

Beginner's Torah Lesson #9:

The 13 Torah Interpretation Rules of Rabbi Ishmael

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"But you remain in the *shiurim* you have learned and things you were convinced of, knowing under which rabbi you have sat." 2 Timothy 3:14

There are three fundamental principles in Torah hermeneutics:

- Logic
- Analogy
- Comparison

These are the underpinnings of all Torah interpretation by the sages and Torah scholars of Yehudah. These are the same foundations that we also need to incorporate into our exegesis of the Scriptures. When we try to implement the Greek thought pattern of logic alone to the Scriptures, then we lose the Hebraic way of thinking and Torah understanding. The goal of these Beginner Torah Lessons is to reintroduce to Ephraim the Hebraic-thinking pattern and renew our Greek programmed minds to true Torah interpretation. We cannot use the "Church's" methods to arrive at Hebraic conclusions concerning the Scriptures as they are based upon Greek thought and patterns (see all the previous lessons under ASK THE RABBI at our website).

A Quick Review

We have studied in the previous Torah Lesson Number 8 the "Seven Rules of Rabbi Hillel". Let us review for a few moments. The Seven rules of Hillel are important to us as Messianic Yisrael because:

- They were written by Hillel BEFORE Moshiach Yahshua
- The Moshiach and the other writers of the Brit Chadasha used them.

Rav Shaul speaks of "rightly dividing (interpreting) the Torah". He was a student of Rabbi Gamaliel (the grandson of Hillel) and he used the Seven Rules, so it is obvious that Shaul was referring to these Torah skills.

The 13 Rules of Rabbi Ishmael were written after the First Century CE (but they existed orally before that time). These rules are of great value, and we must be able to follow the Hebraic mind of the rabbis and the writers of the Mishnah and Talmud, as they relied upon these Torah rules in all their application of the Torah.

The dilemma in the Restoration of Yisrael is that we have too many "Ephraimite" leaders and rabbis trying to set Halakah (the way to walk in Torah) without any scholarship and knowledge of the traditional rabbinical accouterment and Hebraic mindset that is needed to rightly divide the Word of Yahweh. The purpose of Lessons 8 and 9 in this series are to equip the advanced student of the Torah with the interpretive skills they will need to set Halakah and make righteous judgments. These are for the more advanced student of Torah and will require much study in order to apply these in your studies.

Rabbi Ishmael B. Elisha

Rabbi Ishmael was a Tanna (Torah scholar) of the first and second centuries CE. He was born to a priestly family in the Northern Galilee area of Eretz Yisrael. As a young man his colleagues recognized him as a brilliant Torah scholar.

Rabbi Ishmael's teachings were calculated to promote good will and shalom among all mankind, and he practiced what he taught. He was a father to the down and outcasts (as our Master Yahshua was), particularly the poor and plain people.

He was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin at Yavneh and Usha. Rav Ishmael developed a system of interpretation and exegesis of the Torah that was more logical than that of Rabbi Akiba. He established a logical system by which the laws of the Torah may be deduced from laws and decisions founded upon the PASHAT (plain meaning) of the text.

Unlike Rabbi Akiba, he required more than a mere jot or letter as a basis for making important rulings. His opinion was that the Torah was given in the language of man and that therefore a seemingly redundant word or syllable can not be taken as a basis of new deductions. The PASHAT level of the text, irrespective of its verbal figures, was the only safe guide for him to make his halakic rulings. He based his laws upon the Seven Laws of Hillel and added his own method of logical deduction of textual evidence to it.

The 13 Rules of Ishmael

Rule #1 is the same as rule #1 of Hillel

Rule #2 is the same as rule #2 of Hillel

Rule #3 is the same as rule #3 of Hillel

Rule #4 is the same as rule #4 of Hillel

FIVE

Perat Ukhelal (particular and general): If the general instances are stated FIRST and they are followed by the general category, instances other than the particular ones mentioned are included. **EXAMPLE:** Shemot (Ex.) 22:9 "an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast" therefore ANY BEAST other than those mentioned ARE included.

SIX

Kelal uferat ukhelal I atah dan ella ke-ein haperat (general, particular, general): You may derive only things similar to those specified. **EXAMPLE:** D'varim (Deut.) 14:26 "Other things than those specified in verse 26 may be purchased, but ONLY if they are food and drink like those that are specified by the text.

SEVEN

Kelal she-hu tzarik liferat uferat she-hu tzarik li-kheal (the general requires the particular and the particular requires the general): Specification is provided by taking the general and the particular together, each requiring the other. **EXAMPLE:** D'varim (Deut.) 15:19 "Set-apart to Me all the firstborn (MASCULINE)." With Shemot (Ex.) 13:2 "whatsoever opens the womb". A firstborn male would have been understood to be included in the term "ALL the firstborn" even if a female had previously been born to that particular mother. Therefore the particular limiting of the term "whatsoever opens the womb" is stated. But this term would NOT have excluded one born AFTER a previous c-section birth, hence general term "all the firstborn" (see Talmud: b.Bek. 19a).

