

Thematic Madness

By

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During the past few years of my life, I have endeavored to make the Torah the foundation for my faith in Yeshua as the Messiah of all Israel. This is not as easy as it may seem, because I have one huge disadvantage to overcome—I'm non-Jewish. So what's the problem? The problem is this. Where is Yeshua in the Torah? Moses never once specifically refers to the Messiah as the Messiah. Not once does he explicitly state, "For Elohim (God) so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." Can you find where Moses speaks of the virgin birth? How about the doctrine of imputation of righteousness by faith? Does Moses ever explicitly state that the Messiah would die and be resurrected in three days? I think you get the picture. So many of the doctrines we take for granted as being foundational to our faith in Yeshua as the Messiah are never mentioned *explicitly* in the Torah. Thus, some would argue that the Torah was simply a temporary document given to the Jews until the coming of the Messiah, whereupon it would be discarded. Well, I for one don't believe that. Furthermore, although the task of finding these foundational doctrines in the Torah is initially daunting, the fact is that it's not impossible. In fact, it gets easier and easier once you are trained to study the Scriptures Hebraically. That's the key.

So what do I mean by studying the Scriptures Hebraically? Simply this, we must renew our minds to the methods and techniques of Scripture analysis developed and used by the sages of Israel, primarily those from the House of Judah. One of the most important hermeneutic tools is thematic analysis, whereby we analyze Scripture by studying the themes underlying the text. The second most important guideline to remember is that the events in the lives of the Patriarchs (or any other Biblical character, for that matter) are prophetic shadows of events that will occur in the lives of their descendants—including the Messiah. For example, earlier I noted that the Torah doesn't explicitly state the fact that Elohim so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believed in Him would have eternal life. Well, the Torah may not state this fact explicitly, but it does state it implicitly or thematically. Genesis 22 is the story of the binding of Isaac, or the Akeida. In this story, we find the following statements:

¹Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ²Then He said, "Take now ***your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love***, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you (Genesis 22:1-2, emphasis mine)."

I would venture to say that by now, most people reading this article are able to recognize where I'm going with my analogy. This story is obviously a picture or shadow of the work of Messiah Yeshua. Abraham was willing to offer ***his only son whom he loved*** as a sacrifice in obedience to the will of Elohim. So likewise, our heavenly Father was willing to ***offer His only Son whom***

He loved as a sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, the Torah does teach us that Elohim so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son. It does this through the story of the Akeida.

But what about the resurrection, you may ask. Where does the Torah teach us about the resurrection of the Messiah? Well, let's cheat a little and see what Yeshua had to say about this. When asked for proof of His authority by the religious leaders, Yeshua stated that He would only give them the sign of the prophet Jonah (Matthew 12:38-40). We know that Jonah was in the belly of a fish for three days and three nights. But many of us have not questioned why this was a sign. Furthermore, of what was it a sign? These questions are simple to answer when we consider that normally, once swallowed by a large fish, after three days in its belly, the normal person would be dead. However, Jonah came forth alive after three days! In other words, the sign of Jonah was the sign of resurrection! The sign of Jonah involves two concepts—resurrection (life from the dead) and the number three.

It turns out that these two themes, resurrection and the number three are also present in the story of the Akeida. Abraham and Isaac traveled *three* days before seeing the place where Isaac was to be offered. He was supposed to die. However, at the moment of impending death, his life was preserved when the angel stopped Abraham from executing him. This concept of resurrection, or life, death and the number three recurs in almost every story of Messianic significance in the Torah and throughout the Tanakh! For example, most of us know that Joseph is a picture of Messiah as the suffering servant. While in jail (Genesis 40), Joseph interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's servants, the chief baker and butler. In Joseph's interpretation of the dream, one of them is promised *life* in *three* days, while the other is promised *death* in *three* days. This is the Messianic sign Yeshua spoke of in the story of Jonah, which tells us that Joseph's life (and this incident in particular) is a foreshadowing of the Messiah. How so? According to Isaiah 53, Yeshua was incarcerated as a criminal, although he had done no wrong. So likewise, Joseph was also incarcerated as a criminal. Furthermore, just as Joseph was incarcerated with two criminals, so too, Yeshua was executed with two criminals! In Joseph's story, the baker was executed by hanging on a tree. Is it coincidental that Yeshua and the two criminals condemned with Him were also hanged on a tree? I think not. Furthermore, during Yeshua's execution, one criminal is promised eternal *LIFE*, while the other *DIES* in his sins just as in the story of Joseph were one criminal lived and the other died! Get the picture? Lastly, the occupations of the cupbearer and baker are pictures of the bread and the wine, which Yeshua used to illustrate His redemption! Truly, this portion of the life of Joseph was a prophetic shadow of a future event to occur in the life of his greatest descendant, Messiah Yeshua.

