



## Understanding the Parsha

Devarim Deuteronomy 25:17-19

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.

## Understanding the Teachings From the Story of the Battle With Amalek

Read the last Parsha of this week's sidra, Devarim 25:17-19. Do you remember what we have said already about chiasmic structures? Do you see one here? Remember, a chiasmic structure is a thematic method of organizing the stories of the Torah. A chiasmic structure is a pattern that goes like this: A story is divided into two halves. The themes of the first half of the story is repeated in the second half of the story in reverse order. Also, both halves of the story point to the central axis, the most important part in the story. Let's apply this to our Parshiot, by carefully dividing them thematically. Then we'll examine it to see the beautiful pattern.

First, let's look at the general flow through the Parsha.

**Devarim 25:17** — A warning to remember what Amalek did.

Devarim 25:18 — Amalek's attack.

Devarim 25:19 — Adonai's instructions for Am Yisrael's response (to avenge themselves).

At this point, this Parsha may not appear to be a chiastic structure. Looking at Devarim 25:17 and 19, what major clue do you see that suggests that this passage may be a chiastic structure?

This Parsha begins and ends with the warning for Am Yisrael to r\_\_\_\_\_ (don't forget).

If we diligently search through these three verses, we'll find this chiastic structure:

A) Devarim 25:17 The command (mitzvah) to r\_\_\_\_\_ what Amalek did to Israel. COLOR GREEN

B) Devarim 25:17-18 The emphasis on w\_\_\_\_\_ and h\_\_\_\_\_ the event occurred (on the way). COLOR YELLOW

C) Devarim 25:18 Am Yisrael's p\_\_\_\_\_ condition during the attack. COLOR ORANGE

D) Devarim 25:18 Amalek did not f\_\_\_\_\_ Adonai. COLOR RED

C1) Devarim 25:19 Am Yisrael's p\_\_\_\_\_ condition when they avenge Amalek. COLOR ORANGE

B1) Devarim 25:19 w\_\_\_\_\_ Am Yisrael will be located and h\_\_\_\_\_ they will avenge Amalek. COLOR YELLOW

A1) Devarim 25:19 The command (mitzvah) for Am Yisrael not to f\_\_\_\_\_ Amalek's actions. COLOR GREEN

As you can see, this story definitely divides into a chiastic structure, even though it's only three verses long! The second half of the Parsha contains the exact same themes as the first half in inverse order. I like to show you chiastic structures because they emphasize the importance of learning how to think THEMATICALLY. If you don't analyze the Scriptures thematically, you'll miss a great portion of its wisdom.

In the first half of the chiastic structure, the themes are presented according to Amalek's actions.

In the second half of the structure, the themes are presented in terms of Am Yisrael's future response to Amalek's attack.

Remember, both halves of the story always point to the central axis.

In this case, the central axis is the fact that Amalek did not fear Adonai. Could this be the reason why Adonai commanded Am Yisrael to avenge them? To answer this question, we need to look at other Scriptures thematically related to this one. So, let's study the original passage involving Amalek's attack to get a better understanding as to why Adonai has such contempt for them.

Read Exodus 17:8 - 17:13 In order to figure out the overall theme of a passage, it's good to outline it and study the topics of the out-



line first. After reading the passage, establish a general outline of the flow of topics in this story. Complete the outline below:

17:8-10 Amalek a \_\_\_\_\_ Israel and the preparations for war  
attacks

17:11-13 The b \_\_\_\_\_  
battle

17:14-16 The o \_\_\_\_\_ of the battle  
outcome

Believe it or not, we have another chiastic structure here.

A1) vs. 8-10 Initial a \_\_\_\_\_ and preparations  
attack COLOR YELLOW

B1) vs. 11 The b \_\_\_\_\_ teeters back and forth  
battle COLOR ORANGE

C) vs. 12 The strengthening of Moses' h \_\_\_\_\_  
hands COLOR RED

B2) vs. 13 Joshua prevails over A \_\_\_\_\_  
Amalek COLOR ORANGE

A2) vs. 14-16 Broadening of the c \_\_\_\_\_ forever  
conflict COLOR YELLOW

Now, let's thematically analyze this structure from different perspectives.

### Comparing and Contrasting the Opposing Halves of the Story

**Compare the A sections**, we see that in the first half of the story, it is Amalek who starts the battle with Israel. **In the second half of the story**, it is Adonai who will start battles with Amalek for all time. Notice how this parallels the chiastic structure in Devarim 25:17-19, where the first half of the story reflects Amalek's actions, and the second half reflects Am Yisrael's.

