

The Hebrew Corner

Two Hebrew words, baqash (בַּקַּשׁ, bah-KAHSH), and darash (דָּרַשׁ, dah-RAHSH), have the basic meaning, to seek. These words are used many times throughout the Tanach in a variety of usages. To get the full range of meaning for each of these two words, let's look at several passages where these words are used. In the first passage, we see one usage of the word baqash (Judges 6:28-29):

“And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.”

Here baqash, translated as investigated, is used to indicate an investigation, looking into a matter. The townspeople desired to find out who destroyed their altar to Baal and their Asherah pole. In the next passage, a similar but somewhat different usage of baqash (2 Kings 2:16-17):

“And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.”

Translated as sought in this passage, baqash is being used to signify a search. Here the sons of the prophets were doing an exhaustive search of the land, hoping to find Elijah. Next we see another sense of baqash in the following passage from the Torah (Numbers 16:9-10):

“Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?”

Baqash is translated as seek in this passage, and is used in the sense of aspiring to or desiring to obtain. Korah desired to take over the priesthood from Aaron and Moses, and was leading an insurrection against them.

Next let's turn to darash, starting with a consideration of its usage in 1 Chronicles 15:12-13:

“And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.”

Here darash, translated as sought, is used to signify seeking out information or instruction. The breach made against Uzzah was due to the people of Israel not seeking out the instruction of God for the proper handling of the ark of the covenant. Next we turn to the use of darash in the Torah (Deuteronomy 23:3-4):

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.”

In this passage, darash, translated as seek, is used to indicate desiring an outcome and possibly taking action to help achieve the outcome. The Israelites were commanded to not desire to help the Ammonites and Moabites, because they were cursed by God. Next we will look to the book of Job for some more clarification of meaning for this word (Job 10:5-6):

“Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days, That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?”

In this passage darash, translated enquirest, is used to indicate an investigative search. Job is questioning if God is searching for his

hidden sin.

In the next passage, both baqash and darash appear, with similar meanings (Psalms 24.6):

“This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.”

The first instance of seek, is darash, and the second is baqash. In the first case, darash is used to indicate a search for God, and baqash an effort made to find and to be in his presence.

In summary we have found, from the passages presented, that baqash can mean to investigate, to do an exhaustive search, to aspire or desire to obtain, to make an effort to find, while darash can mean to seek out information or instruction, to desire with possible action to achieve an outcome, to investigate, to search for. With much overlap in meaning, these words are nearly synonymous.

May you have a blessed month, always seeking the presence of God.