

mishpacha beit midrash

Part Three of Five Introductory Articles

From

Mishpachah Beit Midrash

(The Family House of Study)

These five articles were written to prepare you to study the Torah—the first five books of the Scriptures. The Torah study of Mishpachah Beit Midrash is based on the following premise. The Torah, given by Adonai to Moses, is the foundation for all subsequent revelation from the prophets. Therefore, it is our goal to understand the Torah’s prophetic message. Through understanding the Torah, we build the proper foundation for understanding the rest of the Tanakh, and the New Covenant Scriptures. Furthermore, our Torah foundation will lead us to...

The Goal of the Torah...

The Revelation of Yeshua HaMashiach

I invite you to study the Parashat HaShavuah (Weekly Torah Portion) with Mishpachah Beit Midrash as we use Thematic Analysis to understand the Torah, its prophetic message for all ages and the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah.

The complete set of introductory articles *and* the Parashat HaShavuah Studies can be found at...

www.restorationoftorah.org

For information on fellowship times or if you have questions or comments concerning the content of these teachings send an email to...

torahteacher@restorationoftorah.org

Part Three of Five Introductory Articles

Thematic Analysis

The Secret to Rightly Dividing the Torah of Life

Introduction

Thematic analysis is the most important concept in Scripture hermeneutics (interpretation). Where did this concept of thematic analysis originate? Jerome, Ignatius, Origen, Tertullian, Martin Luther, John Calvin? No. It was developed by the Rabbis and Sages of traditional Judaism. That's right. No matter how much Messianic and/or Christian disciples may think that traditional Judaism has missed the boat concerning who is the Messiah, the fact is, any non-Messianic Rabbi who has been thoroughly trained through study of the Torah and Talmud can probably tell you and I more about the Messiah from the Tanakh (Old Testament) than most of us can demonstrate from the New Covenant Scriptures. The technique of thematic analysis was discovered by the sages of Israel as they began to diligently study the Torah. They left no stone unturned in their pursuit of its wisdom. In so doing, they discovered that Adonai used patterns of themes in His word. Furthermore, they discovered that these themes, when viewed together, helped unify and clarify the prophetic message of the Torah. I am convinced that the thematic analysis of Scripture is the key to understanding the Scriptures properly. I personally exhort you to carefully and thoughtfully read this article. I've chosen some of the most obvious examples of thematic connections from Scripture which clearly demonstrate that this is Adonai's ordained method of understanding His eternal Words. Hopefully, after you've finished this article you will see the importance of thematic analysis.

Adonai has placed a tremendous calling on the Jewish people. As Paul stated in the book of Romans:

¹What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?

²Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

(Romans 3:1-2)

Part of that calling is the unique method of learning the Scriptures called thematic analysis. In thematic analysis we search for the underlying theme/topic of each passage of Scripture. By connecting the themes of Scripture, line upon line, precept upon precept, the Scriptures open up to us in a unique manner that is clearly inspired by the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). Passages that seemed obscure begin to make sense and numerous levels of wisdom and understanding unfold before us.

Therefore, it behooves us to learn from the Jewish people. To discover how they did this, we need to review a portion of Part One of this series concerning the Parsha divisions on a kosher Torah scroll.

We know that Adonai commanded Moses to write the Torah as five separate books. Since Adonai had him separate those words into five separate books, we surmise that each book has a unique message or theme. In other words, Adonai separated his words into five books for a reason. The most obvious reason should be that the different books contain a unique message that is separate from, yet part of the overall message of the five books together. I think most people would agree that each of the five books carries its own unique theme or purpose, so I won't try to prove that fact. Within each book each of the five books of the Torah, the words are written with two paragraph-like divisions interrupting the flow of the words. This paragraph-like division is called a Parsha. Now if Adonai has separated His eternal word into five books, each of which carries a unique theme, wouldn't it be logical to assume that the divisions within each book have a similar purpose? Wouldn't it be logical to assume that the Parshiot (plural of Parsha) are important? Wouldn't it be reasonable to assume that Adonai divided each book into Parshiot for a reason? Otherwise, why would they be necessary?

We all know the function of chapters and paragraphs. They are added to aid the reader in understanding the flow from topic to topic. Since Adonai commanded Moshe to separate the individual books into smaller paragraph-like sections or Parshiot, I surmise that each Parsha was written as a separate unit because each of those Parshiot is trying to convey a unique thought, theme, concept or understanding.

Therefore, since Adonai inspired these divisions I think they are VERY important.