**Compare the B sections**, we see that in the first half of the story, Israel is weakened in battle (notice the last phrase in verse 11). In the second half of the story, Amalek is weakened in battle.

Notice how the second half "opposes" the first half.

**The central axis** appears to be the most important event, since it changes the direction of flow from one half of the story to the next.

### Comparing and Contrasting Events on the Mountain and on the Battlefield

**This story is also divided in space as follows:** Activity is happening in two places — **on the mountain** and **on the battlefield**. When we compare and contrast events happening on the mountain with those on the battlefield, we will see that the word **Amalek** is used a lot of time (seven times) in the battlefield passages. The word **hand** appears a lot of times (seven times) in the mountain passages. Through this parallel, the Torah 3



wants us to focus on the fact that what happened on the battlefield was **directly influenced** by what happened on the mountain.

**These contrasts are not by chance.** Thematic analysis allows you to uncover many parallels, similarities and contrasts, which help reinforce the main message of the story. We have discovered two things through thematic analysis of the structure of this story:

**#1** Because the two halves of the story "oppose" one another, they point us to the importance of the central axis (verse 12).

**#2** Studying the events happening on the battlefield and on the mountain teaches us that **Israel's battle against Amalek** (in the natural) is directly connected to what happened on the mountaintop.

**The Importance of the Words Used in This Parsha** It is not by chance that the words Amalek and hand both appear seven times. Whenever the Torah uses certain words an equal number of times, it is usually trying to tell you a message. The message will be understood by the way the words are used that appear the same number of times. So, it's important to understand the way they are used in this story.

**Why is it important that the name Amalek is used seven times in the story?** And, **what did Amalek do to deserve the generational judgment Adonai put upon them?** To answer these questions, we need to understand the principle of here a little, there a little from Isaiah 28:9-13. Remember, the Torah records information here a little, there a little. If we search the Scriptures for other passages that mention Amalek, we should be able to uncover important thematic parallels.

**Can you think of any Scriptures that shed more light on the battle with Amalek?**

**Write Deuteronomy 25:17-18** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**We see that Amalek used unmoral practices in warfare because they attacked the weak stragglers, probably older people, women and children. How about how this Scriptures thematically related to Amalek (in battle)?**

**I Samuel 30:1-3** And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; and had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

Here, once again, we read of Amalek engaging in unethical forms of warfare, taking women and children. This is a perfect example of how a theme will carry throughout the Scriptures.

It is not by chance that these two accounts, although separated in time by hundreds of years, both contain the same theme (unethical practices in warfare) concerning Amalek.

In the Exodus account, Amalek attacked Israel for no cause.



Considering 1) that Israel had just left Egypt (on their way to Canaan), 2) the reason for establishing the nation of Israel in Canaan (to be a light to all the nations pointing them to the One true God), and 3) that the Amalekites dwelled on the southern portion of Canaan (Numbers 13:28-29), what is the reason of the attack by Amalek?

Since A Amalek lived on the southern border of

C Canaan, Israel would have eventually battled

Against them. So, it seems as though the Amalekites have traveled a good distance to strike first in war to stop Adonai's plan that they become a great

n uonenu in the land of Canaan. This is therefore a direct attempt to stop the eternal plan Adonai has in store for Israel.

**Let's sum it up**, we can now see a clearer picture of why Amalek's attack was so outrageously evil. Just think for a moment. The Elohim of Israel had just literally destroyed the greatest, most powerful nation on earth, Egypt. How shameless of Amalek to attack Am Yisrael!!! Now do you see the real importance of the central axis in Devarim 25:17-19 — that Amalek didn't fear Adonai! Wow! They had a lot of nerve to attack the nation who just utterly destroyed the greatest nation on the earth. They did not fear the Holy One at all. They had utter contempt for Him despite His awesome deeds that had never been performed in the sight of the nations on such a grand scale. AND, they were characterized by their despicable battlefield behavior — unethical wartime practices. These may be the reasons why Adonai commands that Amalek be utterly destroyed.



### Can you find the words from this Parsha?

A T T A C K H S E S O M  
 O V M D A C A N A A N E  
 S G E O R P H A N D E R  
 E W S N O W A R F A R E  
 Z O M A G N D M E N T B  
 T D E I R E M E M B E R  
 E J U D G E M E N T E E  
 T W E V M O U N T A I N  
 I D L E I F E L T T A B  
 K E L A M A I S R A E L



KI TETZE  
 AMALEK  
 REMEMBER  
 WARFARE  
 AVENGE  
 ATTACK  
 ADONAI  
 BATTLEFIELD  
 ISRAEL  
 MOSES  
 HAND  
 MOUNTAIN  
 JUDGMENT  
 CANAAN