# Why do you believe what you believe?

**CAN YOU EXPLAIN & DEFINE BIBLICALLY THE BELIEFS THAT YOU HOLD TO & LOCATE THEM IN THE BIBLE?**

Date:_____

# BIBLICAL THINKING

## EMBEDDED IN OUR CULTURE

Judeo Christian vs Greco Roman

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS – MONARCHY vs DEMOCRACY

SPORTS

ENTERTAINMENT

## SUBTLE DAMAGE

THE WAY WE THINK

HOW WE READ & HOW WE STUDY THE BIBLE

*SO…WHAT IS IT?*

- It permeates commentaries and most modern-day sermons
- It looks at the Old Testament as object lessons or to illustrate between law and grace
- It says that man is dual [flesh and blood] It focuses on the soul, saying that only the soul is eternal, only the soul is redeemable, and only the soul goes to heaven
- It says that knowledge /doctrine and right thinking feed the soul
- It says that morals and ethics are intellectual and only for the soul

## BUT IF…

If it is ***only*** about the soul – then any commandment or law found in the Bible that primarily deals with the ***physical*** would be irrelevant to the ***spiritual*** man.

## TO THINK THAT WAY… IT SAYS

That the heart is good & the body is evil

## THIS HELLENISTIC OR GNOSTIC THINKING

Divides a person into the fleshly you and the "***real*** you" – therefore whatever the body does – it does because that is its natural inclination.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THIS THOUGHT PROCESS?

In this type of thinking – the body is a product of the fallen world and ***cannot*** and ***will not*** ever do good
In this thinking – the sooner the soul leaves the body – the better off it is

## WHAT'S THE DANGER OF THIS KIND OF THINKING?

- It leads to spiritualizing or allegorizing nearly everything.
- Which means to give a spiritual meaning to or to understand Scripture in a "spiritual" sense which is expressed by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existences

## BASED ON YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Did the Old Testament ***pass away*** with Jesus's entrance into the world?
Did Jesus ***start something new or separate*** from the Old Testament?

## IF THIS IS YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS…

**In other words…. You answered YES to those 2 questions…. Then most likely…**

you take the Old Testament & allegorize it…
& Instead of real people with real lives – people who experienced the One True God & understanding that Jesus knew it to be inspired & true **You** see the Old Testament as simply myths, legends & stories purely to teach valuable lessons

## TO THINK IN THIS MANNER…

Means that man's soul simply "has to believe" & "confess" certain things about the Logos

**WHICH LEADS TO A VERY DANGEROUS VIEWPOINT**

Now, instead of asking the question…

**WHAT DOES <u>GOD</u> REQUIRE OF ME?**

It become the question of…

**WHO IS LOGOS** to me?

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is completely Hebrew and was completed before the Greek culture even came on the scene. It's one of the reasons that reading and studying the Old Testament is critical to an understanding of what it means to be a follower of God.

## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

2/3 of the Bible is written by Hebrews & the New Testament – though written primarily ***in*** the Greek language was written from a ***Hebrew*** perspective. Doctor Luke was the only author who was not a Hebrew – but he was highly influenced by the Hebrews he was surrounded by.

## WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT?

**THE VERY NATURE OF THE GODHEAD**

Is UNITY – specifically a TRI-UNITY

**IN THE SAME WAY…**
**IN HEBREW THINKING…**

MAN IS A TRI-UNITY
Man is spirit
Man is soul
Man is body
But are ALL <u>ONE</u> MAN

## ALL OF MAN | BODY, SOUL & SPIRIT

IS TO BE **HOLY** AS YHWH IS HOLY

## IT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN..

A believer who **DOES** vs A believer who
**THINKS** or **BELIEVES**.
**LIVING IT OUT** vs **I THINK or I BELIEVE**

## DOES JESUS…

Redeem **JUST** the soul
Or
Does He redeem the **WHOLE MAN**?

## IF IT IS JUST THE SOUL

Then water baptism is purely symbolic

## IF IT IS THE WHOLE MAN

Then you know that it is true renewal of the creation
Dying to self & rising up

## IF IT IS THE WHOLE MAN

Then you know that **salvation** is not about "*believing the right thing*" but is the beginning of the journey

## THE WORD OF GOD SHOULD BE….

- Instruction for the heart
- Guidance for the soul
- Direction for the body

## IT SHOULD LEAD TO A HUNGER

**To know how…**

- To love your neighbor
- To treat those you love
- To take care of yourself
- To worship your Creator
- To celebrate Him
- To follow Him

## BUT TO THINK GREEK…

Finds all of that too "physical"

## BUT TO THINK LIKE A HEBREW

- Is to know that **ALL of God's Word** is about instruction.
- To know that if we follow Him that our way is blessed. It is to truly understand that **there is not one single detail about our life that God is not interested in** – **He** is detailed
- & that even **the simple, everyday, completely ordinary things in our life are not "above" God's interest or involvement**

## HOW DID THE "GREEK" THINKING CREEP IN?

It started in the 400 years of silence between the end of the Old Testament and the start of the New Where men like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Alexander the Great rose in status infiltrating with their philosophy their thoughts and words and creating new ideals.

## ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

It came with the rape of the Jewish nation when for 3 1/2 years Antiochus Epiphanes forced everything Greek upon the Jews. He built an altar to Zeus in the temple and sacrifices were made to the image of a king- the first abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of, and the foreshadowing of what Jesus said would become a part of our future.

## GREEK UNIVERSITIES

It came in the guise of Greek Universities of Athens and Alexandria. These Greek universities were a melting pot of Jewish and Greek thinking. Although it did lead to a Greek translation of Scripture called the ***Septuagint***, it also introduced a new method of studying Scripture called the allegorical method where Jewish scholars like Philo Clement and Origin we're indoctrinated into this way of thinking.

## ST AUGUSTINE

Fast forward to biblical scholars like Augustine who were greatly influenced in Greek thinking-not to

mention Martin Luther an Augustinian monk, or Calvin who studied Augustine. Research and you will discover that St Augustine is literally in nearly every family tree of every part of today's church. If you compare his ideas to Hebrew thinking you will see that he was greatly responsible for re-casting the Christian faith in very Neo-Platonic terms. You will discover how our Hebrew roots have been systematically pulled out.

## SEPARATED FROM…

As one of my teachers said, "Easter was quickly separated from Passover. Whit Sunday quickly separated from Pentecost, and Christmas moved months away from the Feast of Tabernacles."

## STUDY AND SEE FOR YOURSELF

I challenge you to study and see where the Jewish roots of the church are pulled up and roots of Greek philosophy were settled in.

I challenge you to look and see what pagan customs and pagan festivals that have nothing to do with Christ have been adopted into our faith.

## HOW DID THE "GREEK" THINKING CREEP IN?

From Augustine it leads to Thomas Aquinas, who instead of being influenced by Augustine brought in Aristotle's thinking of natural theology based on reason which laid the foundation for science and evangelical skepticism.

## Proverbs 23:7 says,

"For as he thinks within himself, so he is. .."

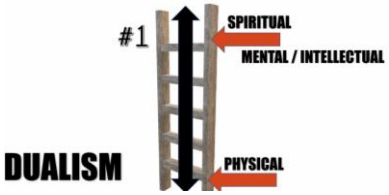
## GREEK IDEAS OR IDEALS

An ideal is a standard of perfection or excellence. Which in simple terms revolves around how we would define our value system. This is done by simply ranking things from what is most valuable to us all the way down to what is least valuable.

## IN OTHER WORDS

**WHAT** are you willing to **LOSE** and **WHAT** will you hold onto until you **DIE**.

## A VALUE LADDER




## GREEK THINKING D I V I D E S | it is…

Physical | Spiritual
Sacred | Secular
Natural | Supernatural
Eternal | Temporal
[Death] as Enemy | or Death as Friend

## FIRST | THE DIVIDING OF THE PERSON

INTO TWO PARTS
**BODY**
**SOUL**

## GENESIS 2:7

" Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

**The Hebrew word for <u>being</u> is: 5315. nephesh. (Neh fish) Which means soul.**

## S.O.S.

## AFFECTS ON CHRISTIAN THINKING

So how does Greek philosophy and the separating of body and soul affect Christian thinking?

## WE MUST MOVE PAST OUR LIMITED PERSPECTIVE

The gospel of Jesus is comprehensive.
What do I mean by that?
Yes, there is a spiritual salvation from the result or penalty of sin but, it is also a holistic salvation that was meant to include **every single aspect of a persons life**!

## MATTHEW 10:8

**Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.**

## THERE IS NO HIERARCHY OF SPIRITUALITY

When we have been taught a hierarchy of spirituality that is CONTRARY to what the Bible actually teaches--then we FAIL to realize that it is ***regardless of your spiritual gifts, regardless of your station in life*** and **regardless of your career *path*** or ***any other calling that you might have***- that **every single one of us** are called to become ministers of His grace and mercy.

## SECOND | IT HAS LED TO DIVIDING LIFE INTO TWO PARTS

SACRED &
SECULAR

## WHAT ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Jobs can be **immoral** or **illegal,** but they **cannot** be sacred or secular.