It is fine to use the chapter and verse designations of man. They are extremely helpful. However, shouldn't we be more concerned with divisions that Adonai has INSPIRED? Shouldn't we be more concerned with understanding how He wanted us to understand the flow of topics in His Torah.

Well, this is how the Jewish people have always thought about the Parshiot. Let me quote to you from RASHI, the most revered Torah scholar in all of Judaism:

These short breaks were given [together with the Torah by God] to allow Moshe Rabeinu the opportunity to contemplate from one "parshiya" to the next, [in order] to understand the flow from one topic to the next, **[and if this was necessary for Moshe Rabeinu] then even more so - we who study Chumash must pay attention to these breaks!**¹ (emphasis mine)

There are two types of Parshiot. A Parsha Stumah and a Parsha P'tuchah. Here is an example of what the Parsha divisions look like ...

◻—Parsha Stumah (plural, stumot)—A paragraph-like break inspired by the Ruach HaKodesh, still preserved on kosher Torah Scrolls, where there are at least nine blank spaces between a word and the next word, all on the same line of text.

אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים
 אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים
 אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים

פ—Parsha P'tuchah (plural, p'tuchot)—A paragraph-like break inspired by the Ruach HaKodesh, still preserved on kosher Torah Scrolls, where there are blank spaces extending to the end of a line of text and the subsequent text does not begin until the next line. (Hebrew is read from right to left)

אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים
אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים
אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים אלהים

I have defined a Parsha as a paragraph-like division because they aren't paragraphs in the strictest sense of the word. Some Parshiot can last for two or three chapters without a break, while others may last only one sentence! We should not try to force them to function exactly as paragraph markers. We need to use them as Adonai intended them to be used. They are thematic divisions inspired by Adonai. The sentences within each Parsha contain a unique theme or topic.

The first step in thematic analysis of the books of the Torah is to find the theme of each parsha. This is done by making thematic connections within the parsha. Sometimes, we need to make thematic connections to other parsha's in order to understand the parsha under examination. A basis for understanding thematic analysis of Scripture is found in Isaiah 28:9-10:

*⁹"Whom will he **teach knowledge**? And whom will he make **to understand the message**? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? ¹⁰**For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.**"*

This simple passage tells us two things; 1) *how* Adonai wants to teach us knowledge and 2) *how* He wants to help us understand the message [of Torah]. I'm sure you've noticed that the Scriptures are not written as most theological works of man, where each subject/doctrine (the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of imputation of righteousness, the doctrine of last things, the doctrine of substitutionary blood atonement, etc.) is taught separately and thoroughly. In fact, many view the Bible as a hodgepodge of unrelated stories. This passage however, tells us that we 1) gain Adonai's knowledge and 2) understand the message [of Torah] as we examine the entirety of Scripture precept upon precept, line upon line, *here a little, there a little*. In other words, we must take the Scriptures and stack them one upon another. If we do this with Scriptures that are thematically related and compare and contrast them, looking for the obvious and subtle similarities, His knowledge will unfold in a unique fashion. In this manner we will gain an understanding *based on the entirety of Scripture* instead of a few isolated "proof" texts taken out of context. As you progress through this study, I guarantee you will be amazed at how simple, yet profound, is this concept. Furthermore, you will be amazed at the importance of this foundational hermeneutic tool. The examples of thematic analysis in this paper and the conclusions drawn from them will show you 1) how awesome is our God, 2) how this type of analysis is thoroughly inspired by Adonai, 3) how it will preserve you from error and 4) how you can be assured you are making the proper interpretations.







Thematic analysis involves gaining an understanding of the overall theme of a passage of Scripture. By theme, I mean the underlying (usually unwritten), topical subject of the passage.


Although this may seem somewhat subjective (as in reading between the lines), for the most part it can be quite objective. In order to understand thematic analysis, let's contrast two approaches for studying a passage which I call the microscopic and panoramic approaches. In the microscopic approach, we thoroughly dissect a passage. We answer every important question for every phrase in the verse—who, what, when, where, why and how. Furthermore, we do word studies, examine context, etc. In short, we leave no stone unturned in searching for the minutest detail of the passage. However, in the panoramic approach, we sit back, ignore the detail, and take a "panoramic" view of the passage, looking *in general* at the passage, to determine its general theme. We search for the general topic, the underlying message, the overall subject, and/or a summary of the passage instead of focusing in on the details. This panoramic approach will allow you to do thematic analysis. Furthermore, you will discover that many passages dealing with entirely different subjects will converge—through the common theme—to teach a truth. This truth will become apparent as you *compare* and *contrast*² the thematic connections that exist between the Scriptures. Now, let's see how these divisions help us to interpret the Torah thematically.

