

## Understanding the Parsha

Leviticus 25:1-26:2

We will Learn how to

- 1) **interpret the main theme (subject) of a Parsha** (weekly reading from the Torah),
- 2) **make thematic connections to that Parsha** (study the Scriptures related by a common theme [subject], line upon line and precept upon precept)
- 3) **learn how to gain greater understanding of the Parsha we are looking at through its thematic connections to other portions of Scripture.**

## Chiastic Structures Within the Torah

Back in Parashat Mishpatim, we saw an example of a **chiastic structure** in the Torah. A chiastic structure is a thematic method of organizing the stories of the Torah. Some believe, the Scriptures are a hodge-podge of stories hooked together in a book; but, they couldn't be further from the truth. The Scriptures (and the Torah in particular) are a VERY organized and structured document. In fact, they are so well organized, once you understand how to uncover their organizational principles you will definitely fall on your knees and give glory to Adonai, knowing that only an all-knowing, all-powerful Elohim (God) could have developed such highly structured approach. In this lesson, we will uncover another chiastic structure woven through the stories found in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

Thematic analysis is THE primary method and model we should be using to understand and interpret the Scriptures. Adonai intended for us to study the Scriptures thematically. This will become even more evident to you because the themes will naturally lead you to profound truths and patterns found in the Torah that would otherwise remain hidden!

## The "Problems" With the Sidra

**Read Leviticus 25:1.** What seems "strange" about this verse?

It states that the following instructions were given to Moses on M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_.  
Mount Sinai

This is strange, because most of the instructions given in Leviticus were spoken from the Mishkan.

If you remember, most of the instructions in the last half of the book of Exodus (beginning in Exodus 19) were given "from Mount Sinai." So why does the Torah wait until now to present these instructions in this sidra? Notice this is the first clue to help us realize that instructions in this sidra are thematically related to instructions we've already seen in the book of Exodus. But hold on, there's more!

**Read Leviticus 26:1-2.** Don't these verses seem out of place? Most of Leviticus 25 is about the instructions of **Shemittah** (the seven-year Sabbath rest for the land) and the **Yovel** (50-year Jubilee celebration). Then, in Leviticus 26:1-2, we have these instructions that don't seem to belong here.

In last week's study, Leviticus 21-22 gave instructions for holiness/ sanctification among the priests. Leviticus 23 was the chapter about the sanctification of time — the **Mo'edim (appointed times)**. Then, seemingly out of context, Leviticus 24:1-4 mentions the lighting of the Menorah! Where have we seen a verse similar to this passage?

**Read Exodus 27:20-21.**

Did you notice, it's almost an exact repeat?! Also, instructions for the Showbread were suddenly mentioned in Leviticus 24:5-9. This command was also given in Exodus 25:30.

In this week's sidra, the Torah presents us the instructions of **Shemittah**. Do you remember where these instructions were first given?

**Read Exodus 23:10-11.** Now we must ask why. Why has the Torah presented the instructions of Shemittah twice? We will dig a deeper later to answer this question.

**Now look at Leviticus 26:1-2.** Where have we seen these commandments before?

**Read Exodus 20:1-9.**

**Have you noticed how many commandments in the last two sidras were first mentioned in the book of Exodus?** Let's see if we can find any other parallels.

Leviticus 26:3-46 describes blessing and curses depending on whether or not Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) obey or disobey Adonai's instructions. This is thematically related to Exodus 19:5-6 where Adonai makes certain promises based on whether or not Am Yisrael obey his commandments!



Leviticus 23 detailed the instructions for the Mo'edim. Do you remember the strong emphasis this chapter placed on the Shabbat? Not only did the Torah mention a day of rest with all of the Mo'edim, it specifically mentioned Shabbat at the beginning of Leviticus 23. Because of this we can thematically relate all of Leviticus 23 to the Sabbath—Leviticus 23 is thematically linked to Exodus 31:12-17 and 35:2-3.

Leviticus 22:17-33 is about the types of animals that may be offered on the altar. **What other section in Leviticus is thematically related to this passage?**

Leviticus 1-5, teaches the types of offerings that are a \_\_\_\_\_  
to Adonai. acceptable

Read Leviticus 21-22:16, which gives instructions for the priests. What phrase is repeated many times concerning the priests and the offerings?

"The f poor of your God."

This section of the Torah is concerned that the priests maintain the proper holiness, so that they can properly handle the sacrifices.

Do you remember where in Leviticus that is thematically related to the priests handling the sacrifices?

Parashat T avaz Leviticus 6-7.]

Remember, Parashat Vayikra (Leviticus 1-5) gave instructions about which offerings an Israelite could make, and Parashat Tzav (Leviticus 6-7) taught HOW the priests were to handle the offerings (the food of their God).

