Darshan Yeshiva

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Introduction to Midrash, class 1 notes

Halakha vs. Aggadah

Halakhah- legal matters: normative behaviors, conduct of ritual matters, kashrut, etc. Halakhic matters must be decided one way or the other, at least within a community.

Aggadah- everything else: theology, legends, (non-legal) Biblical interpretation, sermons, history, etc. Aggadah can contradict itself and belief is not mandatory.

Midrash (with a few exceptions) is Aggadah.

Midrashic techniques:

Radical Intertextuality

Scripture is not seen as proceeding from beginning to end, but as a seamless whole where any verse can refer to any other verse.

Gezerah Shavah

One word, or root of a word, or similar roots of words can be used to connect verses. No word is used randomly or without the intention to serve as a vehicle for teaching.

Legendary Material

Midrashic literature will often introduce non-Biblical stories or ideas that help to explain the material in a certain way.

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