

Principles of Holy Scripture Study

Jim DeFrancisco, Ph.D.
Miltha Ministries

www.aramaicbibleperspectives.com

WELCOME

Ancient wisdom . . .

- Thus says YHVH, "Stand on the highways, and see, and ask for **the old paths**, where the good WAY is, and walk upon it, and you shall find rest for your souls."
 - Jeremiah 6:16

Principles of Holy Scripture Study

- Preliminary Introduction
1. The Aramaic Language
2. Idioms and Figures of Speech
3. Revelation, Mysticism, and Supernatural Occurrences
4. Near Eastern Culture, Customs and Manners
5. The Near Eastern Psychology
6. Symbolism and Imagery in the Holy Scripture
7. Near Eastern Amplification in the Holy Scripture
8. The Manuscript Order of the Holy Scripture
9. A Semitic/Hebraic Perspective of the Holy Scripture
10. Personal Relationships in the Holy Scripture

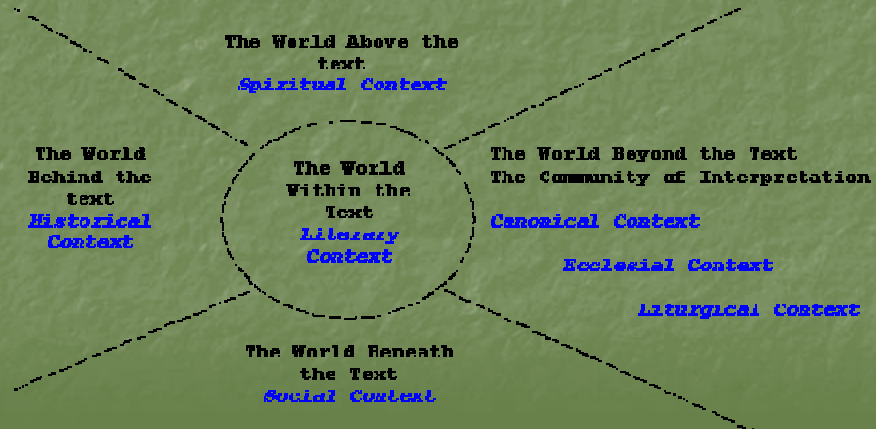
Basic Guidelines

- Don't accept or believe any new ideas that I present without first checking them out yourself
- Study . . . Read . . . Do research
- Challenge your beliefs.
- Debate – Disagree but don't be disagreeable
- TRUTH – Remember that the truth will stand on its own merit
- Anything that has to be reinforced is inherently weak

Principles of Holy Scripture Study

CHART by Dr. John Gresham

Kenrick-Glennon Seminary & Paul VI Institute, St. Louis, MO



Principles of Holy Scripture Study

- Principles of Interpretation:
 - The Holy Scriptures contain God's infallible and inerrantly inspired words
 - Given by the Holy Spirit
 - Selected, compiled, and translated by man
 - Validated by the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Language, culture and customs
 - Historical background and archeological evidence
 - Actual historical situation and events (life setting)
 - Genre, purpose and plan of each book
 - Context of each verse and section
 - Parallel and related passages
 - Literally or Seriously?

1. The Aramaic Language

- Hebrew and Aramaic are the basis for understanding the language of Holy Scripture because they were the primary languages used by the priests, prophets, and patriarchs as well as by Jesus Christ and His apostles and disciples
- Aramaic was the lingua franca – major/common language - of the Near East from approximately 800 BC to 700 AD
- Uniquely powerful and Intrinsic language
- Nuances of meaning lost in Greek, Latin, English, and other languages
- Greek language introduces Greek religious and philosophical meanings foreign to the original text, e.g. Sheol cp. Hades

Aramaic . . .

Language used by Abraham and the Patriarchs
Lingua Franca of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires

Language of Christ and His Disciples

Lingua Franca of the Near East until the rise of Islam in the 7th Century CE when it evolved into the dominant Arabic language

Aramaic continued to be used by Christians in the Near East and throughout the world

The Christians of the East . . .

