

## Four Step Scripture Interpretation

*These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. - Deuteronomy 6:6-7 HCSB*



Because teaching the Scriptures to our children is impossible without studying the Scriptures, no discipline is more foundational than Scripture study. However, we study Yahweh's words, not merely as an academic exercise, but as a religious act of devotion. Hashem's words are to be in our heart. They are to be close to the very core of our being and precious to us. Therefore, God's children take great delight in poring over our Savior's words and meditating on them.

There is an ancient method of Scriptural interpretation that is called the "pardes" method. Pardes is an acronym that stands for Peshat, Remez, Derash and Sod. The word itself is Hebrew for "orchard" implying that this method of study will yield great fruit.

Peshat<sup>1</sup> means "simple" and it is the step in which we determine the passage's simplest meaning; it's most literal, historical and grammatical meaning. For example, today's passage says that at around 1405 BC Moses instructed the people of Israel to teach their children the Lord's commands. The peshat must be determined before any further steps may be taken.

The second step is Remez<sup>2</sup> which means "hint". At this point we must ask ourselves, "what principle does the peshat imply?" For instance, because Yahweh is the God of all nations, Moses' instruction is not merely for Israelis but may be applied to all humans. Biblical education is a universal duty.

The third stage is Derash which is sometimes referred to as "midrash". It comes from the root that means "to interpret". This is the point at which we determine the application of the verse. Moses' instructions are now directly applied to ourselves and our children. What methods may be used? What tools would be useful? We may even consider our role in the education of our grandchildren. After all wasn't Abraham chosen specifically because the Lord knew Abraham would teach future generations to obey Yahweh?<sup>3</sup>

Finally, we come to the Sod.<sup>4</sup> Sod means "hidden" and this is where the Ransomed understand that the Lord God, Revealer of Mysteries, gave us multiple levels of meaning in the Scriptures. To those who are willing to dig and dig deep, there are also available spiritual, symbolic or metaphorical meanings. Today's passage about instructing children the ways of the Lord may be tied to Yeshua ben Adonai's command, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you..."<sup>5</sup> We are not merely to make "converts" but "disciples" of our spiritual children.<sup>6</sup>

May God grant you an keen mind and an obedient heart as you study His Word.

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<sup>1</sup> pronounced peh-SHAT

<sup>2</sup> pronounced reh-MEZ

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 18:19

<sup>4</sup> pronounced "sawed" as in wood

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 28:19-20

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4