

The Importance of Proper Bible Study Tools and Rules of Hermeneutics

"Rightly dividing the word of truth" – 2 Timothy 2:15

By: Gordon Hayes

Introduction

Objective: Help believers understand the importance of essential tools and methods for understanding Scripture.

Key Idea: Responsible interpretation honors The Almighty One and avoids error.

Why It Matters: Misinterpretation leads to false doctrine and confusion.

Just like working on a project, the use of proper tools will allow us to do our duty to be good stewards of The Almighty's word.

By being a good student, we are pleasing to The Almighty.

What Is Hermeneutics?

Definition: The art and science of interpreting Scripture.

Biblical Foundation: 2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to YAH as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 update (2 Ti 2:15). (1995). The Lockman Foundation (Name restored)

Two main ways of understanding scripture

Exegesis = Pulling out the meaning from the context

Eisegesis = Reading our meaning into the text

Key Principles of Hermeneutics

Determining the intent of the author: Rather than asking what this passage means to me, it is better to ask what the author meant and the readers understood. THEN we can ask ourselves how a passage relates to me.

What is the historical context: Time, culture, and purpose of writing

What is the literary context: Genre and structure

What is the grammatical context: Word meanings and sentence structure

How does a passage fit into the overall context?

Importance of Language Tools

Biblical Languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek

Some Essential Tools:

Lexicons (BDB, Thayer's, HALOT)

Interlinear Bibles

Strong's Concordance

Grammar guides

Example: חֶסֶד Chesed (Hebrew) = Loyal covenantal love

It is more than simple mercy

Strong' Entry

H6153

עֶרֶב ‘ereḇ, eh'-rev; from [H6150](#); dusk:— day, even(-ing, tide), night.

Hebrew word	Translit -eration	Pronun- ciation	Root	Root meaning	How it is used in a particular translation.
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Each Strong's word is given a number. Hebrew words start with the letter H. Greek words begin with the letter G. This system was so useful and universally recognized that many other lexical works use the Strong's numbering system. There are several versions of the Strong's Concordance which are for a particular translation such as the KJV, NKJV, NASB, etc.

Brown, Driver, and Briggs entry for עֶרֶב

Notice how much more indepth the definition is here than in Strongs'.

עֶרֶב ¹³¹ noun [masculine] 1 Samuel 20:5 strike out השְׁלִישִׁית see We Dr and others] (sun)set, evening; — absolute 'ע 2 Kings 2:16 +, עֶרֶב Exodus 12:18 +; construct עֶרֶב Proverbs 7:9; dual עֶרְבִים Exodus 30:8 + 4 times, בֵּימִם - Exodus 12:16 + 5 times (all P); —

1.

a. evening, originally sunset, and hence perhaps לַעֲתָ ע' at the time of sunset Genesis 8:11 (J), Genesis 24:11 (J; || השֹׁאֲבֹת לַעֲתָ צֹאֲת), 2 Samuel 11:2; Isaiah 17:14 and (of the day of 'י) Zechariah 14:7, 'עָתָה הָע' Joshua 8:29 (JE) †; usually 'ע alone = time of sunset, evening: 'בַּע' in the evening Genesis 19:1 (J), Genesis 29:23 (E), Exodus 12:18 (P), Deuteronomy 16:6 (+ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לַעֲתָ בּוֹא), 1 Kings 22:35 (compare || 2 Chronicles 18:34 where + הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לַעֲתָ בּוֹא) + 20 times + 'בַּע' (בַּע') 2 Chronicles 13:11 (twice in verse) = every evening; 'לָע' at evening only late: † 1 Chronicles 16:40; 1 Chronicles 23:30; 2 Chronicles 2:3; Ezra 3:3; Psalm 59:7; Psalm 59:15; Psalm 90:6; Ecclesiastes 11:6 †; 'לְפָנוֹת ע' at the turn of evening † Genesis 24:63 (J), Deuteronomy 23:12; 'ע as adverb accusative Exodus 16:6 (P), Psalm 55:18; as marking duration of impurity, in phrase עַד־הָע' Leviticus 11:24 + 30 times P + Leviticus 22:6 (H); of Day of Atonement עַד־ע' מַע' Leviticus 23:32 (P).

b. dual in phrase (only P) הָעֶרְבִים בֵּין between the two evenings, i.e. probably between sunset and dark (see Thes [various views fully given]; otherwise Di^{Exodus 12:6}; on form as possibly only expanded plural see Ges^{s 88 c}), † Exodus 12:6; Exodus 16:12; Exodus 29:39, 41; Exodus 30:8; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:3, 5, 11; Numbers 28:4, 8 †.

c. other phrases are: 'צִלְיִי ע' Jeremiah 6:4 (distinguished from צִהָרִים and לֵילָה Jeremiah 6:5), 'מִנְחָה (הָ) ע' 2 Kings 16:15; Ezra 9:4, 5; Psalm 141:2; Daniel 9:21; 'זֶאבִי ע' see I. זֶאב; for all combinations with בֹּקֶר morning, see 'ב' 1d, e.

