

Over the years – especially the past 25 years – I’ve listened to a number of speakers at various conferences who in their message made a statement or expressed an understanding of a topic that I thought was somewhat unique. I would then ask myself “How did he come up with that?” One example was back in 2002 when a well known Hebrew Roots teacher was speaking in Tyler, and in his message he made the statement “Did you know that the Hebrew word for “violence” is ‘chamas” His statement quickly caught my attention – as it did with others in the room since it was just months since the September 11 attacks. As you will recall, a group of Islamic jihadists from Saudi Arabia were behind the attacks. At that time, anything pointing to Islam caught people’s attention, as well as references to the Islamic group “Hamas” that was bringing a lot of violence to Israel.

After returning home that evening, I pulled out my Strong’s concordance and found a number of passages that translate “chamas” (Strong’s 2555) as ‘violence’. One example is in Obadiah where YHVH is chastising Esau for rejoicing over Judah’s calamity. He says –

^{ESV} **Obadiah 1:10-12** Because of the violence (chamas - חָמָס – 2555) done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. ¹¹ On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. ¹² But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress.

This had an impact on me and for years it caused me to (correctly or incorrectly) have a heightened awareness of Islam in scriptures. But more importantly, it caused me to want to find more intriguing Hebrew words in the scriptures. Why? Because when it comes to understanding the scriptures, just one mistranslated word can change the entire meaning of a scripture, and one mistranslated scripture can create a completely erroneous doctrine.

In this message, I want to talk about ways that we can get more understanding out of our Bible study. Many of us simply read our Bibles. We sit down in the morning and dedicate the next 30 minutes to doing nothing but reading the Bible. But how many of us then take the next 10 to 20 minutes actually thinking about what we read? Do we ask ourselves “how is this chapter relevant to the previous chapter”? or “Why did God use this word instead of another word?” or the question I’m still asking “What caused Israel to fall into slavery? If our Bible reading does not cause us to want to dig deeper, is it really doing us any good?

I believe Bible study should serve a number of purposes. It should cause us to:

- seek to know what God is doing
- seek to know our part in what He is doing
- seek to know when He is going to do it.

As we begin to figure these things out, our Bible study can become something we look forward to; something that is so enlightening that we want to it with others, and something that now becomes part of our prayers as we continually ask Yah to open our minds to His understanding.

There’s a Hebrew word for what I just described, and that word is “DRASH”. Some mistakenly think I’m saying “TRASH”, as if I’m “trashing the Bible”, but instead I’m talking about “seeking” the meaning of God’s written word.



In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses is sitting before all Israel and telling them what will befall them if after entering the Promised Land, they turn again to idolatry. He said -

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 4:26-29** "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷ "And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. ²⁸ "And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. ²⁹ "But from there you will **seek** the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you **seek** Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

In this passage, the first instance of "seek" is "baqash" (בָּקַשׁ – 1245), a word that basically means "to desire". But the second instance is the word "darash" (דָּרַשׁ – 1875), a word that means "to seek out, to investigate, to enquire. It's sort of like the grocery store tabloid "National Enquirer", that writes about the personal lives of celebrities'. God wants us to know more about Him than just what we see on the surface. He wants us to know His inner thoughts, why He does what He does, what His plans are for tomorrow and for the next 10,000 years. He wants us to know Him intimately. And how can we do that? By "drashing" Him with all our being. In other words, seeking to know Him better.

So let's look at a few ways we can make our Bible Study more interesting – and maybe even 'intriguing'.

Begin to Study the 'Hebrew' Mindset

The entire Bible (with the possible exception of Luke) was written in the Hebrew mindset and by various Hebrew men. What that means is that if we want to understand it, we've got to at least begin to think like the Hebrews. "Hebrew" is a Middle Eastern culture – much different than our western "Greek" culture. Whereas in Greek, there is usually only one conclusion that can be drawn from any number of related facts, in Hebrew there could be more than one based on the context.