Part I

Finding the Underlying Theme of a Parsha

The fourth Parashat HaShavuah is entitled, "Vayeira." It runs from B'reishit 18:1 - 22:24. Within that portion of Scripture, we find six Parsha divisions as follows.

- B'reishit 18:1 - 19:38 
- B'reishit 20:1 - 20:18 
- B'reishit 21:1 - 21:21 
- B'reishit 21:22 - 21:34 
- B'reishit 22:1 - 22:19 
- B'reishit 22:20- 22:24 

We will restrict our study to the first Parsha Stumah, [B'reishit 18:1 - 19:38](#) . Hopefully, through this exercise, you will learn the following:

1. The parsha divisions will help us understand *which passages should be interpreted together*.
2. The parsha divisions are the basis for helping us relate (seemingly unrelated) passages of Scripture.
3. The parsha divisions will help us to understand the overall theme of a parsha.
4. The parsha divisions will help us *properly interpret the stories of the Torah*.

After reading B'reishit 18:1 - 19:38, note that there are no other parsha divisions within it. *This tells us that every portion of this parsha has one common theme*. Even though the parsha divisions suggest that this parsha carries one unique theme, there seems to be two separate and unrelated stories in this parsha—one concerning the promise of a son and another concerning the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without knowing that they are linked together by Adonai in one unit (parsha), one may think they are totally unrelated stories. However, the fact that Adonai put them both within one parsha forces us to realize that there is a common theme that unites them. Furthermore, it forces us to search for a common theme that will unite them.

If we examine the text closely, we will notice that there is a connection between them. The angels are present in both stories! In the first story, they announce the promise of a son. In the second story they engage Abraham in a conversation and are the agents of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, we have a clear *textual* connection between these two seemingly unrelated passages. Next, let's find the thematic connection.

Note that Genesis 18:17-19 appears to be sandwiched between these two seemingly unrelated stories. The position of these verses between these two stories suggests that these verses may contain information to link the two stories thematically as well as textually.

*¹⁷And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham **what I am doing [the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah]**, ¹⁸since **Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation**, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."* (Genesis 18:17-19, emphasis mine)

Notice that Adonai confides in Abraham concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because 1) He's going to make Abraham's descendants into a great nation, 2) all nations will be blessed through him and 3) Abraham will instruct his family to do what is right and just. Notice that this verse has now supplied a thematic connection between the two seemingly unrelated stories of this parsha. The promise of the son (whose destiny will be to give rise to the nation) is now connected to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We may gain more wisdom by finding other verses thematically connected to verses 17-19. These verses are clearly thematically related to the original promise in Genesis 12:1-3.

*¹ Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ²**I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.** ³I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; **And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"* (Genesis 12:1-3, emphasis mine)

Making ourselves aware of *the ultimate purpose for Abraham and his family* (by noting the thematic connection between Genesis 18:17-19 and Genesis 12:1-3), helps us see that the two stories of our parsha (the story of the promised son, who will be the first step in starting the nation and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah) are CLEARLY related. We learn from Genesis 12:1-3 that Adonai's ultimate purpose is for blessing to flow from the nation of Israel to all other nations. Therefore, the Torah is teaching us that the future nation of Israel, a nation that practices righteousness and justice, will be a potential source of blessing to nations like Sodom and Gomorrah! But how so? Because they will pass on (Genesis 18:19—⁹*For I have known*

him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him) a legacy of doing righteousness and justice. This will culminate in a nation of righteousness and justice. It will be this nation's example of righteousness and justice (their ultimate purpose) that will be the blessing to mankind, leading them from sin and idolatry to worship the one and only true God.

Now let's see how this will happen. Thematically, what is Abraham doing when he tries to stay the hand of judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah? He is interceding on their behalf! In his intercession, Abraham requests that the cities be saved for the sake of any righteous ones in them. We all know that Adonai's will is for all to come to repentance. Therefore, why would he not destroy a nation for the sake of the righteous within it? He wouldn't destroy it in hopes that the righteous will be a positive influence on the unrighteous, bringing them to proper teshuvah (repentance). This little conversation is a prophetic picture of how the future nation of Israel will be able to save other nations of the world like Sodom and Gomorrah. Adonai won't destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if ten righteous people are found in it because His hope would be that the ten righteous people bring the rest of the nation to repentance through their intercession and example of righteousness and justice. So likewise, the nation of Israel will be able to save cities like Sodom and Gomorrah because they will be the example of righteousness and justice.

