



Understanding the Parsha

Genesis 41:1-44:17

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.

Joseph Meets His Brothers

Read Genesis 42:1-9. What common theme do you see in this passage, connecting it to the first part of this sidra (Torah portion) and last week's sidra?

D _____
dreams

That's right! Once again, we see the importance of Joseph's dreams. When Joseph's brothers bowed down to him, he remembered his dreams.

Read Genesis 42:1-5. How do these verses remind you of Jacob's relationship with Joseph — see Genesis 37:1-14?

Jacob now f favors Benjamin. Genesis 37 showed us how Jacob favored Joseph.

It's pretty obvious that, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and his other wives. This greater love for her was expressed in the way he treated her children. Jacob has now begun to favor Benjamin over his brothers as he had Joseph.

Benjamin was not allowed to go with his brothers just as Joseph did not go with his brothers to find pasture for the flocks in Genesis 37:12-14. And Benjamin had special access to his father Jacob, just as Joseph once had.

Did you notice how Joseph recognized his brothers although they couldn't recognize him. Can you think of a thematic equivalent?

When Joseph approached his brothers in Dothan, they r him before he saw them.

Joseph acted like a stranger to his brothers when they came to Egypt, and he was harsh towards them. Can you think of a thematic equivalent?

When Joseph appeared to his brothers in Dothan, they were very h towards him.

Read Genesis 42:9-16. What happened when Joseph remembered his dreams about his brothers.

He accused them of being S!

Why did he accuse them of being spies? Read Genesis 37:1-12, which is about the story of his dreams. Do you see a connection between Genesis 42:9 and Genesis 37:1-12 — hint, Genesis 37:2b and 12?

There is a thematic connection between Joseph a his brothers (you are spies), and his actions of bringing evil r to his father concerning his brothers. (A spies job is to bring back reports.)

As you can see, not only does Genesis 37:1-12 tell us about Joseph's dreams, it also tells us that Joseph was sent to check up on his brothers. Yes, it seems that often Joseph was sent by his father to gather information about the welfare of his brothers. He would often bring his father a bad report as part of his mission. It's not hard to imagine that they thought he was spying on them! Oh my, how the tables have turned!

As you read through Genesis 42:9-16, count how many times the word, spies, is used (Genesis 42:9, 11, 14, 16, 30, 31 and 34). This seems to be the new theme.

Every theme and major topic we read in Parashat Vayeishev has begun to reappear in Parashat Miqetz! Do you know what may be going on here?

We may be analyzing part of a C S.

To get a better picture, let's look at the following:

Genesis 37:1-2 — Joseph "S" on his brothers.

Genesis 37:3-4 — Jacob l Joseph more than his other children.

Genesis 37:5-10 — Joseph has d that his brothers will b before him.

Genesis 37:12-17 — Jacob s Joseph to seek the w of his brothers.



Now read Genesis 42:19-38, the verses right after Genesis 42:17-18. What is the main topic?

The g_____ of the brothers and their father.

Let's fill in our second table. Draw lines to match the right reference to the right topic

Genesis 42:1-17 — The grief of the brothers and their father
Genesis 42:17-18 — Jacob sent his sons on a mission
Genesis 42:19-38 — Joseph imprisoned the brothers for three days

Do you see the parallelism? Is this a coincidence? Of course not. Thematically, these two passages are perfectly symmetrical! Compare the following topics:

A) Genesis 37:1-17 — Jacob sent Joseph on a mission

Favoritism for Joseph over his brothers
Joseph sought the welfare of his brothers

A) Genesis 42:1-17 — Jacob sent his sons on a mission

Favoritism for Benjamin over his brothers
His brothers seek food for the welfare of the family

B) Genesis 37:18-30 — Joseph was cast into a pit

Joseph is in the pit temporarily

B) Genesis 42:17-18 — Joseph imprisoned the brothers for three days

Joseph's brothers are in the ward temporarily, three days

C) Genesis 37:31-36 — Jacob laments Joseph's death

Jacob laments Joseph's death
Brothers bring "proof" of Joseph's death
Jacob speaks of going down to the grave mourning his son

C) Genesis 42:19-38 — The grief of the brothers and their father

Joseph's brothers lament their sin against Joseph and Jacob laments
for Benjamin
Joseph demands proof that Benjamin is alive
Jacob speaks of going down to the grave mourning his son



As you can see, these passages are definitely thematically related to each other. Each helps shed light on the other.

Read Genesis 43:21-28. The brothers have obviously made the thematic connections we have. Two times, the brothers recognize what happens to them as the hand of judgment from the Holy One because of the way they treated Joseph in the past.

It seems that the table has been turned and Joseph's brothers are fair game for him. Why does Joseph accuse them of being spies? Is he trying to get back at them for their past sins? In last week's lesson, we saw how each individual eventually had to pay for his sins. We saw that Divine judgment / discipline was an important theme underlying the text:

Jacob, who f ^{avored} Joseph over his other son and ostensibly lost him forever.

Joseph was h ^{umbled} for his sin of pride.

Judah is h ^{umbled} for his sin of self-righteousness and infidelity.

Onan and Er both d ^{ied} because of their sins.

Could it be that the sins of the brothers have finally caught up with them? Remember when Jacob's sons presented Joseph's blood-stained garment and asked him, "We found this, identify, if you please: Is it your son's tunic or not?" Later, in an amazing turn around, it was Judah who was confronted with evidence of his wrongdoing in the exact same manner — Identify if you please, whose are this signet, this wrap, and this staff." Now we see that the brothers have been accused of being spies and thrown into a pit, which is exactly what happened to Joseph! Once again, we see that the Father is trying to correct the behavior of Jacob's family so that they can get on with starting a nation of righteousness and justice. But doesn't it seem strange that Joseph would be "playing God" by causing them to suffer. After all, he may have an axe to grind and/ or a score to settle with them. Is he really executing judgment on them for Adonai? Has he taken matters of judgment into his own hands?

We have already seen that Joseph accused his brothers of something they probably accused him of — spying. We've also seen that he threw them into jail/ pit just as he had been cast into a pit. Now, notice this! They fear becoming sold into slavery (Genesis 43:18)! This is exactly what happened to Joseph and exactly what has happened to Simeon! Wow! This is Joseph's life recast onto his brothers! How mean can he get! One by one, he seems to be recreating situations where his brothers are now able to experience what he experienced. Is this his plan or Adonai's? Is he doing this out of spite and revenge?

What are your conclusions?

Find the hidden words for this weeks Parsha

S J O S E P H T S U J
R E L B G O S D I A A
E N O E Y S F E C P I
H M A E P D G O I A L
T I P S T C B I O P 2
O B E N J A M I N D S
R R E G Y P T V E L N
B L D R E A M S I N S



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