The Bible also contains a number of idioms that are not understandable outside the Hebrew culture. Therefore it is important to discover some of those idioms in order to derive the author's intended meaning. Many of those idioms are related to the ancient Hebrew wedding customs, and mean something totally different than what we perceive in our western mindset.

One other point in this context is that – to the Hebrews, time is cyclical whereas in the western culture, time is linear. Westerners look at a week as being a line of seven days, but Hebrews look at a week as being seven segments of a circle where the 1st segment is always a "new beginning". In other words, the 1st segment begins a restoration of the previous seven, thus a "new beginning".

There is much that could be said about this topic alone. To learn more about Hebrew vs. Greek mindset, I suggest reading "Let This Mind Be In You" by Brad Scott.¹

Start at the Beginning

How do we get to know God better? Probably the same way we get to know each other better? When we meet a person we've never known before, we generally start by asking questions like: "Where are you from?" or "What do you do?" By asking such questions we begin to formulate in our mind what connections you might have to this person. Is he local or out of state? Is his profession something I can relate to?

¹ www.wildbranch.org



As the conversation continues, we find out more and more about that person – his likes and dislikes, what motivated him to visit your area, what his hopes and dreams are, etc. Starting with a clean slate, we begin to form an understanding of this person through his own words.

In regards to YHVH, that conversation should begin in Genesis 1 because that is where YHVH begins to reveal Himself to us. He reveals that He is the one who made the things we have simply taken for granted – the trees, the grass, the birds, etc. He reveals that He created time, and split it up in parts of a cycle, and that certain parts of that time are ‘holy’. So if we were able to clear our mind of all that we previously heard about God and start with a clean slate, we find that since He created the universe, He is obviously from outside the universe; and since He created all that is in the universe, He is obviously a creator by trade.

As we continue to ask Him questions, He reveals more about Himself. For instance, we find that He takes every seventh day off from His job; that He expects the living things He created to continue to multiply. And in order to help them multiply, He makes things for them that will protect them - things like a perfectly designed environment and rules to keep His creation from destroying itself.

As we seek to know God better, we will need to set aside all the rumors we may have heard about Him and let Him tell us about Himself in His own words. By doing so, we get a much clearer understanding of Him and what He is doing.

Build Foundational Truths

As we work our way through the Bible, we find things that should become foundational beliefs that we can count on. For instance, if God is the creator, He has the right and the role to determine how to make the creation functional. For instance, God rested on the seventh day and gave His day of rest a name – “Sabbath”. That should become a ‘foundation stone’ on which we can build our understanding of Him. We also find that He instructed all living things to multiply. Therefore, living things that refuse to multiply are not fulfilling their purpose – another foundation stone.

As find more foundation stones, we begin to build a foundation on which we base our understanding of God and His Word. Then, when we uncover something new about Him, if it doesn’t seem to fit on the foundation you have already built, we must ask ourselves if my understanding of what I just read is correct, or did I read it wrong.

One of my main foundation stones is when God said –

^{KJV} **Malachi 3:6** For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Search the Hebrew and Greek Words

If we are going to let God ‘speak for Himself’, we must let Him tell us about Himself in His own words, and since the closest to the original words He gave us are in Hebrew or Greek, it’s good to have access to the Hebrew and Greek words from which our English Bibles are derived. God chose to reveal Himself to us in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. Yet for most of us, we only know about Him through English translations of His words. It’s like talking to our new acquaintance using a translator. Everything we learn about the person is based on how well the translator rendered his words.

Thankfully YHVH put His words in writing, and then gave us tools by which we can translate those words. Tools like the Strong’s Concordance, where we can cross reference between the three languages to better understand the true meanings of the words. Though that is quite laborious, Strong’s is still the standard by which most modern Bible Study tools are based.



I prefer to use computer based tools like E-sword, Quick Verse, Logos, Bible Works², and Olive Tree. I specifically like Olive Tree because it's an app I can use on my phone to cross reference between English and Hebrew or English and Greek. Because it's an app, I can use it to read and study the Bible anywhere. But when I'm into a deep study, I go to the computer and use Bible Works, a now obsolete software package with powerful search and cross referencing tools. It allows me to search for scriptures related to my topic and copy them all to a word processor or to a separate study page in Bible Works.