**When it comes to our perspective of work and God from the Hebrew perspective, He is far more interested in our COMMITMENT and DEVOTION then He is in the *actual position* that we hold.**

**We are called to delight in Him.**
**We are called to commit our ways to Him.**
**In our relationship with Him,**
**He is the one that leads us through**
**our heart's desires and interest,**
**He provides opportunities**
**and creates circumstances.**
**He gives us gifts and talents and abilities**
**He counsels us and convicts us.**

## TO A HEBREW – WORK WAS EVERYTHING

They worked six days and the seventh day was not for leisure but for worship. As one of my teacher says, "they worked for God, and they worshiped God"

## THIRD | THE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSE

NATURAL vs SUPERNATURAL

## THE WORD OF GOD SAYS

There is **Creator** and there is *creature*. And the devil is clearly a created creature.

## FOURTH | THE DIVISION OF RELIGION

HEAVEN & EARTH vs
ETERNAL & TEMPERAL

## ON A DEEPER LEVEL

this division leads to questions about
**what is good** and **who is God**?

## WHAT IS GOOD?

So, if we're looking at defining what is good and if we have been influenced by Greek philosophy and we have placed spiritual far above physical then the question becomes what is that affecting?

## WHO IS GOD?

From a Greek system of values God would land on the "spiritual" rung far separated from the physical **Are you starting to see how this can be a problem?** The ***Creator*** has now ***been removed*** or ***at least largely separated*** from His creation.

## THE GREEKS HAD TWO ANSWERS

The first would be what was considered a demigod one who was not quite God and not quite human. Where God could remain in his eternal world and this demigod would not only create but manage it for God.

## THE OTHER ANSWER FROM ARISTOTLE

He believed that the world wasn't actually created ever but that matter in and of itself was eternal and had always been here and throughout time it has not only managed itself but has evolved completely separate from God completely. Interestingly enough it would actually be the beginning of evolutionary thinking that we didn't see until some 2000 years later. Look at secular humanism and you will see a direct link to how It began in Greek philosophy.

## WHO IS GOD?

Omnipresent?
Omnipotent?
Omniscient?

## IS HE ACTUALLY [BIBLICALLY]

Present in all places at all times?

## GOD IS ABLE TO SEE EVERYTHING AND TO ACT ANYWHERE HE CHOOSES

The eyes of the lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good. **Proverbs 15:3**

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. **Hebrews 4:13**

## GOD'S FORM

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." **John 4:24**

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*. John 1:18_I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. **Isaiah 6:1**

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. **Revelation 4:2**

## GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive.
**1 Kings 8:30**

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them**. Job 1:6**

## DOES HE ACTUALLY [BIBLICALLY]

Have unlimited authority or influence
in other words, He could do anything?

## DOES HE ACTUALLY [BIBLICALLY]

Have infinite awareness, understanding, and insight, possessed of universal or complete knowledge?

## WHEN YOU READ & STUDY WITH HEBREW THINKING

You realize that God did not give us an overview of salvation history but rather a very personal account of individual lives. The Word of God is a documentation of actual people, and it is about His real work in a very real world and you see that it encompasses the lives of individuals who love,

worship and follow Him. Instead of a static god that is immutable without emotion, you discover a very deeply personal God!

## WHEN YOU GRASP THE INTIMACY

Once you can grasp the fact that God is intimate and that He is personal -then you can also grasp that every person is significant, every decision we make is meaningful, every job we engage in is important and every relationship is lasting. This is not about theology, theories, or belief. It's about lives.

## THE BIBLE WORLDVIEW IS EASTERN NOT WESTERN

**There is a sharp contrast between the Greek/Western and the Hebrew/Eastern method of study.**

**The first principle is to <u>search</u> scripture**

My son, if you will **receive my words**
And **treasure my commandments within you**,
**Make your ear attentive** to wisdom,
**Incline your heart to understanding**;
For if you **cry for discernment**,
**Lift your voice for understanding**;
If you **seek her as silver**
And **search for her as for hidden treasures**;
<u>Then</u> **you will discern the fear of the Lord**
And **discover <u>the knowledge of God</u>**.
**Proverbs 3:1-5**

**The second principle is to be**

LIKE the Master

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that **he become** like his teacher, and the slave like his master."

Matthew 10:24-25a

He become | *gínomai*

**1096** *gínomai* – properly,
**to *emerge*, *become***, *transitioning* from one point (realm, condition) to another. 1096 (*gínomai*) fundamentally means "*become*" (becoming, became) so it is *not* an exact equivalent to the ordinary equative verb "to be" (*is, was, will be*) as with 1510 /*eimí* (1511 /*eínai*, 2258 /*ēn*).
1096 (*ginomai*) means "to *become*, and **signifies *a change of condition, state or place***" (Vine, Unger, White, *NT*, 109).

M. Vincent, "1096 (*gínomai*) means ***to come into being /manifestation*** implying ***motion, movement, or growth***" (at 2 Pet 1:4). Thus it is used for *God's* actions as emerging from eternity and becoming (showing themselves) in time (physical space).