We all know that Moses' life is a shadow of the Messiah. Can we see the sign of the Messiah in his life? In Exodus 2:1-10 we are told of Pharaoh's decree—all male babies were to be thrown to their death into the Nile river. In other words, Moses was supposed to experience *death*. However, after *three* months, Pharaoh's daughter took him from the Nile and adopted him as her child, effectively commuting his *death* sentence and giving him *life*! These examples are just the tip of the iceberg! These themes of implied *resurrection* or deliverance from impending *death* to *life* and the number *three* are present in most Messianic pictures in the Tanakh! From Yeshua's own words, they are the Sign of the Messiah. Yeshua reiterated this sign again in John 2:13-21, when He stated that He would give the sign of *destroying* the temple and *raising* it again in *three* days. He spoke of the temple of his body. Thematically, every one of the stories

above contain the themes of *resurrection* and the number *three*. It turns out that as you read the Scriptures, the number three is the most important number indicating a Messianic teaching.¹

So where am I going with all of this thematic stuff? Well, have you ever heard of the law of unintended consequences? It goes like this. Sometimes laws and principles result in behavior that was not intended when the law or principle was enacted. For example, the war on poverty was supposed to eradicate poverty from America through government subsidies to the poor. However, instead of people using welfare as a step up and out of poverty, many people preferred to remain in poverty so that they could continue to receive the free government handouts. This, my friends, was an unintended consequence of the war on poverty. Well my chaverim (friends), I have to confess that I have succumbed to the law of unintended consequences. You see, the Holy One intended that we use thematic analysis as we studied the *Biblical characters* found in the Scriptures. However, over the past few years I've noted a number of thematic connections between the Scriptures and *my life*. I'd like to share some of them with you, if you don't mind.

I'm sure you've noticed the significance of the number forty in Moses' life. He had major changes in the circumstances of his life at every forty year juncture. When he turned forty years of age, he was exiled from Egypt where he had been a leader in Egypt, powerful in word and deed. When he turned eighty, he left shepherding to function as a prophet/judge/king over Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) during their exodus and wilderness journeys. It just so happened that I had a major change in the circumstances in my life exactly during my fortieth year of life. That's when the Holy One opened my eyes to His current Messianic restoration movement! What a life change—from bacon to kosher, from Sunday to Sabbath, from Christmas and Easter to the Holy Days! Everything in my life has undergone major change and it all happened when I turned forty.

Which reminds me: when I turned forty, another spectacular event occurred thematically connected to the events recorded after Jacob's vision of the angels ascending and descending the ladder. Genesis 28:16-22 records one of the revelations Jacob received at *Bethel*. After his vision of the angels ascending and descending upon the ladder, he set up a pillar from the *stone* upon which he had slept the previous night. In Genesis 28:22, he vowed to return and *build a house* for Elohim from the *stone* pillar he had set up. Have you ever made a thematic connection between this story and an event recorded for us in the B'rit Chadasha (New Covenant Scriptures) concerning Yeshua and a *stone*? In Matthew 16:13-28, Peter confessed that Yeshua was the Messiah, the Son of the living Elohim. After his confession, Yeshua stated, "you are Peter, and *upon this rock I will build my assembly*." Knowing that the assembly (us) is the living Temple/House of Adonai, we see that Jacob's actions were actually a prophetic picture of the future work of the Messiah who would build a Temple made out of living *stones*.