In summary, these two seemingly unrelated stories (the promise of the birth of Isaac and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah) are part of *one* parsha division. This tells us that one common theme should unite them. Adonai plans to make Avraham into a great nation. This nation is destined to become one that represents the one and only true Elohim to all other nations. They are to be a nation that practices righteousness and justice. In this manner they will be a blessing to all nations, showing them true righteousness and justice so that they can perform proper teshuvah and not need to suffer divine judgment (remember the flood and the generation of the tower of Babel). The other nations will perform teshuvah as a result of the example of righteousness and justice found in Israel and their intercession on behalf of those nations. ***In order to impress upon Abraham Avinu (Abraham, our Father) the scope and gravity of his calling, He gives Abraham a chance to see what will happen to mankind (the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah) without the positive influence of a nation characterized by righteousness and justice. This real life example will serve to motivate Abraham to fulfill his calling to be the father of such a nation.*** Without the knowledge that these two stories are part of one inspired division, one may be tempted to interpret each independently of the other. Further evidence in support of our interpretation is correct can be gleaned from the story of Jonah. Remember, Adonai was going to destroy Nineveh. However, through Jonah's preaching, the nation was spared judgment! Remember, part of the interpretation was that the nations would be saved through the intercession of Israel. Evidence supporting that interpretation can be found in the following passages:

*⁷Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; **For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.**" (Isaiah 57:7, emphasis mine)*

Abraham's intercession on behalf of Israel was a prophetic picture of the calling of the nation of Israel. Just as he interceded on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, so too would the nation of Israel be responsible for interceding on behalf of all nations!

Part II

Other Applications of Thematic Analysis

The Common Theme of Sin & Judgment

Let us look at the first few stories in the book of Genesis. I will give a general heading for each story and then I'll show you the basic underlying themes the Spirit has shown me.

- The Fall of Man (Genesis 3)
 - Adam and Chavah sin against Adonai
 - Adonai punishes everyone involved in the sin
 - General Theme—Sin and Judgment
- Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)
 - Cain sins against Adonai
 - Adonai drove him from the face of the earth³
 - General Theme—Sin and Judgment
- Generation of the Flood (Genesis 6-9)
 - Sins of the generation of the flood
 - Adonai destroys them from the "face of the earth" but saves Noach
 - General Theme—Sin leading to Judgment, Righteousness leading to salvation
- The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11)
 - Rebellion of mankind
 - Adonai scatters man over the earth
 - General Theme—Sin and Judgment
- Prophecy of Jacob over Simeon and Levi (Genesis 49:5-7)
 - The sin of Simeon and Levi
 - Adonai will scatter them throughout Israel
 - General Theme—Sin and Judgment

All of these stories involve a sin of some sort and Adonai's response to the perpetrator(s). Therefore, the general theme of all of these passages involves sin and judgment. As you contrast these stories you will note that the circumstances are ***totally different*** for each story. But, as you compare the stories, you will see that although the circumstances are different for each, *they all involved sin on the behalf of mankind and a response of judgment by Adonai*. In other words, although these stories seem *unrelated in their specific subjects*, ***they are all thematically connected through the common them of sin and judgment!*** More importantly, if you compare the actual judgments meted out, you will discover *another* amazing thematic connection. All of the judgments involve some type of separation/scattering from a source of blessing...

- Adam was separated/scattered from the blessings of the garden of Eden.
- Cain was separated from the blessings of the fruit of the earth.
- The generation of the flood was separated from the blessing of life on earth.

- The generation of the tower of Babel was separated/scattered from each other.
- Levi and Simeon were scattered within the nation of Israel instead of possessing a unique physical inheritance.

This is no coincidence. These stories paint a consistent picture of the important theme of sin, judgment and *how* Adonai deals with the sinners. The idea that man is accountable to Adonai for his actions is the predominant theme that runs throughout this first portion of Scripture. Seeing how strongly these unrelated stories are connected thematically, let's add one more passage to the mix. What do you think will be the ultimate punishment for the children of Israel if they forsake Adonai?

Deut 4:27—*And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations.*

Once again we see the common theme of separation/scattering from a place of blessing. Separation from the land of Israel and its protection is the ultimate judgment upon an Israelite. Is this surprising. No. It's a perfect example of how seemingly unrelated passages converge to teach one primary concept. Note the consistency of each example. They all point us in the same direction. This is why thematic analysis is so important. Each story repeatedly reinforces the same conclusion, almost forcing us to see the truth that Adonai wants us to see.