**The third principle is GROUNDED IN understanding HOW to study Scripture**

There are 4 levels of study
PASHAT
REMEZ
DRASH
SOD

## PASHAT

the plain, simple meaning of the text; understanding scripture in its natural, normal sense using the customary meanings of the words being used.

## HEBREW THINKING & THE BIBLE

### EXEGESIS

Means that when you EXIT the Bible you come away with a clear understanding that it says what it means and means what it says

### EISEGESIS

Means that when you ENTER the Bible you go in with a self-centered approach & come away with an "I think, I believe" mentality

## REMEZ

This is the implied meaning of the text.

## DRASH OR MIDRASH

meaning "*search.*

## SOD

meaning "hidden"

## MATTHEW 13:11-17

And Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You shall keep on listening, but shall not understand; And you shall keep on looking, but shall not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their heart, and return, And I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

**Mustérion** |what *can only be known through revelation*, i.e. because *God reveals* it.

**The last principle is in understanding that in the ancient world they didn't have a Bible like we do. They had to LISTEN**

## AND IT'S EVEN DEEPER

Concrete vs Abstract thinking
Passive vs Active descriptions
Impersonal vs Personal relationship
Linear vs Block logic

# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

**THE MORAL MAN | HEBREW** vs
THE INTELLECTUAL MAN | GREEK
**PRACTIVE** vs KNOWLEDGE
**CONDUCT** vs RIGHT THINKING
**DUTY & STRICTNESS OF CONSCIENCE** vs
SPONTANEOUS & LUMINOUS
**CONSCIENCE** vs PLAY OF THE INTELLIGENCE
**MORAL VALUE** vs INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

## ONE FINAL SNAPSHOT

<u>This is a GREEK snapshot on Western mentality:</u>

- The English word "listen" means only "pay attention"
- The English word "hear" means only to recognize words
- The English word means only to do what you are told

## ONE FINAL SNAPSHOT

<u>BUT the Hebrew word sh'ma does not just mean "listen", "hear", or "obey". It's a lifestyle involving having an "ear to hear"</u>

**It means to "listen, and pay full attention, as if your life depended on it, and, once you paid attention, and heard what is said, begin immediately to incorporate what has been set into your life, and adapt every aspect of your thought life, speech, an conduct to what you have heard, an begin to memorize and teach it to your children and demonstrate it to the world, until you, and the world around you, is transformed into the image of the words you hear."**

## WHY AUGUSTINE?
## HIS INFLUENCE CONTRASTED WITH THE TRUTH OF WHO GOD IS & WHAT HIS WORD SAYS

## BODILY FUNCTIONS

## GOD IS CREATOR AND REDEEMER

He created this physical world.
He made our bodies.
He invented sex.

## OUR BODY <u>not</u> OUR SOUL

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from [God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20**

## WHAT ARE SACREMENTS

a Christian rite that is documented as being ordained or commanded by Christ Jesus

## <u>PHYSICAL ACTS WITH SPIRITUAL RAMIFICATIONS</u>

## THE LORD'S SUPPER | SYMBOLIC OR SIGNIFICANT?

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11: 23-32

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this

bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's
death until He comes. [27] Therefore **whoever eats the
bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an
unworthy manner**, shall be **guilty of the body and
the blood** of the Lord. [28] But **a man must examine
himself**, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread
and drink of the cup. [29] For **he who eats and drinks,
eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not
judge the body rightly**. [30] For this reason **many
among you are weak and sick**, and a number
sleep. [31] But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would
not be judged. [32] But when we are judged, we
are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be
condemned along with the world.

## IS IT JUST $H^2O$?
## SO IS…WATER BAPTISM
## SYMOBLIC OR SIGNIFICANT?

**REAL LIFE STORY OF THE MAN WHO WANTED TO REMOVE A TATOO OF SATAN FROM HIS BODY & WHAT REALLY HAPPENS WHEN YOU LEAVE THE OLD MAN BEHIND***

### WE ARE ONE BEING
BODY SOUL & SPIRIT

### REGARDING ISRAEL

### THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS…
for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
**Romans 11:29**

### YET WE HAVE MADE A NEW COVENANT – NOT GOD
It has shifted within the "Church" to be a spiritual covenant with Israel.

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

And we have called the "Church" Israel

BUT

**The New Testament NEVER does**

## REGARDING EARTH & IT'S FUTURE

## THE RESURRECTION

Takes place HERE
Why is Christ coming back?
What is Christ going to do?
Why in the world would He bring back all the dead Christians?

## Papias, the ancient Bishop of Hierapolis

"We believe in the corporeal reign of Christ on earth, meaning the bodily reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years."

## ISAIAH 2:3-4

And many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us concerning His ways
And that we may walk in His paths."
For the law will go forth from Zion
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
4 And He will judge between the nations,
And will render decisions for many peoples;
And they will hammer their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war.

