



## Understanding the Parsha

B'midbar 16:1-19

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.**

## Reading Between the Lines

Have you heard of the expression, “reading between the lines?” This expression means that there is another unspoken meaning hidden in the words of someone when they are speaking. The other day I came in the house to find my wife talking on the phone and cooking at the same time. As I approached the kitchen, she turned to me and nicely said something along these lines, “Such and such is already ready and such and such will be ready after the timer goes off.” Was she just trying to inform me of when dinner would be ready? After all, I didn’t ask when it would be ready. And, usually she doesn’t tell me when each part of our meal will be ready. Because of this, I knew there was another unspoken message she was telling me. What was it? It was this— I’ve cooked dinner and I’m almost finished. Please 1) watch over the meal as it finishes cooking, 2) have someone set the table for dinner, and 3) go ahead and start eating dinner while I finish this important conversation on the phone. This, my friend, is a classic example of reading between the lines. ? She made one statement; however, the way she made her statement and the timing of it told me more information than she actually spoke. The Torah does the same thing. It tells much more information than is actually written just by how it records its

stories. Certain words and phrases are used on purpose so that the reader can get a more extensive understanding from the story. Also, it is through thematic analysis that we are enabled to read between the lines of the Torah! This is why thematic analysis is so valuable. In this week's Understanding the Parsha, I want to show you how much extra information we can get from a passage by thematically linking its words and phrases to other words, phrases and concepts thematically related to those in the Parsha.

Notice how it says that Korach separated himself.

### Up to this point who has done all of the separating amongst Am Yisrael?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ has separated them for various purposes.  
separated

### Which tribes were Korach, Dathan, On and Abiram descended from—hint: Numbers 16:1?

Draw a line to the correct Tribes for each name.

Korach was descended from \_\_\_\_\_ REUBEN

Dathan, Abiram and On were descended from \_\_\_\_\_ LEVI

The tribes of Levi and Reuben are the tribes that stand out in this story.

### What is most important about the tribe of Reuben?

Reuben was Jacob's **f** \_\_\_\_\_ but he lost his firstborn status to the sons of Joseph.  
firstborn

We know the firstborns have a very special status in Adonai's eyes. **Now, what is most important about the tribe of Levi?**

Adonai **S** \_\_\_\_\_ the tribe of Levi unto Himself to minister in the Mishkan (Tabernacle).]  
separated

### How are the tribes of Levi and Reuben thematically related through their points of significance?

The Levites replaced the **f** \_\_\_\_\_ as helpers for the priests (the High Priest and his sons).  
firstborns

That's right. In **Exodus 13:2 and Exodus 13:12** we learn that Adonai had separated all firstborns to Himself. Also, in **Numbers 3:3-13**, we read that Adonai replaced the firstborns with the Levites! It should have been the firstborns who helped Aaron and his sons; but, Adonai replaced them with the Levites. We've seen that Korach separated himself. Now we've remembered that Adonai separated the firstborns and replaced them with the Levites; which means that, He has also separated the Levites. This analysis has allowed us to see an point.

**K** \_\_\_\_\_ separating himself **versus** **A** \_\_\_\_\_ separating the Levites and firstborns.  
Korach Adonai

Could there be a connection? Let's keep going and see what we find. By the way, according to Exodus 6:21, Korach was also a firstborn!

### What did Korach, Dathan, Abiram and On complain about?

They complain that Moses and Aaron have taken too much **r** \_\_\_\_\_ and honor for themselves.  
responsibility



At this point, all we know is that according to Numbers 16:3, they think Moses and Aaron are doing too much. What are some of the issues brought up by the rebels when they use the phrase, "...why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of YHVH?"

The rebels may think that Moses and Aaron think they are b better than everyone else?

Perhaps the rebels feel that the entire congregation has e equal status before Adonai. So, they may feel that more people than just Moses and Aaron should share the leadership roles? At this point we still don't know what they truly want.

The rebels state that, "the entire assembly—all of them—are holy." What does the word holy mean?

It means s set a apart.

Now we know that they may have a problem with a certain person or group that has been set apart! They are saying that since the entire assembly is set apart, this one person or group of people— who we still don't know who they are yet— aren't any more special than the rest of the assembly.

**Why did Moses fall on his face in Numbers 16:4?**

He fell on his face in intercessory p prayer for Am Yisrael because he knew trouble was coming.