These tools greatly simplify Bible study by allowing you to quickly see how various words are used throughout the Bible. From that, you can more clearly let God describe Himself to you without having to use a translator.

Getting Deeper into the Word

By using the three points above, we are letting God build our foundation – a foundation based on His own words, not on what others have said about Him. From that, we can gain basic understanding of what God is doing. But how do we get deeper into His mind? We do so by meditation, prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Meditation

I used to think of meditation as simply sitting on the ground with my legs crossed, my arms stretched out in front of me, and just letting my mind wander. But that's not how the Bible describes it all.

The most common Hebrew word for “meditate” is “hagah” (הָגָה – 1897) which Strong's defines as “to moan, growl, utter, muse, devise, plot, and speak”. Of those words, the one that is closest to being correct is “muse”. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, “muse” means “to become absorbed in thought; especially: to think about something carefully and thoroughly”. This fits nicely into God's instructions to Joshua just before crossing the Jordan –

^{ESV} **Joshua 1:7-8** Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Joshua was to keep the Torah foremost on his mind. It was to be his guiding light, the basis of all the decisions he would be making in the future.

The psalmist spent much time in meditation as well -

^{ESV} **Psalms 1:1-2** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

^{ESV} **Psalms 63:5-6** My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

^{ESV} **Psalms 143:5** I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.

In these passages we find that meditation is considering how awesome it is to know God, His instructions (Torah), and His ways. It is remembering what He has done for us, and pondering His great works. I

² Bible Works can no longer be purchased from the company, but is available at this writing on Ebay



would submit that when we clear our mind of all other thoughts and focus on God and what He is doing, He likely stops what He is doing and focuses on us. This is a perfect time to bring up your Biblical questions. Ask Him about His words – a scripture you cannot figure out, or something Paul said. After all, even Peter could not figure out what Paul was saying at times.

Let God then begin to answer you back. If He does not respond immediately, give it some time. You might encourage Him to give you an answer by telling him what you've come up with, but admitting that you're not sure it all fits. If you don't get an answer, then humbly close your meditation session. I prefer to do that with the words of King David –

^{NKJ} **Psalm 19:14** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Prayer

Unlike meditation, prayer is when you go to God with a number of petitions, including petitions for healing, petitions for grace and forgiveness, and petitions for the imminent return of the Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom on the earth.

One petition I normally make is that God will give me insight into His mind. Like meditation, prayer is a time when you can have a one-to-one audience with the creator of the universe. Use that time wisely and have all your petitions and questions ready. Maybe you've been asking Him for understanding on a certain topic, You think you've got it figured out, but you're not quite sure. Just petition Him to make it known if you've got it right or not.

When you think about it, that's what Yeshua did on His last night in the Garden of Gethsemane. Obviously He knew all the prophecies pointing to His brutal demise, but He just wanted to make sure He didn't miss something. Maybe there was hidden in scripture something that could be done to avoid what was coming and still fulfill the scripture. So He asked -

^{NKJ} **Matthew 26:39** ... "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*."

So take your Bible study questions to God, and let Him help you with your Biblical questions.

Let the Holy Spirit Guide You

Sometimes it is simply not our time to figure things out. I would say this is especially true in regards to prophecy. Therefore, if you've been dwelling on a subject for a long time and don't seem to be making headway in figuring it out, just put it on a shelf for a while and move on. When it's time for you to understand, God will see to it that you do.

This was the case of the disciples. Yeshua had shared with them all they needed to know to perform their purpose, but apparently they forgot much of it. Therefore, when they saw Yeshua on a stake just moments from death, they scattered instead of moving forward. Knowing this would happen, Yeshua had said to them -

^{ESV} **John 14:25-26** "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

As a teacher in the local congregation, I oftentimes put together a message on a topic that I am currently studying. During delivery of that message there are times when a thought comes to mind that make me realize that one of my upcoming points is flawed, or at the least needs to be further developed. On the other hand, there are times when a scripture will come to mind that further establishes a point I had



already made or am in the process of making. For that reason, I usually speak with a pen in my hand to write that point down.

