

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

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Digging into the Torah

Let's begin by noting that the Parsha begins in Genesis 28:10 and doesn't end until Genesis 32:3! If you have been studying with MBM, you know that this is significant. What is the significance of all of the events that occur in this single Parsha? That's right. Although there are many subplots in this narrative, we know that their inclusion in a single Parsha means they are part of an overall theme. We will determine this theme now. We will begin by making a general outline of the flow of events.

- Genesis 28:10-22—Jacob's Ladder.
- Genesis 29:1-12—Jacob meets Rachel at the well.
- Genesis 29:13-35—Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel.
- Genesis 30:1-24—The rivalry between Rachel and Leah.
- Genesis 30:25-43—Jacob's prosperity.
- Genesis 31:1-21—Jacob's flight from Lavan.
- Genesis 31:22-42—Confrontation between Jacob and Lavan.
- Genesis 31:43-32:3—Covenant between Jacob and Lavan.
- Now let's do a thematic experiment. Read Genesis 28:10-22 and Genesis 31:45-32:3,

Now let's try to pick out the themes. Read Genesis 28:10-22 and Genesis 31:45-32:3 comparing and contrasting them. Do you see any thematic connections between them?

What are the first and last events to occur in this Parsha? Without reading any more, what do you think is going on here?

The answer is that this whole segment of scripture uses a chiastic structure. Whenever you see two similar events occurring at the beginning and ending of a passage, you can bet a chiastic structure is on hand. A chiastic structure is a pattern organized as follows. Generally, a story is divided into two halves. The

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themes of the first half of the literary unit are repeated in the second half of the unit in reverse order. Furthermore, the first and second halves of the story usually point us to the most important part of the story, the central axis. There are probably hundreds of them in the Tanakh! It is a literary device the Holy One developed to help us understand the themes of His Word. I will help you develop the chiasmic structure below.

Read Genesis 28:10-12. Which verses are thematically related to this passage? They are related as follows:

- In the earlier reference, Jacob is leaving the Promised Land on his way to Charan. In the latter passage, he is leaving Charan to return to the Promised Land.
- In the earlier reference, Jacob saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder. In the latter passage, angels encountered him.

Read Genesis 28:13-22. Which verses are thematically related to this passage? They are related as follows:

- The earlier reference records an agreement between Jacob and the Holy One. The latter passage records an agreement between Jacob and Lavan.
- In the earlier reference, Jacob erects a monument in response to Adonai's promises to him. In the latter passage, Jacob erects a monument in response to Lavan's promises to him.

Read Genesis 29:1-35. Which verses are thematically related to this passage? They are related as follows:

- In the earlier reference, Jacob works fourteen years for Rachel and Leah. In the latter passage, Jacob recounts his fourteen years of labor for Rachel and Leah.
- In the earlier reference, Jacob is deceived so that he doesn't get Rachel whom he wanted. In the latter passage, Lavan is deceived so that he doesn't find his gods on Rachel, who had taken them.
- In the earlier reference, Lavan invited Jacob to set his wages for work. In the latter passage, Jacob recounts how Lavan changed his wages very often.
- In the earlier reference, Jacob's seven years of labor for Rachel seemed very easy. In the latter passage, Jacob recounts his toils under Lavan's hand as very cruel.

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Read Genesis 30:1-21. Which verses are thematically related to this passage?

They are related as follows:

- In the earlier reference, Leah realized that she was blessed with another child because she gave her maidservant to Jacob. In the latter passage, Lavan realized that he was blessed because of Jacob.
- In the earlier reference, Leah believes that Jacob will remain permanently with her. In the latter passage, Lavan wants Jacob to remain with him.
- In the earlier reference, Leah conceives a child because of the mandrakes she paid to Rachel. In the latter passage, Jacob used rods to make his livestock more fertile.
- In the earlier reference, Jacob proliferates abundantly as he has one child after another. In the latter passage, Jacob's livestock proliferate abundantly.

E. Read Genesis 30:22-26. These verses appear to be the central axis!!!

II. Let's lay out the chiasmic structure that we have uncovered.

A) Genesis 28:10-12—Exile from the Promised Land

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| B) Genesis 28:13-22—A pillar, a reminder of the Holy One's faithfulness

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| | C) Genesis 29:1-35—Jacob works for Rachel and Leah

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| | | D) Genesis 30:1-21—Jacob proliferated abundantly

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| | | | — E) Genesis 30:22-26—The birth of Yosef (Joseph)

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| | | D1) Genesis 30:25-43—Jacob's flocks proliferate abundantly

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| | C1) Genesis 31:1-42—Jacob suffers labor under Lavan

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| B1) Genesis 31:45-55—A pillar, a reminder of the agreement with Lavan

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A1) Genesis 32:1-3—Return to the Promised Land

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In fact, there are other chiasmic structures within this larger one!