The Deeper Significance of the Ten Commandments

Moses made the following statement to the children of Israel as he recounted to them the events that occurred at Mount Sinai:

*¹³So He declared to you **His covenant** which He commanded you to perform, **the Ten Commandments**; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.* (Deut. 4:13, emphasis mine)

Why and how could Moses call the ten commandments Adonai's covenant? We know he gave Israel many other commandments. Therefore, why did He single out these ten and essentially say that they were equivalent to the entire covenant? In order to answer these questions, let's look at the ten commandments thematically. Below, I have listed the commandments and the theme associated with each.

- Commandment #1—I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Theme—Know Adonai, Believe in Him, Remember what He has done for us

- Commandment #2—You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image--any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Theme—Idolatry Forbidden

- Commandment #3—You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Theme—Sanctification of Adonai's Name

- Commandment #4—Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Theme— The number seven and a time for man to rest

- Commandment #5—Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you

Theme—Respect for authority

- Commandment #6—You shall not murder.

Theme—Sanctification of life

- Commandment #7—You shall not commit adultery.

Theme—Sanctification of sexual intimacy

- Commandment #8—You shall not steal.

Theme—Sanctification of property

- Commandment #9—You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Theme—Sanctification of truth

- Commandment #10—You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

Theme—Contentment

After reviewing these themes you'll need one other piece of information. If you study the entire book of Deuteronomy, you will discover that it is a series of four speeches delivered by Moses to the people of Israel. Chapters 5-26 comprise the main (and longest) speech. If you analyze the

speech of Deuteronomy 5-26 thematically, a series of amazing thematic connections will surface. The theme of each section of the main speech matches identically with the theme of the ten commandments! In fact, except for one exception, the themes of the main speech are in the exact order of the ten commandments!

- The themes of Commandment #1 (know Adonai, believe in Him, remember what He has done for us) and #2 (idolatry forbidden) are also the major themes for Deuteronomy 6-11!⁴
- The theme of Commandment #3 (sanctification of Adonai's Name) is also the theme for Deuteronomy 12-14!⁵
- The theme of Commandment #4 (the number seven and a time for man to rest) is also the theme for Deuteronomy 15-16!⁶
- The theme of Commandment #5(respect for authority) is also the theme for Deut 16:18-18:22!⁷
- The theme of Commandment #6 (sanctification of life) is also the theme for Deut 19-21!⁸
- The theme of Commandment #7 (sanctification of sexual intimacy) is also the theme for Deut 22:10-23:19!⁹
- The theme of Commandment #8 (sanctification of property) is also the theme for Deut 23:20-26!¹⁰
- The theme of Commandment #9 (sanctification of truth) is also the theme for Deut 19:15-21!¹¹
- The theme of Commandment #10 (contentment) is also the theme for Deut 24!¹²

Through thematic analysis we see that Moses used the ten commandments as a basis upon which to deliver all of the other laws to the children of Israel. These thematic connections emphasize ***that all of the laws given in Moses' main speech have their foundation in the ten commandments given at Sinai.*** Once again, we see that there are beautiful patterns to Adonai's Word, given to help us receive ***His*** intended interpretation. After viewing these inspired connections, do you think there's any way to separate the ten commandments from the other commandments of the Torah?

Part III

Thematic Analysis in Word Studies

Another type of thematic analysis involves studying Scriptures that contain a particular word, concept or phrase. The "here a little, there a little" principle established in Isaiah 28:9-10 is a wonderful tool to use to gain understanding about any subject. As I stated before, Scripture is not written like a theological treatise of man. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the

information about any one subject will not be found in one location. It will be dispersed throughout the Scripture (here a little, there a little). That's why thematic analysis, along with the principle of Isaiah 28:9-10, is so important. We must learn how to connect seemingly unrelated passages together by noting their thematic connections! Then the wisdom from above will naturally follow. The beauty of this method of learning is that we are constantly going to the Scriptures seeking a thematically significant interpretation from Scriptures instead of supplying an interpretation from our own biased thoughts. By connecting passages thematically, you maintain your focus on context and theme. This helps you to get His interpretation. After all, our goal should be to determine what He intended to communicate. Thematic analysis will keep you from pulling Scriptures out of context, bestowing your own (or someone else's) interpretation on them. In April of 2002, I asked Adonai for understanding on the true significance of whole burnt offerings. This is how I was able to use thematic analysis to find the answer.