2. (late poetry) = night, עֶרֶב Job 7:4; compare בְּנֶשֶׁף בְּעֶרֶב יוֹם Proverbs 7:9 (|| בְּאִישׁוֹן לֵילָה וְאֶפְלָה).

Entry from Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament for עֶרֶב

Notice the different information given. Use of various lexicons and biblical dictionaries will give us an even broader understanding of the word(s) used in the original language texts of the scriptures.

עֶרֶב—(I)—(1) *evening* (m. and fem., 1 Sam. 20:5); from the root עֶרַב No. II. בָּעֶרֶב Gen. 19:1; 29:23; לַעֲת עֶרֶב Gen. 8:11; 24:11; עֶרֶב (acc.) Exod. 16:6; poet. לַעֲרֵב Psalm 59:7, 15; 90:6; Gen. 49:27, *at evening*. Plur. עֶרְבוֹת Jerem. 5:6. Dual. עֶרְבַיִם the two evenings; only in the phrase בֵּין הָעֶרְבַיִם between the two evenings, Ex. 16:12; 30:8; used as marking the space of time during which the paschal lamb was slain, Ex. 12:6; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:3; and the evening sacrifice was offered, Ex. 29:39, 41; Num. 28:4; i. e. according to the opinion of the Karaites and Samaritans (which is favoured by the words of Deut. 16:6), the time between sunset and deep twilight. The Pharisees, however (see Joseph. Bellum Jud. vi. 9, § 3), and the Rabbinites considered the time when the sun began to descend to be called the first evening (Arab. مَسِيَّ little evening; مَسِيَّ when it begins to draw towards evening; Gr. δέιλη πρωτα); and the second evening to be the real sunset (Gr. δέιλη όψία). See Bochart, Hieroz., t. I. p. 559. Compare, as to the double morning, Pococke ad Carm. Tograi, p. 71; and Hebr. pr. n. שְׁחֵרָיִם.

(2) i. q. עֶרֶב No. II, *foreigners, strangers*; hence הָעֶרֶב מַלְכֵי *foreign kings*, who made alliance with the Israelites, 1 Ki. 10:15; and so also elsewhere of *auxiliary forces*, Jer. 25:20; 50:37; Eze. 30:5.

Strong's entry for Ἰησοῦς

Again, that which comes after the colon and dash are simply listing the way this word is translated in a particular translation for which this version of Strong's is keyed. In this example, the KJV. It is a very brief definition.

Ἰησοῦς **lēsoûs**, ee-ay-sooce'; of Hebrew origin ([H3091](#)); Jesus (i.e. Jehoshua), the name of our Lord and two (three) other Israelites:—Jesus.

Thayer's entry for Ἰησοῦς

Here, Thayer has added the various endings for this name. The base is Ἰησ- The endings, -οῦς, -οῦ, and -οῦν show the case of this name/noun. The case of a noun in Koine Greek determines how this noun/name is to be understood. For example:

- 1) Nominative Case: the simple name
- 2) Genitive Case: of Iesous
- 3) Dative Case: Indirect object-to/for Iesous.
- 4) Accusative Case: Direct Object- Iesous is being acted upon.
- 5) Vocative Case: Direct address-O Iesous.

Ἰησοῦς, -οῦ, dative -οῦ, accusative -οῦν, vocative -οῦ, [Winer's Grammar, § 10, 1], ὁ, **Jesus** (**יְהוֹשֻׁעַ** and according to a later form, **יֵשׁוּעַ**, Syriac **ܝܫܘܥ**, i. e. whose **help** is **Jehovah**; German *Gotthilf*, but later writings gave the name the force of **יְהוֹשֻׁעַ**, see [Matthew 1:21](#), cf. [Sir. 46:1](#) **Ἰησοῦς ὃς ἐγένετο κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ μέγας ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ**, of Joshua, the successor of Moses; Philo, nom. mutat. § 21 **Ἰησοῦς ἐρμηνεύεται σωτηρία κυρίου**), a very common proper name among the Israelites; cf. *Delitzsch*, *Der Jesusname*, in the *Zeitschr. f. d. Luth. Theol.* for 1876, p. 209 sq. [Keim i. 384 sq. (Eng. trans. ii. 97 sq.)]."
In the N.T.

1. **Joshua** [fully **Jehoshua**], the famous captain of the Israelites, Moses' successor: [Acts 7:45](#); [Hebrews 4:8](#).
2. **Jesus**, son of Eliezer, one of Christ's ancestors: [Luke 3:29](#) LT Tr WH.
3. **Jesus**, the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind: [Matthew 1:21](#), 25; [Luke 1:31](#); [Luke 2:21](#), and very often; see **κύριος** and **Χριστός**.
4. **Jesus Barabbas**; see **Βαραββᾶς**.
5. **Jesus**, surnamed **Justus**, a Jewish Christian, an associate with Paul in preaching the gospel: [Colossians 4:11](#).

