

Remez in the Bible: Hints for Those Who Have Ears to Hear

A narrative guide to biblical allusion, audience awareness, and layered meaning

Introduction: What Remez Means

Remez is a Hebrew term meaning “hint” or “allusion.” In Jewish interpretation it belongs to the wider PaRDeS approach: *Peshat* is the plain meaning, *Remez* is the hinted meaning, *Derash* is the searched-out or taught meaning, and *Sod* is the hidden or mysterious meaning. Remez does not erase the plain meaning; it assumes the plain meaning and then invites the listener to hear an echo of another passage, event, promise, or pattern.

Remez works because the speaker knows the audience. A single phrase, a symbolic action, a place name, a repeated image, or even a quotation fragment can awaken an entire scriptural context in the mind of hearers who know the story. It is like beginning a familiar song and letting the audience finish it inwardly. The Bible often teaches this way: it gives a hint, and the prepared listener follows the trail.

Remez Across the Biblical Story

1. Eden’s Promise: The Seed of the Woman

In Genesis 3:15, God speaks to the serpent: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” On the surface, the verse announces conflict between humanity and the serpent. As Remez, it becomes the first hint of a larger redemptive pattern: a coming offspring will confront evil, suffer a wound, and ultimately prevail. Later biblical readers hear echoes of this promise whenever a threatened child, a promised son, or a victory over evil appears.

2. Abraham’s Seed and the Nations

God tells Abraham, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18). Earlier He says, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). The plain meaning speaks of Abraham’s descendants and their covenant calling. The hinted meaning reaches wider: whenever Scripture later speaks of blessing flowing outward from Israel to the nations, it quietly points back to Abraham’s promise. Paul later

draws on this when he says, “In thee shall all nations be blessed” and explains that “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:8–9). Remez turns the patriarchal story into a map for mission.

3. The Exodus as a Pattern of Redemption

The Exodus is first a historical deliverance from Egypt: “The LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand” (Deuteronomy 6:21). Yet it becomes one of Scripture’s richest reservoirs of Remez. Later passages hint at Egypt, wilderness, water, bread from heaven, covenant, and promised land to signal a new act of deliverance. Isaiah says, “I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19), and Hosea records the Lord saying, “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Hosea 11:1). The audience is meant to remember the whole Exodus drama.

4. Manna, Daily Bread, and Dependence

The manna in the wilderness teaches Israel to receive provision one day at a time: “Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you” (Exodus 16:4). Moses later explains the lesson: God fed Israel with manna “that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only” (Deuteronomy 8:3). When Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11), the phrase does more than request food; it hints back to the wilderness lesson. The audience who knows Torah hears that trust is not merely about having enough, but about depending on God each day.

5. David, the Shepherd-King, and the Messiah

David’s life becomes a storehouse of hints. He is introduced as a shepherd, for Jesse says, “There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep” (1 Samuel 16:11). He becomes the rejected one whom God chooses, since “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). God later promises David, “Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee” (2 Samuel 7:16). When Scripture speaks of a coming “son of David,” as when the crowds cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:9), it is not merely naming ancestry; it is activating the whole story of shepherd-kingship, covenant, suffering, and hope.

6. Psalm 22: “My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

When Jesus cries, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46), He is quoting the opening line of Psalm 22: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). The phrase is not isolated despair. It is a Remez to the whole psalm. The audience familiar with the psalter would recognize the mockery: “They shoot out the lip, they shake the head” (Psalm 22:7), the suffering: “They pierced my hands and my feet”

(Psalm 22:16), and the eventual victory: “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD” (Psalm 22:27). One line hints at the entire scriptural arc.

7. Psalm 8 in the Temple: Children, Praise, and Enemies Silenced

When Jesus responds to criticism by citing praise from the mouths of children, He quotes, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise” (Matthew 21:16). The hint points back to Psalm 8:2: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.” The cited line sounds gentle, but the wider psalm says that such praise silences enemies. The audience that knows the psalm hears the sharper implication: the children recognize what the leaders resist.

8. Ezekiel 34 and the Lost Sheep

When Jesus says, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), the words echo Ezekiel 34, where God condemns failed shepherds and promises, “Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out” (Ezekiel 34:11). The Lord also says, “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away” (Ezekiel 34:16). The phrase “seek and save” is a hint loaded with meaning: it identifies the lost as still beloved, exposes negligent leaders, and presents Jesus’ mission as the work of Israel’s true Shepherd.