So remember, if you are searching to Godly understanding, God will provide the true understanding –

^{ESV} **John 16:13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Secret Things

Up to this point, we've discussed ways to help understand the scriptures the way a person likely would if he had no preconceived ideas of God, or as some would say, "without the baggage" we bring because of previous erroneous teachings. After all, God's word is pretty straightforward, and what we need to know He has made pretty clear.

But what about the "secret things"? Did you know that God laid a number of secret things in the scripture as well?

In Amos chapter three, the prophet is directing his words toward the people of Israel, specifically the northern tribes. He is warning them of their impending doom, but is somewhat vague in regards to details. He then said –

^{ESV} **Amos 3:7** "For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

In that passage, the word "secret" is "sode" (סֹדֶה – 5475) which generally means "secret" or "council". God does have secrets that He does not clearly lay out in the scriptures. In Proverbs it says –

^{ESV} **Proverbs 25:2** It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.

And when His disciples ask Yeshua why He spoke to the crowds in parables, He said -

^{ESV} **Mark 4:11** "...to you has been given the secret (mystery) of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables"

From these words, we see that God has laid in His word some things that are not obvious. Things His people will have to search out. For instance, God oftentimes provides the time of day certain events take place. Being one who believes God did not waste words, but only put into His scriptures words that have a meaning for us, let's look at an example.

^{NKJ} **Acts 3:1** Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.

This is the account of the lame man who was healed at the command of Peter. Notice what time this is. It's the "ninth" hour, which many agree is 3:00 in the afternoon. Depending on what latitude you are at, it's basically the time between the sun being overhead and sunset. Let's now look at some other events that happened at that time of day:

^{NKJ} **Acts 10:1-3** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ²a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. ³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"



Here we find God communicating with Cornelius in a vision at the ninth hour. Let's look at another instance.

^{NKJ} **Genesis 3:8** And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

We don't necessarily know if this is talking about morning or evening, but at our latitude (which is about the same as that of Israel), in spring and fall, temperatures begin to fall as the sun begins to set. So assuming this is the case, God chose to visit Adam and Eve sometime in the afternoon, probably at the same time as He did Cornelius.

Now let's connect that to another verse that we are all familiar with –

^{NKJ} **Matthew 27:46** And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Obviously, this is the point when the Messiah died - at the ninth hour. God made it a point to let us know when this event happened. Thus, is it reasonable to assume that since He gave us these timing markers, maybe there is a reason He gave us the others? I believe there is and therefore when I see God giving details like this, I believe He did so for a purpose, and I search to find this purpose. So what is the 'ninth hour'? It's apparently the time God chooses to communicate with His people, and therefore it's call 'the hour of prayer'. Important things happen at the 'hour of prayer'.

This type of study is called "drash". It's seeking to find the secret things of God - things that are not clearly laid out but have meaning that is not quite apparent in what we read. I often describe this as "reading the white spaces", or using a more common phrase "reading between the lines".

Biblical Interpretation

According to the Jewish sages, there are 4 (some say 5) levels of Biblical interpretation. They are

P'shat – the literal meaning – what you see is what you get. Most of us read the Bible this way and draw our conclusions from the plain – literal meaning of what we read.

Remez – hints, connecting verses with similar themes (example Rom. 9:25 and Hosea 2:1)

Drash – Reading the "white spaces". Deriving understanding via seemingly out of place words,

Sod – mystic understanding

Why is this important? Because sticking simply with the "pashat" level of interpretation causes you to miss a lot of understanding of scripture; especially the words of the Messiah. But as we desire greater understanding, we will want to learn how to use these three other levels of understanding as well. This is what Yeshua meant when He gave the parable of the sower and His disciples asked Him afterward why He spoke in parables. His response was -

^{ESV} **Mark 4:11-12** " ... 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: ¹² That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.'"

What Yeshua was saying is that it was not time for the people as a whole – even those who were mesmerized by His words – to understand the hidden things of God. Those things, at least at that time, would be reserved for those who truly follow Him; those who are truly His disciples.