## HEAVEN IS SIMPLY A TEMPORARY RELOCATION UNTIL CHRIST'S RETURN

PREDETERMINATION OR PREDESTINATON

WHAT NOW?

BE AWARE & BE ALERT

Ask the Holy Spirit to continually help you to discern if what you are hearing is Greek thinking or Jewish / Hebrew thinking.
We live in a Greek Culture. Understand it's influence.

SATURATE YOURSELF

**Get <u>into</u> the Word of God**
**Pay <u>more attention to His Word</u> than you do anything else.**
**The MORE of the Word that get's into you [body, soul & spirit, heart, mind & will] <u>the more biblically sound</u> your thinking will be.**
**<u>Study the Old Testament in conjunction</u> WITH the New Testament and you will see that though it is two Testaments it is <u>ONE UNIFIED</u> message.**

The more you can think from a Jewish/Hebrew perspective the quicker you will be able to identify Greek thinking.

## GOING DEEPER | Read and Note the differences in the two articles:

### Ancient Hebrew Thought By Jeff A. Benner, ancient-hebrew.org

In the world, past and present, there are two major types of cultures; the Hebrew (or eastern) culture and the Greek (or western) culture. Both of these cultures view their surroundings, lives, and purpose in ways which would seem foreign to the other. With the exception of a few Bedouin nomadic tribes living in the Near East today, the ancient Hebrew culture has disappeared.

What happened to this ancient Hebrew thought and culture? Around 800 BCE, a **new culture arose** to the north. This new culture began to view the world very much differently than the Hebrews. This culture was the Greeks. Around 200 BCE the Greeks began to move south causing a coming together of the Greek and Hebrew culture. This was a very tumultuous time as the two vastly different cultures collided. Over the following 400 years the battle raged until finally the Greek culture won and virtually eliminated all trace of the ancient Hebrew culture. The Greek culture then in turn influenced all following cultures including the Roman and European cultures, our own American culture and even the modern Hebrew culture in Israel today.

As 20th Century Americans with a strong Greek thought influence, we read the Hebrew Bible as if a 20th Century American had written it. In order to understand the ancient Hebrew culture in which the Tenakh was written in, we must examine some of the differences between Hebrew and Greek thought.

#### Abstract vs. concrete thought

Greek thought views the world through the mind (abstract thought). Ancient Hebrew thought views the world through the senses (concrete thought).

Concrete thought is the expression of concepts and ideas in ways that can be seen, touched, smelled, tasted and/or heard. All five of the senses are used when speaking and hearing and writing and reading the Hebrew language. An example of this can be found in Psalms 1:3; "He is like a *tree* planted by *streams of water*, which yields its *fruit* in season, and whose *leaf* does not *wither*." In this passage we have concrete words expressing abstract thoughts, such as a tree (one who is upright, righteous), streams of water (grace), fruit (good character) and an un-withered leaf (prosperity).

Abstract thought is the expression of concepts and ideas in ways that cannot be seen, touched, smelled, tasted or heard. Hebrew never uses abstract thought as English does. Examples of Abstract thought can be found in Psalms 103:8; "The LORD is *compassionate* and *gracious*, Slow to *anger*, abounding in *love*." As you noticed I said that Hebrew uses concrete and not abstract thoughts, but here we have such abstract concepts as compassionate, gracious, anger, and love in a Hebrew passage. Actually, these are abstract English words translating the original Hebrew concrete words. The translators often translate this way because the original Hebrew makes no sense when literally translated into English.

Let us take one of the abstract words above to demonstrate how this works. Anger, an abstract word, is actually the Hebrew word **אף** (*awph*) which literally means "nose", a concrete word. When one is very angry, he begins to breathe hard and the nostrils begin to flare. A Hebrew sees anger as "the flaring of the nose (nostrils)." If the translator literally translated the above passage "slow to nose", it would make no sense to the English reader, so **אף**, a nose, is translated to "anger" in this passage.

## Appearance vs. Functional Description

Greek thought describes objects in relation to its appearance. Hebrew thought describes objects in relation to its function.

A deer and an oak are two very different objects and we would never describe them in the same way with our Greek form of descriptions. The Hebrew word for both of these objects is **איל** (*ayil*) because the functional description of these two objects is identical to the ancient Hebrews, therefore, the same Hebrew word is used for both. The Hebraic definition of **איל** is "a strong leader."

A deer stag is one of the most powerful animals of the forest and is seen as "a strong leader" among the other animals of the forest. Also, the oak tree's wood is very hard compared to other trees such as the pine which is soft and is seen as a "strong leader" among the trees of the forest. Notice the two different translations of the Hebrew word **איל** (*ayil*) in Psalms 29.9. The NASB and KJV translates it as "The voice of the LORD makes the *deer* to calve" while the NIV translates it as "The voice of the LORD twists the *oaks*." The literal translation of this verse in Hebrew thought would be; "The voice of the LORD makes the strong leaders turn."