The thematic significance to my life? We built our own house. This is pretty amazing when you consider that two years earlier I didn't even know what a joist was! For some strange reason, I decided I wanted to build our next house. So I went to the library and took out some books on how to build and general contract the building of a house. My family and I planned every inch of the house with an architect, hired every contractor and added some sweat equity of our own. When the foundation footers were poured, I carved the name *Jesus Christ* into the cement while it was still wet. I had just started studying about my Hebraic roots and I knew that I was about to

embark upon revelations that would literally repave the foundation of my faith. So, like Jacob, I began building a house on a rock. But wait, there's more. Genesis 28:19 states that Jacob called the place Bethel, which means House of Elohim. Amazingly, the house we built on the rock is in an area called Bethel Township.

Which reminds me: the addresses of every house that my immediate family has lived in has had significant thematic connections to Scripture. Our first house was on Almond Drive in Lake Jackson, TX. As you know, the menorah in the Holy Place had almond designs on it. The address of our second house contained the numbers three and seven. Our current house has the numbers seven and twelve. Furthermore, we live on Falling Water Drive² in **Bethel** township.

Which reminds me: although I've used the pronoun *we* numerous times, I have not introduced you to my wife, Tina. After discovering our Hebraic roots, we realized that our marriage is a good picture of the restoration of both houses of Israel, because she is Jewish by descent through her father, while I'm a Goy, probably from the lost tribe of the House of Israel. Ezekiel prophesied of a time when the Messiah would make the House of Judah and the House of Israel one in His hand. As you know, marriage makes us one flesh as husband and wife. However, it is also a testimony to the faithfulness of Adonai who has literally made Judah and Joseph one through our marriage.

Which reminds me: my middle name is Joseph. So what's the significance? Well, have you noticed how many Biblical characters had their names changed at some point? Take Jacob for instance. In Genesis 32, the Holy One changed Jacob's name from Jacob to Israel. Here's the connection. My legal name is Anthony Joseph Robinson. However, if you search the records of my life, you will not be able to trace me before 1974 by the name Anthony Joseph Robinson. Why? Because for personal reasons, in 1975 I had a legal name change. At that time, I had a friend named Aaron Wright. We called him AJ. I really liked the sound of the name AJ. So, I chose Joseph as my middle name so that I could call myself AJ. Well, I never called myself AJ. But now I know the real significance behind my middle name, Joseph. I truly believe I am from the House of Joseph. And although my name change was not as glorious as Jacob's, I still see the Father's providential hand in this matter. By the way, we call my youngest son, AJ instead of Tony. ☺

Speaking of names, have you noticed how Biblical characters usually have names that are related to their destiny and personality? Isaac means laughter because Adonai caused Sarah to laugh with joy over the child of her old age. Abraham means father of many. The thematic connection to my life? I have three sons named Sean Anthony Robinson, Evan Joseph Robinson and Anthony Joseph Robinson II. I know you may think me somewhat egotistical by now, using my name at every chance, however this all began quite innocently. You see, we named our first son Sean Anthony Robinson. We decided to give him my first name as his middle name. We decided to give my second son my middle name, Joseph, as his middle name. Well, when Tina was found to be with child for the **third** time, we set about choosing names. We never wanted to know the sex of our developing children. We waited to see what Adonai had given us. We had no trouble choosing a name for a girl; however, we were at a loss for another name for a potential third boy. I had sheepishly suggested that we name him Anthony Joseph Robinson, but that suggestion was met with an instant rebuff. It just so happened that Tina went into labor on

the evening of my birthday. It was around 8:30 p.m. at the time, so I made her a proposition. If the next child was a boy *and* if he was born before midnight (on my birthday), we would name him Anthony Joseph Robinson II. Well, the rest is history! In fact, I checked my birth certificate and we were born within thirty minutes of each other on the same day! What a blessing and a miracle. Hopefully, he will not make the same mistakes I've made.