The Purpose of Whole Burnt Offerings

The whole burnt offering is called an olah (עֹלָה), and is one of the primary offerings listed in Leviticus 1-6. Here are some passages from the Torah that mention the olah and the interpretation of the themes surrounding their usage. After each passage I'll list some of the themes.

In Genesis 8:20-21 Noah offered olah to Adonai. The context is that Adonai has just destroyed man from the earth.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done." (Genesis 8:20-22)

- Since Noah, who was termed righteous in his generation, is making the offering (and not the generation of the flood), we surmise that the one who offers the olah must be *in right moral standing with Adonai*. This suggests that the relationship between Adonai and the one offering the olah is significant.
- The fact that Adonai entered a *covenant* with Noah after offering the olah is more evidence suggesting that the relationship between the worshiper and Adonai is important.
- There is a thematic connection between the olah offering and its pleasing effect upon Adonai.

In Exodus 24:5-8 Israel offers olah as they enter into covenant with Adonai

*⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, **who offered burnt offerings** and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶ And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant*

and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."⁸ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words." (Exodus 24:5-8, emphasis mine)

- Once again we see a *covenant* being made at the time of olah offerings, which re-emphasizes the *relationship* between Adonai and the worshiper.
- A new thematic connection is made between *obedience* to Adonai and olah offerings.

In Exodus 29:18, 25, another thematic connection is made between the olah offering and its pleasing effect upon Adonai.

In Genesis 22 Abraham attempts to offer Isaac as an olah offering.

⁶So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering [olah]?" ⁸And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering [olah]." So the two of them went together. (Genesis 22:6-8, emphasis mine)

- Another thematic connection is made between an olah and obedience since this was a test of Abraham's faithfulness to obey Adonai's voice, even though the commandment seemed to contradict the promise concerning Isaac's offspring.
- Even though Isaac is not actually sacrificed, this passage hints (remez) that a person can be an olah. According to Hebrews 11 and Romans 4, Isaac was actually offered as an olah in type and foreshadow.

Let's follow the theme of obedience since it seems to be a dominant theme connected to olah offerings. We read in Psalm 40:6-8:

*⁶Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; **My ears You have opened. Burnt offering [olah] and sin offering You did not require.** ⁷Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. ⁸**I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.**" (Psalm 40:6-8, emphasis mine)*

- Once again these verses make the connection between olah and obedience (I delight to do your will and your law is in my heart), specifically, obedience to the commandments of Adonai.

What is the significance of the words "my ears you have opened?" This phrase reminded me of the law of the bondservant in Exodus 21. The servant who wanted to serve his masters forever had to go through a procedure where his ear was bored through with an awl on the doorposts. In this manner the servant's ear was "opened."

¹ "Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: ²If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. ³If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. ⁵**But if the servant plainly says, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,"**⁶then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. (Exodus 21:1-6, emphasis mine)

- What was the significance of piercing the ear through on the doorposts? That question may be answered with another question. What is on the doorpost of any Torah observant Israelite? A mezuzah, containing the commandments of Adonai. The picture presented in Psalm 40 and thematically connected to Exodus 21 is one where the servant had his ear pierced on the doorposts which contained the commandments of Adonai. Therefore, his ear was "opened" to hear and be obedient to the commandments of Adonai. It is significant that all of the New Covenant Scripture writers claimed to be bondservants of Yeshua! We know their ears were opened to the commandments of Adonai.
- In Exodus 21 we also see that obedience is connected to service.
- The passage in Psalm 40 states that the olah offering of the animal was not what Adonai really wanted! The Psalmist, speaking prophetically on behalf of the Messiah (who is called the Servant in many passages in Isaiah), states that his obedience is what Adonai truly wanted. Whereas, the passage in Genesis 22 only hinted that a person could be an olah, this passage in the Psalm explicitly states that a human olah, offering himself in dedicated service to the obedience of Adonai's commandments, was truly what Adonai desired.

Through these various Scriptures we are consistently receiving a picture of the olah being connected to the obedience and service of the worshipper. Is this clearly expressed anywhere else in the Tanakh?