When translating the Hebrew into English, the translator must give a Greek description to this word which is why we have two different ways of translating this verse. This same word is also translated as a "ruler" in 2 Kings 24.15, who is a man who is a strong leader.

Another example of Greek thought would be the following description of a common pencil: "it is yellow and about 8 inches long." A Hebrew description of the pencil would be related to its function such as "I write words with it." Notice that the Hebrew description uses the verb "write" while the Greek description uses the adjectives "yellow" and "long." Because of Hebrew's form of functional descriptions, verbs are used much more frequently than adjectives.

## Impersonal vs. Personal Description

The Greek culture describes objects in relation to the object itself. The Hebrew culture describes objects in relation to the Hebrew himself.

As in the example above of the pencil, the Greek description portrays the pencil's relationship to itself by using the word "is." The Hebrew describes the pencil in relation to himself by saying "I

write." Because Hebrew does not describe objects in relation to itself, the Hebrew vocabulary does not have the word "is."

A Greek description of God would be "God is love" which describes God in relation to God. A Hebrew description would be "God loves me" describing God in relationship to myself.

### Passive vs. Active Nouns

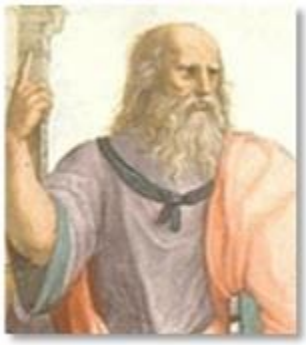
Greek nouns are words which refer to a person, place or thing. Hebrew nouns refer to the action of a person place or thing.

The Hebrews are active people and their vocabulary reflects this **lifestyle**. The Greek culture recognizes the words such as a knee and a gift as nouns, which by themselves impart no action. But in the Hebrew vocabulary these nouns come from the same root word **ברך** (*BRK*) because they are related, not in appearance, but in action. The Hebrew word for knee is **ברך** (be*rak*) and literally means "the part of the body that bends." The Hebrew word for a gift is **ברכה** (*berakah*), meaning "what is brought with a bent knee." The verb from the root word is **ברך** (*barak*), meaning "to bend the knee." As you can see, both **Hebrew verbs and nouns** have action associated with them where the Greek nouns do not.

Even the Hebrew nouns for father and mother are descriptive of action. The Hebrew word for father is **אב** (*av*) and literally means "the one who gives strength to the family" and mother **אם** (*em*) means "the one that binds the family together."

The Philosophy of the Hebrew Language, By Jeff A. Benner, ancient-hebrew.org

## East and West



Throughout the world, past and present, there are two major divisions of thought or philosophy; Western and Eastern. Western Philosophy has its beginnings in the sixth century B.C. in Greece with such philosophers as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Eastern Philosophy has its roots in the ancient past and was the philosophy of all ancient cultures of the Far East (including China and Japan), Middle East (Including India and Babylon) and Near East (including Egypt and Israel). As the Greek culture spread, so did Western philosophy to the point that Western philosophy has become the predominant philosophy throughout the world.

The Hebrews of the Bible wrote the Bible from the perspective of Eastern philosophy, but today's readers are interpreting these writings with Western philosophy, the results being misinterpretations and mistranslations of the text. For this reason, it is essential that we learn the philosophy of the Ancient Hebrews in order to better understand the text we are reading.

The language of the Hebrews is a concrete language, meaning that it uses words that express something that can be seen, touched, smelled, tasted or heard and all five of the senses are used when speaking, hearing, writing and reading the Hebrew language. An example of this can be found in Psalms 1:3; "*He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither*".

In contrast to the Eastern philosophy of a concrete language, Western philosophy uses an abstract language to express itself. An abstract word is an expression that cannot be seen, touched, smelled, tasted or heard. Examples of Abstract thought can be found in Psalms 103:8; "*The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love*". The words compassion, grace, anger and love are all abstract words, ideas that cannot be experienced by the senses. Why do we find these abstract words in a passage of concrete thinking Hebrews? Actually, these are abstract English words used to translate the original Hebrew concrete words. The translators often translate this way because the original Hebrew makes no sense when literally translated for Western thinkers.

## Concrete and Abstract Thought

While there are many differences between the Western and Eastern schools of thought, one of the major differences is the use of abstracts and concretes.

Just as artwork may be created in the concrete or the abstract, words can also be created in the concrete or the abstract. A concrete word, idea or concept is something that can be perceived by the five senses. It can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched. An abstract is something that cannot be perceived by the five senses.

As the Bible was written from an Eastern philosophical perspective, it is important that we recognize that we cannot interpret it through our own Western philosophy. To do so, would place a meaning and interpretation that may not be that of the original authors.

