

Searching the Parshiot

Objective—Learn how to

- 1) uncover the theme (subject) of a passage,
- 2) relate it to other passages and
- 3) learn how to get a greater understanding on how to interpret the original passage based on its thematic connection to those other passages.

The Dominant Themes of Parashat Lekh Lekha

I. Let us take a quick look at this week's sidra (Torah portion) to find its major theme(s).

Let's begin by making an outline. For the verses below, write a short title summing up the main theme of each passage. Remember to make your titles for your outline as short as possible. Try to write only short sentences describing the most important theme/topic on the line. This will teach you to look for the most general words and phrases to describe the main point. Also, try to keep your answers to the following questions as short as you can.

- **Genesis 12:1-3— Abram's call.** What is the major theme of these verses?

Moving far away to become a nation

Remember, the Holy One said He will do three specific things for Abram;

- 1) He will show him a special land,
- 2) He will make his descendants into a great nation, and
- 3) He will surround Abram with blessings.

Let's see how many times the **themes** of land and descendants are mentioned throughout our sidra (Torah portion).

- **Genesis 12:4-9— Arrival in Canaan.** What is the major theme of these verses?

Look how many times the word **land** is used in these few verses. Remember in most cases, **the theme** of a passage is often found in **repeated words**.

- **Genesis 12:10-20—The descent (go down) to and ascent (go up) from Egypt.** Although the primary theme of this story is about events in Egypt, how is this passage related to the theme of the **land of Canaan**?

A famine in the land of Canaan caused them to descend (go down) into Egypt.

- **Genesis 13:1-18—Abram and Lot part ways.** Why did they have to part ways?

The land could not support them living together (Genesis 13:6).

As we can see, the theme of the **land** has reappeared again. **What is the two themes of Genesis 13:14-18?**

The main theme is the _____ . The second theme is _____ .

Now, remember how Genesis 13:14-15 and Genesis 13:17-18 are all about **the land!**

- **Genesis 14:1-24—The war of the kings.**
- **Genesis 15:1-21—The covenant with Abram.** What is the major theme of these verses?

The main theme is _____ in Genesis 15:1-6. And the main theme is _____ in Genesis 15:7-21.

- **Genesis 16:1-16—Ishmael and Hagar.** What is the major theme of these verses? _____
- **Genesis 17:1-27—The covenant of circumcision.** What is the major theme of these verses?

The promise of a son so that Abram can have a multitude of _____ .

It seems as if the theme of **descendants** has slowly replaced the theme of **land** as we read more of the sidra.

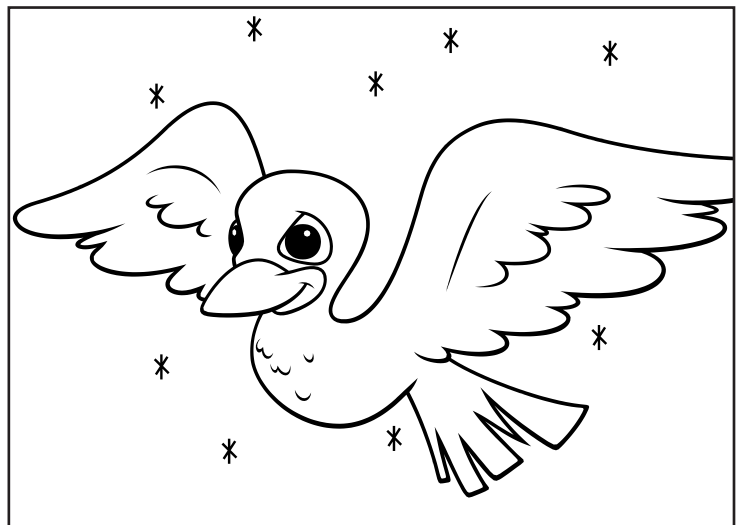
In general our outline shows us that,

Genesis 12:1-13:18 seems to focus mainly on the **theme of the land**.

Genesis 15:1-21 seems to give the same amount of time to **both themes of land and descendants**.

Genesis 16:1-17:27 seems to focus mainly on the **theme of descendants**.

