the futility of challenging the will of the gods.

The effort of doing so was compared to the futility of an ox kicking against the goads of his driver thus causing, in addition to failure, increased pain.

Please note the origin of this metaphor was in the plays of fifth-century b.c. Greek dramatists Aeschylus and Euripides.

The Greek word used by these two dramatists is the noun *kentron* and, according to Liddell and Scott, was used to describe the following:

Liddell, Henry G. and Robert Scott. Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. “kentron”:

Any sharp point; the point of a weapon; to prick, stab, puncture, or punish; the sting of bees or scorpions, the spur of a cock, the quill of the porcupine; an ox-goad; a symbol of sovereignty. Metaphorically, to goad, spur, provide incentive.

The figurative use of the word can take two directions: pain or torment and inspiration and incitement.

When the goad brings pain it means that the individual has strayed from the desired path and corrective action is sought.

To ignore the goads is to kick against them, intent on continuing the alternate course in opposition to divine will.

Those who possess a goad have the power to impose pain on their subjects. They also either possess the intrinsic authority to do this or have been delegated it by a higher power and authority.

Gerhard Kittel in volume 3, page 664, of his Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says:

Kittel, Gerhard. Vol. 3 of the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 364, s.v. “kicking against the goads”:

The proverbial saying, “kick against the goads,” is an expression of futile and detrimental resistance to a stronger power, whether it be that of a god, of destiny, or of man.

Now, with this isagogical background into the development of this term in the Greek culture, we now turn to its use by our Lord in Scripture.

The original use of the term by Christ occurs historically in Acts 9. It is important that for our study we quote here the King James Version:

Acts 9:1 - Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

Acts 9:2 - And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Acts 9:3 - And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

Acts 9:4 - And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

Acts 9:5 - And he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Acts 9:6 - And he trembling and astonished said, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."