In that passage, the word “mystery” is from the Greek word “mysterion” (Strong’s 3466) and it means “a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding.” In other words, the mysteries of God will need to be searched out, but as I said earlier, most people are not willing to do that – and that’s OK.

So let’s learn about a couple of the tools for greater understanding – the use of “remez” and “drash”.

Remez

In the scriptures – especially the New Testament – we find examples of Yeshua, Peter, and Paul making references to verses that do not seem to fit the context of what they are trying to explain. For example Mark 4 11-12 contain a “remez” of Isaiah 6:9-10 which reads –

^{KJV} **Isaiah 6:9-10** ⁹ And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

In this passage, Yeshua is telling His disciples that in regards to the crowd, it was not their time to understand His words. Why – because Yeshua was sent to the “lost tribes of Israel”³, not necessarily to the Jewish people or the other peoples living in Judea and Samaria in that day.

But there is more to this remez than just repeating what Isaiah had previously said. By remembering the context of Isaiah 6:9-10, the disciples would see that Yeshua was giving them a mission. The entire remez is this:

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 6:5-11** So I (Isaiah) said: "Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." ⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here *am* I! Send me." ⁹ And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'" ¹⁰ "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." ¹¹ Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate,

Yeshua was not only telling them that they were called for the purpose of delivering His message, He also showed them that YHVH has somehow “cleansed” them in preparation for their calling. And like Isaiah, they would be sent to proclaim a message to a people who could, or maybe just “would not hear it”. What’s more, they would proclaim that message until Judea became overthrown and deserted. In other words, it was a lifetime calling.

Remez is used in a number of passages in the New Testament, and oftentimes will be pointed out by reference in the margins of your Bible.

Another example of remez is when Yeshua was hanging from the cross, and as the ninth hour approached, He cried out –

³ ^{KJV} **Matthew 15:24-25** I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ²⁵ Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.



^{NKJ} **Matthew 27:46** "...Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

We mentioned this passage before in regards to events that happen at the same time, but this time let's focus on the words that Yeshua spoke – "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" or in English "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me". More than likely, most of us have been taught that at that moment, God had turned His back on His son, so that He would bear all the sins of the world on His own. But is that really the case?

We might think otherwise if we saw that this passage is another example of *remez*. When you read Psalm 22, you will see that these words were written by the Psalmist - King David.

^{NKJ} **Psalm 22:1** "... My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?*

As you continue to read the psalm, you will see that it describes a person who has been pierced in his hands and feet, stripped of His skin to the bones which are all out of joint and that the person is surrounded by soldiers mocking him and casting lots for His clothing.

Now who could this be? Obviously it was Yeshua, and to those of his disciples who were there looking up at Him at that point of time, they would recognize those four words as being a part of that psalm.

Yeshua said this to confirm to His disciples, as well as to others who followed Him, that He was indeed the promised. Messiah.

There are many other examples of *remez* in the New Testament, and as you begin to recognize them, you will gain much more understanding of the words of Yeshua and the disciples.

Drash

As I said earlier, *drash* is like reading something that is not there – at least it's not in plain view. Therefore, there is really no way to describe how a person can "drash the scriptures". Nevertheless, the Rabbis have for years used tools such as *gamatria*, enlarged letters in the Hebrew text, and unusually large spaces between the letters in the text, to alert them that there is something in a specific passage of scripture that they need to check out further. In each case, they are striving to find deeper meaning in the text. Sometimes they're right; sometimes they're wrong.

Anything that causes you to stop reading and begin to apply the "5 W's" (who, what, where, when, and why) that we were taught in school to further analyze the scripture is "drash". For instance, I like to do word studies, and one time I was studying the word "Christ" (anointed) and noticed that Yeshua never claimed to be the "Christ" until He had lead his disciples to Caesarea Philippi. Only there did He acknowledge Peter's statement "You are the Christ, the son of the Living God." (Matt. 16:16). This lead to more study to determine why that was the case, and I eventually wrote an article entitled "King of the Jews" that explained what I discovered.

