

Peeling the Onion- PaRDeS

PaRDeS is an acronym for what the Jewish sages understood as the four levels of understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures. **P'shat**, **Remez**, **D'rash** and **Sod**. Usually compared to peeling an onion (a staple vegetable in Jewish cuisine) it is believed that each layer leads to a deeper understanding (or dimension, if you will) to the text.

P'shat is the literal reading and meaning of the text. Context is the key!

Remez is the alluded to meaning; something that is not said in the text but is hinted at and supported by other text creating a clearer picture.

D'rash is the understood meaning that can be taken from the text and applied. This is where, based on the context and supportive text understood from the first two levels, a lesson is learned or a deeper understanding revealed.

Out of this word we have *D'rashah* translated as sermon or message. And since we know that the *Scriptures* that are mentioned by the writers of the New Testament... were in fact the 'Old' Testament writings.... it can be stated that the 'New' Testament is a collection of Divinely inspired *Midrash* (a body of text that explains, interprets and/or investigates).

Matthew, Mark, Luke and all the rest of them wrote to show the validity of Yeshua as Messiah BASED on what had been revealed in the Tanakh (Old Testament) because the Tanakh gives a clear roadmap of who Messiah Was, Is and Will Be.

Sod is the hidden meaning or mystery (such as the significance of numbers, names, individual letters, etc.).

One thing that you must focus on as you travel through the layers is this: **No level of interpretation can contradict the P'shat!** It is a built in checks and balances to keep us on the straight path.

So in light of all of this, I invite you to peel an onion. To start...**pray** for discernment...and then **read** the following verses- **John 5: 46-47:**

***“If you believed Moses you would believe me,
for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings how will you believe my
words?” -Words of Yeshua***

***To help with the context.....**P'shat**.....the first layer:

We learned in a previous article that *believe* is the Hebrew word *aman* and literally means *firm*. So the verse can be read like this:

“If you were firm in Moses you would be firm in Me for he wrote of me. But if you are not firm in his writings how will you be firm in my words?”

Further, to understand the context, we must always look at what is going on in the overall picture. Who is He speaking to? In this case, it is some Jewish people who, on the Sabbath, were outraged at what they saw as lawlessness in this man, Yeshua. He had not only healed a man on the Sabbath, but had also made Himself equal with G-d when He responded to their accusations.

As a side note to this, and maybe some of you have had a similar experience, I was in the parking lot of a grocery store one day when I saw a very dirty, obviously homeless woman, begging. I watched her approach two women standing by their vehicles with carts full of food, who continued to talk to one another while they shook their heads at her requests. Their conversation never broke stride....

Admittedly, since I was witnessing heartlessness, my motivation was not *only* to help this woman but also to shame the two women who no doubt had some spare change and definitely had some food. (Something I repented of later) But I yelled for her to come over. And as the two women, who now seemed to be interested, watched her come to me, I realized that she was indeed, filthy. She muttered something incoherent as I handed her some money and I said to her the only thing I could think of. I told her that God loves her.

She then declared to me that she WAS G-d.

And although I didn't become irate or accusatory (I simply smiled in wonderment and started my truck) I understand where the 1st Century Jews who *thought* they were firm in Torah were coming from.

To help with the hint...Remez***...the second layer:

Since we are told literally in the first layer that Moses wrote of Him... search what Moses wrote... the Torah! Read the promise G-d made to Abraham in Genesis. Read the Passover story. Read the Song of Moses. Study the sacrificial system. (A few among countless instances where Yeshua is alluded to.)

******D'rash***...the third layer...has enumerable messages, but one should be very evident:

If you claim to believe Yeshua ...based upon *His own words*... it must indicate that you are claiming to be firm in Torah. Are you? If your answer is “no”... you have some decisions to make.

This is what Torah class is all about; this is what the Messianic Synagogues popping up all over the world are all about.

This is why so many churches have realized that they've been sleeping and are seeking their Jewish roots and discovering a love for Israel and the Jewish people.

This is why a simple thing, like the name Yeshua, Messiah's Hebrew name given at birth, is showing up more and more. The Roman created name 'Jesus' is sufficient (and apparently the name that seems to have stuck), but Yeshua, which means SALVATION in Hebrew, holds so much more in meaning and purpose and leads you to realize that every time you see this Hebrew word in the Tanakh, you are seeing Him!

These things are happening because once you taste real Truth, once that seed is planted in your heart; you want to nourish it and nurture it and let it grow! And every time we learn something new, every time a picture becomes clearer, we become closer to our Father in that Truth. And that's what He has intended from the beginning....

***“let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body having been washed in pure water”
Hebrews 10:22***

In this knowledge, a Man of G-d put it best when he wrote:

Those who do not believe as Yeshua and Paul did... have a faith that is different from that of Yeshua and Paul.

If you are a believer and not growing and learning and studying and changing as you race the race of faith, you're running blind. And blind faith is a dangerous and deceptive state to be in.

