

The Life and Torah of Yeshua

Bible Study

by Dr. Galen Peterson

Biblical Interpretation Guide

This study is based on the premise that the Bible is God's message to humanity, revealing His sovereign will, and was delivered within specific cultural contexts, while at the same time having the capability of being understood by people of any time and place. Each concept presented in this guide is essential for fully understanding the biblical message regarding Yeshua (Jesus).

Foundational Principles

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Based on these declarations, we are able to conclude that all writings outside the accepted canon of Scripture do not possess the inspiration of God, and thus, do not hold authority over the believer's life. Other writings, such as the *Mishnah*, the *Talmud* and texts of ancient commentators may be helpful in providing cultural, historical and practical information, but they lack the authority of the Bible.

Methods of Interpretation Employed by New Testament Authors

There are four types of interpretation that are used to derive meaning from the text of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament). The writers of the *Brit Hadasha* (New Testament) employed each of them at various times. Those methods are:

פְּשָׁט (Peshat) – the “plain meaning” of the text

This is a historical/grammatical approach that takes into account the basic meaning of words as a record of actual historical events. It requires reading passages within the context of a chapter, a book, and the entire Bible.

רְמֵז (Remez) – “hints of deeper meaning”

This includes the meaning behind the name of a person or a place, or typologies and prophecies within a narrative that point to something more significant to come in the future.

Hints will never contradict the *peshat* or plain meaning of a text so that the fundamental truth of a story is independently valid.

Example – the meaning of Moriah – “The Lord sees,” which implies His provision, hints that God would provide a sacrifice instead of Isaac (Gen 22:2,14), as well as providing a future sacrifice of Yeshua for the sins of humanity in this same vicinity.

דרשׁ (Derash) – “seeking by comparing” the text

This method was used by New Testament speakers and writers in several ways:

- Parables are a means of comparing the characters and circumstances of hypothetical situations to real life.
- Word studies are a means of comparing the ways that certain words are used in different passages.
- Another form of *derash* is drawing a principle from a biblical text and applying it to other situations. The details of the biblical account and the applied context (such as your own life) might be different, but there is a general principle that applies to both situations.

Example – Paul’s use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 regarding a principle that applies to both oxen and elders.

In all cases, the *derash* does not take away from the legitimacy of the plain meaning.

סוד (Sod) – “secret or hidden meaning”

God has woven meaning into the underlying structure of words, which have to be deciphered from the text. It should be noted that this method was popularized by mystical rabbinic thought, especially *Kabbalah*, including Torah codes and *Gematria* (calculating the numerical value of words and substituting words with equivalent values).

Because of the propensity to read into Scripture in speculative ways, usage of this method should be constrained. Seeking to identify hidden meanings should be limited to passages that directly state the presence of a mystery in the text, such as the number of the Antichrist being 666 in Revelation 13:18

Hebraic Ways of Communicating Meaning

Inclusive reckoning – the part represents the whole.

This concept in the Bible applies especially to time, so that a part of a day represents the entire day (a “day’s wage” was the same, regardless of the number of hours worked). The same is true for a part of a year representing a whole year (kings were credited with a full year’s reign for even a small part of the year). Inclusive reckoning is also related to the way that individuals in the Bible represent people collectively, such as the way that the Messianic Servant of Isaiah represents the whole nation of Israel.

Kal v’homer – “light and heavy”

This frequently used technique is used to argue that if something is true in a light context, it will also be true in a heavy context (or simple and complex). The primary indicator of this kind of argument is the phrase, “how much more.”