Understanding Authorial Intent

Some Key Questions:

Who wrote it?

Who was the audience?

What was the purpose?

Examples

The command to procreate

The command to build the Ark given to Noach

The command to Avram to get up and leave his country and go into a new land

The command to Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchaq

The command to study the scriptures so that we can understand them properly

Paul's letters address specific congregational issues

Tools to Discern Authorial Intent

Study Bibles with intros and notes (be cautious of authorial bias)

Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias Like:

Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Cultural Context Books (e.g., Manners & Customs of the Bible;
How to be a Jew)

Historical Commentaries

Lots of Online Help Resources

Dangers of Misinterpretation

Modern bias (anachronism--something placed in the wrong time period.)

We need to read the scriptures in their historical context

Then we can adapt them as needed, without destroying their original meaning, to our present day situation(s)

Proof-texting

Ignoring language and context

Result: Doctrinal error and division

Case Study Example

Romans 10:4: "Christ is the end of the law..."

Common Misreading: Torah is abolished

Correct Understanding: "Telos" = goal or purpose

Lesson: Use tools to understand original intent

A Method for Sound Bible Study

Read multiple translations

Look up key words in original languages

Look for unusual words being used

Greek word for saint = chagios (chag keeper?)

Rule of first use

Study historical-cultural context

Identify genre and structure

Ask what it meant originally

Apply its meaning for today

Recommended Resources

Books:

Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith by Marvin R. Wilson

Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus Can Transform Your Faith by Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg

Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus: New Insights From a Hebraic Perspective by David Bivin and Roy Blizzard

MISREADING SCRIPTURE WITH WESTERN EYES - E. Randolph Richards & Brandon J. O'Brien

Brown, Driver, & Briggs Lexicon

Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament

HALOT (Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon to the Old Testament)

Computer, Online, and Smartphone Bible Helps

- Sefaria.org (online)
- [Blue Letter Bible](#) (online)
- [Step Bible](#) (online)
- [HALOT](#) Hebrew Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (online version with free subscription)
- [Logos](#) (online, desktop, and phone)
- [Accordance](#) (online, desktop, and phone)
- [e-Sword](#) (desktop and phone)
- [theWord](#) (desktop and portable USB)
- Holy Bible (phone)

Conclusion

Studying Scripture accurately honors Elohim.

Using proper tools protects truth and builds sound doctrine.

Proverbs 25:2: "The glory of Elohim is to conceal a matter, but it is the glory of kings to search it out."

IF we do not use the proper tools and the proper hermeneutic rules, translational and interpretive errors WILL occur.

Biblical Literary Genres

Genre	Purpose	Examples	How to Recognize It
Narrative	To tell a story with theological or moral significance	Genesis, Exodus, 1 & 2 Samuel, Acts	Characters, plot, setting, conflict, divine intervention
Law	To instruct God’s people in righteous living	Exodus 20–23, Leviticus, Deuteronomy	“You shall...” or “If... then...” commands and legal case scenarios
Poetry	To express emotion, worship, lament, or praise	Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations	Parallelism, metaphor, vivid imagery, rhythm
Wisdom Literature	To teach life principles, moral behavior, or philosophical insight	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job	Short sayings (Proverbs), reflections on meaning (Ecclesiastes), dialogues (Job)
Prophecy	To call people to repentance and proclaim future hope or judgment	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos	“Thus says the LORD...”, oracles, warnings, future promises
Parable	To teach a moral or spiritual lesson through story	Luke 15 (Prodigal Son), Matthew 13	Short story, real-life scenario with a twist or deeper meaning
Apocalyptic	To reveal God’s cosmic plan, often through visions	Daniel 7–12, Revelation	Symbolism (beasts, horns), angels, heavenly visions, time-specific phrases

Biblical Literary Genres

Genre	Purpose	Examples	How to Recognize It
Epistle (Letter)	To teach and guide early believers	Romans, 1 Corinthians, James	Greeting, body of teaching, exhortations, personal closing
Genealogy	To show heritage, identity, or fulfillment of prophecy	Genesis 5, Matthew 1, Luke 3	Lists of names, usually “X begat Y” or “X was the father of Y”
Song/Hymn	To worship, celebrate victories, or pray	Exodus 15, Luke 1:46–55, many Psalms	Poetic structure, praise language, often starts with “Sing to the LORD...”
Hyperbole	To emphasize a point through exaggeration	Matthew 5:29–30, Luke 14:26	Statements clearly not meant to be literal, but used to stress urgency or severity
Allegory	To teach spiritual truth through symbolic representation	Galatians 4:21–31, Ezekiel 23	Characters or events represent larger spiritual truths; layers of meaning
Lament	To cry out to God in sorrow or crisis	Psalms 22, Lamentations	Complaint, plea for help, expressions of grief or abandonment
Blessing & Curse	To proclaim future conditions based on obedience or sin	Deuteronomy 28, Genesis 49	Formal pronouncements of reward or punishment, often poetic or prophetic in style