Now we can see, **land** and **descendants** have become the **important themes** of this sidra. These two themes will continue to come up in the remainder of the book of Genesis. Therefore, we must **always keep them in mind** as we try to study the stories of this book. Remember, this book is mainly about **a land for the future descendants/ nation of Abram**. As we continue to study the book of Genesis, allow these two themes to guide your understanding.



Understanding the Torah Thematically

I. It is very important that you begin to understand the Torah thematically. Only then will you begin to see its greatest wisdom. Let's see how thematic analysis can help us get a better understanding of the Torah.

A. How are the stories of 1) Adam and Chava [Eve], 2) Cain and Abel, 3) the generation of the flood and 4) the generation of the Tower of Babel all thematically connected? Circle the correct theme

Sin and punishment

Living in the Garden

Water, Trees and Man

sin and punishment

These stories take us from **Genesis 1-11**. In **Genesis 12**, the Torah begins to focus on Abram. ***In fact, the rest of the book of Genesis is about Abram and his descendants!***

B. Let's look at the big picture. What is the main difference between the Holy One's dealings on earth between Genesis 1-11 and Genesis 12-50? Draw a line to match the theme to the correct chapters:

Genesis 1-11 He revealed Himself to one man

Genesis 12-50 He revealed Himself to Mankind

Gen 1-11 to mankind, Gen 12-50 one man



In Genesis 1-11, the Holy One is trying to work through ALL mankind. He had not revealed Himself to just one person. He revealed Himself to all of mankind, hoping that they would ALL call upon Him.

Beginning in Genesis 12, this all changes. We learned that ALL of mankind failed to call upon the Holy One during the time span of Genesis 1-11; now we can see that Adonai is trying to change this situation by starting with **one man**. Hopefully, Abram's **descendants** will be able to reveal the One and Only True Elohim (God) to ALL mankind.

1. The blessing of Abraham will become a blessing to the entire world. Let's read Genesis 18:18-19.

How is Genesis 18:18-19 thematically related to Genesis 12:1-3? Connect the correct answer

They both tell us that Abrahams descendants will be a

big problem for all the nations of the earth

blessing to all the nations of the earth

blessing to all the nations of the earth

Remember that the blessing to the nations is to come from a nation that practices justice and righteousness, something mankind has failed to live by so far. Mankind, so far, has been only concerned with themselves, and not with a relationship with Adonai. Now, the new plan calls for building a nation—from the descendants of one man—that will be known by justice and righteousness. In this way, this nation will be a blessing to all mankind, showing them the One and Only True Elohim.

Understanding the Events of Abram's Life Thematically

I. As we begin to study the stories of the Torah thematically, we will see wisdom like never before. So what does it mean to "studying the Torah thematically?" It means this—learning how to think about the events of the Torah mostly in light of its own important themes. **Let's see a few examples.**

A. Read Genesis 12:1-3. These verses teach us about the thematic game plan for the Holy One's working with Abram and his descendants. **What is the Divine game plan in Genesis 12:1-3?** Remember what we just learned?

Abram's descendants will become a mighty nation, a blessing to all the nations of the earth

Why is the the land mentioned in Genesis 12:1 and promised in Genesis 12:7? Circle the correct answer

This is the land that Abram's descendants will live

This is the land where the nations will live

This is the land that Abram's descendants will live

So we can see, the game plan depends on two things—land and descendants. Now we know, the Divine game plan can only be fulfilled if 1) Abraham has lots of descendants and 2) those descendants have a land they can call their own.

B. Now read Genesis 12:5b-10, pay special attention to verse ten. Okay, in light of the Divine game plan and the importance of having land for this future nation (*remember to, keep in mind what we just learned when we are learning the rest of Genesis*), **what do you think about the famine of Genesis 12:10?**

It is the opposite of the promise Abram received in Genesis 12:1 and 7

Let's think about this for a minute. Abram brought over three hundred servants with him from Mesopotamia! They followed him, trusting that he could hear the Holy One speak. They traveled such a long distance and finally arrived in the "Promised Land." They began to walk and live in it. **Then, a famine! No food to eat and water to drink, for them and the animals!—so now they had to leave this "Promised Land"!**

Some Promised Land, huhh? It can't even support Abram and those belonging to him, let alone an entire nation. **Do you get the picture? This is a test!!! *The Holy One is testing Abram to see if Abram will trust YHVH to keep the promises!*** It's like the Holy One said... "Will he really hold on to My promise of the land? Well, let's see... How about a little famine? Will he still hold on to trusting Me (Elohim)?"

