

Remez: A Helpful Interpretive Tool

*There is no substitute for reading the Bible (in context);
It throws a great deal of light on the commentaries!*

- Unknown (added)

Read: Luke 1: 46-55

A Harkening Back

Remez is a Semitic word meaning “hinted meaning” or a harkening back to something that needs no further elaboration because the hearers all know its obvious context.¹ Since most first-century observant Jewish young men had memorized much of the Hebrew Scriptures at the local synagogue school as part of their childhood education, rabbis were able to speak and teach in this *remez* (shorthand) manner because everyone knew the complete (longhand) version of the portion of Scripture being referenced.



Because a number of chapters in this book make reference to *remez* as part of the contextual understanding of a passage, it helps to understand this common Jewish literary technique.

Contemporary Remez

We are all familiar with the *remez* communication genre. If I were to burst into song and start singing “God bless America, land that I . . . , and then suddenly stop, you could continue the song because almost everyone knows how to finish it. That would be a contemporary *remez*. The same would be true of the opening phrase of The Lord’s Prayer. All someone has to do is start by saying, *Our Father who art in Heaven . . .*, and we all know how to continue it and finish it.

Remez can also be short phrases that have much larger meanings. The “Cold War,” “9-11” and “Remember the Alamo” are examples of contemporary *remez* phrases that have huge historical, emotional and political meanings.