



Parashat HaShavuah

אָמַר

Vayikra (Leviticus)

21:1-24:23 Emor

(Speak)

Understanding the Parsha

Leviticus 21:1-24:23

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.

Instructions Seemingly Out of Place?

In this week's lesson we will study the last two Parshiot, (Leviticus 24:10-23).

Leviticus 24:1-12—During an angry and heated argument between two men, one of them blasphemed (to debase by a wrong or vulgar use) Adonai's Name, YHVH.

Leviticus 24:13-16—The man is sentenced to death for blaspheming the Name.

Leviticus 24:17-22—Instructions concerning a person who

- 1) kills another person,
- 2) injures another person or
- 3) kills an animal.

Leviticus 24:23—Stoning of the blasphemer.

This short outline shows us the general flow and topics of these Parshiot. As I read Parashat Emor this week, these Parshiot puzzled me for two reasons. First, how do they fit within the overall flow of the sidra (Torah portion)? Leviticus 21-22 talks about different instructions for the priests and High Priest. Leviticus 23 talks about the instructions for the Holy Days. Leviticus 24:1-9 talks about elements of the Mishkan. Finally, the sidra ends on a story about people fighting within the camp and taking Adonai's Name in vain.

So, the question is this. How does this last story relate to all of the other parts of the sidra? The second question involves the flow of topics inside this Parsha itself. The instructions for injury and death inflicted on a person or animal seem to be out of place since the last Parsha is mainly about the story of the blasphemer. Let's closely look at these Parshiot.

Read Leviticus 24:10-16. In general, what/who is the main topic of those verses?

The **b** _____
blasphemer

Now read Leviticus 24:17-22. Notice the topic change? We are no longer talking about the blasphemer. It seems as if the instructions in Leviticus 24:17-22 are out of place. Can you see one way that they aren't completely out of place? For instance, on the surface, what is the most obvious way these instructions thematically relate to the story of the blasphemer? Write your ideas down:

These instructions for injury are related to Leviticus 24:10-16, because in Leviticus 24:10, it says that two men fought. Therefore, one of them may have been injured.

Even though this thematic connection is strong, we can all agree that the MAIN topic of this Parsha is the story about the blasphemy, not the fight. The fight is used to tell about the circumstances by which the blasphemer blasphemed.

So far, we have seen the thematic topic shift from the blasphemer to instructions for personal injury.

Now, read Leviticus 24:23. What/Who is the thematic topic? The **b** _____
blasphemer

Okay, now it seems as if we are back to the story of the blasphemer! Look at the flow of topics here:

Draw a line to the topic that matches the Scripture reference

- Leviticus 24:10-16 Instructions concerning Personal Injury
- Leviticus 24:17-22 The blasphemer
- Leviticus 24:23 The blasphemer



Now write them in the right order into the boxes below:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Leviticus 24:10-16 | |
| Leviticus 24:17-22 | |
| Leviticus 24:23 | |

Our table helps us see an important picture. It looks as if the instructions for the personal injury were placed into the story of the blasphemer! See how the topic changes from blasphemer—personal injury instructions—blasphemer is an obvious pattern, and begs to be explored? The remainder of this section will talk about the reasons why this is so.

related to desecrating Adonai's Name, including the instructions of personal injury! **Now, can you figure out why the instructions about personal injury were repeated in this story of the blasphemer?**

Yes, Adonai wants us to see that when a man either injures another man or kills him, he has d desecrated

Adonai's N Name!

This teaching—that one who injures or kills another man has desecrated Adonai's Name—would be completely lost apart from thematic analysis. Let's take this a step further. We now see a clear connection that our treatment of other human beings can actually determine how we treat Adonai! **Remember, if we injure or kill a person we have desecrated Adonai's Name.** Can you see that?

We learned this lesson in last week's study (Parashat K'doshim) through a similar thematic analysis. We saw that Leviticus 19:1-11 mainly dealt with commandments between Adonai and man. Leviticus 19:9-10 was about the relationship between man and his fellow man (feeding the poor and the proselyte). Through thematic analysis, we came to the understanding that Adonai inspired Moses to put Leviticus 19:9-10 inside the thematic context of verses CLEARLY describing the relationship between Adonai and man **to teach us when we serve the poor and the convert, it is as if we were serving Adonai himself!**

To sum it all up, we can now see why the instructions about personal injury (which were already given in Parashat Mishpatim) were repeated inside the story of the blasphemer. The story of the blasphemer was clearly thematically related to Leviticus 21-22 because it was an example of how a person could desecrate/profane Adonai's Name. By planting the instructions about personal injury inside the story of the blasphemer, the Torah teaches us that we desecrate Adonai's Name when we assault or kill another human being. This message is especially strengthened when you think about the fact that man is created in the image of Adonai. Therefore, by attacking another human, you attack Adonai!

