

Midrash comes from the word “drash” which means “from searching”.

“Midrash” The term is heard frequently among religious Jewish circles. “Midrash”—means “study, interpretation” and it is derived from a Hebrew word called, ‘lidrosh,’ which means, ‘to search.’ Most of the Jewish midrashic literature brings out ethical and devotional aspects of the Bible, sometimes drawing out and applying what is manifestly there, and sometimes imposing meanings on the texts, although the norm in Judaism is not to make a midrash that violates the p’shat (simple sense) of the text.

In the book of Acts 17:10-11 we find an example of a “midrash” taking place. “And as soon as night fell, the brothers sent Sha’ul (Paul) and Silas off to Berea. As soon as they arrived they went to the synagogue. Now the people here were of nobler character than the ones in Thessalonica; they eagerly welcomed the message (with all readiness of mind), checking (searching) the TaNaK (Old Testament) every day to see if the things Sha’ul was saying were true. Many of them came to trust, as did a number of prominent Greek women and not a few Greek men.”

The Jews mentioned in this passage were actively involved in what is called, “A Midrash or a “Drash.” They gathered together in the Synagogue to search the scriptures for the revelation of the mystery of Messiah.

PaRDeS

When Jewish men gather together to search the scriptures and study the Bible, there are four modes or guidelines that govern their interpretation of scripture. These four modes are represented as an acronym known as PaRDeS. The P stands for “Pashat”, the R stands for “Remez”, the D stands for “Drash”, and the S stands for “Sod”.

The word “Pardes” in Hebrew means, “orchard or garden.” This term is used as it describes the surrounding beautiful fruit of all four forms of scriptural interpretation.

The Bible is a garden of truth. If it is interpreted through only one set of eyes and one mode of understanding its garden of truth may never be realized by the masses. Truth is as infinite as God Himself for it is written, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the One who was and is and is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8) In addition, God, Truth and His Word are inseparable. Yochanan (John) 1:1-2 says, “In the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the Word was God.” Yeshua prayed, “Abba sanctify them through your Truth, your Word is Truth.” And in Yochanan 8:30-32 we hear the resounding words, “If you obey what I say then are you my talmidim (disciples), and you will know the truth and the truth will make (set) you free.” Thus we must recognize the value of truth and its source—God (Spirit) and His Word.

Pashut means, “simple.” It is for all practical terms the “literal” interpretation of scripture. Pashut looks into the grammar of language and the historical settings as background to decide what a passage means.

Remez means, “hint.” Remez is a word, a phrase or other element that hints at a deep truth not conveyed by the Pashut. The implied presupposition is that G-d can hint at things which Bible writers are unaware. Remez is often used in interpreting different scriptures that have messianic overtones such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. And it will be a key mode of interpretation in the pages that follow.

Drash means, “search.” In light of interpreting scriptures, “Drash” means, “reading ones own thoughts into the text as opposed to exegesis, which is extracting from the text what is actually said.” The implied presupposition for “drash” is that “words of scripture can legitimately become grist for the mill of the human intellect and heart, which God can guide to truths not directly related to text at all. This principle of religious study and interpretation is often copied and used in leadership training seminars for the secular world. A good example of a Drash in the Brit Chadasha (New Covenant) is Paul’s comments regarding celibacy and marriage. Paul reads his own thoughts into diverse areas of Mosaic teaching concerning these subjects and draws his own conclusion based upon the Torah (first five books of Bible), knowledge and experience.

Sod means, “secret.” Sod is a mystical or hidden meaning of scriptures often arrived at by operating on the numerical values of the Hebrew letters. This form of calculation is also referred to as “Gematria.” The implied presupposition of Sod is that “God invests meaning in the most minute details of scripture.” An example of Sod can be found in the equating of the word Love (Ahava) and One (Echad). Both these words possess a numerical value of thirteen revealing a hidden eternal truth—Oneness and Love are equivalent and cannot be separated. Yeshua himself prays to the Father, “that they may be one even as we are one” (Yochanan 17:21). Sod is equivalent in several ways to “divine interpretation and revelation” experienced when the Spirit of God illuminates one’s understanding of hidden truths in a particular passage. Paul was especially given to this when it came to “the mystery’s” he openly spoke of.

Taken from the Hadassah Institute (Though I did not attend the institute, it had the most concise and clear explanation of the PaRaDS I have learned over the years. – Dr. John L. Mastrogiovanni)