9. Daniel’s “Son of Man”

The title “Son of Man” can sound modest, but in Daniel 7 it points to a heavenly figure: “One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven” (Daniel 7:13), and “there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom” (Daniel 7:14). When Jesus says, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64), He hints at Daniel’s vision directly before leaders who know the text. The phrase invites hearers to ask not only what Jesus is doing, but who He is claiming to be.

10. Hosea’s “Out of Egypt I Called My Son”

Hosea 11:1 originally looks back to Israel’s Exodus: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Matthew later cites the line after Joseph takes Jesus into Egypt and then returns: “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matthew 2:15). The plain meaning remains Israel’s history, while the hint sees Israel’s story recapitulated in the Messiah. Remez allows the reader to see correspondence between corporate Israel and the representative Son.

11. Jonah and the Sign of Three Days

The “sign of Jonah” is more than a reference to a prophet swallowed by a great fish. Jonah is in the fish “three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17), and Jesus says, “As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). Jonah also preaches to outsiders, and “the people of Nineveh believed God” (Jonah 3:5). Jesus’ use of Jonah assumes that His audience can connect judgment, resurrection-like deliverance, repentance, and unexpected mercy.

12. The Woman Caught in Adultery and the Finger of God

When the Pharisees bring the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, they are trying to trap Him through the law: “Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?” (John 8:5). Jesus does not answer first with an argument; “Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground” (John 8:6). As Remez, the action itself becomes the hint. Exodus says, “The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables” (Exodus 32:16), and also speaks of “two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). So when Jesus writes with His finger while they appeal to the law, He is silently pointing beyond their accusation: the One before them is not merely being judged by the law; He is the divine Lawgiver. His spoken answer, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7), then forces the accusers to face the holiness of the very law they are invoking.

13. “I Am” and the Name Known by Israel

When Jesus answers His opponents with the words “I am,” the phrase carries more than ordinary self-identification. At the burning bush, God tells Moses, “I AM THAT I AM,” and then says, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus speaks into that known scriptural memory when He says, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24), and again, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). His audience understands the weight of the hint, because the next verse says, “Then took they up stones to cast at him” (John 8:59). The Remez depends on their knowledge of the divine name: Jesus does not need to retell Exodus; the phrase itself awakens it.

14. Peter’s Threefold Question of Love

Peter’s failure is specifically threefold. Before the crucifixion, Jesus tells him, “The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice” (John 13:38). Later Peter does deny Him, and

the narrative closes the moment with, “And immediately the cock crew” (John 18:27). After the resurrection, Jesus restores Peter with matching repetition: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” followed by “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15); again, “Lovest thou me?” followed by “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16); and a third time, “Lovest thou me?” followed by “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). As Remez, the three questions point back to the three denials. Christ is telling Peter, in effect, “I know every denial, and I am restoring you at the exact place of your failure.” Each question answers one denial with grace, truth, and renewed calling.

15. Paul’s Use of Adam, Abraham, and the Rock

Paul often reasons by Remez. Adam becomes a pattern for humanity and Messiah: “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). Abraham becomes a hint of justification by faith, for “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6). The wilderness rock becomes a symbol through which Paul teaches that Israel’s story contains spiritual realities pointing beyond itself: “They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). These examples show that apostolic interpretation often moves from the plain story to its larger scriptural resonance.

How to Recognize Remez

1. **Notice partial quotations.** A single line may point to an entire psalm, prophecy, or narrative.
2. **Listen for repeated images.** Bread, water, shepherds, mountains, deserts, lambs, vines, temples, and sons often carry earlier biblical memory.
3. **Ask what the audience already knew.** Remez depends on shared Scripture, shared worship, and shared story.
4. **Keep the plain meaning intact.** A hint should deepen the passage, not contradict the original context.
5. **Follow the echo back and forward.** Read the earlier passage fully, then return to the later passage with the larger context in mind.

Conclusion: The Bible Teaches by Echo

Remez shows that the Bible is not a flat collection of isolated statements. It is a unified conversation in which later words often awaken earlier ones. The hint honors the audience by expecting them to remember, compare, and search. A reader who recognizes Remez

learns to hear the Bible the way a trained listener hears music: one note can carry the memory of an entire melody.

Because Scripture is filled with direct quotations, indirect allusions, typological patterns, repeated images, and symbolic actions, it would be impossible to list every instance exhaustively in a short narrative. But the examples above show the major pattern: Remez occurs whenever biblical language gives a knowing hint to an audience prepared to hear the larger story.