Thorleif Boman's monumental work, *Hebrew thought compared with Greek*, states; "The thinking of the Old Testament is primitive and hence can be compared only with the thinking of other primitive peoples and not with thinking as advanced as Plato's or Bergson's."

Victor H. Matthews explains how the culture of the Hebrews can be studied in his book, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*." One of the joys of studying the Bible is attempting to reconstruct the manners and customs of the peoples of ancient times. The gulf of thousands of years can be bridged, at least in part, by insights into their everyday life. These can be garnered through the close examination of the biblical narratives and through the use of comparative written and physical remains from other ancient civilizations."

In his books *The Hebrew Genius as Exhibited in the Old Testament*, George Adam Smith said; "...the Hebrews were mainly a doing and feeling people. Thus, their language has few abstract terms. Rather, "Hebrew may be called primarily a language of the senses. The words originally expressed concrete or material things and movements or actions which struck the senses or started the emotions. Only secondarily and in metaphor could they be used to denote abstract or metaphysical ideas."

These same Concrete concepts of Eastern thought can also be found in Primitive cultures that exist today who have not been influenced by our Modern Western culture. The linguist Dan Everett, presented during his *Endangered Languages and Lost Knowledge* seminar, his discovery

through his research that the primitive Pirahã tribe in the Amazon did not use abstract perspectives, but instead concrete ones. As an example, the Pirahã tribe call themselves the "straight heads" and outsiders are "crooked heads." Interestingly, the Ancient Hebrew language uses this same style of speech. A literal translation of Proverbs 14:2 reads, "*One who makes his walk straight will revere Yahweh, but the one who makes his path crooked is worthless.*"

Everett also found that they had no concept of "left" and "right" (abstract terms of direction), but instead gave direction in relation to the surrounding topography, as in "toward the river," or "toward the jungle." Again, this is strikingly similar to the Ancient Hebrews' perspectives of direction. Exodus 38:9-13 describes the direction of the court in relationship to the four sides of the Tabernacle. The Hebrew words used for these four directions are;

**נגב** (*negev*) – meaning "The desert region" (south)

**צפון** (*tzafon*) – meaning "The unknown region" (north)

**ים** (*yam*) – meaning "The Mediterranean Sea" (west)

**קדם** (*qedem*) – meaning "the region of the rising sun" (east)

## Step Logic vs. Block Logic

While the Modern Western person thinks and arranges events chronologically (Step Logic), the Ancient Hebrews thought and arranged events according to action and purpose (Block Logic). Let me demonstrate with the following paragraph from a western step logic perspective.

"*I got up and ate breakfast and read the newspaper. I then drove to work. While at work I read yesterday's reports. At noon I walked across the street for lunch. While there I read a magazine. Back at work I read my emails. After work I drove home and had dinner.*"

Now let me rearrange this paragraph in block form, the way the Hebrews would have conveyed this same story.

"*I drove to work and walked across the street and I drove home. I ate breakfast and I ate lunch and I ate dinner. I read the newspaper and I read the reports and I read a magazine and I read my emails.*"

To a person who is steeped in Western step logic, this paragraph would seem illogical as there is no way to make any chronological sense out of this narrative. However, this narrative would make much more sense to a person who is steeped in block logic as they can easily see my actions being grouped together. It is very important when reading the Bible to ignore the philosophy that has been ingrained in you and instead learn a completely new form of philosophy and logic.

Western readers of the Bible, who are reading the Bible from a linear perspective, read the creation account in Genesis as if it was written in chronological order, but this was not how the narrative was written; the different events of the creation account are recorded in blocks of related events.

The first three days of creation are related to separation.

Day 1 – Separating light from darkness

Day 2 – Separating the water from the sky

Day 3 – Separating the land from the water

The next three days of creation are related to the filling of the creation.

Day 4 – Filling the light with the sun and the dark with the moon

Day 5 – Filling the water fish and the sky with birds

Day 6 – Filling the land with animals and man

The record of events for the first six days of creation, are written in blocks of parallels, a form of Hebrew poetry, and can be written like this;

1 – Separating light from darkness

2 – Separating the water from the sky

3 – Separating the land from the water

4 – Filling the light with the sun and the dark with the moon

5 – Filling up the water with fish and the sky with birds

6 – Filling up the land with animals

Days 1 and 4 are paralleled with each other and are recording the same event as we can see from the following verses.

And God saw that the light was good. And God <u>separated the light from the darkness</u>. (ESV, Genesis 1:4)

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night … and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good." (ESV, Genesis 1:14a, 18b)

Verse 4 occurs on the first day and is describing the action of God separating light and darkness, but in verse 14, which is day four, we have God again separating light and darkness. There are only two possible explanations for this. Either the separation of light and darkness on the first day disappeared and had to be separated again on the fourth day, or the first and fourth days are recording the same event. In addition, days 2 and 5 are recording the same event, as are days 3 and 6.