Now for the big question. What is the one theme that unites all the stories in this reading?

- This is the essence of this Parsha. It begins with exile from Eretz

Yisrael (the land of Israel) and ends with a return to the land. Later, we will see why the birth of Joseph is the central axis of the story of exile and redemption.

Connecting the Prophets

The Haftarah reading is found in Hosea 11:7-14:10. I will list some verses from the Prophets reading. Your job will be to relate them thematically to the Torah reading.

- How is Hosea 11:10-11 thematically related to the Torah portion?
- I stated earlier that Jacob's plight was likened unto the Egyptian exile and redemption. Now read Hosea 12:13-14. Note how the prophet used elements of this week's reading and elements of the story of the Egyptian exile as if they were one story. The story should be told like this:

Israel went into Egypt as seventy souls and labored for Egypt as slaves. Through a prophet [Moses], YHWH brought up Israel from Egypt, and through a prophet it was tended.

Instead, the prophet substituted scenes from Jacob's life into the first half of the story.

Jacob fled to the field of Aram; Israel labored for a wife, and for a wife he tended [sheep]. Through a prophet [Moses], YHVH brought up Israel from Egypt, and through a prophet it was tended.

Therefore, we see that the prophet Hosea clearly saw the thematic connection between this week's Parsha and the Egyptian exile and redemption!

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Connecting the Torah with the NT

Read Genesis 28:10-22. In this narrative, Jacob has a dream and sees angels ascending and descending upon a ladder. Can you think of a B'rit Chadasha (New Covenant Scripture) text thematically related to this event? 24 Clearly, Yeshua is making a connection between Himself and Jacob's ladder. Surely, He is the ladder upon which the angels ascended and descended. In this example, we see that the shadow (Jacob's dream) was a prophetic picture of events that would occur in the life of the Messiah.

- A. When one uses the words ascend and descend, it automatically reminds me of Moses' picture of the Messiah. As you will learn in the book of Exodus, Moses' life is also a prophetic picture of the work of Messiah Yeshua. For example, in Exodus 19:1-25, which describes Matan Torah (the giving of the Torah), the words ascend and descend are used over seven times. What was the primary physical activity Moses seems to be engaged in? This may not seem significant to you until you realize that Moses ascended and descended a mountain seven times during a three-day period! That's a lot of strenuous walking and climbing. In Parashat Noah, we learned that the high elevation of a mountain is often likened unto the sky, i.e., from heaven. Therefore, Moses' example teaches us that the Messiah's mission will involve numerous ascents and descents to and from the sky/heaven.
- B. And what was the primary activity Moses was involved in during those ascents and descents? That's right, he was mediating the covenant between Adonai and Am Israel. This is exactly Yeshua's role! What Moses did for Am Yisrael and the Holy One, Yeshua has performed for the Holy One and the world—I Timothy 2:5.
- C. Putting all this together: Through Moses' example, we know the Messiah's work will involve numerous ascents and descents to mediate between man and Elohim. Still not convinced? Well, can you think of any other Scripture in the Tanakh thematically related to the Moses' busy activity of ascending and descending? Yes.

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4 Who has ascended to heaven and descended? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know (Proverbs 30:4, emphasis mine)!

1. Do you know a Father and Son of whom it could be asked who 1) has ascended and descended, and 2) established the ends of the earth? Surely you know Him.
2. Furthermore, who was it that first descended (John 6:51) from heaven as a prophet to speak the words of the New Covenant? Surely you know Him.
3. Who was it that, after redeeming us with His blood, ascended (Ephesians 4:8) back to heaven to become the High Priest of our confession? Surely you know Him.
4. And whom are we awaiting to descend (Revelation 19:11-16) again to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Surely you know Him.

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down (descended) from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven (John 3:13, emphasis mine).

As you can see, these verses clearly teach us that Moses' ascending and descending was a picture of Messiah Jesus' work of redemption. Moses' ascending and descending was related to his ministry as a mediator of the covenant between Israel and the God, so likewise, Yeshua is in the process of ascending and descending to and from heaven mediating the covenant between mankind and the God.