Christians in Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and India were discipled by Mar Toma (Saint Thomas) and have used the Aramaic (Syriac) Scriptures and Liturgy since 2nd Century AD

These Near Eastern Christians sent missionaries as far East as China and Japan
The Peshitta ("straight", "simple", "pure") text has remained intact for at least 1600 years

The Aramaic Language

- Cognate language to Hebrew
 - Also related to Akkadian and Arabic
- Historical stages:
 - Old Aramaic (950-600 BC)
 - Imperial or Official Aramaic (600-200 BC)
 - Middle Aramaic (200 BC – 200 AD)
 - Late Aramaic (200 AD – 700 AD)
 - Modern Aramaic (700 AD – today)

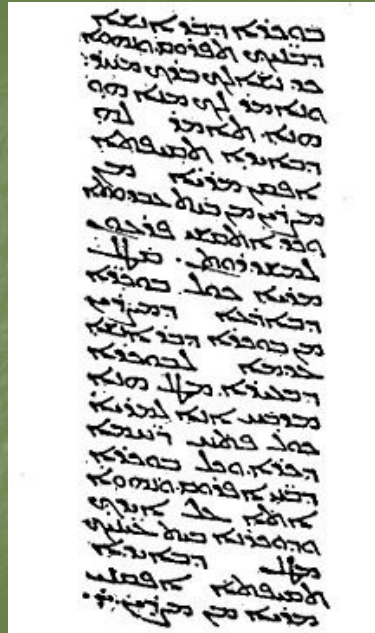
The Aramaic Language

- Modern Witnesses in favor of an Aramaic (or Hebrew) New Testament:
 - Charles F. Burney - The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel
 - William Cureton – Remains of a Very Ancient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac
 - George Lamsa – New Testament Origin and many other books including his translation of the Peshitta
 - Hugh Schonfield – An Old Hebrew Text of St. Matthew's Gospel
 - R. B. Y. Scott – The Original Language of the Apocalypse
 - C. C. Torrey – Our Translated Gospels; Documents of the Primitive Church
 - Frank Zimmermann – The Aramaic Origin of the Four Gospels

The Aramaic Language

- Ancient Witnesses in favor of an Aramaic (or Hebrew) New Testament – The “Church Fathers”:
 - Papias (150-170 AD)
 - Clement of Alexandria (150-212 AD)
 - Ireneus (170 AD)
 - Origen (210 AD)
 - Eusebius (315 AD)
 - Pantaenus
 - Epiphanius (370 AD)
 - Jerome (382 AD)
 - Isho'Dad (850 AD)

- Peshitta
 - Exodus 13:14-16



ܠܒܝܝܬܗܘܢ ܠܝܒܝܬܗܘܢ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܝܫܘܥ ܕܢܝܢܗܘܢ .

- The sixth beatitude (Matthew 5:8) from an East Syriac Peshitta.
- Pronounced *Ṭûḇayhôn l'aylên daḡkên b-lebbhôn: d-hennôn neḥzôn l'alāhâ.*
- Translation: 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'

Aramaic Language

- Importance as a “bridge”
 - Old Testament and New Testament
 - Abrahamic religions
- Importance of identifying words that resemble one another
- KHIMTHA (venom) is incorrectly translated “wine” in the King James Version (Deut. 32:33)
- See “Words Resembling One Another” section of The Holy Bible Translated from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts by George M. Lamsa

Aramaic Language

- Examples of Mistranslation:
 - Lord’s Prayer - Matthew 6:13 – “talan” = “do not let us enter into temptation” (cp. Matthew 26:41)
 - Forsaken on the Cross? Mt. 27:46 - Not the same as Ps. 22
 - Camel or Rope? – Matthew 19:24 - “gamla” - review language and context
 - Eunuch or Believer? - Acts 8:27 – “m’kaymna” = “faithful one”
 - Luke 19:13 – talent (“kakra”) or province (“karkha”)
 - Lucifer? Isa. 14:12 – review context and language “yalal” (see Strong’s #1966 and 1984 and compare with 3213)

From an ancient commentary – Isodad of Merv – Bishop of Hadatha 850 AD

This of Eloj, Eloj, lemana shabachtani, not that He was forsaken of the Godhead not even in suffering; and death, which entered because of transgression of the commandment, as it is written ; but when He was weary and was strengthened by an angel, etc., the Godhead was with Him.