Though *drashing* is hard to describe, I want to illustrate an example of it by relating something that happened to me in late July of this year.

My wife and I had gone to a week-long event in Wisconsin, but planned to spend the Sabbath with a small group of Sabbath keepers nearby. We were told that the main topic of the Bible study would be the book of Jonah. Therefore, I quickly read Jonah the afternoon before in order to refresh my mind of what was in it.



That Sabbath, as the leader was reading through and explaining his view of what the book is about, I was looking up the meaning of a number of the words and noticed a few things I had passed over earlier. They are:

- God “appointed” (‘manah’ – מָנַח – 4487) - not necessary prepared - a number of things in this short story. They are:
 - a great fish (‘dag’ – דָּג – 1709) to rescue Jonah and carry him and his message to the people of Nineveh. (see LXX) (1:17)
 - Dagon was a Philistine fish god
 - A gourd (4:6)
 - A worm (4:7)
 - East wind (4:8)

All of these had already existed in nature, but God intended to use them for a specific purpose.

- Jonah did not fear the people of Nineveh, he feared that YHVH would have mercy on them and forgive them (4:1)
- Jonah built a sukkah (4:5) and sat under it watching to see if God would indeed destroy it.

As I looked at these things, these thoughts came to my head –

- God used the fish to help carry His message to the people of Nineveh
- Jacob told Joseph that Joseph’s sons would “proliferate like fish” (Gen. 48:16 – Stone Tnakh)
- Yeshua told His disciples to be “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19)
- Christians will typically display a “fish” symbol



Putting all that together, I began to see that Jonah and his message was intended to be carried to its destination by people who are represented by a fish. Those people today would be called “Christians” – people who claim to be “fishers of men”. With that, I looked a little deeper.

The first of Yeshua’s disciples to recognize that Yeshua was the Messiah was Peter. He stated such at Caesarea Philippi -

^{NKJ} **Matthew 16:13-17** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" ¹⁴ So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Notice what Yeshua referenced Peter as “Simon, son of Jonah”. That name is not used anywhere else in the Bible. It is only applied to Peter. That’s interesting. Peter is the first among the disciples to openly recognize Yeshua as “The Christ”. Peter was also the first to be sent to the Gentiles – people who were so offensive to the Jews of that day that they refused to even sit down at a dinner table with them.

^{NKJ} **Acts 10:25-29** As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. ²⁸ Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or



unclean. ²⁹ "Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

^{NKJ} **Acts 10:34-35** Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

So Peter, "Simon bar-Jonah" was sent to a people he didn't really care for, and he preached to them a message of salvation. Apparently, many of them repented of their past ways and were therefore baptized.

So what about the Sukkah? I believe it is a marker that this message will be preached in the Messianic Kingdom as well. And just like it was in Peter's day, those who are sent to preach the message will do so reluctantly, just as did Jonah.

I came to this understanding of Jonah's story because I took the time to "Drash the Scriptures" – read between the lines to see what that story was all about. Am I correct in my conclusions? Maybe – Maybe not. That's why there is the phrase "Two Jews – Three Opinions".

Conclusion

Bible study can be mundane and laborious, or it can be exciting. When you really get into it, it can bring you so much closer to understanding the mind of God and His plan of salvation than you would ever receive by just reading the words and moving on.

We did not study the fourth level – "Sode" – at this time basically because it delves too much into mystic Judaism, which is something I believe we should stay away from. Nevertheless, it is interesting that when you put the first letter of the four methods of Biblical interpretation together, they form the acronym "PaRDeS" – or "paradise", which implies that if you study God's word in all these ways, you get closer and closer to paradise.

God wants us to seek Him – to "drash" Him. He wants to share His inner thoughts with us, but we have to search them out, and we can only do that through joining our minds with His through prayer, meditation, and more intense Bible study.

So I want to close this message with a portion from another psalm of David –

^{NKJ} **Psalm 25:12-14** Who *is* the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. ¹³ He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth.

¹⁴ The secret of the LORD *is* with those who fear Him; And He will show them His covenant.

Shalom Aleichem!