³⁰ *And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD : "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, ³¹ whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD 's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering [olah]."*
 ...³⁴ *When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. ³⁵ When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the LORD that I cannot break." ³⁶ "My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the LORD. Do to me just as you promised, now that the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. ³⁷ But grant me this one request," she said. "Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry."
³⁸ "You may go," he said. And he let her go for two months. **She and the girls went into the hills and wept because she would never marry.** ³⁹ After the two months, she returned to her father and he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin. From this comes the Israelite custom ⁴⁰ that each year the young women of Israel go out for four days to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite. (various passages from Judges 11,*

emphasis mine)

In this story, Jephthah made a vow that whatever came out of the door of his house to meet him (he was thinking of whichever animal of his came out to greet him) would be sacrificed as an olah. To his dismay his daughter came out. He admits he cannot break the vow. She also encourages him to fulfill his vow. Does he sacrifice her as an olah? Well, yes and no. No, he didn't put her on an altar, kill her and burn her to Adonai. But, yes he did dedicate her to a lifetime of service and obedience to Adonai! That's why it states in verse 38 that she would "never marry." She was an olah just as Isaac was. They were offered in complete service to Adonai. Is this not the understanding that the Apostle Paul had?

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice [olah], holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (spiritual act of worship—NIV). ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2, emphasis mine)

When Paul wrote this verse he had an olah in mind because he knew the olah was a picture of our dedicated service in obedience to Adonai's commandments. This was also the understanding of Jephthah and his daughter. Note how beautifully the words "will of God" in verse 2 connect thematically to the words "I delight to do Your **will**" in Psalm 40:8! Lastly, let's look at another thematic connection between Genesis 22 and Romans 12:1-2.

*⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad^[1] and I will go yonder and **worship**, and we will come back to you." (Genesis 22:5, emphasis mine)*

In Abraham's mind, he was set to offer Isaac. As he left his young men, he said he and Isaac were going to *worship*. The NIV states that if we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, we will be rendering a "spiritual act of **worship**."

Through thematic analysis we've seen quite plainly that the olah, or whole burnt offering, was a picture of a worshiper in covenantal relationship with Adonai, offering himself to Adonai in complete service and submission to the His commandments.

Part IV

Relating the Torah and Haftarah Portions Through Thematic Analysis

During various times the Jews were forbidden to study the Torah (first five books) by their captors. The Jewish people overcame this obstacle by reading portions of the prophets and psalms that were thematically connected to the Torah. In this manner, they were able to study the Torah without ever having to really read the Torah. As you progress in studying the Torah thematically, you will be able to relate the Haftarah portions to specific portions of the Torah. Thematic analysis is the tool the sages of Israel used to make these connections.

For example, in the Torah portion entitled Vayigash (Genesis 44:18-47:27) Joseph is reunited with his brothers after years of separation and family disunity. The Haftarah portion chosen to connect thematically with that story is taken from Ezekiel 37:15-28. The passage in Ezekiel discusses the reunification of the two houses of Israel by the hand of the Messiah. The following are just a few of the thematic connections readily evident.

- Joseph and Judah are the two main characters in the Genesis account of the separation and family infighting. This was a prophetic picture of the eventual separation of the children of Israel into the divided houses of Judah (the southern kingdom of Judah) and Joseph (the northern kingdom of Israel/Joseph or Ephraim).
- In the Genesis account, Joseph, a type of the Messiah, is the main figure instrumental in uniting the family. The Ezekiel passage states that the house of Judah and the house of Israel/Joseph will be reunited by the hand of the Messiah

Part V

Thematic Analysis and the Words of Yeshua

Yeshua constantly used the principles of thematic analysis in his teaching. For example, in Matthew 24, when Yeshua is talking about the days preceding his return, why does he use the story of the rebellion of man before the flood instead of the rebellion of Korah to typify mankind before his return? He does so because the flood account is thematically connected to His second coming in numerous ways. Here are just a few:

- The moral character and sin of mankind had reached such a grave level that only the destruction of mankind was the appropriate judgment. So likewise, the sin of mankind will reach a level such that annihilation is the only acceptable judgment. That's what the day of the Lord is all about, when Zephaniah says that Adonai will "remove man from the face of the earth." Those same words were used concerning the generation of the flood (Genesis 6:13).
- The flood occurred after a long period of preaching by Noah, calling on men to repent. So likewise, the Day of the Lord will occur after a period of preaching (during the tribulation). In fact, this period of preaching actually started when the gospel went forth to the nations.
- The flood occurred during a time when men scoffed at Noah's message of impending judgment. So likewise, the period right before the Day of the Lord will be a period of time when men scoff at our pleas to repent. That's the theme Peter uses in his epistle.