2. Idioms and Figures of Speech

- There are over 1,000 idioms used in the Holy Scripture
- They lead to confusion and mistranslation when not recognized and translated literally
- Peculiar expressions with special meanings
- English examples:
 - "Its raining cats and dogs"
 - "He is in a pickle" (or ". . . a jam")
 - "He blew his stack"
- Semitic examples:
 - "Good eye" meaning "generous" and "bad eye" meaning stingy (Mt. 6:22-23; 20:15; Lk. 11:34)
 - "Bind" meaning "prohibit" and "loose" meaning "permit" (Mt. 16:19; 18:18)

Idioms

- More Semitic examples
 - Use of the word "Heaven" as a euphemism for "God" (Mt. 5:3; 21:25; Lk. 15:18; Jn 3:27)
 - Idiomatic usage of the word "face" (Lk. 9:51-53)
 - "Son of Man" – an idiom meaning "a human being" as well as a Messianic title (Dan. 7:13 and Mt. 12:8)
 - Job 2:9 – "barak" means to "bless" but is used euphemistically to mean "curse" by Job's wife

Idioms

- Aramaic Examples from George Lamsa (Idioms in the Bible Explained):
 - "Garden" (Gen. 2:8) – metaphorically – a wife, a family
 - "Rock" (Ps. 18:2) – protection and defense
 - "Face of a man . . . Lion . . . Ox . . . Eagle" (Ezk. 1:10) – intellect, dominion, strength, omnipresence
 - "Let thy fountain be blessed" (Prov. 5:18 – virility)

3. Revelation, Mysticism, and Supernatural Occurrences

- Mysticism – mystery, secret; “A spiritual discipline aiming at direct union or communion with reality or God through deep meditation or contemplation” (American Heritage Dictionary)
- Forms
 - Mundane Mysticism
 - Inner Spiritual Mysticism
 - Dreams and Visions
 - HELMA (from HLM) – to heal, make well or whole, to integrate

Revelation, Mysticism, and Supernatural Occurrences

- Estimates of mysticism in the Holy Scripture range between 40-60% of the Bible
 - Mysticism is overly embraced by occultists but ignored by fundamentalists
- Example of mysticism in the Holy Scripture:
- Abraham’s dream leading to the offering of Isaac (Genesis 22)
- The transfiguration (Lk. 9:28-36 & Matt. 17:9) was a “spiritual event”, i.e. a mystical experience
- See Treasures From the Language of Jesus and Let There Be Light – The Seven Keys by Rocco A. Errico

4. Near Eastern Culture, Customs and Manners

- Understanding of culture is absolutely necessary to understand the text of Holy Scripture
- Holy Scripture was given 2,000 – 3,000 years ago in another land, with a different language, within a totally different culture
- Knowledge can be gained from studying the Near Eastern people whose culture has undergone slower change than in the Western world

Near Eastern Culture, Customs and Manners

- Example of Near Eastern Culture:
- The Aramaic word, MAKHIRTA (“espoused”) is derived from MAKHAR (“to purchase”, “to acquire for a price” and is an essential part of Near Eastern marriage customs (Matt. 1:18)
- See Gospel Light by George M. Lamsa

Near Eastern Culture, Customs and Manners

- Bread
- Swaddling clothes
- Status – Lk. 14:10-11
- Greeting others – Lk. 10:1-4
- Weddings – Mt. 25:1-13
- Head coverings – Gen. 24:65; 1 Cor. 11:4-5; Esther 7:8
- Hair length – Lev. 19:27; 1 Cor. 11:14-16

5. The Near Eastern Psychology

- “The customs and manners of a people are usually based on the traditional thinking and consciousness of that particular nation. Therefore, understanding the psychological makeup of the Near Eastern people, especially those of biblical lands, is very important in the study of the Bible.”
- Rocco Errico, Let There Be Light