**So what have we done?** We've seen that most of the commandments have been repeated two times beginning in Parashat Yitro (Exodus 18) until the end of Leviticus chapter 26! Now this may not sound exciting, but wait until we put the topics in order.

**Here are the rules.** First, we will begin by listing the theme of each section of Scripture beginning in Leviticus 26 working backwards! Second, we will label each theme with a letter, starting with A.

- A. Blessing and Curse for O obedience or Disobedience—Leviticus 26:3-35.
- T. The First Three Commandments from the T Ten Commandments—Leviticus 26:1-2.
- S Shemittah and the Y Yovel (Year of Jubilee)—Leviticus 25:1-55.
- B Blasphemer (Instructions between man and his fellow man)—Leviticus 24:10-23.
- M Menorah and the S Showbread—Leviticus 24:1-9.
- M Mot'edim—Leviticus 23.
- O Offer Animals Fit to—Leviticus 22.
- H Holiness Among the Priests—Leviticus 21.



Now, let's put all of this information in a table. In the right column of the table you will write in the information from A-H. The left column you will write in the Torah portions (with Scripture references) of the points in A-H.

Torah Portion of Points A-H	Themes From Points A-H
Bechukkotai—Lev. 26-27:34	Blessing and Curse for obedience or disobedience, Leviticus 26:3-35.
Behar—Leviticus 25:1-26:2	
Behar—Leviticus 25:1-26:2	
Emor—Leviticus 21:1-24:23	
Emor—Leviticus 21:1-24:23	
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Did you notice that we are working our way backwards through the sidras!? Next, let's make a similar chart; but this time, let's list the ordering of the passages thematically linked to points A-H by their Parashat HaShavuah name and references.

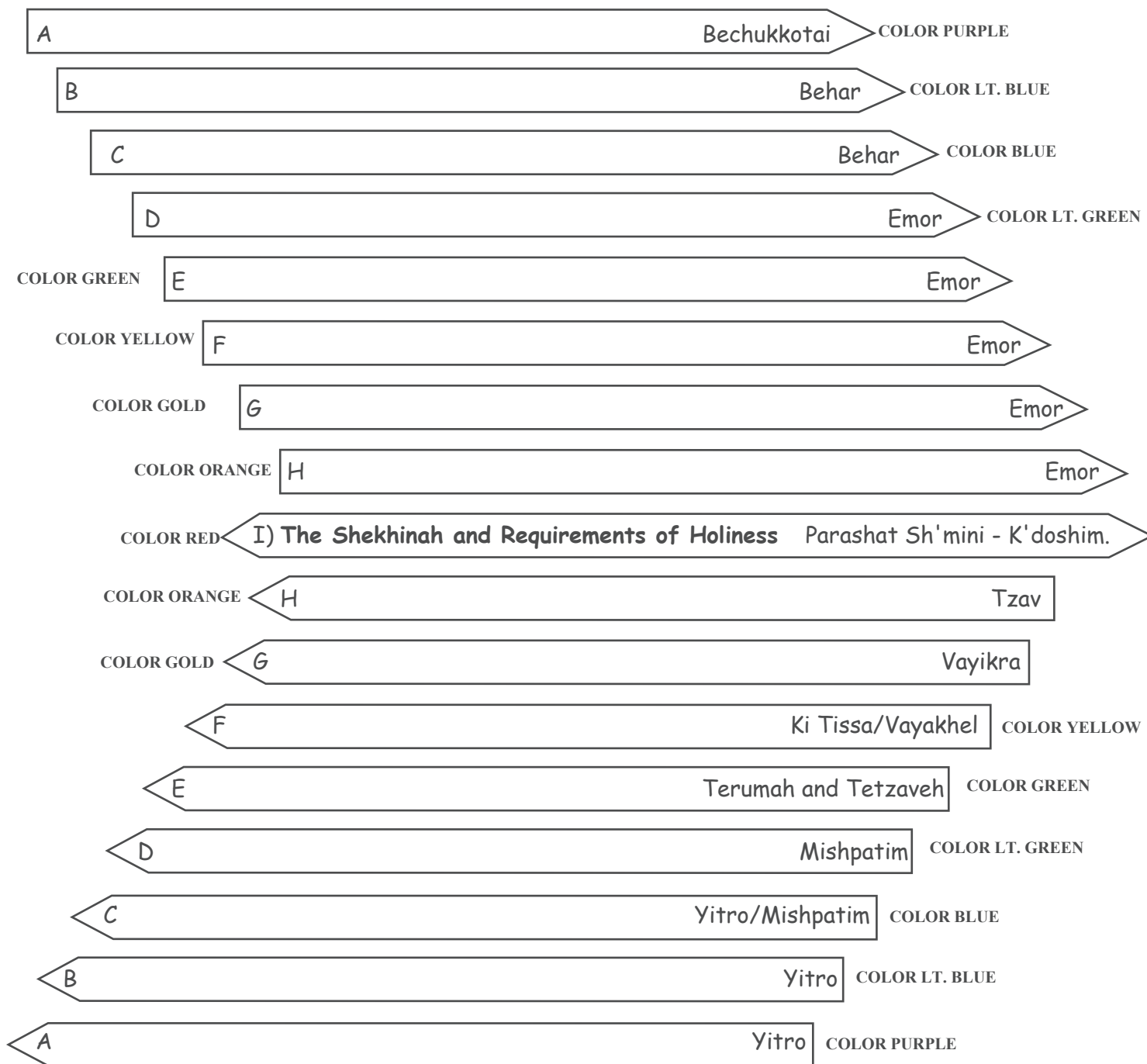
Themes From Points A-H and Scripture References to the Passages Thematically related to the Themes of A-H	Torah Portions of Thematic Connections to Points A-H
<b>A</b>	<b>Yitro</b> —Exodus 18:1-20:23
<b>B</b>	<b>Yitro</b> —Exodus 18:1-20:23
<b>C</b>	<b>Yitro/Mishpatim</b> —Exodus 21:1-24:18
<b>D</b>	<b>Mishpatim</b> —Exodus 21:1-24:18
<b>E</b>	<b>Terumah and Tetzaveh</b> — Exodus 25:1-Exodus 30:10
<b>F</b>	<b>Ki Tissa/Vayakhel</b> — Exodus 30:11-38:20
<b>G</b>	Vayikra—Leviticus 1:1-5:26
<b>H</b>	<b>Tzav</b> —Leviticus 6:1-8:36