The phrase itself, *blind faith*, is usually used to express one's 'innocent trust' in something. It has actually become the standing mantra among some to “*just take it in faith.*” The problem, however, is twofold: 1) what if that which you are innocently trusting in...is wrong? And 2) the term *blind faith* itself is an oxymoron (grammatical term for words put next to one another that are opposite).

Faith is *emunah* in Hebrew, meaning firmness from the root word *aman*. If faith is firmness, blind firmness would be a definition of a fool, not the definition of a servant of the God Most High. And how can you be firm in something if you are blind to what that something is? It doesn't make sense.

It is one thing to trust G-d according to His words and promises and plan. It means that you have knowledge of what those words, promises and plan are. It's a different thing entirely to trust in the idea that everything's okay as long as you believe. So before you take that leap of faith you want to make sure what you are firm in... is scripturally sound.

The interesting part about all of this is that when you look at the three words- believe, faith and trust, in Hebrew, you have one root word... *aman*.

Believe- *aman*
Faith- *emunah*
Trust- *emet*

ALL THREE WORDS THAT WE SAY IN THE ENGLISH WITH DREAMY, WARM FEELINGS ARE ROOTED IN ONE THING- **FIRMNESS!**

And notice that Yeshua said if you are firm in the **writings** of Moses, you will be firm in My **words**.

Yeshua **spoke** Torah and the truths *revealed* in Torah. Take for example His responses to Satan when He was tempted in the desert. All were from Deuteronomy.

Now knowing this *could* lead you to raise an eyebrow at the widely taught message that is preached to denounce evil by rebuking Satan in the *name* of ‘Jesus’.

Since we have also learned in a previous article that **name** is contextually synonymous with **character**... it would be more accurate to teach that one denounces evil by walking in the *Character* of Yeshua. And since His Character is founded on Torah (based upon the text in John), we would denounce evil just as He did, by rebuking Satan through our firm stance in what has already been written.

Already...been written! What He said was written in Deuteronomy. Torah!

This is just one ‘stream’ that can be followed in this portion of the peeling. Hopefully you will be consumed with this level for a long time because these two verses found in John should lead you on hundreds of different quests. But remember, whatever stream you follow, you **cannot** contradict the literal meaning found in P’shat!

I will not venture into *****Sod**... the fourth layer...here. But you can find some of the mystery of Yeshua’s presence in the Tanakh in an archived article titled “Vayikra”.....

Unfortunately, one of the biggest problems we have today when it comes to interpretation is that everyone wants to jump right to the third layer! They want to jump right into a sermon. But how can you get (or give) a message if you don’t understand the literal and alluded to layers of the texts you are trying to *glean meaning from!*

What inevitably happens is that you have a message that you want to get or give....so you thumb through the Scriptures and find verses to support what you already think the message should be! Another definition of a fool and I think scholars (which I am not) call it *eisegesis*, which is a Greek term for reading into the text what you want it to mean!

It’s exactly what *I* did when I tried to fight the idea of eating Kosher. I knew what Torah said. But I had ‘Christ’. My heart felt convicted...but I fought it. After all, every preacher that I had ever heard said that the instructions in the Old Testament were

worthless and invalid. They taught that the ‘laws’ of my people...were dead (except for some reason the Ten Commandments, go figure).

I pulled up all the verses relating to eating in the New Testament and *thought* I had a sound argument. Abba finally dealt the final card. He knew my heart. He knew I wanted the truth of the matter.

And the escargot that I ate that last night....well...I was humbled. (And for any of you skeptics...it wasn't food poisoning. That's what I thought, too, as my body was purging and my heart was acquiescing to Abba that I would be grateful for a few days of pain if it taught me the lesson I desperately wanted to learn. But as soon as it left my body, I felt great again) He is a loving God.

I then researched those New Testament verses with an open mind, still trying to figure it out, but not with any premeditated opinions, one way or the other. And I learned what they really said....and they supported Torah just as the entire New Testament Scriptures do.

My overall advice to all who say they believe is to study and learn the Hebrew language and culture, because it is impractical to start peeling the onion in truth if you don't understand the context. That, in turn, makes it impossible to study Torah in truth, which we are commanded to do. And without this contextual basis, it wouldn't make any sense to try and interpret the Greek scriptures since they are based upon the Hebrew.

This doesn't mean that you have to be fluent in the language or know everything about the culture, just that you make a determined effort to learn... so that you can be open to what He so earnestly wants you to see!
And as He promises, He will be with you.

“You are near, oh LORD, and all your commands are truth” Psalms 119:151

A firm grip on Torah allows us to grasp hold of all the Tanakh. And a firm grip on the Tanakh allows us to grasp hold of Yeshua in truth. And a firm grip on Yeshua offers us an audience with the Father, Blessed be He, and the opportunity to present ourselves before Him blameless.

*****CAUTION*** the peeling of onions may cause tears**

Shalom!