The Near Eastern Psychology

- Near Eastern psychology is important in order to draw the correct conclusions
- Otherwise Westerners often draw invalid conclusions because we look at passages through our own eyes rather than the eyes of the Near East and with consideration to the Near Eastern culture and psychology

The Near Eastern Psychology

- Characteristics of Near Eastern culture and psychology:
 - God is involved in and central to everything
 - Friendships and relationships highly valued
 - Not much attention or value given to time or perfect accuracy in attention to details
 - Male oriented
 - Honor
 - Used to hard times
 - Truth and justice are purchased at great price

The Near Eastern Psychology

- An example of Near Eastern psychology is Jesus' instruction to His disciples that they "judge not, that ye may be not judged." This phrase is practical advice meaning to avoid criticism which often results in quarrels (Matt. 7:1, 2)
 - See Gospel Light by George M. Lamsa
- In the Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount is full of Near Eastern psychology

6. Symbolism and Imagery in the Holy Scripture

- Symbolism and Imagery:
 - Parables (PELATHA = proverbs, allegories, illustrations) used to portray and illustrate events and teachings
 - Metaphors – beware of taking them literally and thus produce unwarranted doctrines
 - Poetical Philosophy – book of Job
 - "It is not easy to describe ideas such as depression, famine, suffering, joy, or sadness. But they can be revealed in symbols, in dreams, and in visions."
 - Lamsa, Old Testament Light

Symbolism and Imagery in the Holy Scripture

- "Serpent" can also mean "deception" or "lie" or "an agent of evil forces" as in Genesis 3:14-15 or Mark 16
- An example of symbolism and imagery is the use of the word "keys" in Matt. 16:19
- "In Aramaic speech, Keys are symbolical of power and trust."
 - Gospel Light by George M. Lamsa

Symbolism and Imagery

- The book of Revelation cannot be understood without first understanding:
 - Temple symbolism
 - Astronomical signs
 - The purpose of apocalyptic literature
 - The urgency of John's environment in the first century AD
 - Context
 - Historical setting
 - Culture and language

7. Near Eastern Amplification in the Holy Scripture

- “Forgiving up to seventy times seven, seven times” (Aramaic text of Matt. 18:22) is an example of Near Eastern amplification meaning “a limitless number of times”
 - See Treasures From the Language of Jesus by Rocco A. Errico

8. The Manuscript Order of the Holy Scripture

- TANAK
- BRIT CHADASHA
- Galatians 2:9 “. . . Pillars . . .”
 - Priority of James – foundation for other Epistles
- Witnesses:
 - Frederick H. Schrivener – Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament
 - Bullinger – Companion Bible, Appendix 95
 - M’Clintock and Strong – Cyclopaedia Of Biblical, Theological, And Ecclesiastical Literature
 - Ernest Martin – Restoring the Original Bible

Manuscript Order and Its Importance

- Priority of authority (foundations)
 - Torah – instruction, “law”
 - Navim – prophecy, revelation
 - Ketuvim – writings, poetry and wisdom
- Priority of authority and order of learning
 - Gospels – Master’s life, teaching, authority
 - Acts – Early disciples empowerment
 - Pillars – James, Peter, John
 - Letters – Expanded and practical guidance
 - Apocalyptic – Be prepared for coming events

9. A Semitic/Hebraic Perspective of the Holy Scripture

- PARDES – the Garden
 - *Peshat* = Literal meaning; the contextual, philological level
 - *Remez* = Allegorical meaning; cross-reference to other texts; rational or philosophical level
 - *Derash* = Moral or homiletic meaning; aggadic level; midrashic [= interpretation via derash] level
 - *Sod* = Mystical or anagogic meaning

Hebraic Perspective – an Example of PARDES in the “New Testament”

- *Peshat* = Literal meaning; the contextual, philological level - Gospel of MARK
- *Remez* = Allegorical meaning; cross-reference to other texts; implied meaning; rational or philosophical level -Gospel of LUKE
- *Derash* = Moral or homiletic meaning; aggadic level; allegorical; midrashic [= interpretation via derash] level - Gospel of MATTHEW
- *Sod* = Mystical or anagogic (hidden)meaning - Gospel of JOHN

Hebrew Language

- Intrinsic Nature
- Examples
 - ABBA
 - MOSHE – HASHEM – SHEMA
 - EMET

The Intrinsic Nature of Hebrew and Aramaic . . .