Compare the second column of this table with the actual order of the sidras. Do you see a pattern?

The topics in A-H are now listed in order according to the Parashat HaShavuah schedule!

Okay, here's the punch-line. The Scriptures from Exodus 19 to Leviticus 27 form what's called a **chiastic structure**. If we label each theme and its thematic connection, you will see the structure. But before we do that, notice that Parashat Sh'mini through K'doshim seem to be missing. **Well, they aren't.** Parashat Sh'mini through Metzora are thematically related to the great event that occurred in those chapters—the resting of the Shekhinah on the Mishkan and the need to be

holy to be able to enter the Mishkan. Usually, a chiastic structure points to a middle "axis". This middle "axis" is the **most important point to which the chiastic structure points**. Let's have a look. In this section you will need your crayons or colored pencils. In each boxed area write in the theme that matches the letter before it. When you are finished writing, color in the arrow boxes as labeled.



**Great job coloring! Can you see the pattern of the themes in the colors? Let's make a few observations about this chiastic structure.**

A. This structure is highly developed.

B. This highly developed structure is **clearly not an accident**.

C. The central axis points to the presence of the Shekhinah or presence/glory of Adonai and the requirements of Holiness upon all who would approach! Remember, in past lessons we learned how Adonai was in the process of revealing Him-

self as YHVH. This process began in Exodus 3 when Moses approached the burning bush and has continued to this point. One of the main part of Adonai's character that He wants us to see, through His Name YHVH, is His Holiness. This chiastic structure is actually POINTS THIS FACT OUT for us too see. Our Elohim (God) is a Holy, Holy, Holy God. **This chiastic structure teaches us this by pointing us to the central axis!**

D. This lesson is a good example of why, as non-Jewish believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we owe respect and honor to the sages of Israel (Jewish Torah teachers). They have given us a great gift in thematic analysis.

E. Last but not least, do you see how this pattern would be totally missed apart from thematic analysis? I hope so. You can see how awesome our Elohim is. Only He could inspire his glory in this manner.



V	U	P	V	O	R	T	B	L	K	J	H	YHVH
A	A	M	U	R	E	T	L	E	E	E	O	HOLINESS
Y	K	Y	A	S	Z	E	E	H	A	C	L	PRIEST
A	M	Q	I	E	B	T	S	I	R	P	I	EMOR
K	I	H	Y	K	H	Z	S	B	O	T	N	TZAV
H	S	A	I	H	R	V	I	J	M	Z	E	VAYIKRA
E	H	N	T	P	V	E	N	H	E	A	S	YITRO
L	P	I	R	O	P	H	G	T	I	V	S	KI TISSA
N	A	K	O	C	V	A	Y	I	K	R	A	TETZVEH
N	T	E	T	C	A	S	S	I	T	I	K	TERUMA
N	I	H	A	R	O	T	R	U	S	E	R	MISHPATIM
N	M	S	T	C	E	C	U	R	S	E	S	VAYAKHEL
												BLESSING
												CURSES
												TORAH
												SHEKINAH