



PaRDeS: The Four Levels of Torah Interpretation for Beginners

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The Hebrew word *PARDES* is spelled without vowels *PRDS* and refers to a garden of delight or a park enclosed by a wall. It can be found in the *Brit Chadasha* in **Luke 23:43; 2 Cor.12: 4; Revelation 2:7.**

It is an acronym (*notarikon*) for the following words:

1. ***Pashat-Simple***
2. ***Remez-Hint***
3. ***Drash- Search***
4. ***Sod-Hidden***

Study of the Torah is like an onion; the more layers you peel off –the deeper you go to the heart or soul of it...

Pashat: It is the literal meaning of the text being studied. It is the plain simple meaning of the text in the grammatical and historical context. An important rule to follow is “NO METHOD OF INTERPRETATION CAN NEGATE THE PASHAT LEVEL MEANING OF THE TEXT! This is the key to understanding Scripture. This results in an exegesis of the text not an esegesis (reading into the text) from prejudices. One is objective and the other is subjective reading.

Remez: This is the implied meaning of the text. The text is hinting at a deeper truth than what is revealed.

Drash: This is the allegorical, typological, homiletical meaning of the text being studied. Great creativity can be used in this level. You can search the Scriptures, other historical works (Talmud, etc.) in order to develop the application to the text. This process DOES involve esegesis of the text.

Sod: This is the hidden or esoteric meaning of the text. The word “mystical” may be correct if you are not offended by this word. It is the secret meaning of the text from using *gematria* (numbers for the letters and adding to find other words with same sum). It may involve reversing spellings or words; etc. This is what is known as “Kabbalah”.

A student of the Torah must learn to use all four methods in order to properly interpret the Torah.