

PARDES – THE ACRONYM

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The word Pardes, is sometimes used as an acronym, for four categories of Biblical interpretation.

Peshat – The sensus literalis, i.e., the plain meaning of the text.	פשט	פ
Remez – The allegorical or typological meaning.	רמז	ר
Derash – The homiletical meaning OR the legal meaning.	דרש דין	ד
Sod – The esoteric meaning.	סוד	ס

- There is significant variability, and therefore, overlap in the way these categories are applied.
- “Pardes” as an acronym for these four methods of interpretation first appears in the writings of Moses de Leon in the late 13th century. Before this Pardes refers to mystical experience of to the totality of Torah study without differentiation into different methods of study.
- Polysemous biblical interpretation is the product of Medieval Christian influence. For most medieval thinkers there were four categories of interpretation, which had originated with the Bible commentators of the early Christian era: Literal (events/history), typological, tropological (moral), anagogical (dealing with the future events of Christian history). (See Dante in his epistle to Can Grande della Scala).