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Four Levels

Within the parameters of proper biblical hermeneutics, there are four levels of understanding one can implement to glean from the Torah. Yeshua and his disciples demonstrated all four levels of exegesis interpretation throughout the Brit Hadasha. We must be careful to operate within these parameters. These levels of interpretation are not expressly mentioned directly, but in realized as consistent pattern in the writings, prophets, and Brit Hadasha.

The first is Peshat (פְּשָׁט) — "plain" ("simple") or the direct meaning.

Most stop here. In fact, what can be revealed in the Torah, some may object to because it is not found in the Scriptures in a literal and blatant sense. One must “discover” it by looking deeper.

By being so quick to dismiss everything beyond the Peshat level, one is very limited in their understanding, and misses out on some exciting and revealing aspects of the Word of God.

However, that being said, the deeper understandings cannot stray from the literal meanings of the text. They must be compatible.

The literal meanings and deeper meanings can not oppose one another or be contrary to one another.

Second, there is the Remez (רִמְזָה) — it "hints" or reveals the deep (allegoric: hidden or symbolic) meaning beyond just the literal sense. Remez literally means “hint” in Hebrew. At this level, one begins to understand that certain words contain much more meaning than their literal counter parts.

An example of implied "REMEZ":

Proverbs 20:10

Different weights, and different measures, both of them are alike an abomination to the Lord.

The Peshat would be concerned with a merchant using the same scale to weigh goods for all of his customers. The Remez implies that this goes beyond this into aspects of fairness and honesty in anyone's life.

Thirdly, there is the Derash (דרש) — from Hebrew *darash* meaning to "inquire" or "seek" — the comparative midrashic meaning, as given through similar occurrences, is also called "midrash."

This is a teaching or exposition or application of the Peshat and/or Remez.

In some cases this could be considered comparable to a "sermon." For instance, Biblical writers may take two or more unrelated verses and combine them to create a verse or verses with a third meaning. ***This does not afford anyone the license to simply make things up...one must not violate the Peshat level as in the literal sense.***

We should allow Scripture to interpret scripture, and be sure that the Derash understanding is consistent with other Scripture.

Lastly, there is the Sod level (סוד) (pronounced with a long O as in 'bone') — it is the "secret" or the esoteric/mystical meaning, as given through inspiration or revelation. Sod literally means "hidden" in Hebrew.

This understanding is the hidden, secret or mystic meaning of a text. Some examples of this would be the "dragon," the "whore of Babylon," and the number "666," all from the book of Revelation.

Others would include; Yeshua's command in John chapter 6:53:

John 6:53

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Or Paul's statement in Galatians 4:26:

Galatians 4:26

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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