Learning A, B, C 's

Every letter has a meaning and a numeric value

Alep (A)= God (1)

Beth (B)= Home and Family (2)

Gamal (G)= Transportation (3)

Example A+B = Father/parent (1+2=3)

= ABBA

Hebrew's Intrinsic Nature . . .

יהוה

יהוה

יהוה



YHWH - This is a Most Sacred Name –

. . . Handle it with the utmost respect

Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:7

Another Example – Intrinsic Meaning –
God in Marriage Covenant

Man
Woman
God
Fire

- The Hebrew word for letter actually means
pulse vibration – Rabbi Yehuda Berg

Intrinsic Nature of Hebrew Language . . .

Moshe (Moses)
HaShem (the Name)
Shema (Hear . . .)
Healing (one of the 72
Names of God)*

*The power of this name brings the energy of healing at
the deepest and most profound level of your being.
- Rabbi Yehuda Berg – The 72 Names of God –
Technology for the Soul!

72 Names of God - Exodus 14:19-21

והוה	יילי	סיט	עלטה	מחשט	ללה	אכא	קוהה
תוי	אלד	לאו	חחע	ינל	מבה	הרי	הקם
לאו	כלי	לור	פנול	נלך	יוי	מלה	והע
נהח	תואו	ירט	שאת	דיי	אום	לכב	למרי
יוו	להות	קזק	כור	אי	זעטם	רעה	יין
דהה	סיכ	נול	ילה	מאל	ערי	עעלי	סיה
והו	דני	הוטס	עמס	נףא	ניח	טכח	כמי
נסם	ייל	והרת	מער	ומב	ידה	שנ	מורי
דיטב	נקק	איע	חכג	דאנג	יבמ	הוי	ביט

Hebrew- Greek Mindset Differences

View of Religion

Greek

Goal – Know Thyself
 Philosophy/Logic
 Spectator in meetings
 Leadership: Clergy/Laity
 Bible: information to be taught
 Church as organization
 Denominational distinctive
 Conformity to rules

Hebrew

Know God
 Revelation
 Participant in meetings
 Every member ministers
 Reality to be lived
 Assembly as family
 Unity in diversity
 Personal relationship

Hebrew- Greek Mindset Differences

View of Education

Greek

Knowledge is highest good
Focus on intellect
Learn from sermons/curriculum
Program orientation
Pride in knowing more
What you know
Hired professionals teach children

Hebrew

God is the highest good
Focus on whole person
Learn from mentor
Process orientation
Humility in serving all
How you serve
Parents teach children

Hebrew- Greek Mindset Differences

View of Social Matters

Greek

Idealism of youth
Intellect over relationships
Hierarchical relationships
Life is compartmentalized
Work to live

Hebrew

Wisdom, respect for age
Relationships over intellect
One-another relationships
Life is a unity
Live to work

source: Introduction to Restored Christianity by
Dr. Lynn and Linda Reddick

10. Personal Relationships in the Holy Scripture

- In the Near East everything begins with God
- SON – “builder of the family name”
- Firstborn
- Intimate relationship
- Kinship – “don’t salute on the way . . . ”
- Tribal
- Covenants
- Marriage Covenant
- Israel – Gentiles - Pagans

FOOD FOR THOUGHT – Even in the Greek New Testament the thoughts and idioms are Semitic.

DEBATE - “Disagree without being disagreeable”

“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function”

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

Resources:

Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text –translated by Dr. George Lamsa

Dr. Rocco Errico – Let There Be Light – The Seven Keys

Dr. George Lamsa - Idioms in the Bible Explained and A Key to the Original Gospels ; New Testament Origin ; many other books

Dr. Ernest Martin – The Original Bible Restored

Dr. Marvin Wilson - Our Father Abraham – Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith

Dr. Irving Zeitlin – Jesus and the Judaism of His Time

Miltha Ministries -- Noohra Foundation -- The Original Bible Project