## Hebrew Descriptions

In our minds we would never relate an oak tree to a ram or view them as the same. The reason being is that we relate to features and appearances. However, the Hebrews relate to the function and in the case of the oak and the ram, they function in the same way. An oak tree is a very hard wood and the horns and skull of a ram are equally as hard. For this reason, the Hebrew word **איל** (*ayil*) is used for a ram (see Genesis 22:13) and an oak (see Isaiah 1:29).

*This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.* (Genesis 6:15)

From our Modern Western mindset, we assume that this passage is describing the "appearance" of the ark. But this is not so, the dimensions are not given to tell us what it "looked like," but instead to tell us that it is very large as it is going to hold a large number of animals.

Another example of differing cultural perspectives is how different cultures perceive time. In our modern Western world, we view the past as behind us and the future as ahead of us. In Biblical Hebrew, the word for "yesterday" (the past) is **תמול** (*temol*), which comes from the root **מול** (*mul*) meaning "in front." The Biblical Hebrew word for "tomorrow" (the future) is **מחר** (*mahher*), which comes from the root **אחר** (*ahher*) meaning "in back." Therefore, from a Biblical Hebrew perspective, the past is in front and the future is behind. We see time from the perspective of

passing through it. As we have walked through the past, we see it as behind us and the future, which we have not yet walked in, is in front of us. The Hebrews saw time from the perspective of observance. The past is known and therefore can be seen (in front of the observer), but the future is not known and therefore cannot be seen (behind the observer).

Another major difference between the modern Western view and the ancient Eastern one is how something is described. A westerner would describe a pencil in relationship to its appearance, such as long and yellow. An ancient easterner on the other hand, would describe it by its function, such as "you write with it." Notice that the western description uses adjectives, but the eastern description uses verbs. Biblical Hebrew rarely uses adjectives; instead, it much more prefers to use verbs.

## Static vs. Dynamic

In our Modern western language verbs express action (dynamic) while nouns express inanimate (static) objects. In Hebrew all things are in motion (dynamic) including verbs and nouns. In Hebrew sentences the verbs identify the action of an object while nouns identify an object of action. The verb **מלך** (*malak*) is "the reign of the king" while the noun **מלך** (*melek*) is the "the king who reigns". A mountain top is not a static object but the "head lifting up out of the hill". A good example of action in what appears to be a static passage is the command to "have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). In Hebrew thought this passage is saying "not to bring another one of power in front of my face".

## Hebrew Psychology

If you were to ask a Westerner, such as from the Americas or Europe, what they see in the picture above, they would probably say "a deer." However, if you were to ask an Easterner, such as from Japan or China, what they see, they will probably say "a grove." The difference is that the Western thinker focuses in on one point, while the Eastern thinker looks at the whole of the image.

In an extensive study on these different forms of philosophy, a wide range of people from America, Canada and Europe were asked if they thought the boy in the middle of the picture on the left was happy or sad, they all said "happy." They were then asked if they thought the boy in the middle of the picture on the right was happy or sad, they all said "happy." Then a wide range of people from Asia, including Japan and China, were asked the same questions. When asked if the boy on the left was happy or sad, they all said "happy." When they were asked if the boy on the right was happy or sad, they all said "sad."

Again, Western thinkers focus on one point, the boy in the middle. Eastern thinkers on the other hand focus on the picture as a whole and because the majority of the children in the picture on the right were sad, their answer was "sad," regardless of the smile on the boy in the middle.

The Psychology of the Ancient Hebrews is very different from our own and when we read the Bible, we must learn to read it from the Hebrew's perspective rather than our own.

When we use a word like "name," we focus in on how it is written and pronounced.

*I will tell of thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee.* (Psalm 22:23)

What does it mean to "tell someone about another's name?" Does it mean to tell others how to write or pronounce the name? From a Western perspective yes, but from a Hebraic perspective a name is much more than its pronunciation; it is the character of the individual, his ethics, workmanship, attitude, dependability, resourcefulness, compassion, honor, etc. When the Bible teaches us to "tell others the name of Yahweh," it isn't telling us to teach others how to write or pronounce it correctly; it is telling us to teach Yahweh's character.

## Now that you have completed this lesson:

- *Briefly give a definition of your Biblical stance for your belief.*
- *Write down 3 specific places in Scripture that clearly states your understanding.*

As defined by the Bible, Biblical Thinking is _____

_____

_____

_____

**Scripture that supports this statement is:**

_____ _____ _____

*NOTE: YOU MAY FIND THAT YOUR UNDERSTANDING WILL GO DEEPER AS YOU MOVE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING LESSONS. FEEL FREE TO REVAMP & ADD TO YOUR STATEMENTS AS YOU GROW SPIRITUALLY MATURE.*