EIGHT

Davar she-hayah bi-khelal veyatza min hakelal lelammed lo lelammed al atzmo yatza ella lelammed al hakelal kullo yatzo (if a particular instance of a general rule is singled out for special treatment, whatever is postulated of this instance is to be applied to ALL the instances embraced by this general rule): **EXAMPLE:**

Vayikra (Lev.) 20:27 "A man, also, or a woman that divines that by a ghost or a familiar spirit shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones." Divination by a ghost or any familiar spirit is included in this general rule against the practice of witchcraft (see D'varim 18:10). Since the penalty in this verse is stoning, then the very same penalty applies to any other instance within the same general rule (see Talmud: b.San.67b).

NINE

Davar she-hayah bi khelal veyatza liton to'an echad she-hhu khe-inyano yatza lehakel ve-lo lechachmir (when particular instances of a general rule are treated specifically, in details similar to those included in the general rule, then only the relaxations of the general rule and not its restrictions are to be applied in those instances). **EXAMPLE:** Vayikra (Lev.) 13:18-21 The law of the boil and the burn (Lev.13: 24-28) are treated specifically even though these are particular instances of the general rule regarding the spots of the plague in Vayikra 13:1-17. Therefore the general restrictions of the law of the second week (13:5) and the quick raw flesh (13:10) are NOT applied to them (see Talmud m. Sifra 1:2).

TEN

Davar she-hayah bi-khelal veyatza liton to'an acher she-lo khe-inyano yatza lehakel-leachmir (When particular instances of a general rule are treated specifically in details dissimilar from those included in the general rule, then BOTH relaxations and restrictions are to be applied in those instances). **EXAMPLE:** Vayikra (Lev.) 13:29-37 on the details of the laws of plagues in the hair and beard are dissimilar from those of the general rule of plague spots. Therefore both the relaxation regarding the white hair mentioned in the general rule (Lev.13: 4) and restriction of the yellow hair mentioned in the particular instance of Lev.13: 30 are applied (see Talmud m. Sifra 1:3).

ELEVEN

Davar she-hayah bi-khelal veyatza lidon ba-davar he-chadesh I-atah yakhol lechatziro li khelalo ad she-yachazirennu hakatav li-khelalo be-ferush (When a particular instance of a general rule is singled out for a completely fresh treatment, the details of the general rule must not be applied to this instance unless Scripture does so specifically). **EXAMPLE:** The guilt offering for the leper requires the placing of the blood on the ear, thumb, and toe, see Vayikra (Lev.) 14:14. The laws of the guilt offering, sprinkling blood on the altar (Lev.7: 2) would not have applied in this case IF it had not been for the Scripture in Lev.14: 13 "For as the sin offering is the priest's so is the guilt offering", i.e. that is the same as the other guilt offerings (see Talmud b.Yev.7a-b).

TWELVE

Davar halamed me-inyano vedavar halamed mi-sofo (The meaning of a passage may be deduced from 1.its context or 2.from a later reference in the very same passage). **EXAMPLE:** This first part is the same as Rabbi Hillel's Seventh rule. "You shall not steal" Shemot (Ex.) 20:13 must also refer to the death penalty offense of kidnapping, since the other two offenses mentioned WITH it "You shall not murder" and "You shall not commit adultery" are both death penalty offenses (Mekh.BaChodesh 8,5).

THIRTEEN

Shenei khetuvim hamakhchishim zeh et the ad she-yavo hakatuv hashelishi veyakhira beineihem (Two verses contradict one another UNTIL a third verse reconciles them). **SEE SIXTH RULE OF RABBI HILLEL IN BEGINNERS TORAH LESSON #8.**

OTHER VARIOUS RULES

Among the other rules are ribbui (inclusion) and mi'ut (exclusion). The School of Rabbi Akiba uses these rules from the premise that every letter has significance. An example would be the particle "et" begins the verse "You shall fear Yahweh your Elohim" in Devarim 10:20. This implies application of that verse is extended to include reverence for Torah scholars (Pes.22b). According to Rabbi Akiba, the use of the infinitive absolute (which repeats the verb) implies amplification. An example of this is "That being shall utterly be cut off" (Bemidbar 15:31) - "hikkaret tikkaret" in Hebrew. Rabbi Akiba therefore said, "Hikkaret in this world, tikkaret in the world to come." But, Rabbi Ishmael says, the duplication of the verb is according to regular Hebrew usage and therefore carries no other significant implication. The Hebrew word "KOL (all)" is treated as a ribbui. **EXAMPLE:** "All the days of your life" in Devarim 16:3 devolves upon one at night as well as the day (Ber.1: 5).

Sometimes dots called nekuddot are found over certain letters calling the reader's attention to certain special features of that word or phrase. **EXAMPLE:** "And he kissed him (Hebrew – va-yishakehu)" in Bereshith 33:4, to teach that Esau was sincere in what he did. Gematria refers to the numerical equivalent of a word or phrase. **EXAMPLE:** The name ELIEZAR has the same numerical value as soldiers (318). The Midrash therefore states that Avraham only had to send ELIEZAR into battle. Notarikon or shorthand means the letters of a word represent the initial letters of other words. **EXAMPLE:** Nimrezet (grievous in 1 Melakim 2:8) alludes to No'ef or adulterer, Mo'avi (Moabite), Rozeah (murderer), Zorer (enemy), To'evah (abomination). Two general rules are "ein mukdam u-me'ubar baTorah" (The Torah does not precede in a chronological order) and "ein mikra yoze mi-ydei feshuto" (a Scripture verse NEVER loses its plain PASHAT meaning regardless of other interpretations).