Speaking of the number three, I also had a near death and "resurrection" experience connected with the number three. After the winter break of my freshman year at the University of Illinois in Champaign Urbana, my *father*, a *friend* and *I (three people)* drove from Chicago to Champaign Urbana in his car. I was driving on I-57 and was approaching a steep overpass at about 60 miles per hour. There was no snow on the road but the temperature was below freezing. As I began to climb the incline, the back end of my father's Ford LTD began to swerve over into the passing lane. I quickly remembered my driving course instructions on how to pull out of an icy skid. I took my foot off the accelerator and did not brake. Then I slowly turned the steering wheel to the left to bring the front of the car in line with the back of the car. It worked! By the time the front of the car was in the passenger lane, the car had straightened out momentarily. However, the back end of the car then began to swerve over to the right lane! So, I gently began turning the front of the car to the right. But this time I could not straighten the car. We continued to go off the road until we hit the railing. By this time we were up near the top of the overpass with railroad tracks beneath us. The car hit the railing and the two wheels on the right side of the car went up and over the railing. I was literally driving on my two left wheels. Knowing that at any second we could go over the railing and plunge to our deaths, I quickly and sharply turned the steering wheel to the left as hard as I could. Miraculously, the car came off the railing, back onto four wheels and came to a complete stop at the top of the overpass. Our lives were spared. By the way, I had not repented and received the forgiveness of sins through Yeshua at that time. It was a most peculiar event.

Speaking of peculiar, have you noticed how wearing tzitzit makes you stand out in a crowd as being, peculiar? A couple of years ago, our family went to visit our old church. At one point, a young lady began pointing at me. She had a most perplexing look on her face. With a pained, yet inquisitive look, she pointed to my tzitzit and asked our ex-pastor something along the lines of, "what's up with that?" What's truly amazing is this. Have you ever seen one of those black and white circular and spiral wheels used to hypnotize people as it turns, seemingly causing the lines to spiral into the middle. Well, she had on a pair of contact lenses that were colored pitch black, with thin white lines spiraling into the center like one of those hypnotic disks. And she had the nerve to point at my tzitzit as if I was peculiar (not to mention the facial piercing, etc.)?

Anyway, I could tell you of a few more instances of thematic connections I've seen in my life like the fact that when our children play tag, they no longer run to safety at home base. No, our kids run to the *city of refuge!* Hmm. Peculiar kids, eh? Or how about this. Recently, the Holy One began to give me revelation concerning the Messianic significance of Samson's life. Through the revelations from Samson's life, He then began to show me that every judge in the book of Judges is a Messianic figure, teaching us something about the person and work of Messiah Yeshua. Well, I noticed the other day that the monitor speaker we recently purchased has the brand name, *Samson*.

Let me pull myself out of this infinite loop that I've started before this article goes too much longer. Although the events in our lives have not been recorded as pictures of future events in the lives of our descendants, each one of us has been invited to live prophetic lives. That's right. You see, as we obey the mitzvot (commandments), we are living testimonies of the one and only true Elohim. For example, as we keep Shabbat and the Holy Days, our lives are prophetic witnesses to the past and the future. We are witnesses to the fact that YHVH created the heavens and the earth in seven days. Furthermore, we are witnesses that He will come back at the seventh millennium to usher in a one thousand year Shabbat for the earth. In fact, as we obey all of the mitzvot (commandments), our lives become prophetic witnesses to the world around us of eternal truths. And our witness is no less significant than the witness of those who have gone before us. So, if you want to have some fun, see how many Biblical themes you can find in your life. If you don't see as many as you'd like, just remember, the prophecy of your obedience to the mitzvot will put you right up there with some of the greats, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob...

¹ We know the Scriptures use numbers to teach things. The numbers seven and forty appear over and over in many stories. You can bet that each one has thematic significance.

² The Torah is likened unto falling water in Deuteronomy 32:1-2.