*¹ Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ²that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, ^[1] the apostles of the Lord and Savior, ³knowing this first: **that scoffers will come in the last days**, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴and saying, "**Where is the promise of His coming?** For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."⁵**For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶by which the world that then***

existed perished, being flooded with water. (II Peter 3:1-6, emphasis mine)

The rebellion of Korah is not thematically related to the Day of the Lord or the second coming. The rebellion of Korah is thematically related to covetousness and pride. Korah was not satisfied with the important position Adonai had already given him.

Examples such as these could literally be multiplied hundreds of times. Yeshua, as well as all of the writers of the New Covenant Scriptures, understood thematic analysis and used it extensively. I hope the examples in this paper have encouraged you to begin to look at Scriptures thematically. As you read the Mishpachah Beit Midrash Torah portion commentaries you will see how thematic analysis will open the Scriptures to you in a new and living way!

The Flood of Noah—A Picture of Our Salvation

Let us look again at the story about the flood from a thematic standpoint (Genesis 6:1 - 8:22). I have noted the following themes through my study.

- ✓ Genesis 6:1-6, 11-12—The theme of these verses is the ***sinfulness of mankind***.
- ✓ Genesis 6:7, 13; 7:17-24—The theme of these verses is ***judgment/wrath on the ungodly***.
- ✓ Genesis 6:8-10; 6:18 - 7:1—The theme of these verses is ***grace and mercy*** bestowed upon a remnant of mankind.
- ✓ Genesis 6:14-16; 7:2-17; 8:1-19— The theme of these verses is ***salvation/redemption/deliverance*** of the righteous.
- ✓ Genesis 9:20-22— The theme of these verses is a ***covenant in blood***.

We see a perfect picture of the entire message of salvation through the sacrifice of Yeshua by simply examining these themes. Mankind deserves the ***judgment*** of death because of his ***sinfulness***. However, because of the ***grace*** and ***mercy*** of Adonai, He will extend ***salvation*** to those, who like Noah, are found to be ***righteous***. Those who accept the ***covenant*** of Yeshua's ***blood*** will receive ***redemption*** and ***deliverance***. Those who reject it will suffer the ***wrath*** of the ***ungodly***.

Endnotes

¹ Rashi', Commentary to Vayikra,1:1.

² The most important concept in thematic analysis involves comparison and contrast of the pertinent passages. Find all similarities and all differences. The similarities and differences will help paint the picture of the hidden wisdom.

³ He was effectively driven from the face of the earth because the earth would no longer yield its fruit to him.

⁴ *Deut 11:1-7, 16-17*—¹ "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always. ² Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm-- ³ His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; ⁴ what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the LORD has destroyed them to this day; ⁵ what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; ⁶ and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel-- ⁷ but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which

He did... ¹⁶Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, ¹⁷lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

⁵ *Deut 12:3-6, 11; 16:22-23*—³And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their **names** from that place. ⁴You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things. ⁵"But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put **His name** for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. ⁶There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks...¹¹then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His **name** abide...²²"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. ²³And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His **name** abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

⁶ *Deut 15:1, 12, 19*—¹"At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts...¹²"If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you...¹⁹"All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the LORD your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock.

⁷ *Deut 17:8-11*—⁸"If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. ⁹And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. ¹⁰You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the LORD chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. ¹¹According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you.

⁸ *Deut 19:1-10; 22:8*—¹"When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses, ²you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess. ³You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there. ⁴"And this is the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past--⁵as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies--he shall flee to one of these cities and live; ⁶lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past. ⁷Therefore I command you, saying, "You shall separate three cities for yourself." ⁸"Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, ⁹and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, ¹⁰lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and thus guilt of bloodshed be upon you. ..⁸"When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

⁹ *Deut 22:22-30*—²²"If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die--the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel. ²³"If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you. ²⁵"But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. ²⁶But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young

woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter. ²⁷For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her. ²⁸"If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, ²⁹then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days. ³⁰"A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed.

¹⁰ *Deut 23:20-25*—²⁰To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess. ²¹"When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. ²²But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. ²³That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth. ²⁴"When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. ²⁵When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.

¹¹ This is the only section that isn't in the same thematic order as the other sections. *Deut 19:15-21*—¹⁵ "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. ¹⁶If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, ¹⁷then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. ¹⁸And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, ¹⁹then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. ²⁰And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. ²¹Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

¹² *Deut 24:10-15, 19-22*—¹⁰"When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. ¹¹You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you. ¹²And if the man is poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. ¹³You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God. ¹⁴"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. ¹⁵Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you... ¹⁹"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. ²¹When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. ²²And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.