**Read Numbers 16:5.** After reading about Moses' response we get a better understanding of the real issues motivating Korach and his followers. Moses used two important phrases in his reply. He said that Adonai would choose who was His own and who could draw near to Him! So, Korach's complaint must have something to do with whom has been chosen to draw near to Adonai.

**Who has been chosen to draw near to Adonai in some manner?**

Adonai specifically chose A Aaron and his s sons to be priests. They were the only ones allowed to draw near to Adonai.

Now we can see that Korach has a problem with the Aaronic High Priesthood! But let's continue.

**Read Numbers 16:6-7. In drawing near to Adonai, what is the importance of these fire pans?**

The fire pans are the same as the c censer used to offer the incense before Adonai.

Part of the daily service of the Mishkan involved the offering of incense. Jewish tradition tells us that this service was the one that was desired most. And, this was the one service that the High Priest was entitled to do. Although he could allow someone else to do it if he declined. Also, according to Leviticus 16:1-13, the High Priest had to offer incense from this censer (fire pan) before entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Once again, we see a connection between Korach's desires and the priesthood. Moses came up with a test to show whom Adonai had chosen to draw near to Himself in the Mishkan!

**Thinking about what we've read about the censer/fire pan and the offering of incense, what happened the last time someone approached Adonai with incense that He had not commanded to be brought?**



Nadav and Avihu were S slain before Adonai when they offered S strange incense before Adonai.

Of course Moses knows this. So we see that the consequences of failing this test may be death! Moses points out again Adonai's choice of whom has been set apart near the end of Numbers 16:7.

**Read Numbers 16:8-11.** Now we have reached the heart of the matter. Moses exposed Korach's true intentions. Korach was seeking the High Priesthood! What I want to draw your attention to is the fact that we had already figured this out by using thematic connections in Numbers 16:1-11 by reading between the lines! This verse confirms the thematic connections we made. It's all about who will draw nigh to Adonai as High Priest.

### Is Korach's desire evil?

No. He W wants to draw near to Adonai. His eyes are heavenward, but he is extremely misguided.

Now we have a scene change. In Numbers 16:12-15, Adonai specifically addresses Dathan and Abiram. Until this point it seems as if there is one rebellion (instigated by Korach, Dathan, Abiram and On), with one issue, the High Priesthood.

### Read all of the statements of Dathan and Abiram in the above passage. Summarize their complaints.

They are upset that Moses took them from a land flowing with m milk and h honey — did you notice how he twisted the phrase, a land flowing with milk and honey and applied it to Egypt.

They don't want to d die in the wilderness.

They don't like Moses' l leadership.

They want l land, an i inheritance and v vineyards, now!

### Are they upset because of the priesthood?

N on. They seem to be more interested in enjoying the good life. You know, land, houses, great crop,

Harvests, and so on.

As you can see, Dathan and Abiram seem to be concerned with earthly matters. Now we can see two different groups who disagree with what Adonai has revealed.

**Group 1:** Korach who seeks the High Priesthood.

**Group 2:** Dathan and Abiram who are looking for the good life on earth

Two different groups with two different agendas, yet they hook up for one unholy rebellion. **Based on this information, which group has a problem with Moses and which has a problem with Aaron?**

Since Korach and his followers seek the High Priesthood, they have a problem with A Aaron.

Since Abiram and Dathan seek the good life, they have a problem with

M Moses' leadership.



**Are Dathan and Aviram's desires evil?**

**Y**<sub>שאל</sub>\_\_\_\_\_ they are. They are simply interested in fulfilling their fleshly desires of getting rich and enjoying pleasure.

Dathan and Aviram seemed to have earthly desires.

**Read Numbers 16:16-19.** Hold on! Here's another scene change. Now we're back to Korach. In fact, the Torah will continue to bounce back and forth between the rebellion(s) of the two different groups of dissidents. Again, remember the story of Nadav and Avihu. We will see what happens to them in the next section. For now, I just wanted you to see how much extra information we could add to the story through thematic connections. The "extra" information gained from thematic connections will help you see the hidden things of each Parsha, which would normally go unnoticed. There are two separate groups of dissenters here, each with their own agenda. Yet the Torah chooses to tell their stories together at the same time.



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

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

- KORACH
- DATHAN
- ABIRAM
- NADAV
- AVIHU
- FIREPAN
- INCENSE
- REBELLION
- HOLY
- HIGH PRIEST
- PRIESTHOOD
- CENSER
- ALTER
- DEATH