C. Well, it seemed that Abram happily packed his U-Haul (camel) and moved to Egypt. But now what?
Read Genesis 12:11-15.

What does this story want us to think about? (with the taking of Sarai by Pharaoh)? **Do you remember the Divine game plan?** Circle the right answer

Pharaoh and Sarai will make the great nation

Abram can't become a great nation without a wife - Sarai

Abram can't become a great nation without a wife - Sarai

That's right! How can he father a nation when Pharaoh has taken his wife and married her? So, Friends, as you can see, **this is test number two!** And what are the two lessons of these two tests? **Land and seed (descendants)**—the important ingredients of the Divine game plan.

Both of these events are the **opposite** of the mission and promise of making a nation known by justice and righteousness, and are, therefore, seen as ***tests of Abram's faith***. **No wonder Abram is called the Father of Faith.** As you continue to study the Torah, remember to try to think about each event according to the major themes of the Scriptures.

II. Read Genesis 13:1-18. Have you noted that as of Genesis 13:18, Abram still doesn't have any descendants? In fact, don't you think he's beginning to wonder about this "descendants becoming a great nation" stuff?

A. Remembering the Divine game plan, why does the Torah tell us about the parting of Lot and Abram?

Can we make sense of this story thematically with respect to Land and/or Seed? Circle one YES or NO
Yes, we can. But let's review a few facts you may not have considered.

**B. Do you know that Lot has no father? —————> Do you know that Abram has no son?
Do you know that Lot is Abram's nephew? → Do you know that Lot has been following Abram through all of his journeys?**

Now put on your thematic thinking caps. Abram is not a father of his own child, and he knows Adonai will make

of him a great nation, what might Abram be thinking concerning The Promise and Lot?

The PROMISE could be fulfilled through Lot

C. The story of Lot and Abram going different ways represents another test for Abram. He may have thought that Lot, his blood relative, was going to be the son through whom the nation would begin, just as later, he thought Eliezer, his servant, would be.

III. Read Genesis 14:1-24, pay close attention to Genesis 14:21-24. After defeating the four kings, Abram is approached by the king of Sodom (on behalf of all the five kings) who makes an offer. Abram said no to the kings offer.

Let's take a quick look at what happened between the kings and Abram, using history and the customs of the land to get a better understanding from Rav Waxman...

- ~ Abraham became the savior and rescuer of the Canaanites when he defeated the four kings.
- ~ He would be accepted as ruler by the Canaanites, in the "Valley of the King" in front of the person who represents the Most High God (Melchisedec, who is the High Priest for YHVH).
- ~ The custom would be to pay Abraham a tribute (offering), and then seal a formal treaty (agreement) with him making themselves servants to Abram. Abram would then be a king over the entire land of Canaan).
- ~ Abraham refuses all the booty of the war offered to him by the King of Sedon, as a treaty invitation.
- ~ Abraham only wants food for his allies. He does not want any reward, treaty, or formal relationship with Sedon and the other rulers.

This Brief outline is a paraphrase from Rav Chanoch Waxman.

As you can see, understanding the customs of the times shines more light on the story. Now, let's study this story through the thematic understanding of the Divine plan of land and descendants.

A. According to Rav Waxman, what is the name of the region Abram could have had "treaty and control over" because of his military victory over the four kings?" _____

The entire land of Canaan

However, Abram refused any type of reward from the five kings! Can you explain the real thematic significance of his refusal? _____

YHWH promised to GIVE him the Land

Wow! Can you imagine that? Abram can take control over the entire land of Canaan, after having won control of it in his battle with the five kings. But instead of getting ahead of the Divine plan, he decided to wait until the Holy One did as He said He would do—**For to you I will give it (Genesis 13:17).**

B. I know I may sound like a broken record; however, **this was yet another test for Abram**. Will he wait for the promise to be fulfilled, or will he be impatient? He passed again. And what a statement of faith were his actions!

